

APPENDIX C

**BACKGROUND AND
PROCESS**

**PARKS, RECREATION AND
CULTURE MASTER PLAN**

District of Saanich, BC.

July 2012

Background and Introduction

Process

The development of the Master Plan started in September 2010. The draft report was presented to Saanich Committees in September 2011, with final approval by Council in June 2012.

Phase 1 – Project Start-Up

Project Initiation Meeting

- The project was underway in September 2010, and started with a meeting between the Project Management Committee and consulting team.
- An overall communications strategy was prepared to ensure that all meetings were well publicized and that all opportunities for gathering input were capitalized upon.

Facility and Amenity Tours

- Four tours of the major community centres and the parks and amenities in the surrounding communities were undertaken.

Background Reports

- Other documents were reviewed including the municipal Strategic Plan, OCP, and other strategic planning documents (see Working Paper #1).

Strategy Fulfillment Overview

- The 1990 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and 2001 update were reviewed, with a status report on strategy fulfillment prepared (see Working Paper #2).

Demographics

- Data from the 2001 and 2006 censuses were reviewed and key demographic issues identified (see Working Paper #3).

Inventories

- The current status of the parks and recreation systems was described and analyzed through the development of several inventories:
 - Organizations (see Working Paper #4)
 - Buildings and facilities (see Working Paper #11)
 - Programming (see Working Paper #10)
 - Resources (see Working Paper #12).

Comparative Municipal Service Review

- Data from the UBCM database of municipal statistics were reviewed and a comparative assessment of the Saanich system was prepared.

Trends, Best Practices and Benchmarks

- Data on current global and local trends were gathered and summarized. Their implications for Saanich parks and recreation were noted (see Working Paper #5).

Phase 2 – Staff and Community Consultation

Financial Parameters Workshop with Senior Municipal Staff

- A meeting with the municipal CEO, CFO and key Parks and Recreation Department managers was hosted to ensure that community and other discussions were consistent with the municipality's perceived financial future.
- A meeting was also held with the municipal Department heads to identify key integration issues.

Staff Workshops

- Workshops were held with staff from the Parks and Recreation Department.

Household Survey

- A household survey was mailed out to over 10,000 residents in mid-January 2011. By the due date of February 15, 2011, 1,568 surveys were returned. This provided a statistical validity of +/-2.5%, 19 times out of 20. Each mailed package contained a cover letter signed by the Mayor, a seven page, close ended question survey, a comments sheet with two opened questions and a postage paid return envelope. Data was gathered into a written report (see Working Paper #8). General comments were input and sorted to provide a key resource for this and future planning. The survey also gathered a list of emails that allowed a second survey to be distributed to gather reaction to the main plan recommendations.
- A similar set of questions were included in an online survey which was promoted through the Saanich website. There were 700 responses to this survey, of which 590 were from Saanich residents (see Working Paper #9).

Focus Groups

- A series of six focus groups were held with stakeholder groups such as aquatics users, community groups, field users, etc. Over 50 people attended the focus groups. Two sessions were also held with Saanich Committee members, which include Councillors. The meetings gathered views concerning key issues (see Working Paper #6).

Consulting Youth

- A youth consultation process was initiated through the Saanich Youth Council (see Working Paper #7).

Other Stakeholders

- A list of key informants – VIHA, CRD Parks staff, School District staff, plus others as noted by the Project Committee - was drawn up and meetings arranged with them; some were individual meetings and some more focus groups (see Working Paper #6).

Open Houses

- Four public open houses/workshops were held at each of the community centres.

Phase 3 – Issue Identification, Analysis and Solution Development**Draft Strategic Plan**

- A series of three workshops were held with Council Committee members, Department managers, and with other Department heads
- At the end of the three workshops, the consolidated results were brought together into a draft set of strategies and recommendations for review by and discussion with the Project Management Committee and other key departments.

Presentation to Saanich Committees

- The strategies and recommendations were presented to Saanich committees in September 2011.

On-line Survey

- In January 2012, the strategies and recommendations were formatted into an on-line survey and distributed via email to all those who registered through the household survey or by adding their emails through the District website. The results of this survey were used to clarify and confirm public support for the draft Strategic Plan.

Phase 4 – Report Preparation**Presentations**

- A presentation of the Master Plan's principal recommendations was made to a variety of groups.

Open Houses

- The executive summary formed the basis for presentation at two Public Meetings.

