

A photograph of a forest path. The path is made of dark soil and is lined with a rustic fence made of stacked logs. Large, moss-covered tree trunks are prominent in the foreground and midground. The background shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees under a bright sky.

# CENTRAL SAANICH PARKS AND TRAILS MASTER PLAN

## Background Plan Guidance

March 27, 2024

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# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The District has numerous parks, trails and shoreline access points that provide residents and visitors places to walk/hike, play, gather and/or enjoy the natural beauty and agricultural vistas. Many of these are currently underdeveloped or underutilized and could be enhanced to better meet community needs.

The District’s Comprehensive Parks and Open Space Master Plan was prepared in 1996 and a Beach Access Report was completed in 2001 that, while outdated, do provide guidance for the District in the management of its parks, trails and shoreline accesses. In recent years, the District has adopted a new Official Community Plan (2023), Active Transportation Plan (2021), and the Saanichton Village Design Plan (2020).

A new Parks and Trails Master Plan will help guide staff and Council in making well-informed, efficient and cost-effective decisions for parks, trails and shoreline accesses over a 10-to-20-year period.

While important to the overall fabric of open spaces, trails and shoreline accesses within the District of Central Saanich, regional and provincial parks and other properties not owned by the District will not be specifically addressed in this plan but will be referenced in relation to the services they provide. Considerations around improved access and/or future partnerships to address desired improvements may be considered in the development of the Parks and Trails Master Plan.

## PLAN PROCESS

The Parks and Trails Master Plan will be developed over an 18-month timeline, with anticipated completion in December 2024. The planning process will be collaborative with First Nations, community partners, the public, District staff and Council with multiple rounds of engagement throughout the project.



- Phase 1: Pre-planning work, background reviews, mapping and site reviews, and needs assessment.
- Phase 2: Engagement with First Nations, partners and the public to identify opportunities, issues, proposed vision and goals.
- Phase 3: Draft Master Plan #1; community engagement on Draft #1
- Phase 4: Draft Master Plan #2 and Draft Implementation Plan; community engagement; Final Master Plan.

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## 2.0 COMMUNITY PROFILE

The District of Central Saanich is located within the traditional territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ peoples, represented today by W̱JŌŁĒLP (Tsartlip), S̱ÁUTW̱ (Tsawout), W̱SIKEM (Tseycum), BOKÉCEN (Pauquachin), and MÁLEXEL (Malahat) First Nations. Other Coast Salish peoples also have important ties to the District, through relationships to this land and the people who have lived on this land since time immemorial.

Central Saanich is a friendly and active community in a spectacular outdoor setting on the Saanich Peninsula, in the Capital Regional District. The rolling farmland, forests, and neighbourhoods are set against the backdrop of breathtaking ocean and mountain views.

Central Saanich has strong agricultural roots that shaped the District's settlement pattern and has been engrained by the introduction of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and adoption of an Urban Containment Boundary as a principal growth management policy. Encompassing 41.2 square kilometers (excluding First Nations lands), lands within the District are predominantly rural – 60% of land is within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) with only 18% within the Urban Containment Boundary. Within the Urban Containment Boundary, there are two village centers (Brentwood Bay and Saanichton) and one commercial area (Keating Business District). The District has marine shorelines on both its west and east sides.

### HISTORY

The W̱SÁNEĆ people have had relationships with the lands of the Saanich Peninsula since time immemorial. Saanich elders have passed down the story of a great flood, believed to have taken place about 10,000 years ago. In W̱SÁNEĆ oral history, XÁLS (the Creator) signals a great flood which correlates with a flood event known to Western geological history. The people heeded XÁLS' warnings and got in their boats with food and supplies. As the water levels rose, they anchored their canoes to arbutus trees located atop a mountain that was eventually submerged. As the water levels dropped, the top of Mount Newton emerged, and there they found refuge. Many survived the great flood due to this LÁU, WELNEW (place of refuge) and from then on, they called themselves the W̱SÁNEĆ (the emerging people).

Following the establishment of Fort Victoria in 1843, the first Europeans started to settle in areas away from the fort. In 1851, the lands of Vancouver Island were granted to the Hudson Bay Company for settlement as a crown colony. In 1852, the Crown entered the North and South Saanich Douglas Treaties with the W̱SÁNEĆ people. While the written text of the treaty documents the transfer of land, the preservation of W̱SÁNEĆ village sites and enclosed fields, and the protection of W̱SÁNEĆ people's right to fish and hunt, W̱SÁNEĆ oral history describes it differently. The desire to meet to negotiate a treaty came as a result of history disputes between W̱SÁNEĆ peoples and Douglas and Fort Victoria. By W̱SÁNEĆ oral history, at the meeting Douglas acknowledged the extent of the W̱SÁNEĆ homelands and recognized W̱SÁNEĆ rights and responsibilities to the land, and the parties agreed that the W̱SÁNEĆ and settlers would live on these lands in a peaceful relationship with one another, not that the W̱SÁNEĆ people sold their land.

Only 10 years after the signing of the Douglas Treaty, colonist settlers who arrived by ship to Victoria brought along with them the destructive smallpox infection. Estimates have shown over 30,000 Indigenous people died the following year, representing approximately 60 per cent of their population at the time. Paired with the residential school system and the ban on the potlatch, Indigenous communities were rendered devastated and depopulated.

Starting around 1855, settlers started establishing homesteads and farms in the Mount Newton Valley. The original Prairie Tavern, in Saanichton, was built in 1859 and was later replaced by the Prairie Inn in 1893.

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The Victoria and Sidney Railway (V&S) ran through Saanichton on its run from Victoria to Sidney, from 1894 to 1919.

The District of Central Saanich was incorporated in December 1950 when it separated from the Municipality of Saanich. In 1956, a Zoning Bylaw was introduced to regulate land use. SÁÁUTW\_ (Tsawout) and WJÓŁŁP (Tsartlip) First Nations are part of the Corporation of the District of Central Saanich Letters Patent, the document giving legal status to the municipality, a unique inclusion within British Columbia and Canada.

