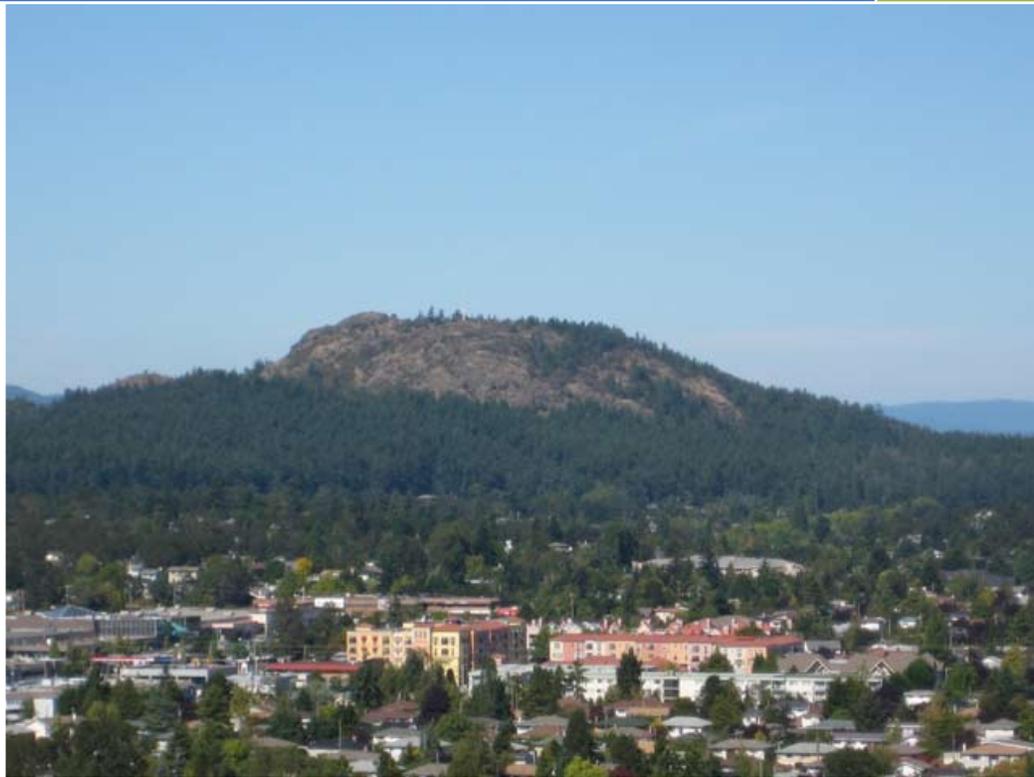


2010

Saanich Park Property Inventory



Saanich Parks and Recreation
Saanich, British Columbia
September 2010

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Residents in the District of Saanich have always placed a high value on parks, trails, and open spaces. The municipal parks system includes over 160 parks, an extensive trail network and many environments that are unique in the province. The system has evolved over the years from a collection of properties acquired through a variety of means – one that protects a municipal land asset with incredible social, environmental and economic value.

Purpose

The 2010 Saanich Park Property Inventory is background information to help the community shape park classification and priority assessment criteria during the 2011 parks and recreation master plan process.

Community feedback will set the course for future park acquisition and retention in the context of the Official Community Plan, Local Area Plans, Saanich Strategic Plan and Capital Regional District Regional Growth Strategy.

The resulting management tool, the 2011 Parks Priority Guide will include park priority acquisitions including land, capital and operating costs.

SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND

Park Planning

Parks planning staff is constantly challenged to devise means to ensure that the diverse network of park lands will continue to serve the District of Saanich adequately into the future – particularly to respond to changing conditions brought on by:

- more residential development
- additional population with a changing social and economic demographic order
- diverse outdoor recreation activities
- conservation needs to protect ecological systems, unique species and to guard from the affects of climate change
- resident needs for health and fitness to increase longevity
- community needs for energy alternatives and food production

Assessing park land priority is a fundamental process to achieve success. The first Park Priority Study was completed in the District in 1983. That document compared specific park land acquisition lists from each of the Local Area Plans to broader parks and open space needs assessed for the District. The study highlighted important opportunities for acquisition and was used as the basis for an impressive \$6.9 million parks acquisition referendum approved by the electorate in 1986. That funding initiative resulted in many successful land acquisitions over the following years, even though not all were developed as parks.

Following completion of a Parks & Recreation Master Plan in 1990, attention focused on finding the best ways to respond to changing park activity needs in the Municipality. An updated Park

Priority Study (1994) reflected ideas presented in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, including specific recommendations for additional park land acquisition standards, as well as a need for park land classification.

Land-Use Planning – the Saanich Official Community Plan

In 2008, Saanich Council addressed the pressures of rapid urban growth by approving several strategic land-use policies contained in the Official Community Plan (OCP). It provides a policy context for park land management and acquisition. Furthermore, it committed several sets of Performance Measures that are being used to track OCP implementation progress in Annual Reports to Saanich residents.

**Approved OCP directives pertaining to Saanich park land acquisition include:

- *Acquire & develop park land to ensure residents have a wide range of leisure opportunities, and to preserve significant ecosystems.*
- *Use a minimum standard of 5.0 ha of parkland per 1,000 people, excluding regional parks, while considering other significant factors affecting acquisition.*
- *Continue to create Development Cost Charges (DCC)... to recover a portion of the cost of... parks and trails acquisition.*
- *Acquire parkland through dedication at the time of rezoning or subdivision where... land is indicated... in a local area plan... adjacent to an existing park and will improve the configuration or function... the Park Priority Study indicates a high priority for acquisition...*
- *Work with private land owners to acquire... and encourage the donation or bequest of privately owned lands...*
- *Continue to support... CRD... regional park acquisitions...*

The Saanich OCP directs a minimum parks system standard of 5.0 hectares per 1000 residents. Given the 2008 population estimate of 113,529 the Saanich parks system should protect a minimum of 567 ha of open space. In actual fact, Saanich manages approximately 770 ha of open space park land¹ for the use and enjoyment of residents - 35% surplus to the “official” minimum standard. In addition, there are 885 ha of Regional Park and 354 ha of institutional lands with high open space, recreational and/or environmental values that supplement our system.

