



DRAFT PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES MASTER PLAN

City of Parksville — March 2019



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan was completed by the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) at Vancouver Island University. We would like to thank Staff and Council at the City of Parksville for their guidance and project support, with special thanks to:

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During the engagement process for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan, more than 1,000 members of the public attended events, interviews, and participated in surveys. We thank the public for its interest and attendance and for providing valuable suggestions to guide the plan.

In addition to our project team, we would like to acknowledge VIU's Master of Community Planning students, faculty, MABRRI staff, and other VIU graduate and undergraduate students for assisting with our public engagement and data collection events, and for their contributions to this document.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks and trails are a source of great pride for the City of Parksville. These public spaces offer enjoyment for residents and visitors alike by providing opportunities for activities and community events. They are an important contribution to the overall quality of life in Parksville, supporting the ecological, social, physical, and economic health of the City.

In February 2018, the City of Parksville and Vancouver Island University (VIU) initiated a planning process to review the Parks and Open Space Master Plan (2005) **to ensure these vital resources continue to support the community's needs as the** City grows and develops. This Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan (2019) is intended to provide the City of Parksville with a framework that will be used to guide decision-making in the short and long-term planning and management of parks, trails and open spaces.






The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan (2019) is a culmination of a year-long research and engagement process to guide the planning, management, **development, and conservation of the City's parks, trails and open spaces over the** next twenty years. Activities included a parks and trails inventory, policy analysis, multi-stage community engagement process (outlined below), input from stakeholders, and research into best practices.

The engagement process unfolded over seven events between March and October 2018, involving over 1,000 participants. These engagement events included:

- Parks on the Street
- Individual Park Comment Boxes
- Foster Park Spring Mini Event
- Online Survey
- Splash Park Opening
- Open House Series
- User Group Interviews



Five *Guiding Principles* for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan were developed from the feedback generated through the public engagement process:

-  **Encourage** safe and healthy opportunities for all community members
-  **Create** a more accessible park network for everyone
-  **Support** sustainable infrastructure use and maintenance
-  **Protect** and enhance the natural environment
-  **Promote** physical and mental well-being for all.

In total, the Action Plan included in this document lists 99 recommendations, accompanied by costs and timeframes.

The Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan (2019) conforms to the Parksville **Official Community Plan (2013) and City of Parksville’s current policies and bylaws.**



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VISION AND PURPOSE

The City of Parkville's Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan (2019) provides direction for a diverse and interconnected parks and trails system that:

- Protects and enhances the natural environment
- Promotes ecological knowledge
- Contributes to sustainability, active living and accessibility
- Strengthens community identity for current and future residents.

The Plan provides the City with a framework to guide decision-making to provide, preserve and advocate for parks and trails to benefit all people and the environment. This document builds from the Community Park Master Plan (2018), updates the Parks and Open Space Master Plan (2005) and creates a vision for the next two decades of parks planning and development.

SCOPE

The scope of work for the Parkville Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan (2019) process included:

- A large scale, in depth, public engagement process
- An evaluation and inventory appraisal of the existing infrastructure and assets of the parks, trails, and open spaces
- An evaluation of current and future parks and trails usage
- An in-depth evaluation of existing policy.

Information collected was combined with previous studies, best practices, and the **direction provided by Parkville's Official Community Plan to develop** recommendations prioritized by costs and timeframes. The recommendations included in the Action Plan section of this document meet the needs of both current and future residents of the City of Parkville, as well as tourists and visitors who **enjoy Parkville's many green amenities.**

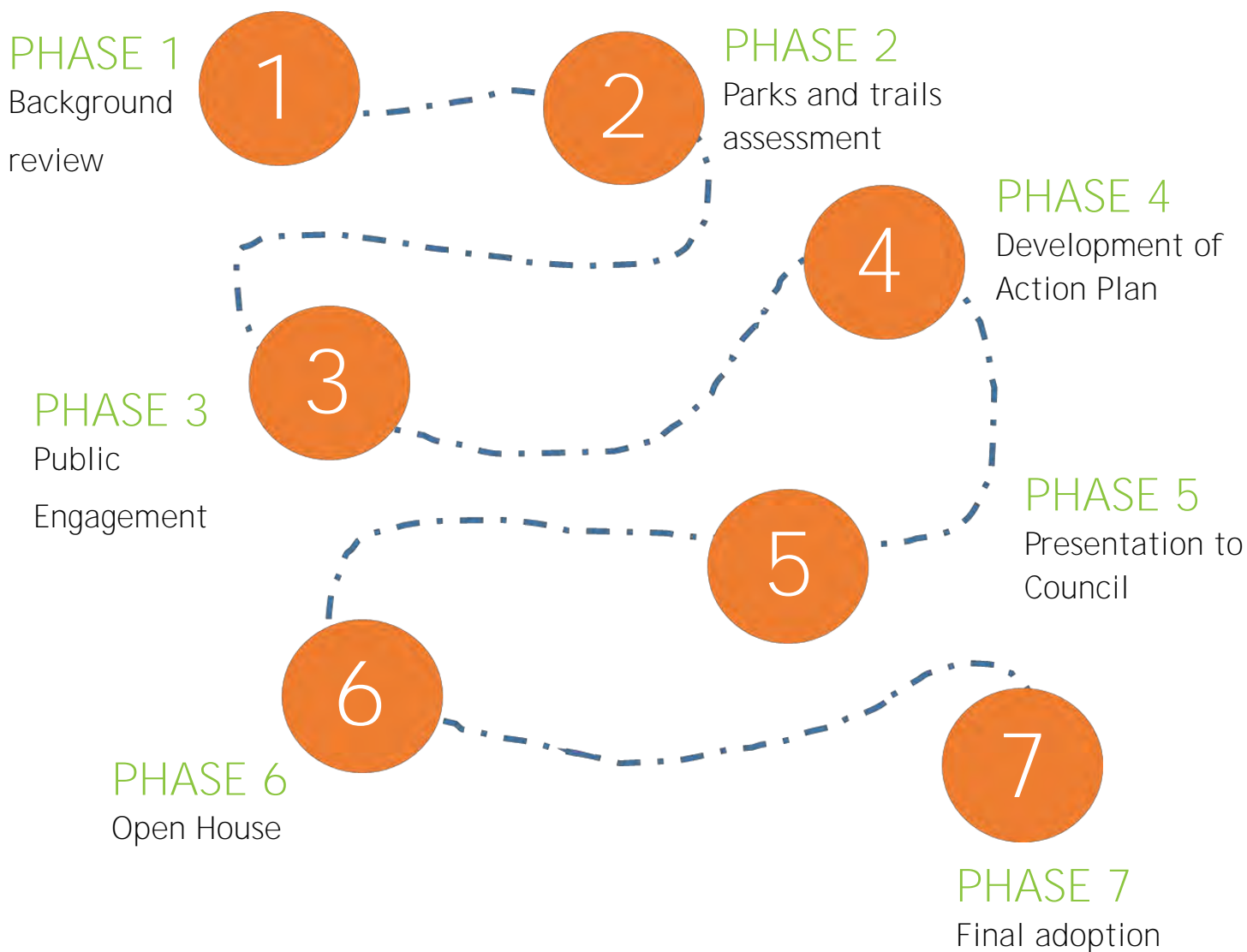


PLANNING PROCESS

A black and white photograph capturing a moment in a community planning process. On the left, a man wearing a dark jacket and a baseball cap with an 'AZ' logo stands looking towards the right. In the center, a woman wearing a dark jacket, a patterned scarf, and sunglasses on her head is leaning over a table, pointing at a large map or brochure. The table is cluttered with various items: several pens and pencils, two rolls of white tape, and a brochure titled 'City of Parkville Parks, Open Spaces and Trails'. The background shows an outdoor setting with trees and a fence. A blue banner at the top of the image contains the text 'PLANNING PROCESS' in white capital letters.