The Agricultural Land Reserve was established in 1973 to protect agricultural lands within British Columbia and helps create the distinct settlement boundaries within the District. The District's first OCP was adopted in 1979 and every OCP since that time has focused on protecting agricultural areas and rural character; supporting compact communities with pedestrian-oriented settlement; protecting the District's marine shorelines, inland wetlands, creeks and streams, and wildlife habitat; and the importance of making land use decisions based on the natural features and capabilities of the land.<sup>1</sup>

## HERITAGE SITES

There are number of buildings and sites on the heritage inventory including a number of designated heritage buildings within the municipal parks system including the following:

- Butterfield House, Barn & Garage/shed. 8000 Thomson Place. Located in Butterfield Park.
- Temperance Hall (Lions Hall). Adjacent to Michell Park and is owned by the District.
- Saanich Pioneer Museum. 7910 East Saanich Rd. Located in Saanichton Green Park
- Newman Farms. 8073 Veyaness Road. Includes house, several buildings including creamery, barn, garage/workshop and boathouses. Newman Park
- West Saanich School, 7130 West Saanich Rd. Located in HEL,HILEŁ (Pioneer Park).

While there are a number of other private sites on the heritage inventory, some of the properties that have some level of public accessibility or are adjacent to park land include:

- St. Stephen's Anglican Church and cemetery. 7921 St Stephen's Road, Designated heritage building. The adjacent house at 1049 Mount Newton Cross Road is also on the heritage registry.
- Shady Creek Church and cemetery. 7180 East Saanich Road. In process of being designated. Cemetery abuts Cooperidge Park.
- Our Lady of Assumption Church. 7748 West Saanich Road. Abuts Hagan Bight-KENNES Viewpoint.
- Butchart Gardens. 800 Benvenuto Drive. National Historic Site.

The District has a heritage walking tour brochure for Mount Newton Cross Road with a number of designated and non-designated sites included. The 2021 Active Transportation Plan identifies Mount New Cross Road as a Proposed Heritage Road.

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<sup>1</sup> Information from this section is taken from the District of Central Saanich website, Central Saanich History. <https://www.centralsaanich.ca/our-community/history-heritage-sites>

# 3.0 DEMOGRAPHICS

The population growth in Central Saanich has generally been close to 1% per year. With a population of 17,385 (2021 census) and limited land base, the District wants to ensure the parks and trails systems continue to serve the needs of the community.

## AGE CHARACTERISTICS

Figure 1 shows the change in time of Central Saanich age characteristics from the 2011, 2016 and 2021 Census. Some generalizations that can be seen include that the percentage of young children (aged 0 to 4 years and 5-9 years) has been growing as has the number of adults aged 30 to 39 and 70 to 69.

Figure 2 compares the age percentages of Central Saanich with regional and provincial data. In general, Central Saanich has higher percentages of young children and teens than the Capital Regional District as a whole, with percentages similar to the provincial dataset. Central Saanich also has higher percentages of older adults (ages 60 to 69 and 70 to 79) then both the CRD and the province.

While the average age of Central Saanich at 46.7, is slightly older than the BC average of 43.1, almost half of the population are adults between the ages of 25 to 64 years old (see Figure 3). Just under a quarter (23.5%) of the population are children, teens and young adults (ages 24 and under). The remaining 27.1% are older adults and seniors (ages 65 and over).

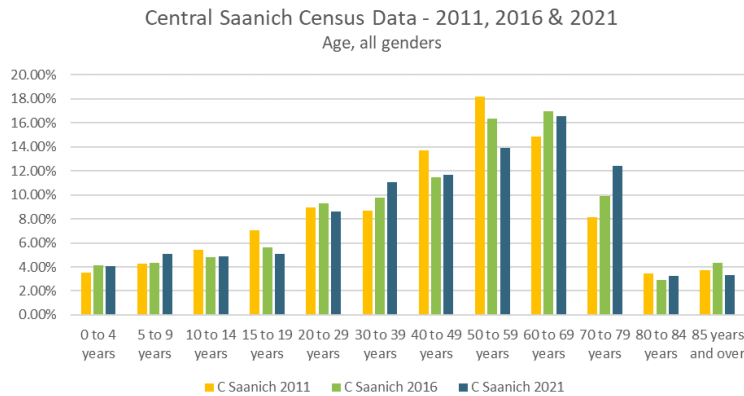


Figure 1. Central Saanich Age of Population - 2011, 2016 and 2021 Census

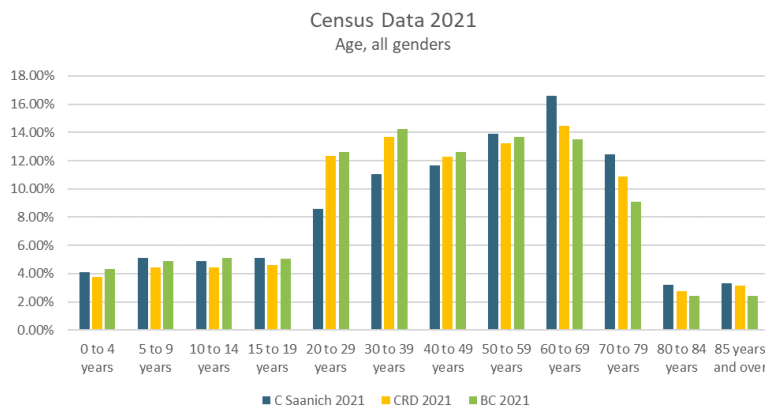


Figure 2. Age of Population - 2021 Census

Central Saanich Census Data 2021  
Age, all genders

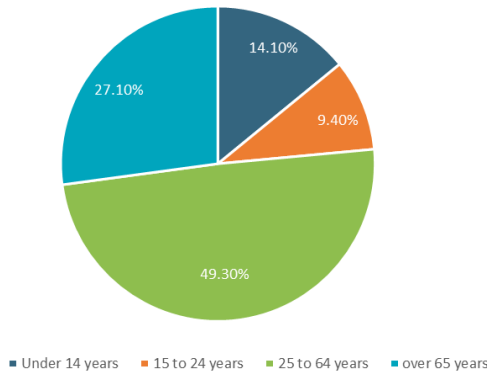


Figure 3. Central Saanich Age Distribution - 2021 Census

## HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

The average household size in Central Saanich is 2.4 persons, which is higher than the CRD as a whole (2.2 persons) but on par with the provincial data set. In comparison to the CRD, there are fewer people living alone and more multi-person households within Central Saanich. 35.2% of households consist of greater than three people (Figure 4).