Parks Classification & System Standards

The classification system used in Saanich is typical of a hierarchy utilized by many municipalities. It is a 3-level system comprising of neighbourhood, community and municipal parks. These classes of parks have quantitative standards that have been defined in the OCP and Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

¹ Mount Douglas, Cedar Hill Golf Course, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary total 293 ha included in the calculation.

Within the District of Saanich, park classification categories are defined as follows:

Neighbourhood Parks

Serve residents in the small catchment zone of an elementary school, or each of the 12 local planning areas. Minimum optimal is size 1 - 2 ha, serving 2,000 to 4,000 residents. They focus on local recreational use and attract people from within walking distance of up to 500 - 800 m. Neighbourhood park development may include play equipment, hard court, pathways, open grass, and seating designed to provide play environments, unstructured open space and some play fields. These parks are meant to form the visual, physical and social focus of the neighbourhood. Some sites that have been acquired for future development may be called undeveloped neighbourhood parks. Elementary and Middle Schools can serve as neighbourhood parks and as such 50% of the land is included in the standard.

The OCP specifies 1.2 hectares Neighbourhood Park per 1000 population.

Community Parks

Serve the local area for neighbourhood park purposes but are intended to serve several neighbourhoods and often have the same catchment area as a Secondary or Middle School. Minimum optimal size vary from 5 - 20 ha with typical facilities that include high quality sports fields and/or ball diamonds, field-house /washroom buildings, playground(s), walkways or trails, special natural or horticultural features and parking lot(s). Community parks are a visual, physical and social focus for the community. They can attract users from 1-3 km away and may see users drive to the park. Secondary and Middle Schools can serve as community parks and as such 50% of the land is included in the standard.

“Park supply standards often include a maximum spacing of Neighbourhood and Community parks. One standard that has been utilized in other BC municipal park system plans is that “all residents have a Neighbourhood park within one half (0.5) kilometre (a slow 10 minute walk) from their home, and a Community park within one (1) kilometre (a slow 20 minute walk).”

The OCP specifies 1.4 hectares Community Park per 1000 population.

Municipal Parks

Serve the entire Municipality and typically large enough 20-200 ha to have the widest range of types of park uses. People may visit these parks due to the natural features or the facilities and opportunities offered. Municipal parks draw the general public who specifically travel to spend time “in the park”. Park features can be natural, such as beaches or important forests. They can also be built features, such as major walkways, trail systems, and large picnic areas.

The OCP specifies 2.4 hectares Municipal Park per 1000 population.

Regional and Other Public Open Spaces

Saanich is fortunate to be well served by Regional Parks operated by the CRD, as well as other Institutions/Agencies that lands are enjoyed by the community. These others include: University of Victoria, Camosun College, Vancouver Island Technology Park, Glendale Gardens and Woodlands, Royal Oak Burial Park, the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory and the Pacific Forest Research Centre. They are not formally included in the standards calculations but they provide park and open space opportunities to be considered in the quantitative provision of parks.

These quantitative standards are not considered as absolute rather they should serve as a guide to provision of parks. Interests such as the protection of natural or environmental sensitive areas factor into the acquisition of park land. The qualitative type of park may also impact the provision. These other factors need to be considered even if the quantitative standard is exceeded.

Parks Qualitative Types

In addition to the quantitative standards parks and open space can be further defined based on their intended use or purpose. These purposes can be described as a park type.

Saanich's park types include:

Natural: A natural park is dedicated to the preservation and protection of indigenous wilderness while allowing access for the enjoyment of the natural conditions without appreciably detracting from them.

The natural conditions include the flora, fauna, view, topographical, and historical features. Development must be carried out in a sensitive manner and is normally restricted to elements that cause minimum disturbance of the eco-system while allowing for access to appreciate the area's natural attributes.

The following elements may be considered for development: trails and bridge system, interpretive elements, viewpoints, signs, benches and individual picnic sites, parking and road access and service structures

Structured Athletic: These open spaces are designed for relatively formalized activities and include sport fields, tennis courts, and other amenities where the type of activity is largely determined by the type of facilities provided.

Unstructured/Recreational: These open spaces have been planned and developed to provide for the relatively unstructured, spontaneous use by all age groups. Elements commonly include open turf areas, play environments, picnic and seating areas, less formal play fields, and flower gardens. Use of the areas is left largely up to the participant and activity can range from very active play to contemplative activities.

Special Purpose/Horticultural: These open spaces refer to areas that have been devoted to a special purpose such as a leisure centre, major lookout, boulevard, or significant horticultural feature.

Nature Sanctuary: These are land or water areas that are set aside for the preservation of plant and animal life and that have special biological, physical, cultural, scientific, or educational value. These lands may be under the direction of a separate authority and are zoned P-5, Conservation Zone.

A critical concept is that open spaces need not fall within one qualitative category. In fact, many parks are a combination of structured and unstructured, with natural attributes preserved when they exist and are a combination of structured and unstructured, with natural attributes preserved when they exist and are appropriate to retain. The largest Municipal park, Mount Douglas, is primarily natural, but also contains some areas that focus on unstructured uses. This is not to say that a Neighbourhood, Community, or Municipal park cannot primarily, or even exclusively, focus on one function, but that many parks combine these elements.

