



Draft Outdoor Sports Field Strategy Discussion Guide

Fall 2025



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What is the Outdoor Sports Field Strategy?

The District of Saanich is developing an Outdoor Sports Field Strategy to guide the future planning, management, and investment in outdoor sports fields, including baseball and softball diamonds, rectangular grass fields, artificial turf fields, and lacrosse boxes over the next 10 years and beyond.

This strategy is an important objective of the Council Strategic Plan and aims to ensure the needs of the growing community are met, focusing on active living and community sport. The Strategy includes an assessment of the current state, determining needs and values, establishing a vision and principles, and making recommendations for the planning, management, and maintenance of these important community assets.

Why is it needed?

Saanich continues to grow, and pressures on parks and sports fields are growing, too. There are 60 sports fields and more than 50 different sport groups and field users, each with their own needs and organizational capacity. With a system this complex, the way the District plans and manages sports fields and lacrosse boxes needs to be updated to make sure opportunities for sport continue to be available for everyone and that investments are prioritized.

Project Timeline



The Strategy Process

The Strategy pulls together information from several key areas, including:

- A review of Saanich's existing plans and policies;
- A review of the sports fields and lacrosse boxes including a condition assessment and asset management review in collaboration with staff;
- Benchmarking comparison of the inventory to other communities of similar size and context;
- An assessment of Saanich's service delivery overall compared to best practices for municipalities, and
- Engagement with sports user groups and partners to better understand what's working well and what needs improvement.

Objectives

The Strategy will guide the way Saanich plans, manages, and maintains outdoor sports fields over the next 10 years and beyond. It will set the stage for improved process and partnerships, as well as prioritized investment in the sports fields and lacrosse boxes. The Strategy will be implemented over time and with ongoing collaboration with sports field users.



Sports Field Inventory

Saanich's inventory of sports fields and lacrosse boxes includes 60 sports fields, with some overlapping. There are also 2 lacrosse boxes, and lacrosse clubs also use indoor dryfloor space in Saanich arenas.



Ball Diamonds

Total Inventory: **35**

Relative Supply: **Above Average**

Condition Assessment

Very Good / Good - **57%**

Fair - **37%**

Poor - **6%**



Rectangular Grass Fields

Total Inventory: **19**

Relative Supply: **Below Average**

Condition Assessment

Good - **63%**

Fair - **57%**

Poor - **0%**



Artificial Turf Fields

Total Inventory: **5**

Relative Supply: **Average**





Mini Artificial Turf Fields

Total Inventory: 1



Lacrosse Boxes

Total Inventory: 2

Relative Supply: **Average**

Condition Assessment

Good - **2 of 2**



Relative Supply Comparison groups: 1) Victoria, Delta, Abbotsford, Burnaby and 2) CRD communities; current and 2040 population



Service Delivery

How are sports fields and lacrosse boxes currently planned, managed, and maintained?

Saanich Parks is responsible for the overall planning, management, and maintenance of sports fields as community assets, along with substantial contributions from user groups and partners to the inventory of facilities that the community enjoys today. Community sport organizations take the lead on programs, leagues, tournaments, and other sport opportunities like summer camps.

Home User Group Model

Saanich uses a unique model, called the Home User Group Model, to help manage the use of outdoor sports fields and lacrosse boxes. In this system, long-standing non-profit sports groups are connected to specific “home” parks and are called Home User Groups (HUGs). HUGs have spent many years (often decades!) giving back to their home parks by fundraising for field and facility improvements, running programs and leagues, helping with maintenance, and planning field schedules. In return, HUGs have priority use of sports fields and, in most cases, do not pay fees for field use.