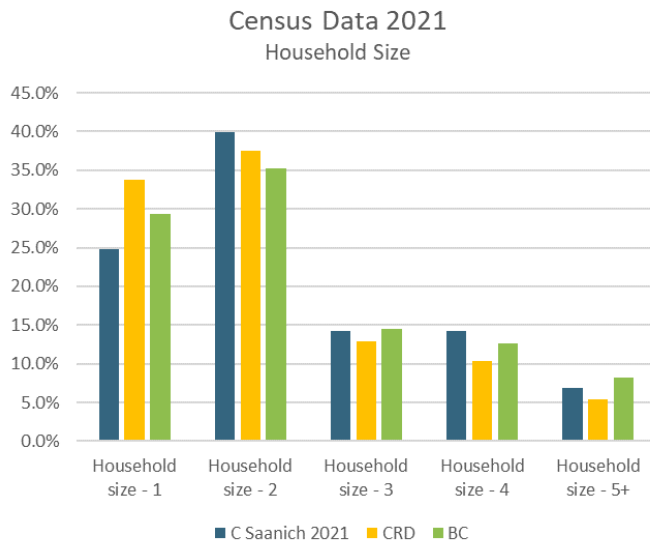


Figure 4. Household Size Comparison - 2021 Census

## FORM OF DWELLING

Form of dwelling provides an indicator of the importance of public parks and open spaces. In areas with more apartments and other multi-family dwellings, typically there is more reliance on parks and open spaces to provide access for both active and passive park uses.

The 2021 Census indicated that dwellings in Central Saanich are predominantly comprised of single family residential (53.8%), with 34.2% comprised of duplexes and townhomes and 11.1% of multi-family apartment buildings. (Figure 5)

As outlined with the Official Community Plan, within the Urban Containment Boundary there are two distinct village centers found in Saanichton and Brentwood Bay that provide a range of retail services and include a strong residential component. A third commercial area is the Keating Business District, which is a light industrial and service commercial area servicing the broader region. Growth is anticipated to be through infill and densification within the Urban Containment Boundary within the following areas:

- Village centers of Brentwood Bay and Saanichton – mixed use development at higher densities.
- Along main travel corridors (e.g. Wallace Drive, East Saanich Road, West Saanich Road, and Verdier Avenue), smaller multi-unit developments up to 8 units and moderate and high-density housing forms, including townhomes and apartments up to four storeys where appropriate for the surrounding neighbourhood.
- Dignan Road between West Saanich Road and Stelly’s Cross Road – transition from single-detached residential to higher density, multi-unit residential or commercial/mixed use.
- Intersection of Keating Cross Road and West Saanich, in conjunction with tourist-oriented uses.

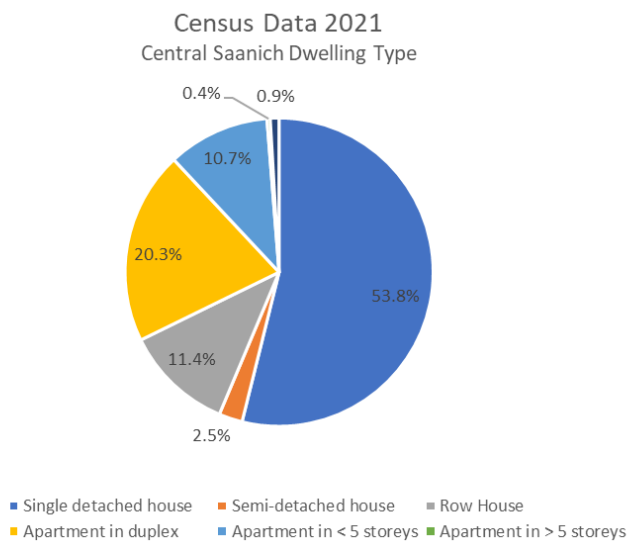


Figure 5. Dwelling Type - 2021 Census

Given the District’s future housing needs and its focus on densifying and infilling existing residential areas, it is expected that over time the number of multi-family housing units will increase. This trend can start to be seen when looking at Census data from 2011, 2016 and 2021 (Figure 6) but will likely increase at a greater rate with the updated provincial legislation in Bill 44. As the changes have been recently rolled out and detailed assessments of what this may mean for Central Saanich have not yet been fully assessed, for the purposes of conducting a needs assessment for the parks and trails master plan, we have estimated that densities will double in the village nodes – Brentwood, Saanichton and Tanner Ridge.



Central Saanich Census Data - 2011, 2016 & 2021  
Multi-Family Forms of Dwelling

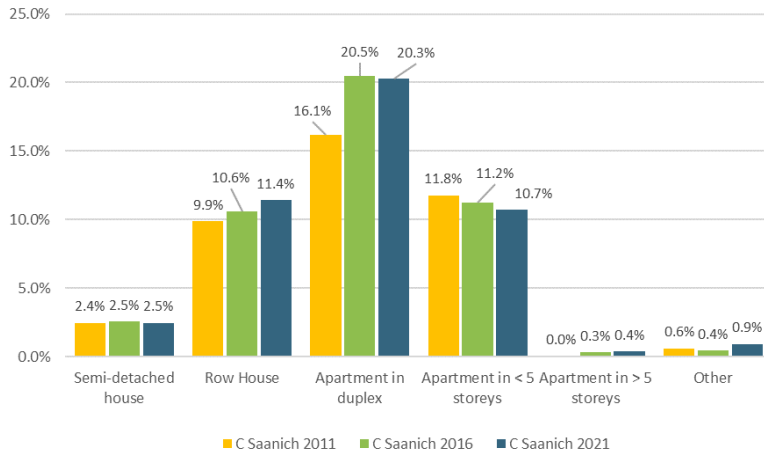


Figure 6. Multi-family Forms of Dwelling - 2011, 2016 and 2021 Census

Understanding the demographics of the community and areas of anticipated growth will help inform a needs assessment that indicates priority areas for future parkland acquisition or specific park amenities to help meet the changing needs of the community over the plan period.