SECTION 3 – CURRENT PARK INVENTORY

The current inventory is listed by Local Area Plan and park classification. We have also included the Schools, as 50% of the grounds are considered in the provision of park land. Regional and Institutional park land is also listed for an understanding of the complete open space provision.

Current Park Inventory by Park Type – by Local Area Plan

Table 1 – Existing Park Inventory by Park Class for each Local Area Plan – August 2010		
Blenkinsop Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 1,255 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	1.8260
	Community Parkland	3.7767
	Municipal Parkland	39.3606
	School District Property Open Space	2.1550
	Total Parkland in Blenkinsop LAP	47.1183
	CRD Regional Parks	Nil
	Institutional Lands	Nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in Blenkinsop LAP	47.1183
Cadboro Bay Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 3,785 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	17.5000
	Community Parkland	6.0205
	Municipal Parkland	nil
	School District Property Open Space	2.3600
	Total Parkland in Cadboro Bay LAP	25.8805
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in Cadboro Bay LAP	25.8805

Carey Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 16,745 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	28.2974
	Community Parkland	25.0809
	Municipal Parkland	43.3013
	School District Property Open Space	14.7341
	Total Parkland in Carey LAP	111.4137
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in Carey LAP	111.4137
Cordova Bay Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 7,690 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	24.3352
	Community Parkland	5.8926
	Municipal Parkland	nil
	School District Property Open Space	4.3592
	Total Parkland in Cordova Bay LAP	34.5870
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in Cordova Bay LAP	34.5870
Gordon Head Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 21,005 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	21.1848
	Community Parkland	20.2616
	Municipal Parkland	150.3650
	School District Property Open Space	12.0947
	Total Parkland in Gordon Head LAP	203.9061
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	137.9956
	Total Parks & Open Space in Gordon Head LAP	341.9017
North Quadra Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 7,600 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	7.7575
	Community Parkland	9.0065
	Municipal Parkland	14.4148
	School District Property Open Space	3.8702
	Total Parkland in North Quadra LAP	31.1788
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in North Quadra LAP	31.1788

Quadra Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 10,660 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	9.0084
	Community Parkland	9.5692
	Municipal Parkland	100.5880
	School District Property Open Space	7.2370
	Total Parkland in Quadra LAP	126.4026
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
Total Parks & Open Space in Quadra LAP	126.4026	
Royal Oak Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 8,045 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	28.4076
	Community Parkland	5.4448
	Municipal Parkland	44.4076
	School District Property Open Space	4.1650
	Total Parkland in Royal Oak LAP	82.4250
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	56.2781
Total Parks & Open Space in Royal Oak LAP	138.7031	
Rural Saanich Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 4,940 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	21.8870
	Community Parkland	49.1192
	Municipal Parkland	20.0705
	School District Property Open Space	1.2950
	Total Parkland in Rural Saanich LAP	92.3717
	CRD Regional Parks	885.6609
	Institutional Lands	151.5118
Total Parks & Open Space in Rural Saanich LAP	1129.5444	
Saanich Core Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 5,115 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	3.5875
	Community Parkland	nil
	Municipal Parkland	nil
	School District Property Open Space	0.9100
	Total Parkland in Saanich Core LAP	4.4975
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
Total Parks & Open Space in Saanich Core LAP	4.4975	

Shelbourne Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 11,765 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	5.7110
	Community Parkland	nil
	Municipal Parkland	18.5364
	School District Property Open Space	9.0428
	Total Parkland in Shelbourne LAP	33.2902
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	8.2656
	Total Parks & Open Space in Shelbourne LAP	41.5558
Tillicum Local Area	Class of Park and Open Space	Size (Hectares)
Population: 9,660 (2006 Census)	Neighbourhood Parkland	3.1063
	Community Parkland	10.6239
	Municipal Parkland	29.6053
	School District Property Open Space	1.7414
	Total Parkland in Tillicum LAP	45.0769
	CRD Regional Parks	nil
	Institutional Lands	nil
	Total Parks & Open Space in Tillicum LAP	45.0769
Total Neighbourhood Parkland		172.6087
Total Community Parkland		144.7959
Total Municipal Parkland		460.6495
Total Saanich Owned Parkland		778.0541
Total Capital Regional District Parks		885.6609
Total Institutional Lands		354.0511
Total School District Property		65.6094
Total Parks & Open Space in All Local Area Plans		2,083.3755

SECTION 4 – PARK PRIORITY ANALYSIS

There are differences between the amount of park land specified in the Official Community Plan and the actual measure of the current parks & open space system. This is because municipal parks systems have generally developed through land acquisition opportunities presented over time, more than from a precise, strategically planned approach.

Indeed, although seemingly precise, there is in fact no pure science in parks system spatial needs formulas - they have generally been derived from municipal standards in use for many years throughout North America.

“...the reality often makes it difficult or inadvisable to apply national standards without question in specific locales. The uniqueness of every community, due to differing geographical, cultural, climatic and socio-economic characteristics, makes it imperative that every community develop its own standards for recreation, parks, and open space. (Lancaster, 1983, p.37, National Recreational & Parks Association)”

Ammons, David N.; Municipal benchmarks: assessing local performance and establishing community. (2001)

Natural parks and nature sanctuaries make up a significant portion of municipal park space resulting in an apparent surplus of park land. However, these areas are recommended to be considered on an individual site and issue basis.

Thus, recommended standards for open space represent only minimums to help guide park acquisition in a cost effective manner. All opportunities for acquisition must also be considered in the context of OCP/LAP policies, economic considerations and environmental/social needs.

