

TOWN OF SIDNEY PARKLAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

December 2023



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Parkland Needs Assessment

Executive Summary

Introduction

Parks Overview

The Town of Sidney is a growing, urban community. Since 1976, its population has nearly doubled, from 6,735 to 12,318 in 2021. Despite this growth, the amount of parkland in Sidney has remained relatively static in recent decades, and currently sits at 23.43 hectares (ha) in 2022. The majority of the Town's parkland was acquired in the 1960s and 1970s, with smaller, infrequent acquisitions since that time.

As Sidney continues to grow, ensuring the provision of adequate local neighbourhood park space will be an important factor in building a healthy community. Parks and green spaces can help to promote health and well-being, including improving mental health, building social connection, supporting physical activity, and the healthy development of children.

Sidney's 27 municipal parks are spread across its 5.1 square kilometers of land area, along with 17 beach accesses to its 10.2 kilometers of natural shoreline. Although Sidney does not contain any Capital Regional District (CRD) regional parks, provincial parks, or federal parks, there are two school sites in Sidney which supplement municipal parkland. For the purposes of this report, Sidney's 27 parks have been classified into four categories: Destination Parks (3), Neighbourhood Parks (11), Nature/Linear Park (4), and Green Space (9).

Methodology

The Parkland Needs Assessment provides analysis on the sufficiency of parkland area and distribution rather than assessing the amenities of existing parks (a comprehensive inventory of park amenities can be found in the 2018 Parks Master Plan). Drawing on standard assessment practices in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of Sidney's park supply and identify potential gaps in the network, three different methodologies have been used to analyze Sidney's supply of parkland:

1. Area-based analysis: Parkland supply measured as a percentage in relation to land area – common standards are 12%, 17%, or 30% land area dedicated as park space.
2. Population-based analysis: Parkland supply measured in hectares per 1,000 residents – common standards are 2.4 and 4 hectares of park space per 1,000 residents.
3. Spatial analysis: Parkland supply measured in relation to residents' proximity to parks – common standards are 5- to 10-minute walk from home to a park.

The standards noted above are used in order to help assess the sufficiency of parkland supply and identify gaps in the parks network. Sidney's unique context and history also require that the standards act only as reference points for park provision, rather than to achieve specific goals.

Current Conditions

An overview of parkland supply in present-day Sidney using the common assessment standards listed above is outlined in the table below. The table also groups parks in Sidney into four commonly accepted park types, with each type ranked by its total number and total area in hectares.



Park Type	Number of Parks	Current Park Area (ha)	Share of total land area in Sidney (%)	Current Parkland Supply (ha/1,000 residents)
Destination Park	3	5.69	1.12%	0.46
Neighbourhood Park	11	10.60	2.08%	0.86
Green Space	9	1.30	0.26%	0.11
Nature/Linear Park	4	5.84	1.15%	0.47
Total Municipal Parkland	27	23.43	4.59%	1.90

This table shows that Neighbourhood Parks, which is the category of park intended to primarily meet the daily needs of residents, has the highest number of parks and overall largest share of parkland in Sidney.

Area-based Analysis

Sidney currently has 4.6% of its overall land base as municipal park – significantly less than the 12%, 17%, or 30% area-based standards used in other jurisdictions. With Sidney’s small size and built-out urban land use pattern, working to achieve any of these is likely not possible and these standards are not recommended as targets for Sidney to work towards.

Population-based Analysis

Sidney has a current park supply of 1.9 ha/1,000 residents, significantly below the recommended Canadian standard of 4 ha/1,000 residents. Given this gap, two more relevant targets for population-based analysis are considered: a moderate goal of 2.0 ha/1,000 residents (a 5% increase over existing levels) and a stretch goal of 2.4 ha/1,000 residents, which reflects a more moderate standard for parkland provision from the United Kingdom. With its current park supply, the Town is 1.2 ha of land short of the moderate goal, and 6.1 ha short of the stretch goal.

Comparison with jurisdictions similar in size and population density shows that Sidney’s current parkland supply may be typical for a community of its characteristics, even if it is on the lower end in terms of overall park provision.

Spatial Analysis

The map to the right provides an illustration of 200 metre and 400 metre walking distances to parks throughout the Town. This represents an approximately 5-minute walk depending on mobility level (i.e., 400m for the average person, or 200m for a person with mobility challenges or travelling with small children).

The map analysis illustrates that while many areas of Sidney are well served in terms of



residents' proximity to parkland (although potentially underserved with respect to size or amenities) there are four general areas identified as gaps in the park network:

1. Downtown North
2. Northern Waterfront Areas
3. West Side
4. Downtown Centre

Catchment Areas Analysis

In order to further understand parkland supply and distribution at a localized level, the Town was geographically broken down into twelve park "catchment areas" based on the location of Sidney's parks, relative walking distances, and census population boundaries. This analysis found that the areas most well-served by parkland are primarily centred around Sidney's largest and oldest parks. When analyzing parkland distribution with population density factored in, several key gaps emerged:

- Two catchment areas have no parkland (Allbay, Shoreacres).
- Two catchment areas have over 1,000 residents but less than 1 ha/1,000 people of parkland (Downtown, Melissa-Central).

Future Conditions

Over the last few decades, Sidney has experienced modest annual population growth and land development. This population growth is projected to continue through 2038 as identified in the CRD's 2018 Regional Growth Strategy and the Town's Official Community Plan. By 2038, the Town of Sidney's population is predicted to grow to 14,045 residents, an increase of approximately 1,700 people. This growth is expected to be primarily focused in the West Side, Downtown, and Tulista-Iroquois catchment areas. Given the relative lack of parkland current in the West Side and Downtown areas, consideration should be given to expanding supply in these areas.

Findings & Recommendations

Sidney has a relatively low supply of parkland and some notable gaps in its park network. While this report recommends developing an acquisition strategy to help increase supply, the costs of even modest land acquisition are substantial due to the high cost of land in the Greater Victoria area.

A small community with limited resources like Sidney will be challenged to fund a substantial level of parkland acquisition, given the Town's budget and limited financial resources. However, given the importance of green space to human well-being, and the expectation of continued growth in the community, some level of parkland acquisition needs to be explored, including repurposing existing municipal land for park use, establishing agreements with other landowners, or purchasing land outright.

A combination of all of these options is likely warranted to help the Town to meet its current and future parks goals.

Conclusions from the Parks Needs Assessment can be summarized into five separate findings, each with an accompanying recommendation for future consideration.



Finding 1: Sidney has a relatively low supply of parkland when compared to most accepted standards and some peer communities.