PLANNING PROCESS

Development of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan was completed in seven phases:



BACKGROUND REVIEW

A review of past data, policy and planning documents, demographic information, and the regional context provided a foundation for the development of this Plan. A summary of the background review is provided in the Guiding Principles, Parksville at a Glance, and Demographic Sections.

PARKS AND TRAILS ASSESSMENT

An inventory of all parks, trails and open spaces was completed to determine the number and condition of amenities, facilities and public spaces available to residents. An analysis of the current system, including the distribution of parks and trails and the proximity of parks and trails to community members was also conducted. In addition, non-city owned spaces including schools and provincial lands were identified as community assets. Details on the parks, trails and open space system are presented in the Parks and Trails System Section of the Master Plan.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

An extensive public engagement process was designed to identify needs and **concerns of residents within the City's parks, trails and open spaces.** This process created opportunities to discover how residents use the parks, trails and open spaces, gathered their ideas for changes and improvements, and set the groundwork for the recommendations in this plan. Engagement events for the Master Plan occurred between March and October 2018 and included seven data collection and public engagement events attended by over 1,000 participants. Highlights of the engagement process and a list of events are provided in the Community Engagement Section of the Master Plan. The full engagement summary is located in Appendix A.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Feedback and information collected from the community engagement events was analyzed to inform the five *Guiding Principles* for the Master Plan. These principles were informed by the site assessments and inventories, and previous and current planning documents. The *Guiding Principles* are used to direct the recommendations for the Action Plan.

The *Guiding Principles* are:



Encourage safe and healthy opportunities for all community members



Create a more accessible park network for everyone



Support sustainable infrastructure use and maintenance



Protect and enhance the natural environment



Promote physical and mental well-being for all.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

A list of recommendations was developed based on an analysis of all project information. Recommendations are organized under the five *Guiding Principles* and identified by estimated costs and timeframes for completion. The final recommendations were reviewed against the current fiscal landscape to ensure they are feasible for the City to implement. While the recommendations are realistic, they also aim to progress the parks and trails network to support the diversity of users now and into the future. The Action Plan Section begins on page 63.



THE CITY OF PARKSVILLE & THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH BIOSPHERE REGION



Image Courtesy of Arrowsmith Media

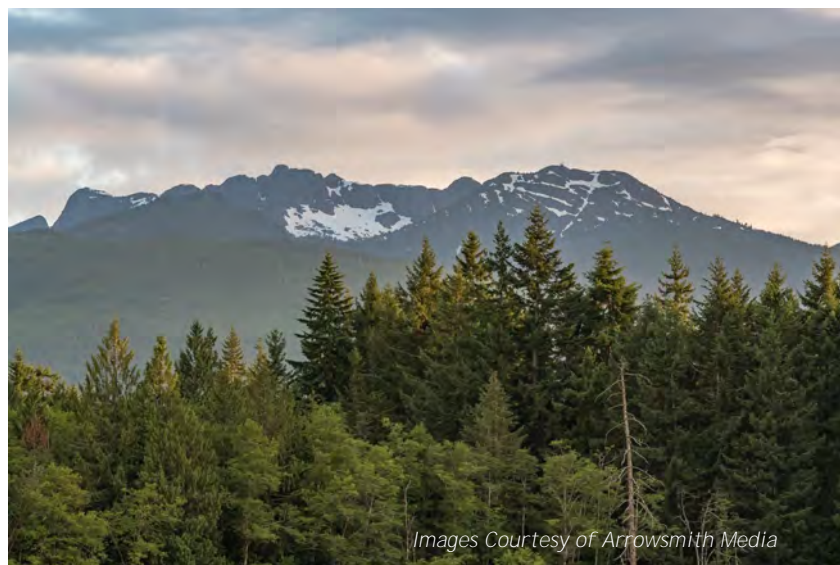
CITY OF PARKSVILLE & THE MOUNT ARROWSMITH BIOSPHERE REGION

THE MABR

Parksville is located within the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR). The MABR extends from the top of Mount Arrowsmith, located just 20 km south west of Parksville, into the Salish Sea. Within its region, the MABR encompasses five major watersheds, 45,000 residents, seven traditional territories of First Nations communities, and many unique ecosystems.

Parksville also has a representative on the MABR's governing roundtable.

The MABR is a part of the larger United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere Programme. The goal of this program is to designate model regions around the globe as biosphere reserves, where people can work and live together with nature. Designated in 2000, the MABR is one of more than 650 biosphere reserves worldwide.