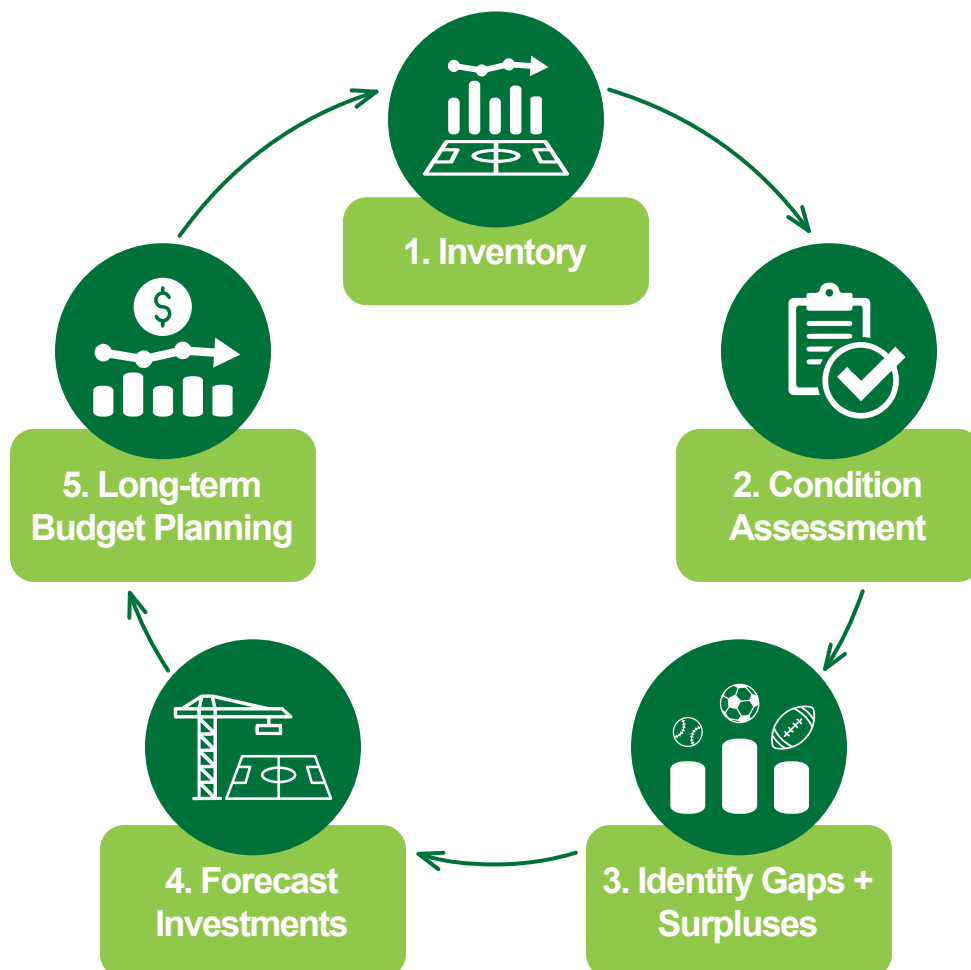
Home User Groups (HUGs) have been instrumental in the initial development of sports fields and associated infrastructure, and many still contribute to maintenance. Many HUGs continue to fundraise for specific field and facility improvements to serve the needs of their organization and support their membership.

Due to factors such as reduced volunteer capacity, cost of construction and maintenance, and aging sports field infrastructure, Saanich Parks has increasingly assumed maintenance responsibilities for sports fields and supporting amenities originally developed by HUGs. The goal moving forward is to make sure that sports fields continue to provide the right levels of service for the right types of play and are safe and available for community use.

Asset Management

The District is currently developing an Asset Management Strategy, including an inventory and condition assessment of all sports field assets, as well as the expected replacement timelines and costs. This will help the District plan and prioritize field maintenance and upgrades in the long term.

The Outdoor Sports Fields Strategy is focused on the inventory, condition assessment, and identification of gaps and surpluses in the supply of sports fields and lacrosse boxes. It will also help inform future investments and long-term budget planning. As the Strategy is implemented, Saanich will continue to gather better information on sports field use and needs, tracking changes over time and keeping its inventory up to date.



Best Practices and Challenges

Sports Field Classification

A classification system provides clarity on the types of sports fields and ensures consistent quality across the system. It provides a guiding framework for the type of play, recommended maintenance levels, maximum recommended hours of play, and suggested amenities.

Current Challenges

- Existing classification system lacks information necessary to guide management decisions.
- Maintenance levels aren't consistent across the system or aligned with field classifications.
- Field type and quality may not be aligned with the needs of field users.

Allocation Policy

Centralized allocation policies are best practice in managing large field systems with a wide variety of sports activities and changing demand. The goal is to ensure fields are being used efficiently while balancing different levels of play, improving equity in sport, and promoting field maintenance best practices.

Current Challenges

- Existing policy does not collect field use data, making it difficult to know if fields are being assigned efficiently and equitably.
- It is often challenging for new and non-HUGs sports groups to find space.

Fees and Charges Policy

A fees and charges policy establishes a clear, consistent, and transparent fees and charges structure based on type of use, quantity of use, and the field classification. A good fees and charges policy aligns with the sports field classification and allocation policy, helping to improve data, manage demand, and contribute to funding for maintenance and renewals.