- *Recommendation:* Develop a parkland acquisition strategy to identify potential locations for new parkland and pursue them as opportunities arise.

Finding 2: The Town does not currently have sufficient financial resources to achieve any significant level of parkland acquisition.

- *Recommendation:* Consider implementing specific funding mechanisms such as the DCC bylaw, capital reserve transfers, or borrowing to achieve parkland acquisition goals.

Finding 3: The Town will need improved internal capacity to purchase additional parkland (and meet other land needs) for the future.

- *Recommendation:* Establish a set of policies and procedures to guide property acquisition and disposals.

Finding 4: Areas projected for higher population growth already have a parkland deficit.

- *Recommendation:* Actively pursue property acquisition opportunities in some or all of these areas as a high priority.

Finding 5: Spatial analysis showed some notable gaps in the parks network.

- *Recommendation:* Acquire parkland to fill specific identified gaps in the network.

Tulista Park Playground



TOWN OF SIDNEY PARKLAND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

December 2023

Part 1: Overview and Project Purpose

Introduction

Connecting with the natural environment, whether in local parks, green spaces, or protected natural areas, provides many personal and societal benefits. Parks and green spaces can help to promote health and well-being, including improving mental health, building social connections, supporting physical activity, and the healthy development of children. At the local level, access to a park network that is within walking distance is an important way for the community to realize these benefits. For example, a recent study found that the distance between older adults' homes and parks affects how much they access these spaces, while another found that even short visits to urban parks can tangibly reduce stress.¹ As Sidney is a small urban town with an older demographic, that is also looking to attract young families and individuals, the provision of local neighbourhood parkland will continue to be an important feature of a healthy community.

Over the past several decades, the Town of Sidney has become a largely urban community. While it originated as a typical coastal British Columbia town, its advantageous location, natural beauty, and small town, walkable feel continue to attract new residents. With that growth has come continued development and an increasingly urban character to the community. Since 1976, during the era when most of Sidney's single-family neighbourhoods were subdivided and built (and most of its parkland dedicated), the population has nearly doubled, from 6,735 to 12,318 in 2021. Despite this ongoing community change and growth, the amount of parkland in Sidney has remained relatively static in recent decades, and currently sits at 23.43 hectares as of December 2023.

The Town's 2018 Parks Master Plan (PMP) resulted in a comprehensive parks inventory and assessment and provided some ideas for the further development of existing parks. However, the Town has never undertaken an assessment of the overall sufficiency of its parkland, both in terms of meeting the needs of existing residents and expected future residents. The recent adoption of a new Official Community Plan (OCP) in 2022 has provided an opportunity to undertake this assessment with updated growth estimates and a refreshed vision for the community in mind.

An assessment of the sufficiency of parkland is needed from two perspectives. First, areas where residential densities have been steadily increasing for decades, such as in and around the downtown area, require an evaluation of whether there is sufficient parkland for the current population. Second, in areas anticipated to see new development and population increases, such



Town of Sidney Overview

Size: 511 hectares

Population: 12,318 people

Park Area: 0.23 km² (23 ha)

Total Parks: 27

Largest Park: Reay Creek

¹ Levy-storms L, Chen L, Loukaitou-Sideris A. (2018). *Older adults' needs and preferences for open space and physical activity in and near parks: A systematic review*. Journal of Aging and Physical Activity 26(4): 682-692; Tyrvalinen L et al. (2014). *The influence of urban green environments on stress relief measures: A field experiment*. Journal of Environmental Psychology 38: 1-9.



as in the Galaran neighbourhood in West Sidney, the potential for new parks needs to be explored to meet expected future demand.

Accordingly, the purpose of this report is as follows:

- Establish standards for parkland provision against which Sidney and its neighbourhoods can be analysed.
- Assess Sidney's current park supply and determine adequacy based on the standards for current and anticipated population and growth estimates.
- Identify potential locations for new parkland in Sidney.
- Investigate opportunities and methods for improving connectivity in Sidney's park network.
- Evaluate financial costs for acquiring parkland and identify potential next steps.

It is worth noting that the intent of this analysis is not to directly gauge the level of service (i.e., physical infrastructure or amenities) provided in each existing park in Sidney, but rather to determine whether the area of municipal parkland in Sidney is sufficient to meet the needs of the community, now and in the coming decades. Details regarding current physical infrastructure and the potential for future park enhancements for the Town's existing parks can be found in the PMP.

Overview of Sidney's Park Network

The 2018 PMP inventoried and detailed the existing conditions of Sidney's 27 municipal parks and 17 beach accesses. Due to Sidney's relatively small size (511 hectares or 5.11 square kilometers) and development history, Sidney does not contain any Capital Regional District (CRD) regional parks or provincial or federal parks, like some other municipalities in the region. However, Sidney does boast 10.2 km of natural shoreline, including some significant protected areas, which provides residents with a substantial level of access to the natural environment. There is also direct access from Sidney to the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve via private boat or ferry service. While this study looks specifically at the sufficiency of municipal parkland (including managed natural areas within Sidney's parks) it should be noted that Sidney's waterfront is relatively accessible for all residents and visitors to Sidney and can fulfill some degree of desired access to natural areas for residents.

Generally, parks in Sidney are focused on the provision of recreation and sports facilities, protection of natural areas (nature/linear parks), and the provision of small green spaces within residential areas (neighbourhood parks and green space).