Images Courtesy of Arrowsmith Media



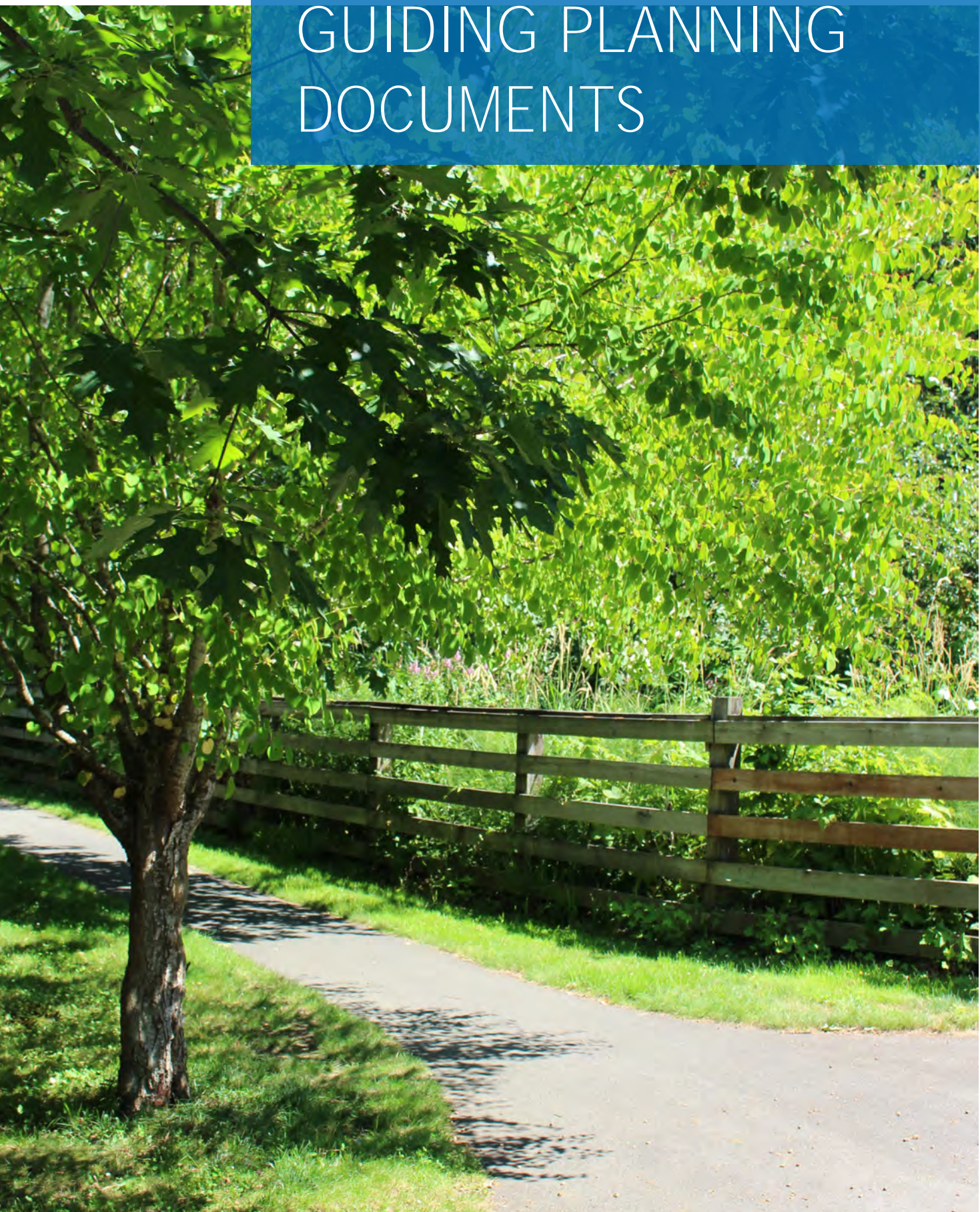
As a UNESCO biosphere reserve the MABR seeks to address the following three functions.

1. **Promoting the conservation of biodiversity:** to contribute to the conservation of landscapes, ecosystems, species and genetic variation.
2. **Fostering sustainable development:** to foster economic and human development which is socio-culturally and ecologically sustainable.
3. **Supporting research and education:** to provide support for research, monitoring, education and information exchange related to local, national and global issues of conservation and development.

The principles that support the biosphere reserve concept are recognized in this Plan and also inform the recommendations in the Action Plan: this Plan promotes the conservation of biodiversity and supports sustainable development that celebrates the unique features and location of the City of Parksville.

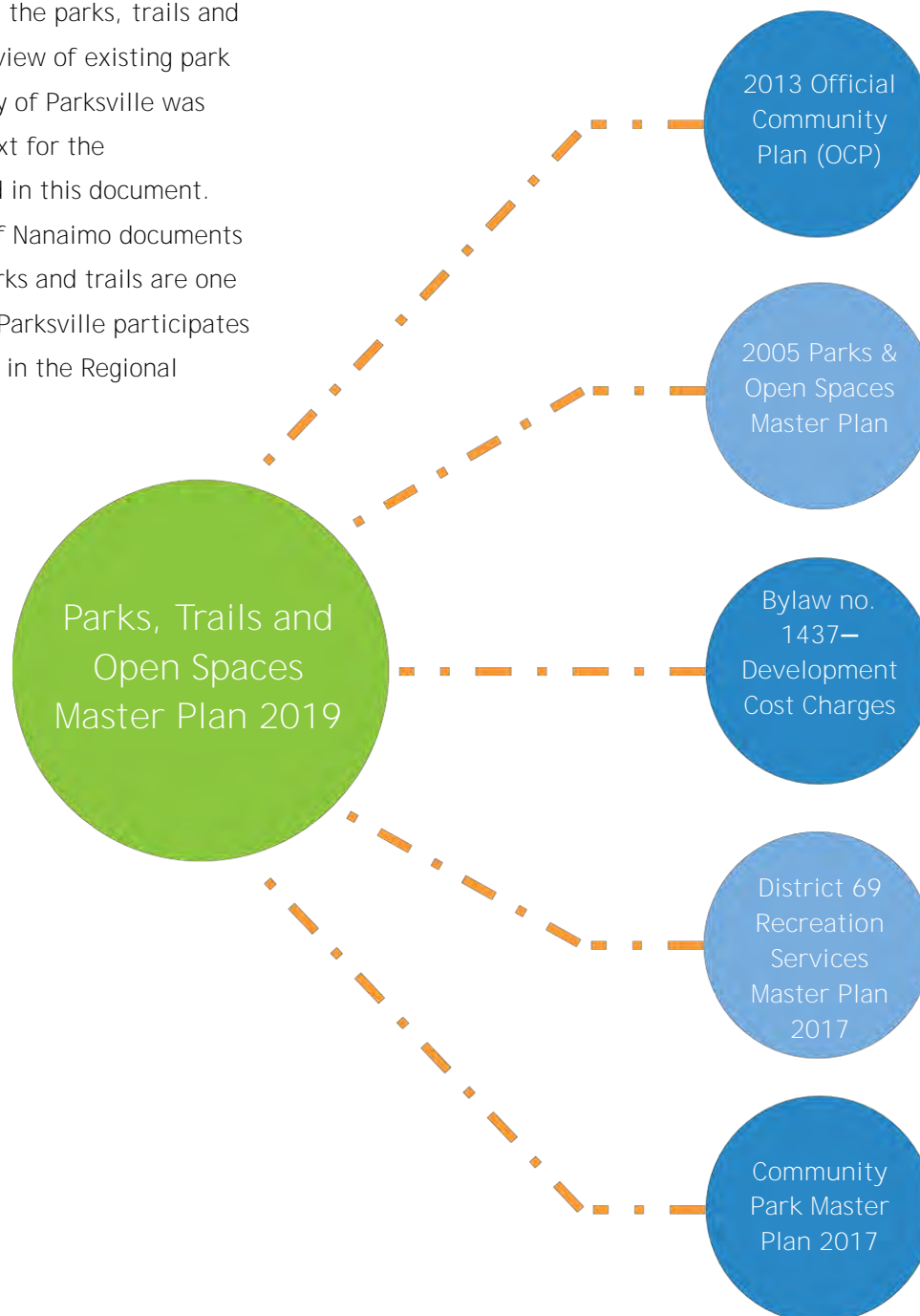


GUIDING PLANNING DOCUMENTS



GUIDING PLANNING DOCUMENTS

This plan is informed by and furthers the strategic **directions provided in the City's other plans and policies**. Prior to conducting the parks, trails and open spaces inventory, a review of existing park policy and bylaws in the City of Parksville was completed to provide context for the recommendations presented in this document. Relevant Regional District of Nanaimo documents were also considered, as parks and trails are one of the functions the City of Parksville participates in along with other partners in the Regional District.



