



MEMORANDUM

TO: ADVISORY PLANNING COMMISSION
FROM: JAMES VAN HEMERT, CONSULTING TOWN PLANNER
SUBJECT: PARKS AND GREENWAYS
DATE: 1/24/2022

Preamble

The Town has an abundance of park land and recreational amenities. However, much of the park land remains without desired amenities, and some neighbourhoods have no park amenities.

Most recently, at the last APC meeting, we discussed a location and the desired features for a dog park. Several years ago, the APC played a major role in selecting a location and design for a memorial park, now named River's Edge Memorial Garden, and substantially completed.


The Town seeks to provide a wide-ranging suite of recreational amenities for people of all ages and abilities. Additionally, the Town maintains green space, dedicated to preservation of ecological functions.

For reference to the discussion on park priorities, please find in the appendix excerpts from the OCP's parks and greenways goals, objectives and policies. For convenience Map 7 'Parks, Open Space, and Public Facilities including the Greenways and Blueways Plan' is also included. The clearest view of the map, however, is within the OCP on the Town's website.

Actions and priorities

On the following page is the OCP's table of suggested park improvements.

1. Are these improvements still relevant?
2. Are these improvements matched with the best park location?
3. Which should be prioritized?

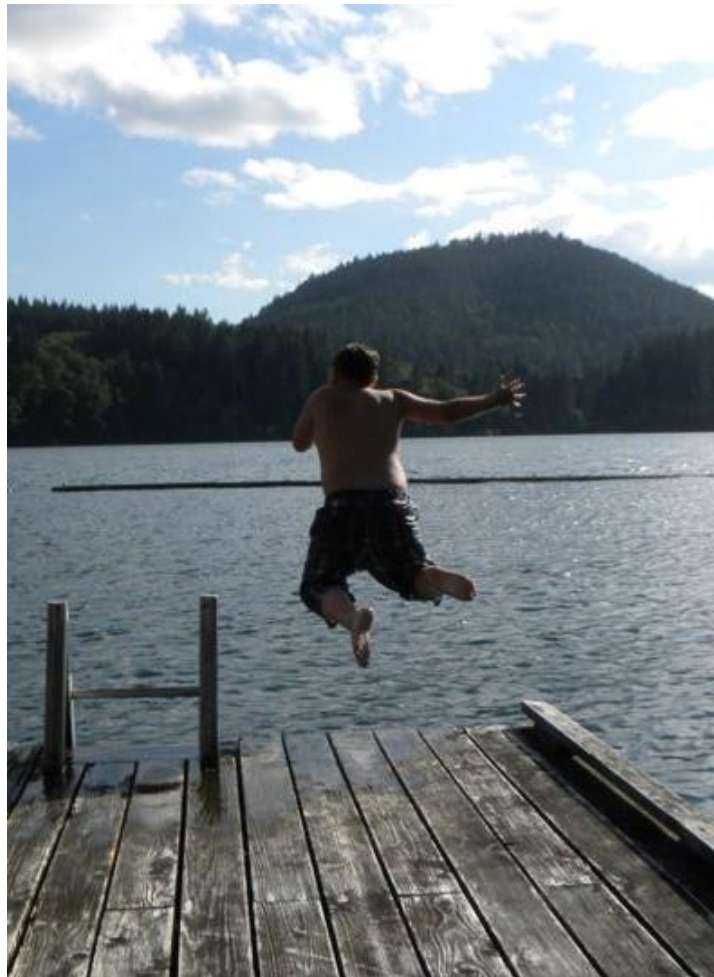
Table Park improvements	
Centennial Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install aging-supportive exercise and activity equipment
Cowichan Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop nature trail encompassing circumference of existing wetlands • Support pickle ball facilities
Dashwood Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add native plants and trees to encourage the creation of a nature reserve • Provide a picnic table
Lakeview Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the expansion of the floating walkway and connecting land walkway • Improve access and wayfinding information for public beach and to the trail connecting to Point Ideal
Joginder Bains Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide picnic tables, benches, and a garbage receptacle • Plant trees to provide shade • Develop a dog park
North Shore Road Greenbelt.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail and public lake access
Riverside/Duck Pond Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain sandy beach • Maintain and enhance picnic and play areas • Construct pedestrian accessibility beach ramp. For example, a mat such as those used at beaches in the City of Vancouver and Wasaga Beach, Ontario 
Sahtlam Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install a drainage system • Replace existing swings • Add playground equipment for different age levels, including toddlers • Upgrade basketball court and fencing
Saywell Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a boat launch for non-motorized boats • Plant trees around picnic tables to provide some shade • Install wheelchair accessible picnic tables

APPENDIX

OCP EXCERPTS

Parks

This plan designates over 68 ha (168 acres) for parks and open space¹. This represents primarily Town owned land, a portion of the Cowichan River Provincial Park and two parks on privately owned land with special public use arrangements (Friendship and Gillespie Parks). 11.06 hectares (acres) of developed parks are dispersed throughout the community. This represents 3.68 hectares per thousand residents. While this is well above the generally accepted urban standard of 0.75 hectare per thousand residents, it is important to understand that a significant portion of these lands are undeveloped, including part of the Lakeside Campground, natural areas that are preserved for their ecological and aesthetic functions, and Provincial parkland. A major challenge facing the community is installing playground and recreational equipment in existing parks. New or expanded park facilities planned are detailed in the policy section 10.4.2 3) below. Parks and open space areas are shown on Map 5 – Parks, Open Space and Public Facilities. Existing parks are listed in Appendix B.