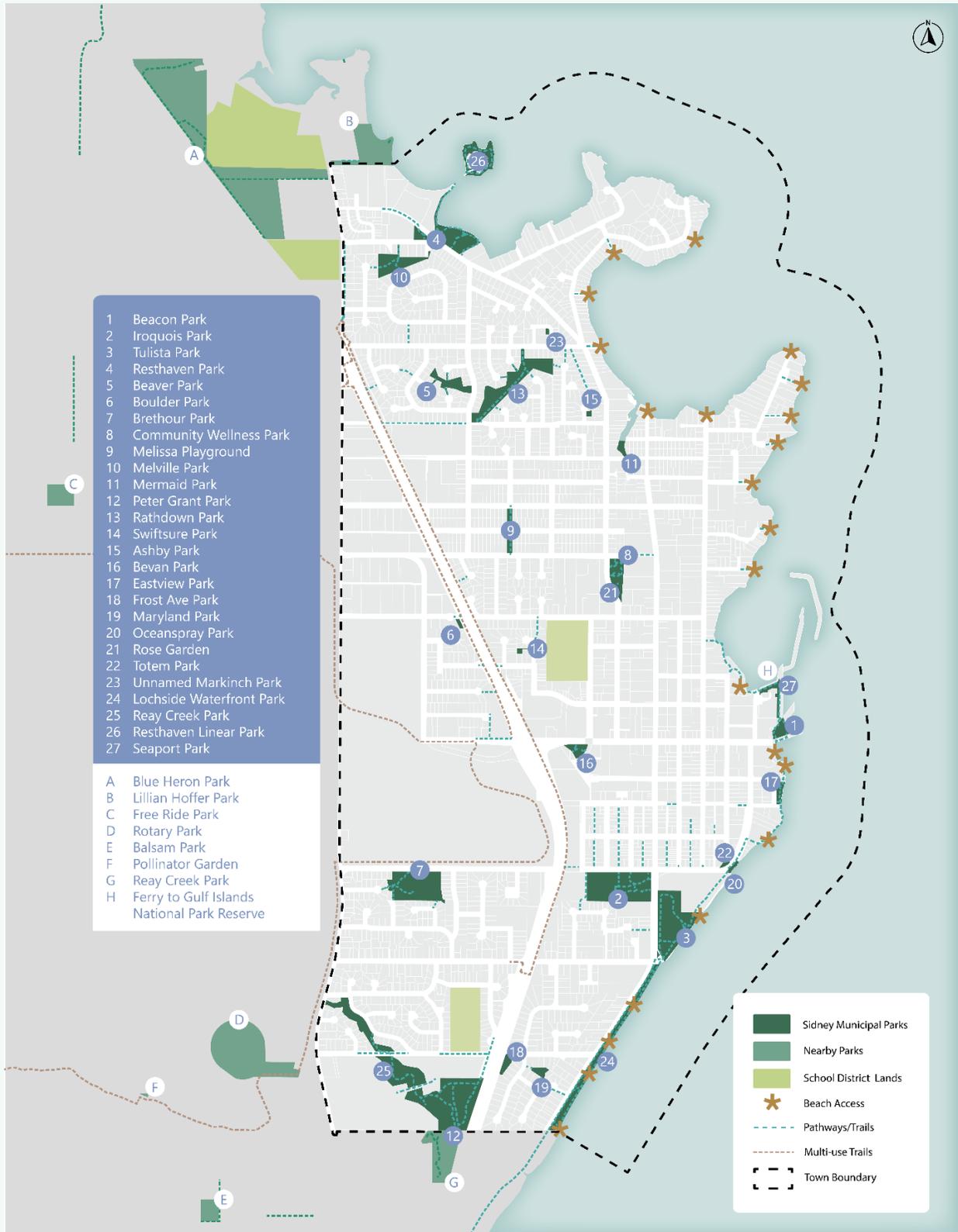
In addition to two Sidney school sites which supplement municipal parkland, there are also several parks and schools nearby but outside Sidney's municipal boundary (from directly adjacent to 1 kilometre away) that can help support broader community outdoor recreation needs for Sidney residents:

- Parkland High School (~12 metres)
- North Saanich Middle School (~12 metres)
- Blue Heron Park (~12 metres)
- North Saanich Freeride Park (~1 kilometer)
- Balsam Park (~500 metres)
- Lillian Hoffar Park (0 metres)
- Reay Creek Park (0 metres)
- Rotary Park (200 metres)
- YYJ BEE-KIND Pollinator Garden (~650 metres)



The following map (**Map 1**) identifies the parks available to the community both within Sidney and in close proximity to its borders.

Map 1: Sidney's Park Network with School District 63 Lands and Nearby Non-Town of Sidney Parks



Park Classifications

Table 1 below breaks down Sidney's parks into four categories: Destination parks, Neighbourhood parks, Nature/linear parks, and Green Space. The categories can be defined as follows:

- Destination parks are typically large, centrally located, and accessible destination spaces that benefit the broader community and beyond. These draw people who specifically travel to these areas to spend time in the park and provide a range of recreational amenities, such as sports fields, courts, play areas, walkways or trails, and parking.
- Neighbourhood parks are commonly used parks that support local recreation needs. These are typically larger, highly used green spaces or parks that provide at least one active feature (i.e., play equipment) for community residents within close walking distance to their homes. These are especially important in neighbourhoods where private open space is limited.
- Nature/linear parks are primarily natural areas with limited opportunity for active recreation, where residents can access nature passively, such as through walking trails. These areas have high ecological value and are typically protected from further recreational development.
- Green Space parks are undeveloped and do not currently have any significant amenities but are publicly accessible for self-directed active use (e.g., throwing a frisbee, having a picnic).

