

2025 BUDGET

Parks Division



Our role

Net budget \$13,230,200

Safe and enjoyable park spaces contribute to the health and well being of our community. The Parks Division stewards Healthy Nature through planning, designing, constructing, managing, programming and maintaining the District's 172 parks. These parks range from neighbourhood and multi-sport athletic parks to natural areas and open spaces that cover more than 825 hectares with over 100 kilometres of trails.

Parks work is environmental stewardship and protection, which is integrated into the Division's work, whether providing outdoor sports facilities using best-of-class environmental practices or providing trail or nature restoration opportunities. Biodiversity does not recognize fence lines, so caring for and protecting nature on private lands is as important on public lands. The lands are biologically diverse, offering residents a spectrum of active living experiences and opportunities to connect with nature.

Services we provide

PARKS ADMINISTRATION

Net cost \$1,128,000

Administration is the nerve centre of the Division providing support to residents, parks staff, external staff, and the community. The section manages a small group of front-line staff, processes about 5,000 calls for service, 800 permits for park activities, and over 900 tree removal permits annually, and carries out all administrative functions from invoice processing through to payroll.

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URBAN FORESTRY

Net cost \$1,885,000

The urban forest is a major component of the District's green infrastructure and natural areas, supporting biodiversity, clean air and water, and improving the quality and livability of urban neighbourhoods. The Urban Forestry team aims to protect and enhance the urban forest on public lands, while providing a safe environment for the public and staff.

Core service areas include:

- Community safety and requests for service: provision of adverse storm and weather event response and hazard tree mitigation services. Staff respond to about 2,000 requests for service by the community annually.
- Tree planting: planting on property frontages, boulevards, streets, and in open area parks.
- Tree care: services to ensure long-term health with over 1,000 trees pruned and maintained each year.

NATURAL AREAS AND COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP

Net cost \$1,400,600

Natural areas cover about 65% of Saanich parks. These natural areas provide unique ecological characteristics and are home to many rare and threatened species. Saanich's Natural Area team protects and enhances these ecosystems for current and future generations.

Service areas include:

- Tree planting, watering, and care: the maintenance and establishment of newly planted trees in natural area parks.
- Community safety: hazard tree assessment and mitigation, and trail improvements and maintenance throughout natural areas.
- Biodiversity protection and enhancement: invasive species management and restoration of natural systems, including riparian zones, creeks and waterways, and terrestrial areas in natural area parks.
- Community stewardship: Parks provides staff support for 234 registered Pulling Together volunteers (plus hundreds of drop-in volunteers) who gave over 16,000 hours in 2024 to biodiversity enhancement and ecological restoration across 45 District parks and natural areas.

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- Park Ambassadors, Our Backyard and Naturescaping are also components of Community Stewardship along with projects related to supporting property owners with stewardship of their land.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN REVIEWING DEVELOPMENTS

Net cost \$1,532,900

Saanich Parks reviews development proposals to ensure compliance with the Urban Forest Strategy, the Tree Protection Bylaw and the Streamside Development Permit Area guidelines. Parks staff also administer and enforce the Tree Protection Bylaw and ensure that residents abide by the terms of their Natural State and Tree Covenants registered on title of their private property.

The development review team provides expertise to other Departments to ensure that other Parks-related interests and assets are considered when developments are proposed so that impacts to the parks system are considered and addressed. The section assists Saanich residents to inform them of their rights and responsibilities in managing trees on their private property. This work unit is also responsible for assessing and mapping prioritised trees with the goal of providing transparent information to residents about how trees are managed and protected in Saanich.

Parks works directly with more than 45 sport and community user groups to support their programs, community driven projects, and provincial and national tournaments. Parks continues to work with our established user groups to provide fair and equitable access to high quality fields and playing surfaces across the District. Our community development activities leverage grants, in-kind donations, and volunteer efforts to supplement taxpayer-funded capital projects to invest in new facilities and upgrades to existing facilities.

PARK OPERATIONS

Net cost \$5,610,600

Parks Operations comprises the Maintenance and Horticulture sections. These large units carry out a broad spectrum of work to ensure that parks are safe and enjoyable. The services provided include:

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- Horticulture displays: including display gardens at various parks, recreation centres, Municipal Hall, streetscapes and over 475 cul-de-sac gardens.
- Irrigation: for sports fields, horticulture displays and many drip systems to irrigate new public trees.
- Parks washrooms and refuse: visitors rely on these services for their enjoyment of Saanich parks. This function also includes cleaning up after illegal dumping and instances of illegal overnight sheltering.
- Turf maintenance: for sports and casual enjoyment. Maintenance is carried out using integrated pest management practices. Over 45 sports clubs use sports fields.
- Parks roads and parking lots: maintained year-round to provide safe surfaces.
- Parks shop: responsible for maintaining hundreds of pieces of small equipment used by field staff, along with larger equipment such as mowers, excavators, and chippers.

PARKS PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION

Net cost \$ 1,673,100

The Parks Planning/Design and Construction teams are responsible for all aspects of planning and designing the park system, including strategy development, park asset management, and new project design and implementation.

Park assets that the groups manage include:

- 56 playgrounds
- 2 water parks
- 50 courts (tennis, pickleball, and sports courts)
- 1 skate park
- 2 bike skills parks
- 81 park buildings (including park washrooms)
- 97 footbridges
- 124 km of trails
- 72 parking lots
- 56 sports fields
- 37 beach accesses
- 3 community gardens
- 3 lawn bowling greens

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- 2 lacrosse boxes
- 1 horseshoe club

Service areas include:

- Designing, developing, and maintaining playgrounds to ensure they are fun and attractive, in safe working conditions, and include accessibility features.
- Constructing and maintaining sports courts to ensure they are in optimal condition for members of our community to enjoy active recreation.
- Procuring and maintaining park buildings, bridges, furniture, and amenities that improve the function, comfort, safety, and enjoyment of parks.
- Developing and maintaining park trails improve visitor experience and public safety and helps to protect the natural environment.
- Planning and designing park projects to enhance and add recreation opportunities/facilities, reduce user conflict, and provide additional amenities for our growing community. Upgrading and installing washroom facilities to ensure the provision of an important service to our residents, allowing visitors to enjoy our parks for longer periods of time.
- Designing and installing signage, for identification, education, wayfinding or for the posting of regulations, contributes to a strong sense of community, an appreciation for our parks, and improves communications/park safety.
- Developing varied strategies and park-specific plans based on community engagement, science, and best practices to ensure a welcoming, environmentally responsible, and cost-effective approach to park development.