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## 4.0 STRATEGIC POLICIES

Existing policies and plans provide important background information and policy guidance for the development of the Parks and Trails Master Plan. The following pages provide a high-level review of existing policies, plans and other reports related to parks, trails and shoreline accesses within the District.

### REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Central Saanich is one of 13 municipalities within the Capital Regional District (CRD). These local governments and the CRD developed the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in partnership. The current RGS, adopted in 2018, outlines the following vision for the region:

In 2038, Capital Regional District residents enjoy a healthy and rewarding quality of life. We have a vital economy, livable communities and steward our environment and natural resources with care. Our choices reflect our commitment to collective action on climate change.

Objectives within the RGS relevant to park and trail planning include to protect, conserve and manage ecosystem health; create safe and complete communities; improve multi-modal connectivity and mobility; and, to significantly reduce community-based greenhouse gas emissions.

### OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The Official Community Plan (OCP) represents the long-term vision for the community, setting out objectives and policies that guide decisions on planning, land use, and the provision of municipal services. The current OCP was approved in April 2023 following three years of plan preparation including considerable community input.

While guidance for the Parks and Trails Master Plan can be found throughout the Official Community Plan, the community vision, and the objectives and policies within Section 4.5: Parks and Open Spaces provide the most direct guidance.

#### Community Vision:

Central Saanich is a community where residents value our great natural beauty and rolling rural landscapes, with active agriculture that existing in harmony with vibrant, compact villages. Located within a growing metropolitan region, Central Saanich has maintained its rural and small-town character with a strong sense of community pride and neighbourly residents that welcome diversity.

The District is a leader in climate action and peninsula-wide collaboration with W̱SÁNEĆ Nations, other municipalities, businesses and community organizations to minimize negative impacts on the environment, our waterways, and marine shorelines.

The built environment supports a healthy community that is active, vibrant, and inclusive, with a road, trail and open space network that is safe and prioritizes active transportation. A diverse housing stock located within walking distance to services and public transit supports residents of a range of ages, incomes, and abilities to age-in-place and thrive within the community.

We have established strong, respectful working relationships with W̱SÁNEĆ Nations. The economy is thriving with a variety of local businesses supported by the community.

#### Section 4.5 Parks and Open Space Objectives

- Supporting an active, healthy community by providing a variety of parks and trails that are safe and accessible for all ages and abilities.

- Working with adjacent jurisdictions, the CRD and BC Parks to create linkages between parks and open spaces that connect to regional amenities and form corridors for multi-modal active transportation.
- Collaborating with W̱SÁNEĆ Nations to identify, protect and restore ecologically and culturally sensitive areas.
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, habitat and environmentally sensitive areas, particularly related to the Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem.
- Continuing to expand and develop the parks and trails system to serve the existing and future needs of the community in an environmentally sensitive manner that protects a diversity of species and ecosystems.
- Recognizing the role of natural areas in climate resiliency and considering climate action in park planning, design and operations by applying landscaping strategies that decrease water use, enhance habitat and help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improving the quality and quantity of public shoreline access and supporting non-motorized recreational opportunities in key waterfront locations.

### **Other OCP Related Guidance**

Within other sections of the OCP, there are a number of objectives and policies that will help provide guidance for the PTMP. Objectives include:

- Preserving Saanich Peninsula’s Interconnected ecology through collaboration with the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations, North Saanich and Sidney. (Section 4.6)
- Encouraging and facilitating the protection and conservation of the natural environment and biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations and recognize protecting the District’s natural assets contributes to climate change mitigation and resiliency. (Section 4.6)
- Preserving, protecting, and enhancing freshwater and marine ecosystems by protecting the quantity and quality of the waters, supporting watershed restoration projects, restoring riparian areas and the marine shoreline to natural conditions (Section 4.6).
- Apply a climate lens to all local government decision-making to integrate greenhouse gas mitigation efforts and adaptation considerations across all municipal programs, projects and services. (Section 4.7)
- Preserve and celebrate the diverse heritage and historical features of Central Saanich, including the W̱SÁNEĆ cultures that have existed since time immemorial. (Section 4.8)
- Create a community and local culture that supports walking, cycling and other forms of active transportation as preferred travel modes with a target of 50% of all trips occurring by active transportation by 2050. (Section 4.9)
- Better utilize the existing road and trail networks by improving connectivity between the Village Centres and Keating Business District, and to other locations throughout the District. (Section 4.9)
- Where an informal trail or pathway crosses over private land, work with property owners to formalize rights-of-way for public passage where they connect to the active transportation network. (Section 4.9)

In earlier drafts of the OCP, some of the policies had longer bulleted sub-lists that while removed from the final version were intended to be carried forward to future projects. This includes the following.