Table 1: Parks Classifications in Sidney

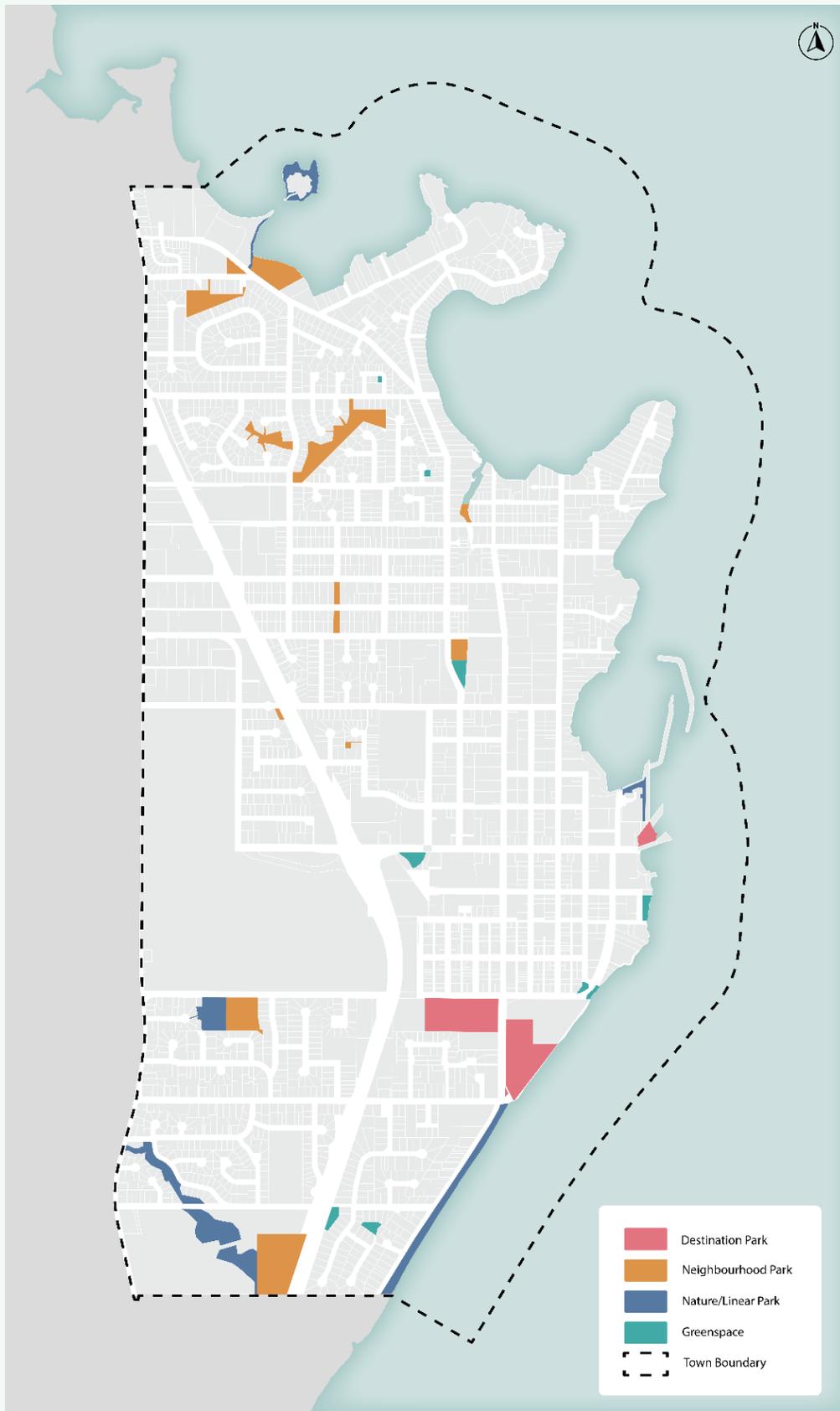
Destination Park	Neighbourhood Park	Nature/Linear Park	Green Space	Beach Accesses
Beacon Park Iroquois Park Tulista Park	Beaver Park Boulder Park Brethour Park Community Wellness Park Melissa Playground Melville Park Mermaid Park Peter Grant Park Rathdown Park Resthaven Park Rotary Park* Swiftsure Park	Lochside Waterfront Park Reay Creek Park Seaport Park Resthaven Linear Park	Ashby Park Bevan Park Eastview Park Frost Ave. Park Maryland Park Oceanspray Park Rose Garden Totem Park Unnamed- Markinch Park	BigRock Road Bowden Road Seagrass Road Ardwell Avenue Fifth Street Third Street Beaufort Road Goddard Road Surfside Place Amherst Avenue Memory Lane Rothesay Road Oakville Avenue Port Sidney Glass Beach (x2) Tulista Lochside (x4)

**Note: Rotary Park is included in the Town's Parks Master Plan but is outside of the Town's municipal boundary. Therefore, it has been excluded from calculations when analysing the Town's overall park supply. Further details can be found on page 19.*

Map 2 shows the location of the Town's parks in each classification category, as identified in **Table 1**.



Map 2: Parks Classifications in Sidney



Parkland Zoning

The Town's Zoning Bylaw has a zone for parkland, Park and Open Space (P1). However, not all parks in Sidney are zoned accordingly. Meanwhile in other cases, certain lands zoned as P1 has not been included in the Town's parks inventory. For example, some highway-adjacent land is owned by the Ministry of Transportation and the Town and is zoned as P1, but the lands are not currently used as such.

Proper zoning ensures that parks are protected and easily identifiable as parkland and allows the community to clearly indicate the intended uses of the lands. Best practice would be to rezone all parks to P1; however, this does not appear to be urgent in Sidney and could be accomplished during a future zoning bylaw update.

Town of Sidney Parks Policy Framework

From a broad policy perspective, the goals of Sidney's Park Network are as follows:

- To provide a parks and public space network that is welcoming and accommodating of all ages and abilities.
- Provide sufficient parkland within an accessible distance from every resident.
- Accommodate a range of community meeting spaces and recreational space.
- Establish the basis for a connected network of green spaces in Sidney.
- To expand the Town's urban forest and improve its quality.

Many of the Town's existing plans, bylaws, and strategies already include language and policies that support and provide direction to parkland provision, acquisition, and enhancement. The documents summarized in this section are particularly important in shaping the Town's park system, and provide a broader planning context for park supply. In addition, there are several design guidelines and policies that are indirectly related to parkland acquisition that can help guide future park development. Specific policies can be found in Appendix A.

The Official Community Plan (OCP), as the primary planning and visioning document for the Town, states broad planning goals and supporting policies for protection and acquisition of open space, including parks. While the OCP primarily focuses on public parkland in Section 14 (Parks, Public Open Space, and Leisure Facilities), there are relevant parks policies throughout the document. These prioritize the preservation of natural areas and features, access to existing public space, and the provision of additional public space.

The Parks Master Plan (PMP) provides an implementation strategy that identifies and makes recommendations on priority park improvements throughout Sidney's existing parks system and has been used to identify and budget for long-term infrastructure improvements. As noted above, the PMP does not assess the overall sufficiency of parkland in Sidney, which is the focus of this document. This assessment acts as a supplement to the PMP and could be used to inform a future update of that plan.

Development Cost Charge (DCC) Bylaw No. 1440 and Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contributions Policy DV-013 both include provisions that support parkland acquisition. The DCC Bylaw allows for development cost charges to be imposed to help acquire funds to pay for the capital costs of providing, constructing, altering, or expanding infrastructure and the provision of parkland. However, the Town's current DCC Bylaw, developed in 1995, does not contribute any significant amount to parks acquisition and is currently being updated.

The Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contributions policy provides a framework for the calculation and collection of financial contributions from developers prompted by increases in



development density. The contributions are intended to provide a community benefit to increase the level of community amenities within the areas being developed. The policy also allows for Council to accept an alternate contribution in lieu of a cash contribution, which may include land improvements that involve publicly accessible open space.

These municipal policies are also supplemented by provincial legislation for parks acquisition, which allows local governments to acquire parkland – or cash in lieu of land – through the subdivision process. The amount of parkland gained through this process is typically 5% of the overall land area, or the cash equivalent of 5% of the pre-serviced value of the land. However, this provision only applies to subdivisions which create 4 or more lots. Due to the relatively small existing lot sizes in Sidney, most subdivisions create only 2 lots, which limits the opportunities for the Town to collect land or cash in lieu that can be put toward adding to the supply of parkland.

Past Park Acquisition and Investment

The majority of parkland in Sidney was acquired many decades ago, during the subdivision of Sidney’s single-family areas in the 1960’s and 1970’s. More recently, Peter Grant Park was granted to the Town by the Province of BC in the early 1980’s. Beacon Park, which already existed at the foot of Beacon Avenue on Sidney’s waterfront, was expanded, redeveloped and improved in 2006.