Park Priority Challenges

In Saanich, the following factors challenge the strategic acquisition and prioritization of park land:

- the gap between private land values and municipal financial resources, particularly when prioritized among other costs for municipal services
- local area plans (LAP) that do not always consider a broader district perspective, thus park land priorities can be dramatically different from one community planning area to another
- park land acquisitions for a single purpose that are considered a lower priority than those for multiple purposes (e.g. a dual-purpose contribution as green infrastructure or habitat protection)
- parks and open spaces acquired by others in the Region that lessen the priority for park land acquisition locally

Park Priority Considerations

The next update of the Saanich Parks & Recreation Master Plan needs to address the following:

- For the municipality, how much park land and of what type is “enough”?
- What is the role of Saanich for acquiring and protecting special features such as Garry oak ecosystems or other significant natural and cultural heritage features?
- Within the Urban Containment area, what is the most effective method to acquire park land around designated Centres and Villages?
- As recreational demand evolves, how responsive should the park land base be to the spatial requirement of new or introduced activities? What about commercial recreation needs?
- With increased conditional bequests of land to the municipality, how can land donations be guided and managed so as not to over-commit District resources?
- In a parks system as diverse as ours, how important is it that all park land classifications fit “inside the box”?
- What about other park types: Natural parks? Urban parks?
- Are greenway connections and trails considered “value added” to the park land system, or are they part of park land spatial calculation? Or does it even matter?
- Is there value in scrapping park land classification “quotas” and undertake park land planning based strictly on community sustainability needs and land capability analyses?

In 2007, the provincial government released its paper Parkland Acquisition – Best Practices Guide that recommends the following considerations when evaluating community park needs:

- *existing parkland inventory, including municipal and regional parks, as well as park facilities provided through the school board;*
- *densities and mix of housing;*
- *natural features and open space (in addition to parks);*
- *local preferences for parkland;*
- *impacts on taxes;*
- *impacts on sustainability; and*
- *impacts on developable land, and associated growth targets*

Answering these questions should consider the expanding parks needs of a growing community and all the acquisition opportunities that present themselves in the District.

Park Priority Needs

The 1990 Parks & Recreation Master Plan provided excellent focus to the District for the past two decades of park land programs and facilities development. Since that time however, additional planning issues have emerged in the community – some with a significant impact on the park lands and on the needs of the community for public open space. As such, the 1990 Master Plan is not comprehensive enough to guide today’s priorities for park lands acquisition and development.

In the interim, the “completeness” of park land acquisition in Saanich can be assessed using 7 factors that are considered to be essential needs for the municipal parks system:

- a documented and approved parks purpose (from higher level plans such as the OCP).
- ongoing planning and community involvement (public engagement / Committees).
- sufficient assets in land, staffing, and equipment to meet district goals (Operating and Capital budgets, fees & charges, staffing levels).
- equitable community access (physical and socio-economic means).
- user satisfaction levels (Community surveys and feedback).
- safety from crime and physical hazards (parks design, risk management and bylaw enforcement).
- benefits for the region (broader perspective and vision).

Adapted from: 2003; Peter Harnick; “The Excellent City Parks system”; Trust for Public Land, Washington, DC

Park Priority Assessment Criteria

When determining the priority for acquiring additional lands for park purposes – including those that have been previously identified in approved Local Area Plans, the following criteria are suggested:

1. Site & Environmental Values

- Locally or regionally significant cultural and historic features present.
- Natural environment or ecosystem is not protected in Saanich.
- Existence of rare, threatened or endangered plants and ecosystems.
- Site plays a role and function in the broader natural ecosystem e.g., watershed management, ground water recharge, flood control/storm water.
- Other parks within proximity to the site.
- Opportunities for views/vista or to better see the park and surrounding landscape.
- Valuable addition to an existing park that completes the park boundary.

2. Community Need

- Provides a new or improved access to an existing park or recreation facility.
- Contributes to an existing or future trail or greenway connection.
- Provides park space for an existing recreation activity that is not being met.
- Links with commercial sites, educational facilities, other recreational facilities, or the regional trail system.
- Addresses community expectations.
- Recreation or social trend which has not yet been accommodated and cannot be served within the present infrastructure.
- Provides public open space near Major /Neighbourhood Centres and Villages.

3. Economic Considerations

- Cost of acquiring the site and available resources /capacity to do so.
- Anticipated cost of maintaining /operating the site.
- Co-management or partnership opportunities.
- Revenue generation opportunities.
- Financial leveraging opportunities (e.g. .subdivision).

4. Urgency

- Threat from imminent development with no other means to protect /preserve the site.
- Acquisition opportunity has been presented to Saanich through other means (development, donation, transfer)

SECTION 5 – FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An understanding of the financial implications of not only the land acquisitions costs but also the development and operating expenses is an important consideration. Land values can fluctuate as the real estate market cycles. Development and operating expenses can vary dramatically depending on the type and purpose of the park. However, an 'order of magnitude' can be provided.

Acquisition Costs

Parkland is purchased at market value or acquired at no cost through the subdivision / rezoning process. On occasion property has been donated for park / greenspace. Natural State covenants on private lands also contribute to the protection of greenspace and natural areas within the Municipality. Approximately 115 Ha of parkland was acquired between 1997 and 2009. The total cost of acquisition was \$12.6 million.