THE 2013 OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN (OCP)

The Official Community Plan (2013) identifies several goals and objectives applicable to parks and trails in Parksville. Page 99 of the OCP includes four **parks and open spaces goals which highlight the City's desire for a multi-modal network of trails throughout the City, maintain naturalized areas and habitat, emphasize the Parksville Community Park as a focal point for the City, and ensure parks and open spaces are accessible to all.** Four of the objectives on page 100 of the OCP have been highlighted to additionally inform the development and direction of this Master Plan:

The four objectives include:

Objective 3: The City will develop a parks and open spaces vegetation maintenance and management policy to encourage high quality landscape aesthetics and an appropriate mix of native, drought and pest tolerant species.

Objective 4: The City will explore the feasibility and public demand for an interpretive centre or interpretive sign program in City parks and/or open spaces.

Objective 5: The City will partner with appropriate provincial agencies and the Nature Trust of BC to acquire and develop a pedestrian oriented, accessible connection from Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park to the Parksville Community Park.

Objective 6: The City will develop a policy for the location and maintenance of public commemorative benches on lands in the Parks designation.

Section 7 sets out the City's goals and objectives for public green space and park acquisitions. Recommendations include:

- Maintaining a park stock equal to 10 hectares of parkland per 1,000 residents;
- Using Development Cost Charges funds to finance park acquisition and improvements;
- Exploring opportunities to link trails from other jurisdictions with City parks;
- Ensuring all residents have a park, trail or public open space within 800 metres from their home; and
- Exploring the idea of a public outreach initiative to promote urban ecosystem stewardship.



PARKS AND OPEN SPACES MASTER PLAN (2005)

The Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2005) was developed to provide a policy framework and identify strategies for Parkville's parks network.

Relevant policy statements include:

- Acquire further areas of parkland (aiming for larger parcels and spreading parkland further apart);
- Develop connections to link parks and residential areas;
- Acquire land that will enrich the parks network;
- Include parks and open spaces adjacent to the city with plans as they are used by local residents;
- Take a citywide approach to parkland acquisition;
- Improve small undeveloped parks by establishing local partnerships/ sponsorships and through the addition of low-key low maintenance facilities; and
- Improve access to the waterfront, taking some direction from the informal routes already used.

| Park Classification | Amount of Parkland (ha) | Percentage of total Parks |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Pocket Parks | 11.94 | 4.64 |
| Linear Parks | 2.36 | 0.91 |
| Neighborhood Parks | 6.28 | 2.44 |
| Principal Parks | 33.61 | 13.06 |
| Natural Resource Areas | 75.22 | 29.23 |
| Provincial Parks | 107.39 | 41.73 |
| Undeveloped | 2.62 | 1.01 |

Table 1: Parks of Parkville (2018).



From these key policies, the Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan (2005) endorsed three primary recommendations:

- 1) Land acquisitions: Acquire land over the next twenty years around existing parks and City property in order to address the shortfall in neighbourhood and principal parks.
- 2) Trails and Links: To provide a network of trails and links that connect residential areas of Parksville with parks and open space destinations by providing safe and attractive walking and cycling trails and roads and improved access to the waterfront. Furthermore, to establish a primary bike route that follows the perimeter of the city to provide connections to Springwood and the Parksville Community Park.
- 3) Develop Existing Facilities: Wherever possible, make more efficient use of existing parks by developing them into usable spaces. To increase the **City's involvement in management of Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park** with the goal of spreading and/or coordinating recreation use between it and the Parksville Community Park.

BYLAW NO. 1437— DEVELOPMENT COST CHARGES

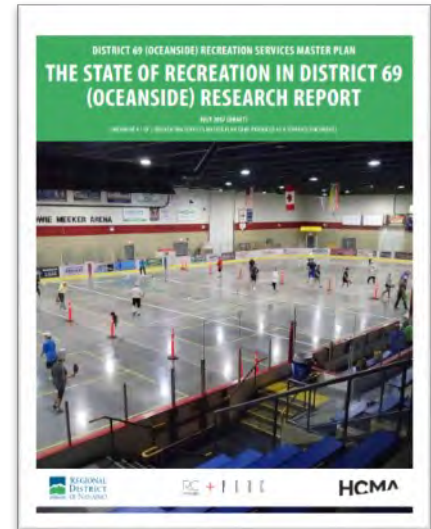
This bylaw specifies how the City collects Development Cost Charges (DCCs). As regulated by the Local Government Act, DCCs can be collected for water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage, highway facilities, and parkland. The City collects DCCs to maintain transportation infrastructure, improve municipal servicing, and provide and improve parkland as the City develops.



STATE OF RECREATION IN DISTRICT 69 (OCEANSIDE) REPORT 2017

Within the Regional District of Nanaimo, District 69 (Oceanside) stretches from Nanoose Bay to Lighthouse Country and includes the City of Parksville. The Regional District of Nanaimo conducted the State of Recreation in District 69 (Oceanside) Research Report (2017). The report is a summary of the consultation process conducted for their forthcoming Recreation Services Master Plan. The Recreation Services Master Plan will outline the long-term management of recreational facilities and the provision of recreational services and programs in District 69 (Oceanside).

In the report, 92% of survey respondents used the parks, trails, pathways and open spaces in Parksville over the past year. Additionally, the overall results from households indicate there is high demand for the Parksville Community Park with 90% of the respondents having visited the park in the past year. The research also demonstrated that although membership is growing for both curling and pickleball activities, these make up a relatively small percentage of the overall recreational uses by respondents. The report further indicates an increase in demand for flexible recreation activities and a trend from formal indoor and outdoor activities to informal activities. The findings in this report highlight the need for planning and programming for multi-purpose spaces and facilities to allow a variety of intergenerational activities.





Images Courtesy of Deb Tardiff

COMMUNITY PARK MASTER PLAN (2018)

The City of Parksville worked in collaboration with VIU, MABRRI, and Master of Community Planning students to complete the Parksville Community Park Master Plan (2018). The public engagement process involved over 1,400 participants in a series of eight engagement events. The plan provides the City with a framework to guide decision-making in the short, medium, and long-term planning of the park, organized by five guiding principles:

Celebrate the unique culture and heritage of the Parksville community

Create a more accessible park for everyone

Support sustainable infrastructure use and maintenance

Protect the natural environment and waterfront

Encourage fun and vibrant activities in the Community Park

The Parksville Community Park Master Plan (2018) replaced a previous plan developed in 2006. Through the development of the plan, the planning team consulted closely with City staff, user groups of the Parksville Community Park, Parksville residents, and the wider public to ensure the vision presented in the 2018 Master Plan was supported by the public and implementable by City staff.

PARKSVILLE AT A GLANCE



Image Courtesy of Arrowsmith Media

PARKSVILLE AT A GLANCE

HISTORY

Coast Salish peoples were the original dwellers and continue to live within their unceded territories along the southeastern coast of Vancouver Island, all of the Lower Mainland, and most of Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula (BC Assembly of First Nations, 2019-a). The east coast of Vancouver Island is home to eighteen First Nations located along the Salish Sea (BC Assembly of First Nations, 2019-b). Each group has their own distinct culture and language. Parksville is located within the unceded territories of these First Nations.