Over the past 16 years (2006-2022), just under nine million dollars have been invested into Sidney’s parks, primarily in equipment and infrastructure. The majority of this investment in parks has gone towards improving parks categorized as “Destination Parks” (see Park Classification section above), the Lochside Waterfront Walkway, as well as Reay Creek Park, where approximately \$1 million was invested into reconstructing the Reay Creek Dam. Tulista, Iroquois, Beacon, and Reay Creek Parks received 82% of all park investment in Sidney during this time period. Iroquois Park, one of Sidney’s most frequented parks, received the highest investment over the time period, at just over \$3.2 million across approximately seven projects, much of which was funded through grants. Beacon Park, another one of Sidney’s three destination parks, was enlarged and improved via development contributions during the development of the Pier Hotel project in 2006, as well as receiving a substantial grant for the bandshell design and construction.

The distribution of parks infrastructure investment between 2006 and 2022 has been concentrated in the south of the community, with 88% of the funds going toward improving six parks south of Ocean Avenue and Ocean Avenue West. While there have been a few larger projects in the north end of Sidney – the most notable being the Rathdown Park playground improvements completed in 2020 – investment in the smaller neighbourhood parks throughout the centre of the community and on the west side of Sidney has been limited. These parks are also generally smaller overall, which means some of this lack of investment may correlate to a lack of parkland to receive that investment.

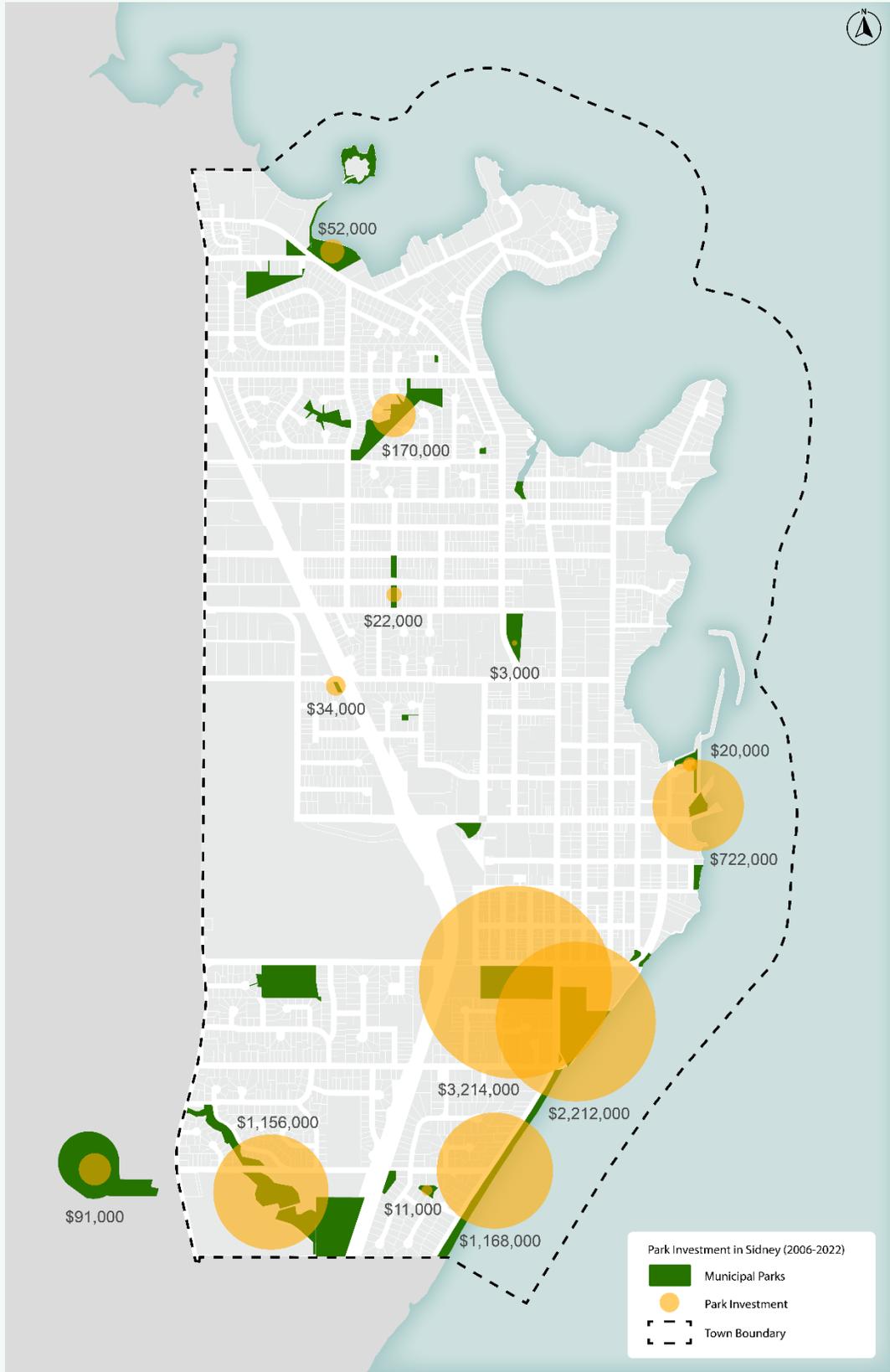
Direct acquisition (i.e., purchase) of parkland has been rare in recent years. Sidney’s most recent direct acquisition of parkland was in 1999, when the Town paid \$500,000 for a waterfront residential lot to increase the size of Eastview Park. However, some parkland was also contributed via subdivision as recently as 2018, when the small pocket park on Markinch Place was provided as a requirement of the 16-lot subdivision.

Since 2012, two other subdivisions have provided cash in lieu of parkland (typically 5% of the total land value) and the balance of the Town’s parkland acquisition fund as a result currently stands at approximately \$230,000 as of November 2023.



Map 3 illustrates where recent parks investment has been concentrated in Sidney.

Map 3: Town of Sidney Parks Investment 2006-2022



Reference Standards and Targets for Parkland Provision

While there is no hard and fast rule for how much parkland a community should have, there are some general metrics and sources of comparison from several organizations that can provide reference points. It is important to note however that these are generalized standards for parkland provision, and as such, must also be considered within the context of an individual municipality's needs and existing conditions. These considerations include land area, historical development patterns, existing infrastructure, modes of transportation, the existence of regional, provincial and federal parks, private and non-profit organizations operating in the community, and the community's visions for the future, as highlighted in its OCP.