¹ Open space is primarily undeveloped land, intended to remain in a natural condition.

Recreation, Parks & Institutions Goals, Objectives and Policies

The following Recreation, Parks and Institutions goals, objectives, and policies advance the healthy community factors of physical environments, education, health services, and social support,



Figure 1 New Pickle ball facilities at Cowichan Park / Moneys Creek built with private donations

Goal for Recreation, Parks and Institutions

A diverse range of recreational opportunities and institutional facilities and services is available for the enjoyment and needs of residents and visitors.

Objectives

- 1) Provide active and passive recreational opportunities for people of all ages and capabilities.
- 2) Provide a comprehensive parks system emphasizing access to watercourses, walking, and cycling while ensuring adequate sports amenities, playgrounds, and green space.
- 3) Facilitate development of greenway corridors linking forests, parks, residential areas, and amenities within the Town, and linking the Town to adjacent Electoral Areas 'F' and 'I'. This will enable wildlife and people to move about easily and will provide recreational opportunities.
- 4) Provide institutional facilities and services in a central and neighbourhood locations, easily accessed by all.
- 5) Ensure all properties and facilities zoned as public use remain available for recreational and cultural activities, educational programmes, and community gardens.
- 6) Support safe, strong community focused schools.
- 7) Provide residential and support services for an aging population

General Policies

- 1) Improve access for those with physical and mobility challenges.
- 2) Co-ordinate recreational, park and institutional development in accordance with the Town's Downtown Revitalization Strategy of 2005.

- 3) When additional building space is required, encourage that existing buildings, such as ones belonging to associations, religious groups, the School District, etc., be utilized for the benefit of the community.
- 4) Develop recreational facilities for and with the active participation of youth, neighbourhood, and service groups, private enterprise, the School District, the CVRD and the Town.
- 5) Support the establishment and maintenance of community gardens for use by residents.
- 6) All lands zoned as public use shall not be converted to other uses.
- 7) Enhance and expand educational opportunities for pre-K-12 and the entire community.

Park Policies

- 1) Continue to develop a comprehensive parks system consisting of:
 - a) **Community parks** that serve the entire community with facilities such as sports fields, community centres, outdoor seating, group picnic areas, and campgrounds;
 - b) **Neighbourhood parks** that are in walking distance for all residents of a neighbourhood with facilities such as playgrounds, tennis courts, and basketball courts;
 - c) **Special area parks** with ecologically sensitive or unique (historical, commemorative or special use) features; and
 - d) **Greenway corridors** with trails or pathways, for walking and cycling; linking forests, parks, residential areas and amenities within the Town, as well as linking the Town to adjacent Electoral Areas via facilities such as the Cowichan Valley Trail.
- 2) When considering parks development:
 - a) complement the objectives and policies of Section 12 - Greenways of this Plan;
 - b) ensure the policies for the provision of parkland for all residential development are followed in accordance with the *LGA*;
 - c) endeavour to protect special features, heritage sites, and environmentally sensitive areas;
 - d) endeavour to distribute Neighbourhood Parks equally throughout the community;
 - e) wherever possible, develop and improve facilities, including baseball and softball diamonds, soccer fields and basketball courts, at school sites in Town in conjunction or partnership with the School District;
 - f) amalgamate any park comprising more than one land registry parcel into one parcel;
 - g) regarding the expansion of the trail system, align with the trails illustrated on Map 2 – Mobility; and
 - h) ensure sufficient public toilet facilities are provided throughout the Plan area.
- 3) Include age-friendly design elements such as level and wide walkways, wheelchair accessible picnic tables, older adult playground with exercise equipment.
- 4) All facilities and amenities provided by the Town must take into consideration the ability of all members of the community to access and enjoy them.

- 5) Require wherever feasible that public access be provided along key waterfront lands in order to achieve a linked multi-use trail system between major parks, greenbelts, and other recreational features throughout Lake Cowichan.
- 6) At selected existing parks, consider the following improvements and additions to facilities:
- 7) Pursue the provision of public access to all watercourses, for recreational use by residents and visitors by the following means, subject to environmental and engineering constraints:
 - a) where publicly owned properties have access to watercourses, provide public access;
 - b) where watercourses are in private tenures, negotiate, where possible, agreements with landowners for public access;
 - c) keep road ends that front on watercourses open to the public; and
 - d) whenever possible, secure properties or a right-of-way between the Cowichan River Bridge and Saywell Park. The intent is to establish a corridor for a riverfront walkway. This area could feature amenities and activities to attract residents and visitors and provide public parking.