Vancouver Island was explored by Captain Vancouver in 1792, but it **wasn't until 1850 that the Parksville area was dubbed as Englishman's River** - named after an unfortunate drowning of an English gentleman in the river (Parksville Museum, n.d.). After years of expansion and road development to other Island towns from 1855 to 1886, the population of Parksville (38 people) was large enough to become an official settlement and was so named in 1889. Parksville was incorporated as a village in 1945. Following years of growth, Parksville officially became a town in 1978 and then a city in 1986 when the population grew to more than 5,000 (Parksville Museum, n.d.).

Parksville acquired its first public park in 1923. The Parksville Women's Institute raised \$3,500 to purchase 39 acres of waterfront property from Joe Hirst. The space became officially known as the Parksville Community Park and was maintained by the Parksville Community Park Society for more than 30 years (City of Parksville, 2013). In 1963, the Society handed management of the Parksville Community Park over to **the City of Parksville, under the condition that the park "be maintained in perpetuity as a park for the residents of the Village of Parksville and the Nanoose Land District" (Deed of the Parksville Community Park, 1963).**

As the City has grown, so has its variety and number of park spaces. This history indicates that recreation and appreciation for nature has always been at the heart of the Parksville community.

1923

first public
park

1978

Parksville is
officially a
town

1986

Parksville
becomes a city



CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

The City of Parksville's low elevation and protected marine environment

contribute to its mild climate, though global climate change is shifting climatic trends in some predictable and some unpredictable ways. Being on the east side of Vancouver Island results in Parksville having a drier, Mediterranean-like climate as the weather systems release their moisture over the mountains as they move west to east. The winter season is, wet and mostly cloudy, but Parksville enjoys many months of temperate weather. Annually, Parksville averages about 2,000 hours of sunshine and 950 millimetres of precipitation (City of Parksville, 2018; Current Results Publishing Ltd., 2019).

The relatively mild climate facilitates outdoor recreational activities such as walking, golfing, and boating year round in Parksville. This is a key draw for retirees from across Canada. The climate also attracts residents who live in the Parksville area seasonally to escape the cold elsewhere in the country.

The effects of climate change, such as drought and forest fires, are a growing concern for British Columbians. Increased forest fires and water shortages from summer droughts, as well as extreme rain and wind events are predicted consequences of the changing climate (IPCC, 2014). As the climate trends change, the habitat and resources available to local species may be altered or impacted, which may impact biodiversity and exacerbate the invasive species problem. As a coastal community, Parksville may be impacted by rising ocean levels caused by glacial ice melt. The rising water levels could result in damage along the shoreline, with larger king tides and winter storm events eroding more of the coast (IPCC, 2014).

The City is located in the Coastal Douglas fir biogeoclimatic zone, one of the smallest of **BC's ecological zones (Natural Resources Canada, 2015)**. The region contains Douglas fir forest, estuarine, and some endangered Garry Oak ecosystems, and has been increasingly impacted by logging, urbanization, and other anthropogenic processes.



Figure 1: British Columbia's Biogeoclimatic Zones

Parksville and the shores of the Parksville Community Park are within the Parksville-Qualicum Beach Wildlife Management Area (PQBWMA). The PQBWMA was designated in 1993 by the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and contains 1,024 hectares of eastern Vancouver Island shoreline (Regional District of Nanaimo, 2019). The area was designated for the conservation of internationally significant intertidal, estuarine, and riparian habitat used by a range of species, most notably the Pacific Brant Sea Goose, along with over sixty other waterfowl species.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

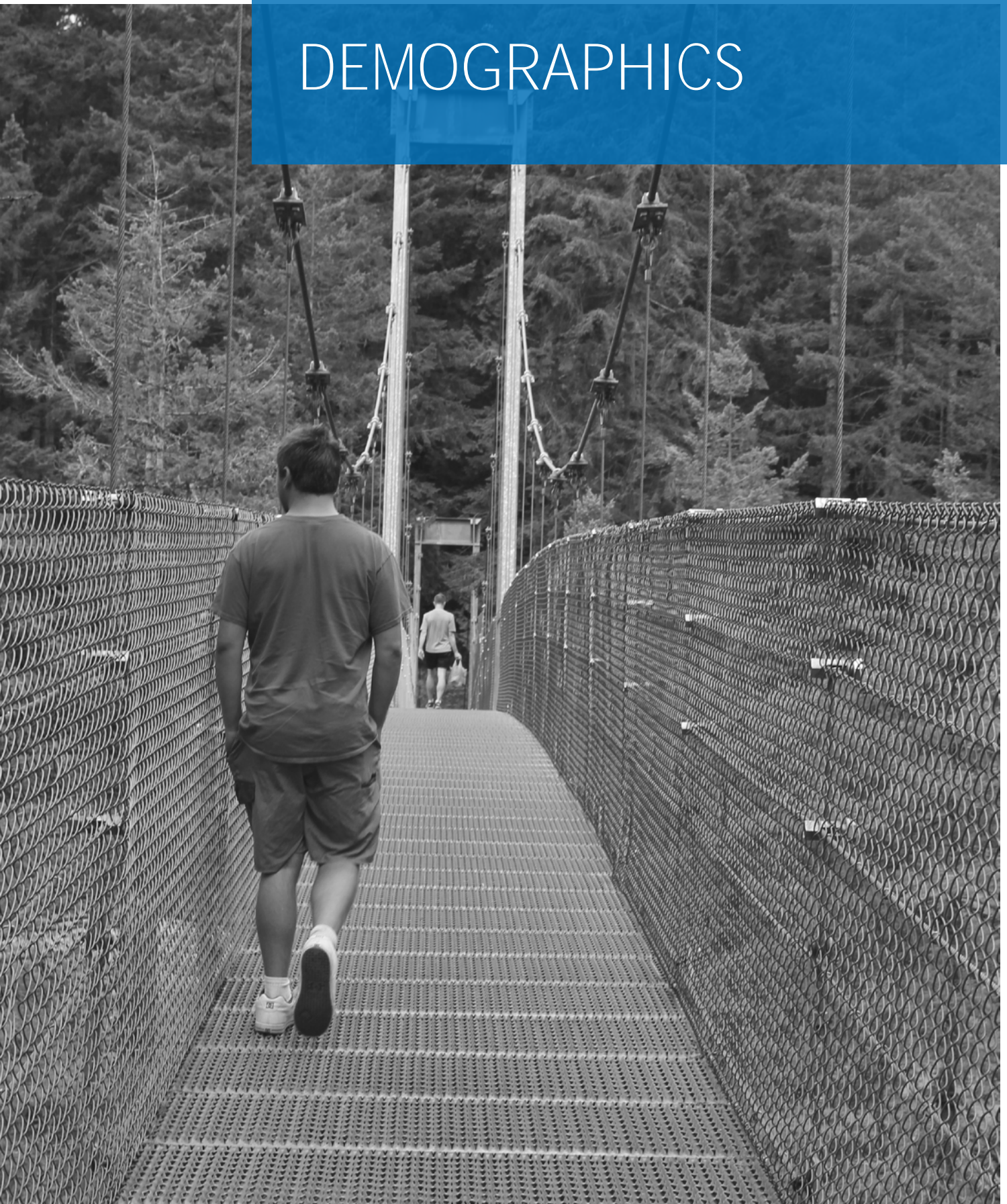
The City of Parksville is located on the east coast of Vancouver Island in the central island region. Parksville has long been a regional hub for outdoor recreation activities due to its mild climate, stunning natural features, and coastal location with ideal sandy beaches.