1. Develop a Parks Master Plan to guide the acquisition and management of Parks and Trails within the municipality, including the following:

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- a. Identify a hierarchy of park and trail classifications that would accommodate a diversity of passive and active recreational opportunities balanced with environmental protection and enhancement based on park classification;
  - b. Ensure the unique features of parks are captured within a park hierarchy;
  - c. Update and incorporate the Beach Access Report into the Parks Master Plan and identify areas suitable for new public access to the shoreline;
  - d. Identify an ideal network of connected parks, trails and open spaces, that would provide wildlife corridors and active transportation connectivity;
  - e. Take advantage of existing road rights-of-way to develop connecting trails or linear park corridors to improve overall connectivity within the parks and trails network;
  - f. Refine the proposed future trail network and identify specific opportunities for trail connections in addition to those identified in the Active Transportation Plan;
  - g. Identify areas for further development of the equestrian trail network, including within public rights-of-way where it is deemed safe and appropriate;
  - h. Considers peninsula connectivity to broader trail networks that include adjacent jurisdictions and regional amenities, such as the Panorama Recreation Centre;
  - i. Explore opportunities to provide off-lease areas for dogs to minimize conflict;
  - j. Identify park acquisition priorities that balance recreational needs with protection of the natural environment;
  - k. Identify targets and schedules for park, trail, and facilities upgrades over time, with estimated municipal expenditures; and
  - l. Accounts for sufficient time for park maintenance and recovery periods to lessen impacts to playing fields, trails, playgrounds or other heavily used areas.

## **2024 – 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN**

The strategic plan was informed by community feedback, including the Citizen Satisfaction Survey, and identifies the priorities and goals for 2024-2027. The five priorities include:

- Invest in infrastructure and active transportation.
- Expand the supply of affordable, attainable and rental housing.
- Foster a community of inclusion, diversity and accessibility.
- Cultivate a resilient economy and thriving agricultural sector.
- Champion climate adaptation, mitigation and preparedness.
- Demonstrate organizational effectiveness.

## **LAND USE BYLAW**

The Land Use Bylaw establishes different zones for agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial areas and outlines how land may be used or developed.

Most parks within the District are zoned as P-2 (Parks and Open Space), however there are some zoned as A-1 (Agriculture), P-1 (General Institutional), or R-1 (Large Lot Single Family Residential).

Permitted uses within P-2 include parks, pathways, natural open space, hiking trails, playgrounds, fairground and exhibition ground.

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## **2023 PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION UPDATES**

In the fall of 2023, the Province announced a suite of housing legislation, aimed to deliver more homes throughout the province on a faster timeline. For the District of Central Saanich, the changes to Bill 44 – Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act and Bill 46 – Housing Statutes (Development Financing) Amendment Act have implications on density and population projections as well as on mechanisms to acquire additional parkland and/or fund park and trail improvements.

In suburban and urban communities, the new legislation requires multiple units of housing (3 to 6 units depending on the location and context) to be permitted on single-family and duplex zoned lots. To speed up the building of homes for people and to support pro-active planning, one-off, site-by-site public hearings for rezonings have been phased out for housing projects that are consistent with OCPs (which already have a public hearing).

Under the legislation, Local governments are now required to update their Official Community Plans (OCPs) and zoning bylaws on a regular basis (every 5 years) for consistency with housing needs reports. Over time, this will have the effect of reducing the number of site-specific rezoning applications required to bring into effect land use changes that are consistent with community visions articulated through OCPs. This will impact parkland dedication and community amenity contributions as these are often achieved through rezonings. Bill 46 includes new legislation for Amenity Cost Charge (ACC) bylaws such that they can be paid when the approval or building permit is issued.

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## 5.0 OTHER KEY BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Other documents that were reviewed and that will provide guidance in the development of the Parks and Trails Master Plan include the following documents.

### **CENTRAL SAANICH ACCESSIBILITY PLAN (2023)**

The Accessibility Plan outlines the District’s commitments to accessibility over the next three years (2023-2026) as well as future considerations. This is not a comprehensive list for achieving full accessibility – that is an ongoing process – but they will contribute to the goals of the plan. As part of consultation on the preparation of the plan, and for ongoing input, the District of Central Saanich, District of North Saanich, Town of Sidney and the Central Saanich Police Service formed the Saanich Peninsula Accessibility Advisory Committee (SPAAC) to consult on matters of accessibility across the municipalities.

Considerations outlined in the Accessibility Plan, related to the Parks and Trails Master Plan include prioritizing accessibility in planning upgrades to transportation, buildings, infrastructure and public spaces by addressing known barriers and increasing safety for vulnerable users. Other items include ensuring signage integrates accessibility features such as plain language, easy-to-read fonts, visual cues and tactile signage; identifying and implementing opportunities to increase the number of public and accessible washrooms; increasing the availability of public seating that accommodates a range of body types and disabilities in a location that does not create new barriers.

### **AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PLAN (2023)**

The Age-Friendly Plan was adopted in October 2023. The plan will help the District understand how to best create age-friendly services and infrastructure to support the growing number of seniors in the community. An age-friendly community is where all members of the community are supported, active, and engaged throughout all stages of life.

During development of the plan, engagement participants indicated that they appreciated access to parks and walkable trails and that they would like to see additional gathering spaces for socialization and intergenerational activities. There were comments about more paths to connect communities and park areas, more washrooms, more off-leash parks and outdoor seating. Additional ideas for improvement included more pickleball courts and a universal access system on one of the local docks or beaches for older or disabled kayakers who need assistance launching.

Actions in the plan related to the Parks and Trails Master Plan include:

- Incorporating the needs of a diverse and aging population through accessibility, intergenerational opportunities and gathering spaces to support social connections.
- Engaging older adults during development of the Parks and Trails Master Plan.
- Continuing to evaluate and improve safety and accessibility throughout the District for people who walk, roll, cycle, take transit and the equestrian community.

### **CITIZEN SATISFACTION SURVEY (2023)**

Every four years, the District conducts a Citizen Satisfaction Survey to give residents the chance to voice their opinions about the quality of life, which services are most important, and any areas that could use improvement. This information is used during Council’s strategic planning sessions, as well as by staff in

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service planning, budgeting, training design and operational improvements. Key findings from the 2023 survey related to the PTMP include:

- 97% of respondents reported that the overall quality of life in the District was good or very good.
- 85% of respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of services from the District.
- 96% were satisfied with access to parks and public spaces.
- 73% of respondents preferred to maintain current parks and park amenity services levels through minor increases to tax levels.
- The top three amenities to be considered by the District to improve local parks included activities and structures (i.e. playground, splash pads, skate parks, etc); dog parks and dog waste containers; and washroom facilities. Other amenities mentioned included additional trails/trail maintenance, waste containers, accessibility, invasive species removal, additional seating including tables and covered areas, parking, safety and lighting.