Greenways

Greenways are vegetated corridors that form a travelling network between parks, natural areas, and activity centre such as recreation, schools, business, and employment areas. Greenways may serve as active transportation routes for commuting to work, school, businesses and recreation areas. The greenways network creates buffers and protects vegetation and trees; this not only has a visually pleasing effect but also relates to the Town's objectives of preserving features of the natural environment and minimizing its carbon footprint. Map 7 Parks, Open Space and Public Facilities – Greenways and Blueways.

Greenways Goal

The network of green spaces and corridors is protected and sustained for the benefit of people.

Objectives

- 1) Create corridors and improve connections

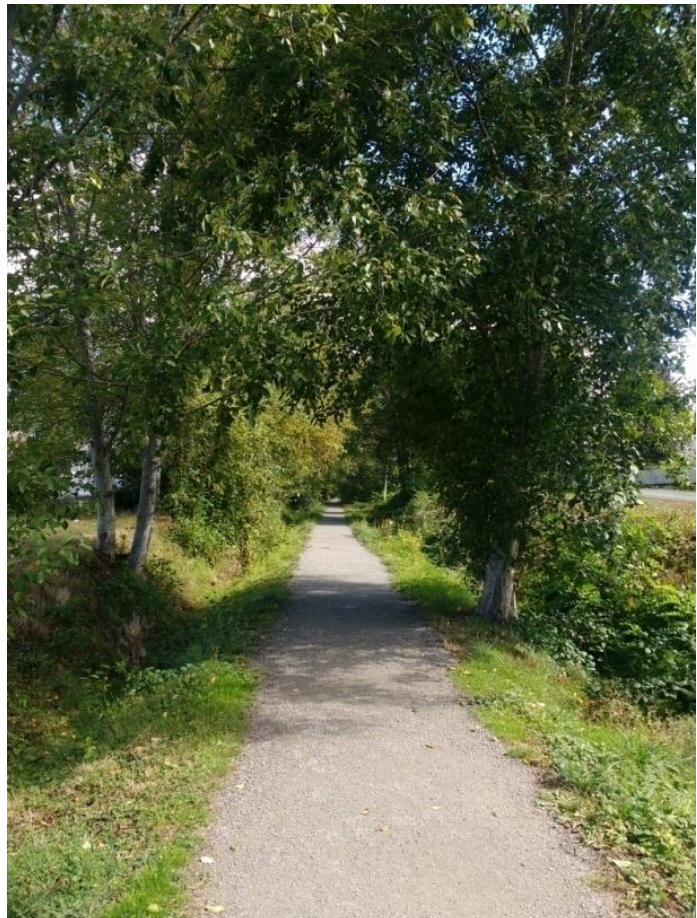


Figure 2 Trans Canada Trail

linking open spaces, parks, and activity centres that form a greenways network.

- 2) Protect environmentally sensitive areas, including watercourses, wildlife habitats and corridors, and natural plant habitats.
- 3) Ensure that land use, development, and operations respect environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4) Foster the use of greenways as active transportation routes for non-motorized transportation, as a means of reducing greenhouse gases.
- 5) Encourage the re-greening or re-planting of natural vegetation of pathways or corridors in developed areas.
- 6) Promote and foster awareness of the importance of the greenways network.

Policies

- 1) Improve and enhance the greenways network in accordance with Map 7 Parks, Open Space and Public Facilities – Greenways and Blueways, with activities affecting them conducted in an environmentally sensitive manner. Priority improvements include:
 - a) Create wayfinding signage for trails and destinations
 - b) Create educational and historical signage
 - c) Create partnerships with Lake Cowichan First Nation, Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society, the CVRD, the Province, Timber West, developers and private property owners to promote, enhance and expand the greenways network.
 - d) Consider the acquisition of land or improvements to the greenways network when reviewing development applications.
- 2) Improvements may include:
 - a) the acquisition of land or rights of way for greenways corridors through purchase or lease, in cooperation with the Town;
 - b) the voluntary protection of greenways located on private property through restrictive covenants, easements, or gifting; and
 - c) the construction of physical improvements such as trails, signs and displays, riparian fencing, re-vegetation and erosion control measures.

Classification

- 1) There are various ways that trails can be classified, e.g., according to use, role, location, or construction standards. In the Greenways Strategy, there are two types of classifications applied:
 - a) Role – defines the context and overall function of the trail,
 - b) Type – defines the construction standard.
- 2) In addition to these classifications, each trail serves certain purposes and uses.
 - a) **Regional Connector:** These trails provide the regional links to surrounding areas beyond Town boundaries. They are typically long trails, and many pass through natural areas. Because they are major links, some of the regional connectors are destination trails, offering experiences of natural features of ecological significance.
 - b) **Community Connector:** These trails provide the major links within the Town, e.g. from Downtown out to the neighbourhoods, major east-west connector. Many of these trails follow road corridors,

since the roads already provide links and they provide access across challenging terrain. Even though a trail route may follow a road, the trail can be located off and separated from the road surface.

- c) **Neighbourhood Connector:** These trails are the local links in the trail system, connecting neighbourhoods to the regional and community connectors and serving local needs, e.g., safe routes to schools. These links are best located off road corridors.
- d) **Park Trails:** These trails are located within the Town’s larger parks. Some of the trails connect with Town-wide routes, and others function as part of the destination experience of the parks