Parksville is one of four municipalities within the Regional District of Nanaimo, which has a total population of 155,698 (Statistics Canada, 2019-a). **Parksville's parks form part of the RDN's larger network of integrated** Regional and Community Parks and Trails System which comprises 2,061 hectares of regional park land, 180 community parks and 60 kilometres of **regional trails. Notable examples of regional parks in Parksville's** surrounding area include Englishman River Regional Park and Little Qualicum River Regional Park; both attract many visitors to the area annually. One regional trail of note is the Top Bridge Trail which connects Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park (within Parksville) with nearby Englishman River Regional Park.

These dedicated parklands are in addition to other forms of natural protected areas within the RDN such as provincial parks, provincial ecological reserves, protected areas held privately by land trusts, the provincial PQWMA established in 1993 (1,024 ha), and the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region (MABR), a UNESCO designated biosphere reserve established in 2000 (120,000 ha).



DEMOGRAPHICS



DEMOGRAPHICS

To evaluate the needs and demands regarding parks, trails and open spaces of the Parksville community, a demographic analysis was conducted. Data from Statistics Canada 2001-2016 census profiles were used in this analysis (Statistics Canada, 2019).

POPULATION CHANGE

The population of Parksville has been growing over the last five years. From 2011 to 2016, there has been a 4.5% growth rate in the population, with a **population of 11,980 in 2011 to 12,515 in 2016. Parksville's growth rate from 2011 to 2016 was slightly lower than the provincial average (5.6%) between the same years.** There will be increased strain on the parks and trails system as the population of Parksville continues to increase, requiring proactive planning to ensure the needs of future users are met.

AGE DISTRIBUTION

Parksville's population has a median age of 62.7 years, which represents an older demographic within the City when compared to the provincial median age of 44 years. Parksville also has an aging demographic with fastest growing age categories being 55 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years and 85 years and older. The growth rate for the cumulative age groups of 65 and older from 2001 to 2016 is 20%. The other age categories in Parksville have been decreasing in proportion since 2011, with the 0-14 age category decreasing by 10% and the 15-64 age category decreasing by 4% (Figure 2).



Image Courtesy of Deb Tardiff



These demographic trends suggest that the parks, trails and open spaces will need to adapt to serve an aging population with consideration towards accessibility needs. In addition, spaces will still need to recognize the needs of other demographic cohorts, and attention may be needed to create amenities that attract younger residents to the City.

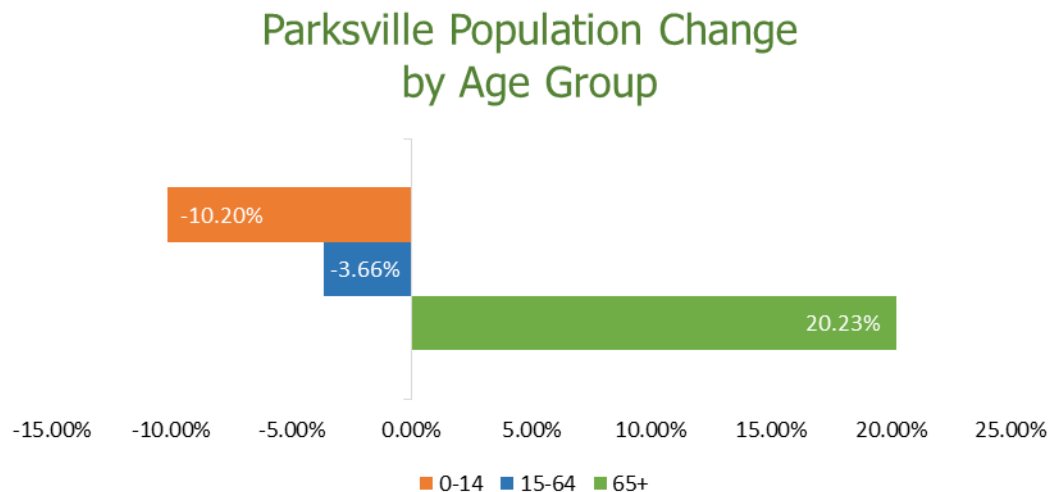


Figure 2: Parksville Population Change by Age Group.

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Reflective of the age demographic, most of the households in Parksville are composed of couples who are married or common-law without children. The average size of households in Parksville from the 2016 census data is 2.4 people. Twenty percent (20%) of the families in Parksville have children. While this number is low when compared to the provincial average, it emphasizes that there remains a young resident demographic who have an influence on the recreation in the community.



LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION

A significant percentage of the residents in Parksville do not participate in the labour force. Additionally, over half of the people who do participate in the labour force are only part-time contributors. These statistics reflect the high percentage of retirees and semi-retirees in the community. With over half of **the City's population not participating in the labour force, this indicates a** population with potential time for recreation.

SPATIAL DEMOGRAPHICS

The density and distribution of the City's population is displayed by a demographic tract analysis (see Figure 3 on following page). Tracts are geographic areas created for election purposes and collecting census data.

Identifying the population distribution in Parksville is important as it reflects the different kind of demands and needs in regards to parks, trails and open spaces. For example, areas with a high percentage of youth would have a higher need for playgrounds and open spaces.

The highest percent of the age category of 0 to 14 years resides in tracts G and J, with tracts E and R consisting of the second highest percentages for this age category (Table 2). Tracts E, J, L, and R, consist of the highest percentages for the age category of 15 to 64 years. The oldest age category of 65 and over resides mostly in tracts C, Q, T, and U. This shows that the age demographics are spatially different within Parksville. This has an impact on the usage and need of trails, parks, and open spaces.

Tract S has the highest growth rate, 17%, compared to tract A and T, which have a decreasing growth rate of -4%. Tracts M, Q and U have the next highest growth rates. For tracts M, Q and U the age category with the highest growth rate is 65 and over. In tract S the highest growth rate is seen in the age category of 15-24.

| Tract | 2016 Population | Percent of Total Population |
|-------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| A | 525 | 4.19% |
| B | 725 | 5.79% |
| C | 665 | 5.31% |
| D | 325 | 2.60% |
| E | 780 | 6.23% |
| F | 440 | 3.52% |
| G | 490 | 3.92% |
| H | 455 | 3.64% |
| I | 525 | 4.19% |
| J | 820 | 6.55% |
| K | 520 | 4.16% |
| L | 655 | 5.23% |
| M | 665 | 5.31% |
| N | 555 | 4.43% |
| O | 655 | 5.23% |
| P | 585 | 4.67% |
| Q | 700 | 5.59% |
| R | 775 | 6.19% |
| S | 445 | 3.56% |
| T | 650 | 5.19% |
| U | 560 | 4.47% |

Table 2: Parksville's population percentage by tract.