## **PANORAMA RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN (2022-2026)**

Panorama Recreation operates two facilities (Panorama Recreation Centre and Greenglade Community Centre, both outside of Central Saanich) and offers programming within the District at Central Saanich Cultural Centre. Important community characteristics and potential indicators of recreation need over the next five years noted in the plan included:

- The median age of residents on the Peninsula is older than the provincial average.
- Current service provision levels for arena and pools are generally well-aligned with those in urban areas across BC.
- Spatial analysis shows that approximately half of residents on the Peninsula are located within a 10-minute drive of an indoor recreation facility. Those residents that do not live within this catchment radius may perceive a recreation service level gap.

Actions identified in the strategic plan that may be relevant to the preparation of the PTMP include:

- Explore cost effective opportunities to meet indoor community space needs and identified gaps in Central Saanich (see Central Saanich Recreation Needs Assessment).
- Consider the feasibility of developing a multi-sport facility in Central Saanich (for awareness throughout PTMP prep, but generally outside the scope of the plan).
- Work with municipal partners to explore outdoor leisure aquatics amenity opportunities like a splash pad / spray park.
- Ensure equity, inclusion and access are primary considerations across all areas of programming and service delivery.

## **ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (2021)**

Vision: The Central Saanich Active Transportation Plan will enable people of all ages and abilities to walk and cycle throughout the community, while respecting our unique character and heritage.

The plan outlines strategic improvements to road crossings, sidewalks, pathways and supporting facilities (i.e. bike racks, e-bike charging, etc.) to enhance connectivity for walking and biking throughout the District.

- Connectivity improvements related to the PTMP, there are several linkages for multi-use pathways within road right-of-way noted as well as a pathway fronting Centennial Park along Wallace Drive.
- Parks with access to electricity should be outfitted with a dedicated e-bike charging area.

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## **CLIMATE LEADERSHIP PLAN (2021)**

The District of Central Saanich has set a goal of 100% less GHG emissions by 2050, relative to 2007, with an interim target of 45% less GHG emissions by 2030, relative to 2007. The primary sources of community-scale GHG emissions are transportation, buildings and solid waste. To reach targets for reducing transportation emissions, the community needs to make significant shifts to active transportation and/or zero or low emission vehicles. To reach targets for reducing building emissions, new buildings are to seek to achieve net-zero energy and existing buildings are to be retrofit to reduce energy use. The District has been tracking and reporting emissions from municipal operations since 2009 and has been carbon neutral in its operations since 2015.

Specific to the Parks and Trails Plan, actions to help achieve the goals include:

- Creating compact and complete communities by continuing to focus development in the Urban Settlement areas with the goal of increasing the number of homes within 400 meters to parks.
- Creating the Active Transportation Plan. While this plan is separate from the Parks and Trails plan, the networks within the two documents should align.
- Identifying opportunities to protect and increase tree canopy and other natural assets that contribute to carbon sequestration, to consider climate sequestration in all land acquisition and management activities.
- Preparing for potential changes to climate by understanding how sensitive natural assets are to the range of potential projected climate changes.
- Participating in regional efforts to identify the value of natural assets in climate change adaptation (e.g reducing flood inundation, protecting shorelines from erosion, providing shade during extreme heat events) and incorporating into park and land management decisions.

## **A BIOREGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE SAANICH PENINSULA (2021)**

This document outlines a collaborative approach to recognize the rich and interconnected ecology of the Saanich Peninsula Bioregion and to foster a health and sustaining environment for the future. Development of the framework and the formation of the Saanich Peninsula Environmental Coalition, authors of the framework, came out of the Sidney Summit on Habitat and Environment (2018). The plan outlines three principles with central and sub- outcomes for each:

- Ecological Integrity: Conserve, protect and maintain ecosystems and the connectivity of the natural environment with an approach that is proactive and informed by both W̱SÁNEĆ traditional ecological and comprehensive scientific knowledge.
- Jurisdictional Collaboration: Operate collaboratively and cooperatively to support sustainable practices on the Saanich Peninsula
- Community Perspective: public knowledge and stewardship of the natural environment supports ecological sustainability.

## **SAANICHTON VILLAGE DESIGN PLAN (2020)**

This plan identified a 30-year vision for Saanichton Village, creating a framework for a vibrant, compact, walkable and mixed-use village. Key directions within the plan related to the PTMP:

- The District will pursue opportunities for park and open space acquisition through the development application process. Priority areas include a central place area within “the triangle”, and plaza and/or pedestrian connections at the municipal hall and Thrifty Foods sites.



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- Blue-Green Strategy for Saanichton Village promoting an integrated approach to stormwater management, urban forest management and other ecologically oriented objectives.

## **COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (2019)**

The plan provides the District a framework to review and assess areas of identified high fire risk and to guide the improvement and or/development of emergency plans, evacuation plans, communication and education programs, bylaw development in areas of fire risk, and the management of potentially hazardous forest lands adjacent to the community. It outlines 36 strategic recommendations for public and private lands to reduce wildfire threat. Recommendations related to parks and trails and trail plan include:

- Including wildfire considerations in the planning and acquisition strategy for parks and recreation areas.
- Developing policies and practices for design and maintenance of FireSmart publicly owned land such as community parks and open spaces.

## **CENTRAL SAANICH RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT (2019)**

This study was prepared by Panorama Recreation with the goals of reviewing the current state of recreational programming in the District, identifying specific short-term and long-term needs for programs and services, and identifying the facilities and amenities to meet community needs.