Development and Operational Costs

Costs vary based on quantitative classification of park, the size of the park and qualitative type of park. Typical costs can be illustrated with the following examples based on the approved or draft concept plans:

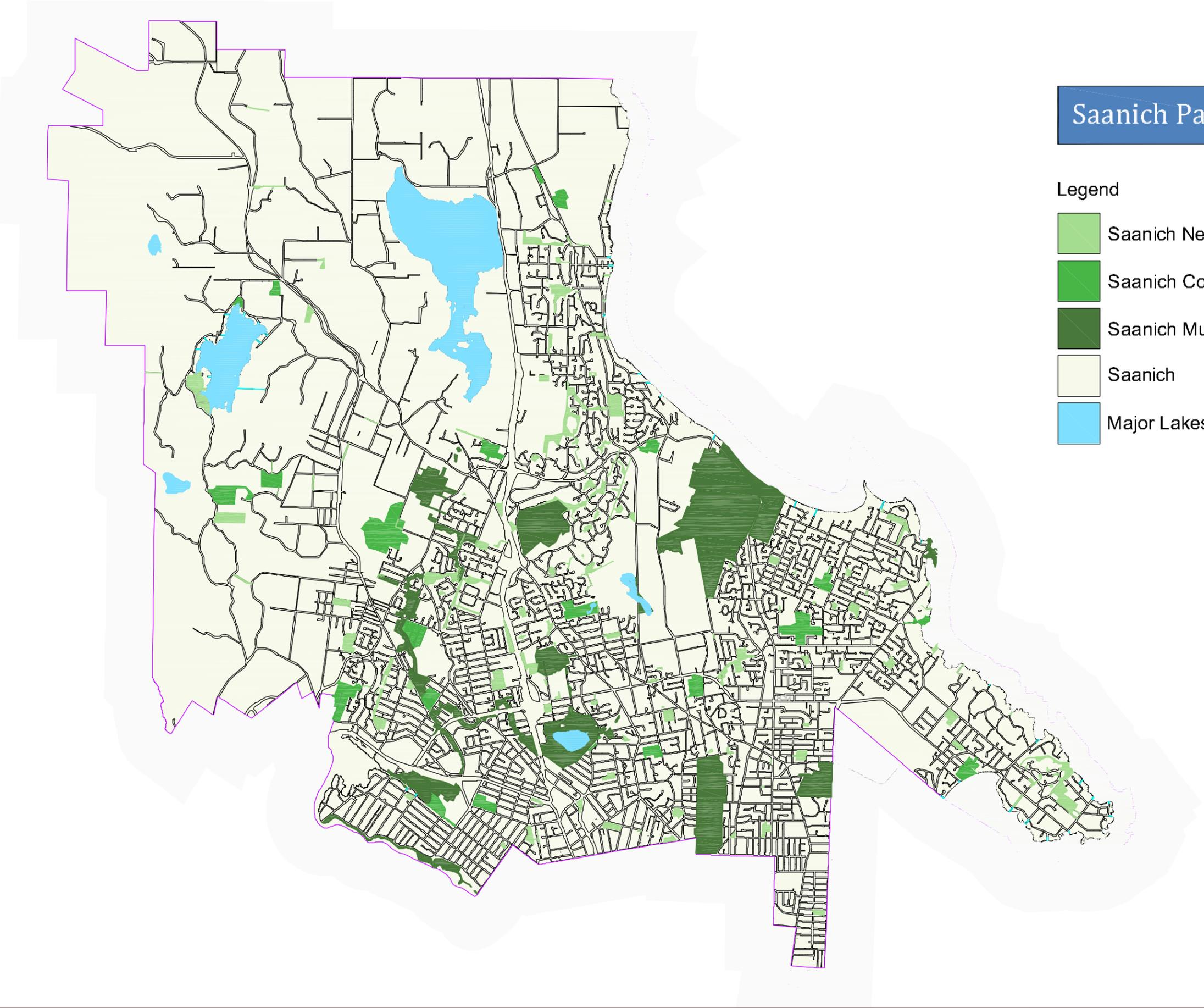
Neighbourhood (Harvest Lane Park 0.32 Ha) – capital \$120,000/operating \$11,000 annually
Community Park (Brydon Park 1.8 Ha) – capital \$320,000/operating \$32,000 annually
Municipal (Cadboro-Gyro Park 6 Ha) – capital \$4.4M/operating \$150,000 annually