In most cases, parkland supply standards are used only as a guideline, rather than a definitive "must have" requirement. This is because the standards are based on broad, national-level recommendations developed by government or non-profit organizations that do not consider the various local complexities and nuances that communities face. However, they do allow a community to measure their park supply over time against a specific reference point that is developed by independent organizations with knowledge of community recreation needs. Typically, parkland supply is assessed using one or a combination of the three following methodologies:

1. Area-based: Parkland supply is measured as a percentage in relation to the municipality's overall land area.
2. Population-based: Parkland supply measured in hectares per 1,000 population.
 - o *Note*: This will be analyzed at both the Sidney-wide level and at a neighbourhood catchment level. Further on, this assessment includes a population-based analysis with both the current population and projected future population based on growth anticipated in the OCP to 2038.
3. Spatially based: Parkland supply is analysed in relation to residents' proximity (i.e., walking distance) to parks.

Taken together, these various methods provide for a comprehensive approach to comparing the supply of parkland in Sidney to commonly accepted standards and other communities, as well as identifying potential gaps in the parkland system; each method is discussed in more detail below.

Developing Sidney-Specific Targets

In addition to standards for parkland supply, this document also identifies several potential targets for parkland provision that help to establish a frame of reference for further evaluation of parkland acquisition.

As is the case in Sidney, municipalities with smaller land areas that are mostly built out may not be able to meet the typical supply standards due to challenges like high land values and lack of available undeveloped land (this is discussed in further detail below). Sidney certainly faces these challenges currently; yet as a highly urbanized community with small lot sizes and a higher-than-average level of multi-unit residential living compared to many other municipalities, there is a greater need for community-based outdoor parkland in Sidney relative to other rural or lower density communities where private outdoor space can supplement parkland.

While targets can help illustrate what some potential acquisition goals might look like from the perspective of operational and cost considerations, they must also be realistic and consider the broader context of a community. Accordingly, any supply targets for Sidney need to consider the above-noted constraints and the greater context, such as nearby parks in adjacent communities.



Area-based Standards

At the global level, the United Nations' 1987 Brundtland Report urged the protection of biodiversity by encouraging the global community to place 12% of land in protected areas. At the Earth Summit in 1992, Canada signed an accord vowing to meet the challenge of establishing 12% of its land base as protected areas. In 1993, British Columbia released its Protected Areas Strategy, which committed the province to double the amount of protected area land base from 6% to 12% by 2000. BC was the first province in Canada to achieve the 12% goal and currently sits around 15%. Several local governments have adopted an area-based goal of a minimum of 12% parkland area to overall land area within their jurisdiction, following the provincial objective. However, unlike Sidney, many of these communities have larger land bases and are able to achieve this goal with their own land combined with regional, provincial and federal parks to supplement municipal parkland.

In 2015, Canada established its 2020 Biodiversity Goals and Targets for Canada, outlining a 17% target for protected terrestrial areas by 2020. This was recognized by the Province of BC and endorsed by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). In December 2022, the Province of British Columbia committed to protecting 30% of the province's land base by 2030. This followed Canada's signing of the landmark agreement to conserve 30% of the planet to protect biodiversity by 2030 at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in December 2022. Broad targets like this are typically more achievable at the provincial or national level, where large reserves of Crown Land can be preserved for this purpose. Not surprisingly perhaps, no municipalities in British Columbia appear to have adopted these latest targets.

While the area-based approach for parkland provision (i.e., 12% parkland) is a commonly used standard, it is a static measure that does not account for population growth and only indicates the total amount of parkland within a community. It may be a reasonable goal to strive toward when considering parkland acquisition; however, without a more nuanced approach, area-based targets do not address the need to ensure that there is an adequate distribution of accessible parkland for all residents in the community. In any case, targets to establish 12%, 17% or 30% of land as parkland or protected areas would likely be impossible for Sidney to achieve given its limited land base and lack of availability of undeveloped land. Indeed, the current amount of parkland within Sidney comprises only 4.6% of its land base. As noted above, area-based standards also tend to be used over much broader regions with diverse land bases, so while they can provide direction for municipalities, success in being able to achieve these standards may ultimately be higher among rural or larger municipalities and regions. Since Sidney is connected to a much larger regional area, it may be appropriate to take a wider view of the availability of parkland when considering the area-based standard.

Area-based Targets

With only 4.6% of its land base currently dedicated as parkland, targets of 30%, 17% or even 12% are likely impossible goals for Sidney to achieve. At 511 hectares in size, a 1% gross increase in parkland in Sidney requires 5.11 hectares of land. As will be discussed below, the cost to acquire even this small percentage of Sidney's land base is significant. As a result, an area-based target is likely not appropriate for Sidney, although the 12% metric will be tracked for comparative and illustrative purposes throughout this report.



Population-based Standards

The following are some nationally recognized targets for parkland provision based on population (i.e., per capita) metrics. Here, parkland supply is commonly measured in area (hectares, or “ha”) per 1,000 residents. This method of measurement will be used throughout this document.

These figures act as guidance or reference points in considering a community’s park needs. In North America, 4 ha/1,000 residents is a commonly cited target for parkland provision:

- The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), an American advocacy and policy development group, recommends a 4 ha/1,000 residents standard². This standard has been used by many jurisdictions as a basis for park planning and was endorsed by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association (CPRA) several decades ago; however, it is often adapted to reflect the needs and conditions of individual communities.

In some international cases, recommendations for parkland provision reflect what is considered to be a minimum standard to achieve, rather than desired, or aspirational, targets:

- In the United Kingdom, the Six Acre Standard, developed by the non-profit organization Fields in Trust, recommends providing the following park area:
 - a minimum of 6 acres (2.4 ha) per 1,000 residents of recreational land, divided into:
 - 4 acres (1.6 ha)/1,000 residents for outdoor recreation and active parkland, and
 - 2 acres (0.8 ha)/1,000 residents for outdoor amenities and play areas.
- In 2015, these UK standards were updated to include an additional 2.6 ha of informal green spaces, such as parks, gardens, and natural spaces, on top of the original 2.4 ha/1,000 residents Six Acre Standard. That recommendation also split the targets up by park type:
 - 0.8 ha (1.98 acres)/1,000 residents for parks and gardens, and
 - 1.8 ha (4.45 acres)/1,000 residents for natural spaces.
- At a global scale, some sources cite the World Health Organization (WHO) as recommending a minimum of 9 square metres of green space per person (0.9 ha/1,000 persons), with an optimal amount of between 10 and 15 metres square per person (1.0-1.5 ha/1,000 persons) as the minimum standard for a healthy community.