Current Challenges

- Fees don't align with field classifications or types of use.
- The roles, responsibilities, and cost sharing practices between Saanich and HUGs need better clarity.
- There is a need to establish sustainable funding to ensure sports fields are kept in good condition.

Engagement So Far

Sports user groups, organizations, and partners were asked to participate in the first round of engagement to voice their thoughts and needs regarding outdoor sports fields and lacrosse boxes. These organizations were also invited to a project update presentation and Q+A in July and August 2025.

What We Heard: Engagement Round 1



There is huge enthusiasm for sport in the community! Most groups report participation increasing or holding steady.



There are a variety of arrangements outlining responsibilities of Saanich and Home User Groups in allocating and maintaining home fields.



There have been substantial contributions of time, money, energy, and enthusiasm from user groups in the past and ongoing.



Many user groups do not have a clear understanding of the Home User Group Model, arrangements, partnerships, roles, and responsibilities.



User groups have differing needs and organizational capacities; many are over-stretched and dealing with burn-out.



Trends and needs are evolving. There are new activities, demand driven by shifting participation trends and community growth, and growing interest in casual uses.

Draft Vision and Principles

A draft vision and principles draws on the District's strategic plans and the results from the first round of engagement with staff and user groups. These statements provide the basis for the recommendations and will help guide decision-making over the long-term.

VISION

Saanich Parks provides facilities, ranging from informal playing fields to high-end competition field complexes, to help foster a sense of belonging, community health, and sports development. The District's outdoor sports fields and lacrosse boxes are inclusive for everyone, including players, coaches, spectators, and other users.

Principles

The following principles will help shape decision-making for sports field and lacrosse box service delivery.

1. Saanich's inventory and allocation of sports fields and lacrosse boxes reflect community needs and consider sports facilities within the context of the wide range of demands on the park system.
2. Sports fields, lacrosse boxes and supporting amenities consider accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion to create a welcoming environment for all sports users and spectators.
3. Sports field and lacrosse box infrastructure and allocations align with the principles of the Sport for Life Long-Term Athlete Development Framework .
4. The roles and responsibilities of Saanich, user groups, and other partners are transparent, well understood, and clearly defined.
5. Sports field and lacrosse box maintenance and capital investments are guided by clearly defined levels of service and align with the District's Asset Management Strategy.
6. Sports field and lacrosse box allocation and booking policies are transparent and aim to use parkland efficiently for the greatest public benefit.
7. The financial management of the District's sports field infrastructure demonstrates accountability to all District of Saanich residents and helps support the local economy.

Draft Recommendations

Guided by the vision and principles, the recommendations describe actions to help achieve the vision and guide the management of Saanich's sports fields and lacrosse boxes over the next 10 years. The recommendations fall under six topics: Service Delivery, Maintenance and Operations; Field Allocation and Fees; Partnerships; Supporting Community Use; and Field Upgrade Plans, Studies & Capital Projects.

All the recommendations are listed below with some key recommendations featuring additional supporting information and explanation. A full description of each recommendation can be found in the Draft Outdoor Sports Field Strategy.

SERVICE DELIVERY

1. Transition from the existing Home User Groups Model to a new, collaborative model for sports fields management.

The Collaborative Governance Model (CGM) is a model for sports field and lacrosse box management typically used by municipalities. In this model, the municipality assumes responsibility for the management, allocation, permitting, and maintenance of sports fields, lacrosse boxes, and all related infrastructure, working collaboratively with local sports groups and other partners such as school districts to deliver the services through agreements. The CGM represents a positive and progressive evolution for the management of Saanich's sports fields and lacrosse boxes. By adopting this model, the District will foster a more equitable and transparent framework for all sports user groups, guided by the clear direction and decision-making principles outlined in the Saanich Outdoor Sports Field vision.

2. Transition to a cost-sharing model for sports fields and lacrosse box assets in collaboration with the HUGs in a phased timeline.

Saanich currently has a variety of arrangements with HUGs that have varied over time and lack clarity and consistency. A cost-sharing model will clarify and standardize how field improvements are funded. Commonly, the municipality and the relevant sporting group share investment in sports field infrastructure, with the municipality retaining overall responsibility for these community assets, from procurement to management. The sporting groups, in turn, generally receives priority access to the facilities, often in exchange for fundraising contributions.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS

3. Implement a sports field classification system.

Field classifications are an important tool for effective and efficient sports field management. By categorizing fields based on factors such as surface type, intended use, level of service, and available amenities, a classification system enables informed decision-making for field allocation, maintenance and investment. This helps ensure that sports fields are used appropriately and maintenance resources are allocated effectively, while managing field user expectations.