APPENDIX 1 – Park Maps

Saanich Parks

Legend

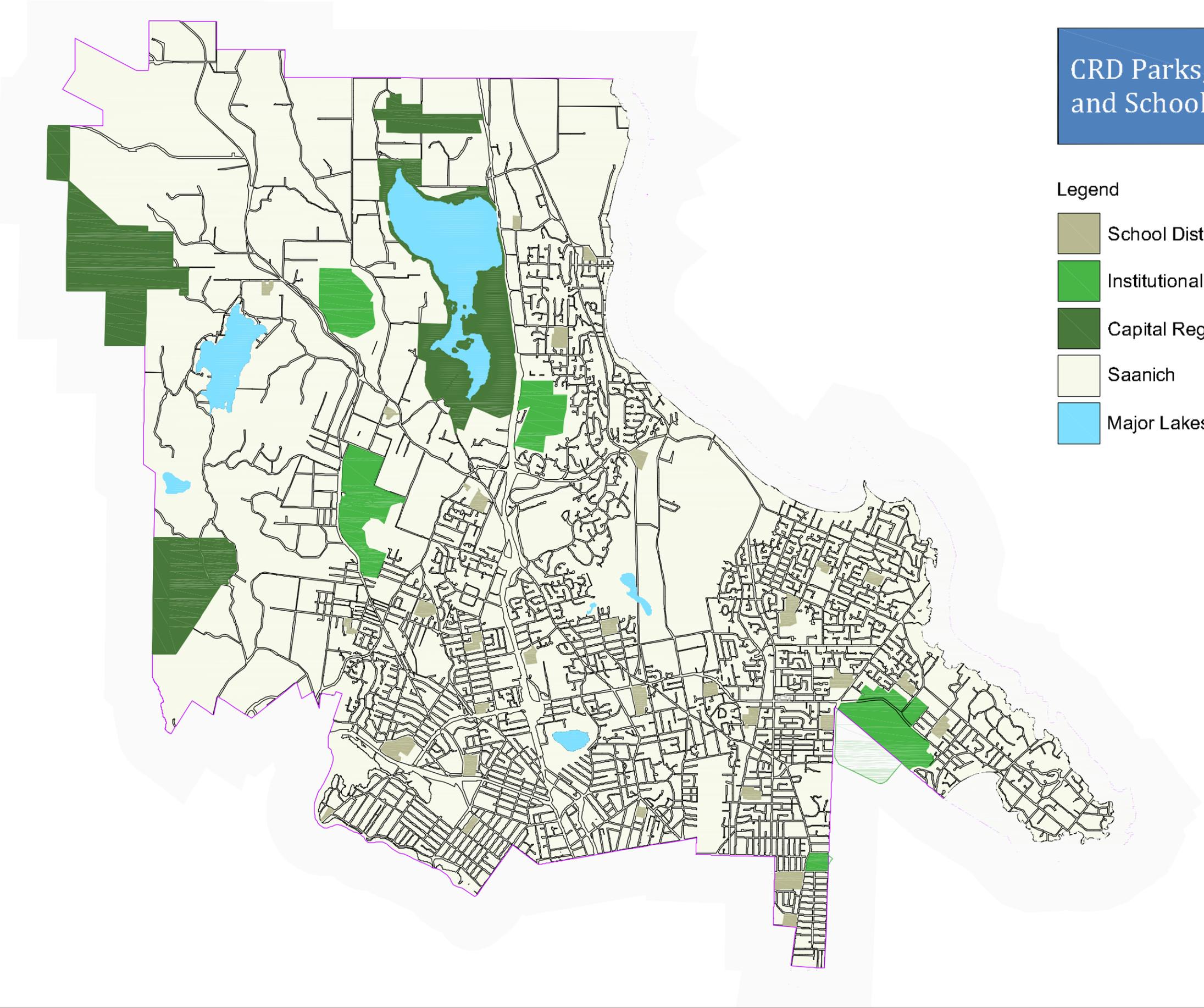
-  Saanich Neighbourhood Parks
-  Saanich Community Parks
-  Saanich Municipal Parks
-  Saanich
-  Major Lakes



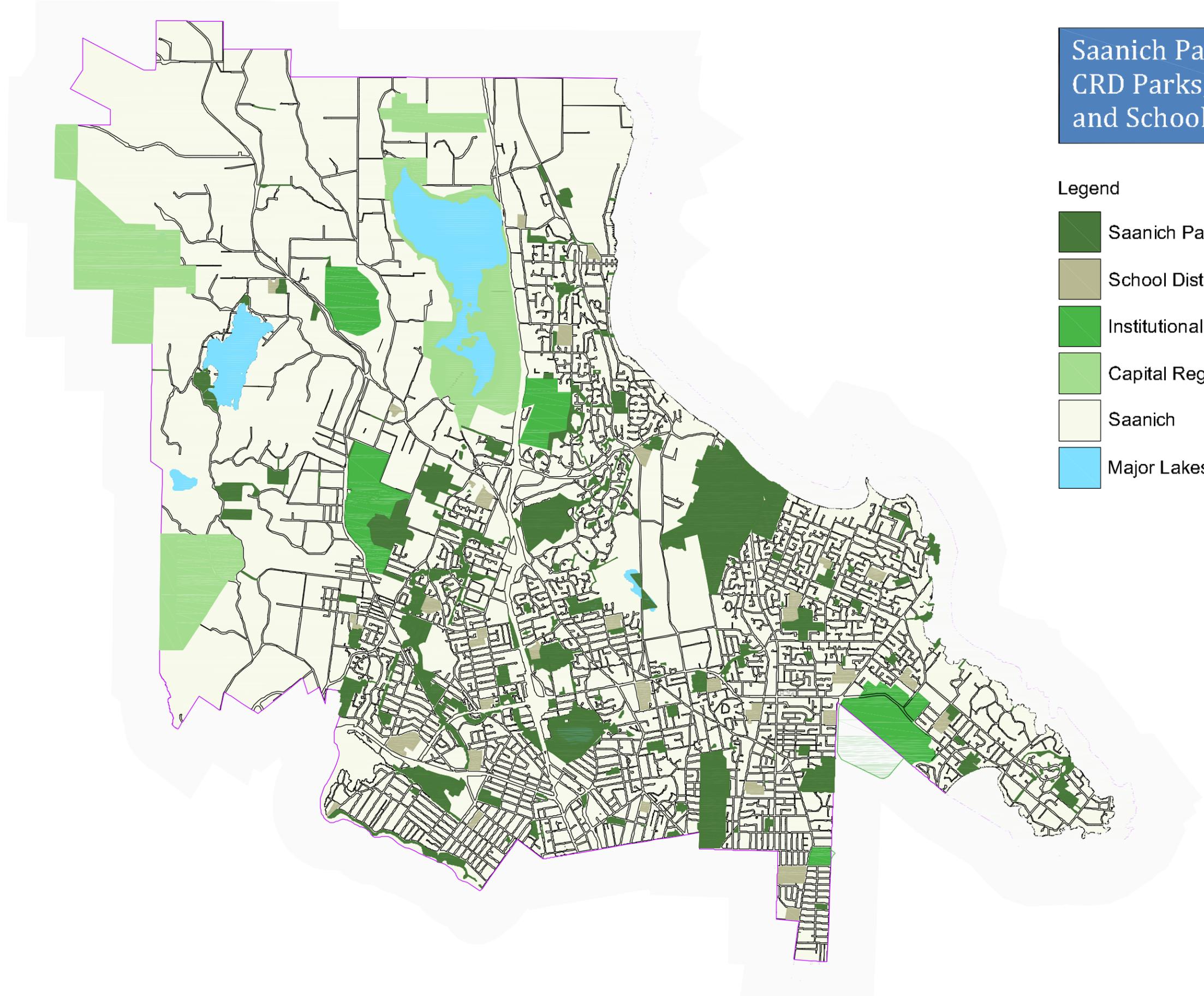
CRD Parks, Institutional and School District Land