Council Presentation

- The draft Master Plan was presented to Council in June 2012.

Review of Previous Master Plans

Note: See Working Paper #2 for a more complete review.

The District of Saanich prepared its first Parks and Recreation Master Plan in 1990. Its principal focus was on the development of leisure services. Its philosophy focused on both the direct benefit to service users and also on the benefit that parks and recreation services provide to the community as a whole. Its twin philosophical goals were:

- the development of a sense of community
- the development of the individual.

The public survey which was part of the planning process identified public support for facility improvements, the development of cycling trails, natural parks and additional neighborhood parks especially in the areas of Royal Oak, Gordon Head, and the Shelbourne corridor.

The need for a fourth recreation centre was identified and subsequently Saanich Commonwealth Place was opened in 1993.

The plan also identified a large number of land parcels that should be acquired for parks over the following 10 years. Indeed the acquisition of these land parcels has provided the basis for the current system, by establishing and expanding parks such as Christmas Hill, Colquitz Creek, Layritz Park, Rithet's Bog, the Gorge Waterway Park, Lambrick Park and Blenkinsop Lake.

The master plan also proposed to partner with school districts on site development and maintenance, and recommended the use of a number of financial mechanisms as the basis for funding the system -- referendums, development cost charges, and the establishment of a land acquisition reserve fund which would receive tax revenues and be available for land acquisition at the appropriate time.

In 2001, it was decided to update the 1990 master plan. The 2001 plan was built around the same philosophy of community and individual development. Much of the work that has been conducted by the Parks and Recreation Department over the last 10 years has been implementing the recommendations of this master plan.

It proposed updating the Parks Priority Plan to address the need for classification standards, financing strategies, as well as identifying key acquisition areas. It proposed to keep the area standards from the 1990 plan but not to apply them in a universal fashion. This approach was primarily to address issues such as the need to protect environmentally sensitive areas and natural parkland. The master plan recommended that there be a focus on adding open space in the Southeast and Southwest quadrants of the municipality.

A Trails Master Plan was also proposed. Work has been undertaken on this plan, through the completion of the Centennial Trail Plan and the establishment of Trail Guidelines.

The need to upgrade playgrounds to Canadian Standards Association standards, to add an additional waterpark, and to improve youth outdoor recreation facilities were identified as key recommendations. The plan also proposed improving playfields both by moving ahead with the development of Layritz Park and by working regionally to establish sports facilities which would serve more high-performance activity.

Focusing on the natural environment was a priority noted by the public through the household survey; the master plan recommended in particular that trees in both the public and private domains be an area of focus, and in particular that the arboriculture budget be increased. Many of these recommendations have been further detailed in the recently developed Urban Forest Strategy.

A financial plan was prepared to address parks capital work, but was never fully implemented. Community partnerships and grants allowed for some significant projects (Layritz, artificial turf fields, lacrosse box upgrades) to be completed. Most recently was the \$1M RInC grant that allowed for \$3M work on playgrounds, sport and tennis courts.

By 2001, all four of the current recreation centres were in place. The 2001 the Master Plan proposed ensuring that a set of core facilities were available at each of the centres. Since then, both Cedar Hill and Gordon Head recreation centres have received significant upgrading, a youth centre has been added at Saanich Commonwealth Place, and its fitness centre upgraded, while the Pearkes Recreation Centre fieldhouse has been extensively renovated and re-purposed. The master plan also proposed partnering with the Library Board and the establishment of the Centennial Library adjacent to Pearkes Recreation Centre was very much in line with the proposals. Other partnerships which were proposed in the master plan and which have moved significantly forward have been the collaborations with the two school districts and the establishment of satellite community centres at three middle schools (Royal Oak, Gordon Head, Colquitz), and a seniors/adult recreation centre at Cordova Bay Elementary School.

The master plan also proposed significant expansion of recreation programming primarily through increased partnering with the not-for-profit sector. This last decade has seen many successful partnering initiatives such as the establishment of Saanich Neighborhood Place within Pearkes recreation centre. Other key recommendations focused on improved marketing, the development of partnering policies (P3's), the updating of joint use agreements with school districts, and the development of an annual report card.

There is no doubt that the last two decades have seen significant developments in both recreation and park facilities and programming. The master plans reflected the attitudes of the time, and provided an effective framework for ongoing activity, continually focusing activities on the achievement of a long-term vision of individual and community development.