Other supporting recommendations include:

- 4. Maintain and regularly update the sports field and lacrosse box asset inventory and costing to guide maintenance and renewal planning for fields, lacrosse boxes and associated infrastructure and amenities.**
- 5. Establish and document levels of maintenance and responsibilities between District staff and sport user groups that are tied to field classifications.**
- 6. Work with user groups to conduct a condition assessment of artificial turf fields and lighting and to clarify ongoing maintenance and management responsibilities.**



FIELD ALLOCATION AND FEES

- 7. Establish an allocation and booking policy for sports fields and lacrosse boxes. Develop a framework and a timeline with the sports user groups for implementing the allocation policy.**

An improved and centralized allocation and booking system is needed to ensure opportunities for all user groups to use Saanich fields and lacrosse boxes; to help Saanich better understand demand; and to help balance the use of fields across the system. The allocation policy should include clear goals and principles to guide allocation processes. Field allocation practices should be transparent and easily communicable to the public. Updates to the allocation and booking policy and process should be done in consultation with user groups, with a phased approach.

- 11. Update and clarify the fee framework for sports field and lacrosse box usage based on equity, cost recovery, and best practices. Update the Fees and Charges Bylaw as needed.**

An updated approach to the fees framework is needed to support sustainable funding for sports fields maintenance and upgrades. An updated fees framework will also ensure accurate collection of field and lacrosse box use data and improved equity and transparency. Updates to the fees framework should be done in consultation with user groups and the community, with a phased approach to implementation.

Other supporting recommendation:

- 12. Update the tournament permit process and develop a Tournament Policy.**



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships play a crucial role in the sustainable delivery of sports fields and lacrosse boxes within Saanich, as the costs to provide sports fields, lacrosse boxes, and the related infrastructure are expensive in terms of both capital investment and ongoing maintenance. Partnerships are also critical in delivering sports programming for the community using these assets.

Recommendations for partnerships include:

- 10. Host regular roundtable meetings with sport user groups to facilitate communications and planning for outdoor sports facilities.**
- 11. Update the Joint Use Agreements with the School Districts.**
- 12. Continue to host regular meetings with the two School Districts to collaborate on issues of field maintenance, scheduling, capital improvements, and other opportunities related to sports fields.**
- 13. Consider spearheading the formalization of a Capital Region inter-municipal outdoor sports field working group.**

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY USE

Best practices in recreation indicate that municipalities should ensure adequate outdoor spaces for unstructured sports, “pick-up”, and other unsupervised, spontaneous play.

Recommendations for supporting community use include:

- 14. Include a field classification for informal community fields and list them on the Saanich Parks website.**
- 15. Consider developing tools and/or methods to let the public know when bookable fields are available for informal use.**
- 16. For fields near recreation centres, consider providing community play equipment.**