Legend

- School District Land
- Institutional Land
- Capital Regional District Parks
- Saanich
- Major Lakes



Saanich Parks, CRD Parks, Institutional and School District Land



Legend

-  Saanich Parks
-  School District Land
-  Institutional Land
-  Capital Regional District Parks
-  Saanich
-  Major Lakes

APPENDIX 2 - 2008 Saanich Official Community Plan

Parks, Trails and Open Space Policies

1. Acquire and develop park land to ensure residents have a wide range of leisure opportunities, and to preserve significant ecosystems.
2. Link parks and public open spaces together by trails, where feasible.
3. Ensure that across the entire Park and Trail system, opportunities are available for a broad range of users.
4. Use a minimum standard of 5.0 ha of parkland per 1,000 people, excluding regional parks, while considering other significant factors affecting acquisition.
5. Use the Five-Year Financial Plan to guide the development of parks and trails, recreation facilities, based on the Official Community Plan, the “Park Priority Study” and the “Parks and Recreation Master Plan”.
 - a. That rezoning of existing public school sites to allow for non-institutional uses shall only be supported where the proposed use would result in: the setting aside of at least 50% of the site as publicly-accessible open space or; provision of other significant neighbourhood public amenities, as provided for under Section 904 or 905.1 of the Local Government Act
 - b. That consideration be given to amending the institutional zoning of public schools by introducing restrictive maximum lot coverage and increased setbacks in order to encourage the retention of existing open space
6. Continue to create Development Cost Charges for new development areas and “Centres” to recover a portion of the cost of neighbourhood and community parks and trails acquisition.
7. Investigate alternative financing options for acquiring and developing park land in “Centres”
8. Acquire parkland through dedication at the time of rezoning or subdivision where: land is indicated for park use in a local area plan; or land is adjacent to an existing park and will improve the configuration or function of the park; or the Park Priority Study indicates a high priority for acquisition of parkland within the local area.
9. Encourage publicly accessible open spaces in new developments, such as plazas, walkways or small park nodes.
10. Support joint use agreements with School Districts 61 and 63, and post-secondary institutions to make effective and economic use of park, recreation, and school facilities.
11. Manage parks, trails, and other open spaces in a manner that minimizes their impact on the natural environment, agriculture, and adjacent urban areas.

-
12. Work with private land owners to acquire trail rights-of-way or easements to complete the trails network and encourage the donation or bequest of privately owned lands that support the objectives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and assist prospective donors in determining eligibility for tax deductions.
 13. Consider opportunities to incorporate food producing community gardens into parks and other public open spaces, where appropriate.
 14. Continue to support the CRD in regard to regional park acquisitions and trail development.

APPENDIX 3 – Background Information

Park land Benefits

Parks and open spaces contribute a great deal to the essence of “Sustainable Saanich”. The Saanich Official Community Plan presents a set of guiding principles and directions under 3 general sustainability themes:

Social Well-Being; Environmental Integrity; Economic Vibrancy

When applied to land planning for parks and open space, these OCP themes highlight many of the key benefits for park lands.

Social Well-Being

- Parks present important greenway linkages for pedestrians and cyclists that supplement opportunities available on sidewalks and roadways.
- Parks define neighbourhood character with their natural and cultural resources
- Parks provide community gathering spaces for recreation, sports and cultural events
- Parks promote health and an active lifestyle

Environmental Integrity

- Parks protect special natural features including ocean front locations, fresh water lakes & ponds, wetlands, streams, ravines, meadows, forests and significant hilltops.
- Parks provide alternate transportation opportunities.

Economic Vibrancy

- Parks enhance property values.
- Parks reduce health costs by encouraging active living.
- The sequencing of planned park land acquisitions is prioritized by opportunities as presented- whether donation /bequest, purchase, development permit or other means.
- Parks leverage business opportunities.
- Parks promote tourism.

Methods to Acquire Park Land

From the 2008 Official Community Plan (OCP):

“Saanich’s more than 160 municipal, community, and neighbourhood parks and over 95 kilometres of trails serve current needs well. However, the need to preserve unique

natural areas and enhance environmental sustainability, combined with population and density increase, mean that further acquisitions will be necessary.

Under authority of the Community Charter, the District can acquire lands, including those for park purposes, through a variety of means, including:

- dedication (development, cash-in-lieu)
- land transfer (exchange)
- bequest (donation)
- taxation (reserves, borrowing)
- easement (rights of way)
- covenant (public interest)

The 2008 OCP includes specific policies with respect to park land acquisition:

- investigate alternative financing options for acquiring and developing park land in “Centres”
- acquire parkland through dedication at the time of rezoning or subdivision where land is indicated for park use in a local area plan; or land is adjacent to an existing park and will improve the configuration or function of the park; or the Park Priority Study indicates a high priority for acquisition of parkland within the local area.

Official Community Plan (OCP)

Saanich Council recently adopted the Official Community Plan which is “the principal legislative tool for guiding future growth and change in Saanich”. Within the Saanich planning model, the Local Area Plans provide more structure for land use and community planning - including identifying locations for park and recreation facilities and recreation land uses. The OCP was updated and approved by Saanich Council in June 2008. The OCP includes a number of Policies specifically related to park acquisition including one which states: “(That Saanich) Use a minimum standard of 5.0 ha. /1000 people, excluding regional parks, while considering other significant factors affecting acquisition.”