The population-based approach considers the area of parkland provided in relation to the population of the whole community or given area. At a broader community level, it does not account for where parkland may be lacking within the community. However, at a neighbourhood or “catchment area” level, it can provide a comparison of parkland provision in relation to individual neighbourhood population levels. This method will inform a more localized analysis throughout this report.

Population-based Targets

Recognizing that the supply of undeveloped land is low in Sidney, the North American standard of 4 ha per 1,000 residents would require an additional 25.84 ha of parkland (i.e., about 5% of Sidney’s total land area), again making it an essentially impossible target for the Town to achieve.

² NRPA (2023). NRPA Park Metrics. Retrieved from the National Recreation and Park Association website: <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/ParkMetrics/>

(If purchased in the form of single-family homes, at approximately \$10 million per hectare this area of land would cost almost \$260 million dollars, while at the same time, the Town would lose the property tax income from those homes, in addition to losing critical housing supply). Moreover, as population-based parkland supply targets are intrinsically tied to population growth and parkland area, a growing community needs to acquire parkland to simply maintain its current level of supply per capita. Using this metric for aspirational targets requires adding parkland over and above the maintenance level to increase the overall amount of parkland per 1,000 residents, presenting an additional challenge.

Accordingly, three moderate and more realistic targets of population-based parkland supply targets were identified for Sidney, given that the commonly used target of 4 ha/1,000 people among BC communities appears unattainable considering the availability and cost of land in Sidney:

1. **Station Keeping:** A target to maintain the current supply of parkland in Sidney at its current level of 1.90 ha/1,000 residents.
2. **Moderate Increase:** 2.0 ha/1,000 residents, which represents a modest 5% increase in the supply of parkland in Sidney.
3. **Stretch Target:** Expansion of park supply to 2.4 ha/1,000 residents. This target mirrors the original UK Six Acre Standard and is a more modest approach to the 4 ha/1,000 residents standard.

Using these targets, the following total additional amount of parkland would be required to achieve each of these targets for Sidney's current population:

- 1.90 ha/1,000 residents: a total of 23.4 hectares (currently meets target)
- 2.0 ha/1,000 residents: a total of 24.64 hectares (an additional 1.24 ha)
- 2.4 ha/1,000 residents: a total of 29.56 hectares (an additional 6.13 ha)

Note that the numbers above assume static population numbers; the effect of population growth on these targets is discussed in more detail below.

Spatial Standards

Targets for parkland provision are also commonly shown as measures of proximity to parkland, which is typically a distance that can be covered over a set time at a normal walking pace. Several BC municipalities use this type of target to ensure residents are within reasonable walking distance of a park in their neighbourhood, with 400 metres representing a typical distance that someone would be willing to walk on a daily basis. As walking speeds and abilities will vary depending on the person, some municipalities set goals for how close residents should be to a park, or a specific type of park, such as 400m to a Neighbourhood Park, or 800m to a Destination Park. These physical distances are usually intended to represent either a five- or ten- minute walk, but can vary depending on a person's ability and level of physical fitness.

The Trust for Public Land, an American non-profit land trust organization, has developed a widely recognized campaign in the United States, called the 10-Minute Walk Program, in collaboration with the American NRPA and Urban Land Institute, with a goal to ensure residents of a community have safe, equitable access to a high-quality park within a ten-minute walk of home. The ten-minute walk standard is also endorsed by the non-profit organization Fields in Trust in the UK for parks, gardens, natural, and semi-natural greenspace.

While spatial standards provide a measure of residents' proximity to parks, they do not account for population growth or if there is sufficient parkland to service the number of residents in a



neighbourhood. This is where population-based standards discussed above can be useful to understand the full picture.

Spatial Targets

Targets in relation to walking distances are useful in helping determine where there are spatial gaps in a park network. While a 5-minute walking distance target is frequently used by municipalities to measure proximity, due to the demographics and the relatively small size and compact nature of Sidney, analysing the parks network using a variety of walking distances provides a more comprehensive approach to identifying gaps.

Acknowledging that there are many different levels of mobility in this community, this report analyses two different walking distances to identify gaps in the network. These distances were set at 200 metres and 400 metres and are estimates of a reasonable travel distance that residents of various physical abilities might be willing or able to travel to a nearby park at their own pace. Beyond mobility differences, these distances also account for different walking speeds, such as among those with small children, who may not travel as quickly.

Rather than being used to set any specific target distance the Town should achieve, the distances in the spatial analysis within the report are simply used to illustrate gaps in the park network and where it may be worth considering new parks in a given area.



Part 1 Key Takeaways:

- *Sidney is a moderately densifying urban community that has not added any substantial new parkland in recent years.*
- *The Town currently has 27 municipal parks totalling 23.43 hectares and also benefits from parkland and green space provided by the District of North Saanich, Victoria Airport Authority, and School District 63.*
- *The Town's current regulatory framework has resulted in only some small parks and minimal acquisition funds being added to the Town's park inventory in recent decades.*
- *Recent Town policy encourages the improvement and acquisition of municipal parkland and emphasizes the importance of natural areas as part of the network.*
- *The Town's regulatory framework and funding mechanisms for parks do not adequately align with these more recently adopted policy goals.*
- *Area based standards established by higher levels of government are intended for large scale areas of land; these may not be appropriate for municipal targets, especially in Sidney's context where the community is separated from larger adjacent rural or natural areas.*
- *Population based standards may provide a more suitable measure of analysis for individual communities as they can respond to changing populations and provide the basis for a constant level of service over time.*
- *Spatial standards can help ensure that residents of a community have equitable access to parkland and can highlight where there are localized gaps in the network that should receive consideration.*



Part 2: Current Conditions

Introduction

This section provides an overview and assessment of the adequacy of parkland supply in present-day Sidney, measured against the standards and targets for parkland provision outlined in the previous section.

Parkland Supply Overview

Table 2 below provides an overview of the current parkland supply in Sidney and highlights four key parameters for each park type category, along with examples. This table serves to illustrate a high-level picture of Sidney's existing park network. It should be noted that this inventory only includes municipal parks; non-town-owned properties such as School District 63 sites are broken out separately below. As noted previously, Sidney does not contain any regional, provincial, or federal parkland.

Table 2: Overview of Current Sidney Parkland Supply

Park Type	Number of Parks	Current Park Area (ha)	% Of total land area in Sidney	Current Parkland Supply – (ha per 1,000 residents)	Examples (Comprehensive list provided in Part One)
Destination Park	3	5.69	1.12%	0.46	Beacon Park Tulista Park
Neighbourhood Park	11	10.60	2.08%	0.86	Boulder Park Melville Park
Green Space	9	1.30	0.26%	0.11	Ashby Park Maryland Park
Nature/Linear Park	4	5.84	1.15%	0.47	Reay Creek Park Resthaven Linear Park
Total Municipal Parkland	27	23.43	4.59%	1.90	
Beach Accesses	22	N/A	N/A	N/A	Memory Lane Seagrass Road
School District 63 Sites	2	6.6	1.29%	0.53	Sidney Elementary School; Greenglade Community Centre
Total Parkland (Including School District 63 Sites)		29.99	5.88%	2.43	

Note: This table does not include Rotary Park or other parks that are not within the municipal land base. This is briefly discussed below.