Comments from the participants in the study related to the PTMP include the desire for expanding the number of indoor and outdoor pickleball courts, in particular for year-round use or casual drop-in play; new park amenities including disc golf and bike parks and the provision of e-charging stations.

## **FACILITY LONG-TERM ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN (2015)**

The purpose of this document is to measure and monitor anticipated upcoming maintenance and renewal expenses for district-owned buildings. Parks and recreation buildings managed by the district are in three municipal parks: Rom Knott, Verdier and Centennial including concession stands, washroom buildings, ball diamond infrastructure and storage buildings.

## **INTEGRATED STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN (2009)**

Central Saanich was the first municipality on Vancouver Island to commission an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan. The plan addressed three major watersheds: KEENES (formerly Hagan-Graham), Tetayut (formerly Sandhill) and McHugh-Noble including 32 km of creek and covering approximately 3900 hectares.

At the time of the report, more than half of the total creek length was classified as “non-functional”. Issues in the watersheds are principally attributed to the extensive direct modification of creeks and wetlands for drainage purposes (such as ditching); the incremental effects of development, creating increased runoff volumes, increased peak flows and reduced groundwater recharge; and water quality impacts from the direct transfer of contaminants from roads and paved areas.

Increasing rainfall capture (the proportion of rainfall that is allowed to infiltrate into the ground as opposed to entering into piped drainage systems) is one of the most important strategies in rainwater management for the District.

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## **BEACH ACCESS REPORT (2001)**

The recommendations in the report were intended to form the basis of a five-year plan to further improve public access to the foreshore within the District. In preparing the report, 28 beach access opportunities (11 on east shorelines and 17 on west shoreline) were evaluated. Two of these were evaluated as both beach access and viewpoint development potential. At the time of report preparation, five sites were considered to be complete, twenty were considered feasible for future development and the remaining five were considered not viable.

## **PARKS MASTER PLAN (1996, 1999)**

The Parks Master Plan was approved in 1996. A Parks Master Plan Policy Summary was prepared in 1999 that is a critical review of the 1996 Comprehensive Parks and Open Space Master Plan recommendations. The contents of the 1999 report supersede all recommendations in the 1996 document. The goal outlined in the 1996 Master Plan is to “develop and maintain a quality park system with adequate natural areas and developed recreational amenities to adequately satisfy the diverse recreational needs of all existing and future Central Saanich residents”.

The report also outlines the highest priorities for park and beach access upgrading as well as highest priority areas for parkland acquisition and disposition. Given that the plan was prepared over 25 years ago, priorities for improvements and/or acquisition will be reviewed as part of the master plan preparation.

## **OTHER BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

While some of these documents are dated, they do provide some context for development of the Parks and Trails Master Plan and some past history on several of the parks within the municipality.

- DCS Signage and Wayfinding Program (2023)
- CRD Regional Parks and Trails Strategic Plan 2022-2032 (approved 2023)
- CRD Island View Beach Regional Park Draft Management Plan (DRAFT 2017).
- CRD Regional Trails Management Plan (2016)
- Newman Farm Master Plan (2007)
- Butterfield Park Inventory and Assessment (2002)
- Oak Haven Park Management Plan (1999)
- Review of Brooks Park Development Potential (1992)
- Centennial Park Master Plan (1989)

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## 6.0 BENEFITS AND TRENDS

### BENEFITS OF PARKS AND TRAILS

There is a significant body of research that demonstrate the value of parks, trails and open spaces for the central role they play in human, community and ecological health.



#### Physical and Mental Health

Numerous studies indicate that spending time in nature provides physical, mental and social health benefits.<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Increasing time in nature can help reduce disease risk, decrease risks of obesity and decrease stress.

Time in nature can help children develop their gross motor skills and studies indicate that time in nature can increase the concentration performance of children with ADHD.<sup>5,6</sup>

Based on the health benefits that nature spaces provide, there is a growing network of nature prescription programs that provide resources for health-care professionals to prescribe time in nature.<sup>7</sup>



#### Social Health and Inclusion

Parks and open spaces and the user amenities within them contribute to the identity and spirit of a community and provide places for people to connect.

Studies show that people who connect with nature feel less isolated and form more connections with neighbours, increasing the sense of inclusion and belonging.<sup>8</sup>

Participation in sport, physical activity and/or recreation contribute to perceptions of feeling welcomed and included, feeling networked or connected, contribute to a sense of community pride, and contribute to a sense of trust and reliance in the community.<sup>9</sup>

Access and participation in recreational activities can help reduce crime prevention and can help reduce delinquent behaviour.

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<sup>2</sup> National Recreation and Parks Association. Parks and Other Green Environments: Essential Components of a Healthy Human Habitat. 2010.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.healthbynature.ca/>

<sup>4</sup> #Natureforall / Home to Us All: How Connecting with Nature Helps Us Care for Ourselves and the Earth. IUCN / Children & Nature Network. 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Frances Kuo. Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits. American Recreation and Parks Association. 2010

<sup>6</sup> Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health. Active Outdoor Play Statement. 2018.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/>

<sup>8</sup> Frances Kuo. Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits. American Recreation and Parks Association. 2010

<sup>9</sup> Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute. (2023). Custom analysis, 2023 Social, Health, Economic, and Environmental Impact survey.



### Environment

Parks, trails and open spaces provide critical habitat for wildlife, protect and provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity, and support ecosystem functions such as air and water purification, stormwater management and flood protection.

They provide an opportunity to promote and protect natural heritage and stewardship.

Studies show that the more people experience, connect with, and share their love of nature, in all its diversity, the more support and action there will be for its conservation.<sup>10</sup>

With changing climate, parks and open spaces also play a role in building climate resilience through use of nature-based solutions. Trails and green corridors for active transportation help reduce carbon emissions while also improving the mental and heart health of commuters and recreational users.

### Economic



Economic benefits of parks and trails are typically seen through tourism revenue, business investment and enhanced property values.<sup>11</sup>

They provide “natural capital” which are resources and flows of service that provide broad benefits such as carbon sequestration by trees, plants and soil, and water filtration and flood storage by wetlands, some of which services can be more effective and less costly than traditional hard infrastructure.<sup>12</sup>

Use of parks and trails can also have spin-off benefits of reduced health care costs.