FIELD UPGRADE PLANS, STUDIES & CAPITAL PROJECTS

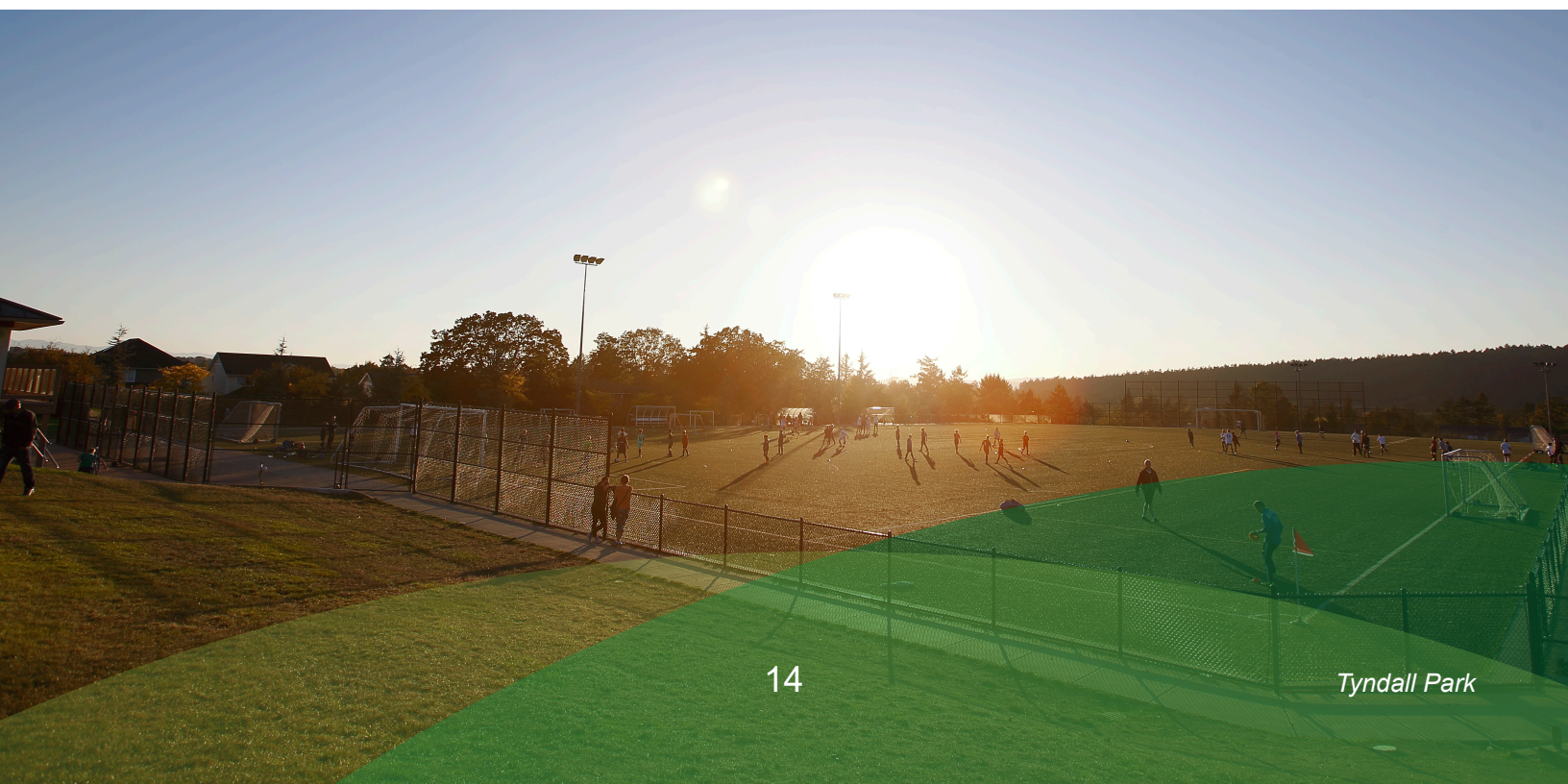
Fields of all classifications and supporting amenities (i.e. parking areas, washrooms, seating, concession stands, etc.) should incorporate universal design principles for field users and spectators. This includes new fields, multi-sport boxes, and supporting amenities, as well as retrofitting existing amenities to meet accessible standards.

17. Continue to invest in sports fields and lacrosse boxes through asset renewals.

Establish a plan for sustainable, phased investment in sports fields and lacrosse boxes. Investment priorities will be informed by the asset management strategy, as well as ongoing information on demand and field use. Asset renewal planning will continue to be updated regularly to make sure it meets community needs as they may change over time.

Other supporting recommendations include:

- 18. Conduct accessibility audits and continue improving sports fields and related amenities with inclusive amenities.**
- 19. Continue to review the sports field system's capacity to determine the need for additional fields in the future.**
- 20. Continue the current practice of not approving new lighting projects on natural grass fields. Work with user groups to develop management strategies for existing natural grass fields with lighting.**



Next Steps

What we hear from the community through the Virtual Open House and Online Questionnaire will be used to refine and finalize the Strategy. In particular, the community's priorities will help inform how the strategy is implemented over the next 10 years.

Have Your Say!



Virtual Open House

October 22, 2025 6:30-8pm
Online on Zoom

<https://saanichsportsfields.eventbrite.com>



Online Questionnaire

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-community/parks/projects-in-saanich-parks/active-projects/saanich-outdoor-sports-field-strategy.html>

Survey Opens: October 22, 2025
Survey Closes: November 22, 2025



Email Feedback

outdoorsportsfieldstrategy@saanich.ca

Project Timeline



Round 2 Engagement

Fall 2025



Final Draft Strategy + Implementation Plan

Fall 2025 to Winter 2026



Consideration by Council

Winter 2026



Final Outdoor Sports Field Strategy

Winter 2026



Implementation Process

Winter 2026 onward