In each of the three key themes – Environmental Integrity, Social Well-Being, and Economic Vibrancy – there are a number of policies which relate directly to the provision of land for parks, trails and open space.

Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2001)

This plan provides some of the context for planning of park and recreation facilities and cited a number of specific recommendations for park and open space land acquisition:

- Retain the existing three levels of classification of parks and open spaces and use the existing quantitative provision of each for future planning, acquisition, and development of parks and open spaces.
- Abstain from universally applying the 2.4 ha/1000 standard for municipal open spaces to environmentally sensitive areas.

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- Develop criteria to help assess potential sites and determine if their acquisition as park land is appropriate and reasonable.
 - Develop additional community park land in the southwest quadrant of the community.
 - Acquire and develop land for neighbourhood open space use to correct or avoid deficiencies. Priorities should be placed on those areas where deficiencies are most pronounced or where the opportunities for acquisition are highest.
 - Prepare a new Park Priority Study based on the recommendations of this Master Plan to guide Saanich's acquisition and development of parks over the next ten years. To include the following:
 - Updated inventory of all park lands and facilities
 - Criteria for determining the priority of acquisition and development
 - List of potential park acquisitions and improvements, including the projected costs
 - Financing mechanism for achieving acquisitions
 - A method to guide decision-making to determine if sites not on the priority list should be acquired or developed
 - Opportunities to sell or trade surplus or inadequate District land in order to generate funds and opportunities for parks elsewhere.

District of Saanich Parks & Recreation Master Plan (2010)

An important update of the Parks & Recreation System (Master) Plan is proposed for 2010 /2011. The Plan is intended to guide future delivery of recreation services, parks and open spaces, parks and recreation programs and facilities within Saanich.

District of Saanich Strategic Plan

The current Strategic Plan (2008-2012) is both a process and a document which provides a strategic framework for guiding the discussions about many issues in Saanich. The six key themes – Healthy Community, Balanced Transportation, Safe Community, Healthy Lifestyles, Vibrant Connected Economy, Service Excellence, and Sustainable Environment -

Parks & Recreation Department Initiatives

Within Saanich's strategic processes a number of initiatives, projects, or programs are done achieve the objectives and visions. These ideas provide an impetus for creating new infrastructure such as new parks, new trails, or other new amenities. The department acts as a facilitator and directional force.

Regional Growth Strategy (RGS)

In 1998 a Framework Agreement for the Regional Growth Strategy was adopted by the Capital Regional District Board and its vision and guiding principles expressed "a desire for a region that is economically vital, where communities are livable, where the environment and natural resources are stewarded with care and where residents enjoy a healthy and rewarding quality of life." Within the RGS, a growth management concept is identified by six land use policy

designations; four of which pertain to parks and open space – Capital Green Land Renewable Resource Lands, Regional Urban Containment & Servicing, and Unprotected Green Space.

The RGS sets out Performance Guidelines and Strategic Initiatives with Targets. A key Guideline for parks and open space is that there is a target of having up to 10% publicly accessible open space of parks, public squares, playgrounds, and enhanced streetscapes for the Core Areas. The seven Strategic Directions, as noted in the OCP, provide supportive rationale for acquiring land for parks, trails and open space.

There is also a commitment to the Regional Green/Blue Spaces Strategy adopted by the CRD Board in 1997. The vision sets out a comprehensive, long term guide for maintaining, conserving, rehabilitating, and restoring green/blue spaces on public and private lands in the region including areas with ecological, aesthetic, renewable resource, outdoor recreation and greenways values.

Other Parks and Public Open Spaces in Saanich

Within the Municipal boundaries there are other parks, trails and open space opportunities which are managed and maintained by other authorities. None of these areas have been included in the quantitative (i.e. ratio) park dedication calculations.

1. School District #61 and School District #63 – The schools sites add to the public open space inventory. In terms of calculating the numbers of hectares of park land per 1000 population, the secondary and elementary schools are seen to contribute 50% of their area to the sum total of public open space in Saanich.
2. Post Secondary Institutions - Other educational institutions providing open spaces include the University of Victoria, Camosun College/University.
3. Capital Regional District - Within its boundaries, the Municipality also has parts of five CRD parks – Elk & Beaver Lake, Mt Work including the Hartland Mountain Bike Park, Thetis Lake, Thomas Frances/Freeman King, and Bear Hill. Their purposes and mandates are different by providing for larger open spaces. There is also an inter-municipal CRD regional trail system which provides regional and community trail connections to the adjacent municipalities and other distant destinations in the region. The off-road portions of these open spaces are not part of the District's open space calculations but do provide additional opportunities in Saanich.
4. Other public open space and park-like opportunities within Saanich include lands managed by other organizations including: the Royal Oak Burial Park Society, and the Glendale Gardens & Woodlands Society. Although these public open spaces are not included in the Saanich parks system, they contribute significantly to the well-being and enjoyment of Saanich residents.
5. Government of Canada - The Federal government has two sites in Saanich that contribute to the overall inventory of open spaces in Saanich including: the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory and the Canadian Forest Service. Both of these sites are accessible to the public.
6. Provincial Parks – There are BC provincial parks within the region, however, none are situated in the District of Saanich.

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7. Other Municipalities - Saanich is central to a number of other municipalities which provide similar opportunities and facilities.
 8. Agriculture - A final contributor of open space in the District is the large amount of private agricultural lands. The experience of having open space in Saanich is further enhanced by this large amount of land which is primarily dedicated to agriculture but also has a high value from a community perspective.