## TRENDS AFFECTING PARKS AND TRAILS MANAGEMENT

The following is a summary of some of the general trends affecting management and operations of parks, trails and open spaces.

### Truth And Reconciliation

Parks, trails and open spaces present opportunities to support truth and reconciliation with Indigenous communities through growing an ongoing connection to the land, better integrating traditional ecological knowledge, values and interests, and considering other ways to support and amplify indigenous language, culture and history.

### Demographics and Lifestyle

In general, Canada’s population is aging. Many communities have an increasing proportion of older adults and fewer children. As noted in Section 3.0 Demographics, there is an increasing proportion of young children (under age 9) in Central Saanich as well.

Canadians are generally living more sedentary lives with more of their leisure time either enjoying individual pursuits or spent online. The focus on online leisure, particularly in youth is leading to nature

<sup>10</sup> #Natureforall / Home to Us All: How Connecting with Nature Helps Us Care for Ourselves and the Earth. IUCN / Children & Nature Network. 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Frances Kuo, Synopsis of 2010 Research Papers: The Key Benefits (Ashburn, Virginia: American Recreation and Parks Association, 2010)

<sup>12</sup> Cheryl Ng Hui Ting / City of Vancouver. Natural Capital Valuation of Vancouver’s Parks. 2020.

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deficit disorders. Designing and implementing opportunities to connect children, youth and families with nature are important for the health of both humans and the natural environment.

### **Active Transportation and Connectivity**

There is greater demand for informal and unstructured individual leisure activities, such as walking and cycling, in part due to increasingly busy schedules.

The proportion of people choosing active modes of transportation is growing as an alternative to driving. In addition, larger numbers of people are using trails and cycling infrastructure for recreational use. Providing connections within the community to parks and trails along with associated facilities (such as bike racks, e-bike charging stations, etc.) in parks and along trails will support both commuter and recreational users.

### **Accessibility / Equity / Inclusion**

The *Accessible BC Act* became law in June 2021 and aims to remove all barriers to accessibility for British Columbians with disabilities. Under the new Act, public sector organizations in BC, including local governments must publish an Accessibility Plan, prepared in consultation with an accessibility committee.

Canada's population is increasingly diverse. Parks, trails and other open spaces need to be welcoming and inclusive for all who choose to use them regardless of ethnicity, gender, income, age, ability or identity.

### **Anti-Social Behaviours / Social Challenges**

There are growing challenges in social issues such as access to affordable housing, growing unhoused populations, addictions and mental health. The provincial declared a public health emergency in 2016 related to the growing number of drug-related overdoses and deaths. The COVID-19 pandemic amplified some of these issues. These challenges affect municipal operations staff across the region.

### **Increasing Land Values / Competition for Land**

Increasing land values and new provincial housing legislation means that it is getting harder and/or more expensive for local governments to acquire new parkland.

The growing population places increasing demand for the protection of important natural areas and environmental resources as well as for access to parks and open spaces for recreational opportunities.

### **Competing / Changing Demands**

As the population grows, so does the number of visitors to parks and trails as well as the types of experiences and uses that visitors are looking for in parks and open spaces. There was also increased use patterns noted following the COVID-19 pandemic. The Canadian City Parks Report estimates an approximate 15% increase in park visitation from 2020 to 2022 across Canada<sup>13</sup>.

There is a growing demand for spaces that have something for everyone as well as for single use amenities that take larger footprints in parks (i.e. bike skills parks, dedicated sport courts, etc.). In areas with growing populations and limited access to new parkland, designing multi-functionality into park and trail spaces is becoming increasingly important, however this multi-functionality may also increase conflicts among user groups.

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<sup>13</sup> Surfacing Solutions: The Canadian City Parks Report. Park People. 2023.

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### **Infrastructure Deficits / Resourcing Demands / Sustainable Service Delivery**

Aging infrastructure coupled with increased use means that operating and capital budgets are increasing. Parks and trails need to be positioned as an essential service that are as important to the community's well-being as traditional services, such as roads and utilities.

Partnerships with other service providers such as schools, other service providers and/or community groups and volunteers are a key consideration in helping with service delivery.

### **Data Driven Management**

Parks and trails managers have more opportunities to use software, "big-data" and other tools to have real-time data about parks, trails and open spaces to help make informed management decisions. Advanced data analytics tools can provide real-time data, predictive analysis, and user-friendly interfaces, enabling park managers to make data-driven decisions that enhance visitor experiences.

Mobile crowdsource technologies (ex. TrailForks, Strava, AllTrails) along with social media, are making it much easier for the public to find trails and natural spaces. In addition, citizen collection of data can be used to support environmental management (i.e. iNaturalist, eBird).

### **Environmental Stewardship and Protection**

Citizens are becoming more informed of environmental issues and in some cases are putting greater pressure to provide more naturalized park spaces, incorporating green infrastructure and/or using more native or native-adapted plant species.

Volunteer programs such as Saanich's Pulling Together and "Friends of" groups are increasingly important to help with natural areas protection service delivery, particularly with regards to growing issues related to invasive species.

### **Climate Change**

Parks and open spaces play an increasing role in the mitigation of climate change impacts by providing opportunities for green infrastructure and nature-based solutions (i.e. stormwater services, tree canopy coverage, shoreline protection, etc.).

Wetter conditions in winter with longer droughts in summer, coupled with an increase in unpredictable storm events affects park and trail maintenance (ex. increasing risk of erosion, wood debris clean-up from windstorms, damage to park and trail infrastructure, etc.) and park use patterns (ex. longer peak seasons, more use of shoreline access and parks to cool down during heat waves). Some native species, such as western redcedars, are affected by changing weather patterns – parks operations will need to address this during species selection for new plantings both in ornamental horticulture as well as any environmental restoration work.