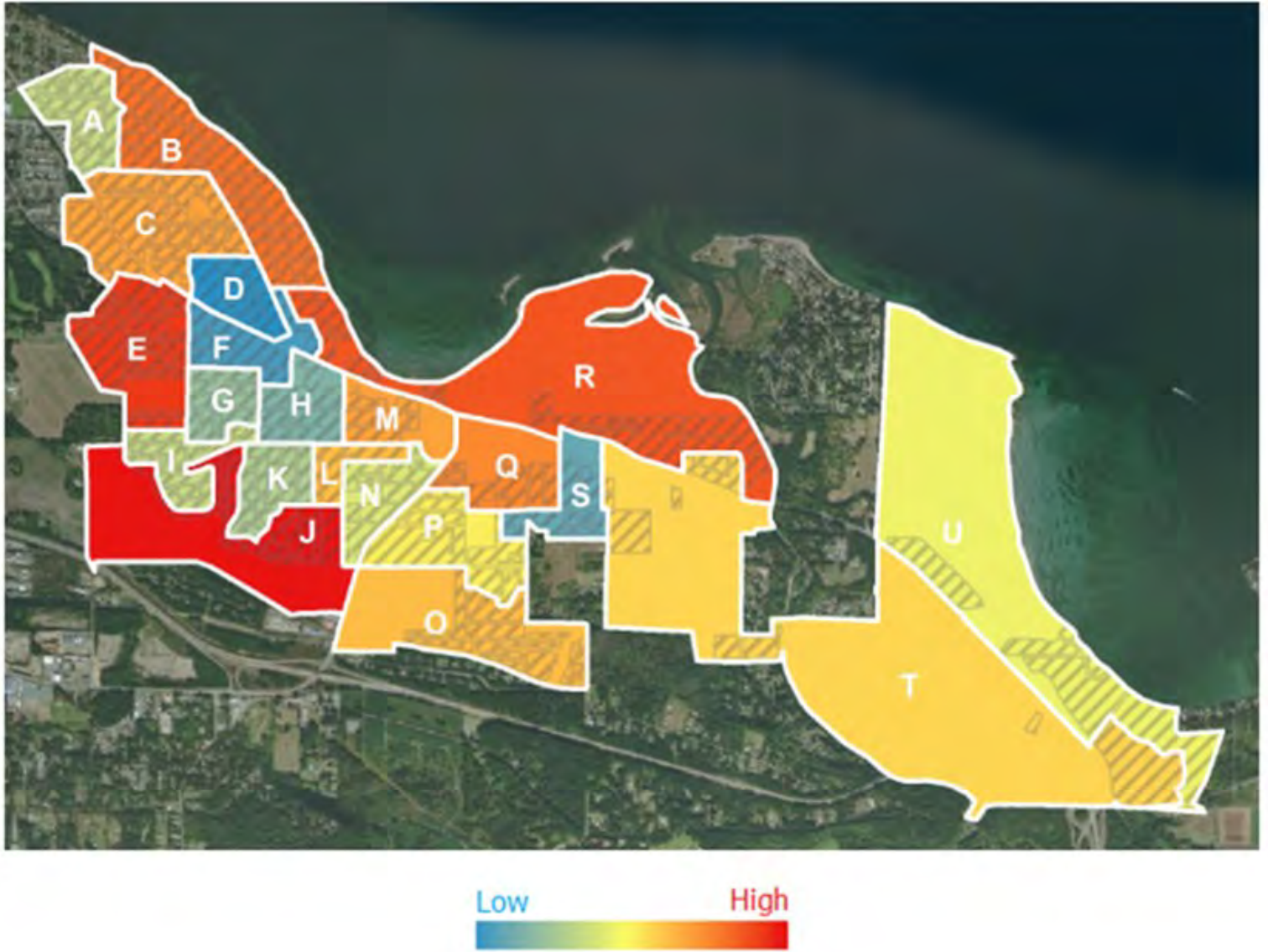


Figure 3: Parkville's census tracts.

BENEFITS OF PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES



BENEFITS OF PARKS, TRAILS AND OPEN SPACES

There is a significant body of research showing the benefits associated with parks, trails and open spaces, which reinforce the importance of these amenities to the Parksville community.

OVERVIEW

Parks, trails and open spaces play a key role in a community's development.

Park systems perform at their best when they suit the needs of their community members. Parks can be designed for both individual and group use, providing many functions to a community. Communities can gain many benefits from well-utilized parks such as improved physical and mental health among residents, environmental sustainability, and economic success (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015). These highlighted benefits of park systems are supported by a wide array of literature, but also by the opinions of Canadians. Most Canadians feel that parks - and the recreation provided by the parks - are an essential service to their communities (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015). These feelings are reflected in the Parksville community as well, with 78% of online survey respondents placing a high value on the Parksville parks system.

“There’s nothing quite like a good trail. Trails can connect areas of the City without the need for massive infrastructure like a road. They’re also much more interesting, refreshing and fun. They add ambiance and are interesting... It’s nice to be able to get somewhere or just enjoy an interesting localized network.”

- Community Respondent



OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY A PARKS AND TRAILS NETWORK

There are many studies that indicate a public park and trails can create positive outcomes for a community (Alberta Recreation & Parks Association, 2016). In a well-integrated park system, parks will provide access to nature, recreation spaces and activities for active and passive uses, sports, arts, culture, and offer an opportunity for active transportation. Increasing accessibility for the community to parks and trails can result in positive outcomes as outlined in this section.

BENEFITS





ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

There is a direct link between a well-developed parks and trails network and active transportation. Studies show adults residing in neighbourhoods with more parks and open spaces are more likely to walk to these local amenities (Devlin, Frank, & vanLoon, 2009). Increased walking provides benefits relating to reduced stress and anxiety, as well as improved sleep and mood (BC Recreation and Park Association, 2009). Active transportation also helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and can factor into fewer automobile accidents as there are reduced vehicular and foot traffic on roads when pedestrians and wheeled users move to an integrated, separated parks and trails network (Weinstein et al, 2015). Additionally, safe routes to schools also assist with increasing active transportation and the reduction of pedestrian related injuries (Weinstein et al, 2015). Interconnected street layouts and the proximity of green spaces that offer travel options to residents are a key component in active transportation (Theilman, Rosella, Cope, Lebenbaum, & Manson, 2015).



HEALTHY YOUTH

Parks are particularly beneficial to youth as they offer an opportunity for organized sports, cost-free play, and interaction with nature. Studies show that access to these opportunities helps develop imagination, promotes physical activity, and encourages positive mental health in youth (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015). Additionally, parks that provide activities for teenagers can increase their engagement in recreation. Recreation activities for teenagers has been linked to an increased self-esteem while reducing boredom, which can be linked to undesirable behaviour and activities (BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2009).



ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Parks, open spaces and natural areas play a key role in the protection, enhancement, and management of ecosystems, conservation, ecosystem services, and supporting biodiversity (BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2009). Protecting natural habitats and landscapes benefits communities as it connects humans to nature, provides habitat for wildlife (and opportunities for wildlife viewing), contributes to clean air, and helps to protect water resources. Parks and trails also add to opportunities to build interest and educate residents about the natural environment (BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2009).





INCREASE SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital refers to a community's shared sense of identity, values, trust, and cooperation. Parks, trails and open spaces are enjoyed by all members of a community, along with visitors, and provide a positive space for individuals or groups **to meet and interact.** **Activities within parks, such as Parksville's annual Beach Festival Society sand sculpting competition and exhibition, Canada Day celebrations, and community fireworks draw people in the community together (Weinstein et al., 2015).** This assists connecting people of different cultures, socio-economic classes, ages, and identities through recreation (BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2009). The result is increased social capital and community pride.



HEALTHY AGING FOR SENIORS

Parks and trails offer a place for seniors to engage in a range of uses from passive enjoyment of nature spaces to highly active sporting activities. Having accessible **parks and trails increases a community's capacity to serve older adults and add to the overall health of the community (BC Recreation and Parks Association, 2009).** Increased physical activity contributes to healthy seniors and encourages sustained physical literacy, which helps to prevent falls and injuries (BC Recreation and Parks Association, n.d.). In addition, seniors who do not have the financial means to participate in community activities can engage in the many free activities **programmed for Parksville's parks and trails (BC Recreation and Parks Association, n.d.).** Therefore, parks provide an affordable place to hang out allowing for a gathering place, which can reduce social isolation. For these reasons, park access is a vital component of supporting healthy aging.



ECONOMIC GAINS

Parks have a strong impact on the regional economy of an area. Parksville is well-known in BC and beyond for its incredible setting and parks system. This draws tourism to the City and the economic impact of this sector is well documented (Devlin et al., 2009).

Beyond direct economic spin-offs, parks increase physical fitness, and in turn reduces costs associated with poor physical health and obesity (Colman & Walker, 2004). Statistics from Colman and Walker (2004) indicate that the BC health care system spends \$573 million annually on obesity related illnesses and if another 10% of British Columbians were active, nearly \$50 million could be saved.

Parks and trails add to the amenity base of a community, which contributes to higher property values, increased community desirability, and greater attraction to new residents seeking the benefits of a west coast lifestyle (The Trust for Public Land, 2017).



PUBLIC SAFETY

A common perception is that parks and trails are places which tend to attract crime and other negative behaviours; however, studies have shown the opposite is true. Surroundings that engage residents in proximity to vegetation, nature, and activities tend to have lower crime rates. High rates of positive usage of these areas creates **“eyes on the street” lowering the potential for negative activities as the users create positive environments and social cohesion in the parks and trails spaces.**



VALUE OF NATURE

Less Canadians are experiencing nature, (Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, 2015) however environmental consciousness and desire to be in nature has never been higher. Canadians want to protect and connect to the environment more than ever before. Parks serve as a space to protect nature in addition to offering opportunities to connect with nature.





DIVERSITY

New Canadians coming from around the world see Parksville as an attractive destination and place to start a new life. New Canadians bring diverse cultures and ideas to communities, which can be economically and socially beneficial (Dubinski, 2018). Unfortunately, new Canadians can suffer from social isolation (Dubinski, 2018). Parks provide a space for recreation and connections in the community. Parks are a place that allows for expression of culture and community.



POLLINATORS

Pollinators form one of the most crucial components of the ecosystem, supplying **residents with both food and flowers, as well as contributing to the community's** biodiversity (Xerces Society, 2018-b; Tommasi, Miro, Higo, & Winston, 2004). There are 450 native bee species in British Columbia and 2,285 species of moths and butterflies (Habitat Acquisition Trust, 2018; Cannings & Scudder, 2007).

Unfortunately, pollinators, including bees, are seeing global declines in both numbers and species (Climate Institute, 2018). One of the largest contributing factors to this decline is loss of habitat, as pollinators seek to build homes in meadows and grassy areas, ideal places to build human cities (Hostetler & McIntyre, 2001). Sub species such as Western Bumblebees, once common, are now considered threatened due to a combination of habitat loss as well as pathogens passed on to native bee species through their farmed cousins (Xerces Society, 2018-a).

Efforts made by private gardeners to cultivate native plant species and pollinator specific flower mixes are crucial for supplying these creatures with food but cities play a role in maintaining and enhancing spaces for these species, especially the majority of native bees which are both ground dwelling and solitary and therefore are especially vulnerable to city encroachment (City of Toronto, 2018; Tommasi et al., 2004).

Within each park, regardless of size, there is space for pollinators. These creatures, having thrived on Vancouver Island for millennia, do not necessarily need specific pollinator gardens but can carve out spaces within parks and open spaces alongside humans. Parks create unique opportunities for pollinator spaces as well as human enjoyment of these beautiful creatures and their ecosystems.



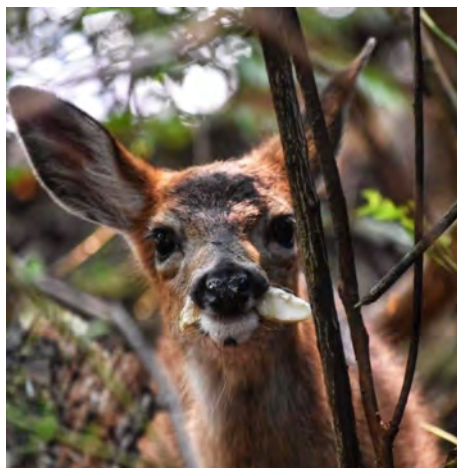


BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION

Parksville's parks, trails and open spaces have the potential to promote greater biodiversity and conservation. An interconnected system of pocket parks, neighbourhood parks, principal parks, natural resource areas, open spaces, trails, regional parks, and recreation opportunities distributed equitably throughout the City and connected to the greater region may work towards achieving this. Increasing the **size and quality of Parksville's natural areas and expanding wildlife habitat are foundational for ecological health.**

Biodiversity encompasses all living species on Earth and their relationships to each other (Biodivcanada, 2018). Having many different genes, species, and ecosystems interact with each other allows nature to recover from change (Biodivcanada, 2018). This includes all marine and terrestrial ecosystems within the City of Parksville. This plan recognizes the importance of native ecosystems and species and the value of **Parksville's urban habitats in supporting biodiversity.**

Urban biodiversity depends on maintaining a network of connected natural areas with larger nodes such as the Parksville Community Park, Top Bridge and the Englishman **River corridor, and Parksville Wetlands. Parksville's system of parks, trails and open spaces create an ecological network, which can function as a connected system and represents potential for enhanced biodiversity.**



Images Courtesy of Samuel Bowen