This table shows that neighbourhood parks, which is the category of park intended to primarily meet the daily needs of residents, has the highest number of parks and overall largest share of parkland in Sidney. While this is a generally positive finding, it is also important to consider the size and distribution of the individual parks when analysing park provision.



In terms of park size, neighbourhood parks range from 0.05 ha (Boulder Park and Swiftsure Park) to 2.7 ha (Peter Grant Park), while greenspace parks range from 0.03 (Markinch Park) to 0.27 ha (Bevan Park and Rose Garden). These are much smaller parks on average than Sidney's destination and nature/linear parks. The implications of Sidney's park sizes and distribution will be analyzed further in the supply analysis and spatial analysis sections below.

The Town's municipal parks are not the only publicly accessible green spaces in the community. Sidney Elementary School and Greenglade Community Centre, while not owned by the Town, also help to meet the community's need for localized outdoor recreation space. However, these spaces may not typically be fully usable at some periods during the day (i.e., school hours) and the Town does not decide on the level of service or directly determine the future use of these green spaces. Due to these limitations, these spaces are considered supplemental to the municipal park system. However, their existence and availability should not be overlooked.

While included in the Parks Master Plan, Rotary Park is also excluded from Sidney's municipal parkland supply analysis. Rotary Park is a 4.80 ha section of federal land located outside of the Town's borders, leased by the Victoria Airport Authority and sub-leased to the Town and the District of North Saanich. The use of the park is managed by the Peninsula Baseball and Softball Association, as outlined in the facility's License Agreement. Made up of five baseball diamonds, a clubhouse, and washrooms, Rotary Park is a specialized type of park and is locked to the public when not in use by baseball teams, such as the local Little League.

Existing beach access points are also identified in **Table 2**, as they are public amenities that also provide access to outdoor natural space. However, the characteristics of these access points vary considerably. They range from short stairways to beaches with user amenities such as park benches and parking, to public rights of way that provide undeveloped paths or visual access to water, but with few amenities. Many of the less developed access points may be underutilized by the public because they are not easily recognizable as public spaces. Generally, they are not large enough to provide recreation amenities.

Town-wide Parkland Supply Analysis

This section analyses parkland supply across all of Sidney using the three methodologies and targets described previously:

1. **Area-based analysis:** Parkland supply measured as a percentage of the municipal land area.
2. **Population-based analysis:** Parkland supply measured in hectares per 1,000 population, at both Sidney-wide and neighbourhood catchment levels.
3. **Spatial analysis:** Parkland supply is analysed in relation to residents' proximity (i.e., walking distance) to parks.

These various methods provide for a comprehensive approach to comparing the supply of parkland with broad standards and identifying potential gaps in the parkland system. Each of these methods is discussed in more detail below. Sidney is also compared to peer communities in this section.

Area-based Analysis

Area-based analysis considers parkland as a percentage of the total land area (i.e., total municipal land base). This measure would typically include open space, natural areas, and parks managed by all jurisdictions. Many municipalities have an objective of 12% of their total land area as parkland or protected areas, which is consistent with the older, provincial objective of 12% of its land base as protected areas. However, as noted in Part 1, this standard is not considered



appropriate for Sidney’s highly developed, urban environment and as such is included for reference only.

Table 2 in the Parkland Supply Overview section above provides a summary of the parkland and other public open space within the Town of Sidney. Currently, 23.43 ha of land within the Town of Sidney is designated as parkland, or 4.6% of the Town’s total land base.

The 4.6% measure increases to 5.9% if the total land area of open space provided through School District 63 is included in the analysis. When compared to other municipalities in the region (**Table 4**), Sidney’s low percentage is partially a result of the lack of parkland and protected areas owned and managed by non-profit organizations and other levels of government within Town boundaries. Several municipalities in the CRD have regional, provincial, or national parks within their boundaries. For example, this additional parkland ranges from none in Sidney and Esquimalt, up to 1,350 ha in Central Saanich, with an average of 480 ha each of regional and/or provincial parks across the thirteen municipalities.

To demonstrate the difficulty in meeting the provincial objectives of 12%, 17%, and 30%, at 511 hectares Sidney would require an additional 37.8 ha, 63.3 ha, and 129.6 ha of parkland, respectively. Given the costs and constraints to land acquisition in Sidney, achieving these numbers is not a realistic possibility and these targets are not appropriate for Sidney’s context.

Population-based Analysis

The measurement of parkland supply in relation to population is a common tool that highlights a “user-based” approach for tracking park provision, typically measured in hectares per 1,000 people. **Table 3** below illustrates Sidney’s existing population-based parkland supply, including the portion of public-school sites identified and mapped as parkland.

Table 3: Overview of Population-Based Park Supply

Park Name	Park Area (ha)	2021 Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)
Destination Park Total	5.69	0.46
Neighbourhood Park Total	10.60	0.86
Greenspace Total	1.30	0.11
Nature/Linear Park Total	5.84	0.47
Total	23.43	1.90
School District 63 sites	6.56	0.53
Total with school sites	29.99	2.44

Note: This is an excerpt of the information in Table 2 for ease of reference and comparison.

Sidney’s total current supply of municipal parkland is 1.90 ha/1,000 residents, based on a 2021 population of 12,318. Although not typically counted in parkland analyses, with school sites added, this number rises to 2.44 ha per 1,000 residents. As previously mentioned, while school sites add to the available parkland in some circumstances, the Town does not have direct control over these sites, and they can be unavailable for community use during school or programming hours.

Using the population-based approach, Sidney would need the following amounts of additional parkland to meet the targets identified in Part 1, as follows:



- Moderate goal: Sidney is 1.2 ha short of meeting the 2.0 ha/1,000 residents target.
- Stretch goal: Sidney is 6.1 ha short of meeting the 2.4 ha/1,000 residents target.

Population-based Comparison with Peer Communities

An analysis of similar communities can provide an additional point of comparison for a municipality to understand its level of parkland provision. **Table 4** below provides an analysis of the current overall municipal parkland supply for the Town of Sidney compared to a selection of peer municipalities in BC (not including regional, provincial, or federal parkland). Municipalities were filtered by population, land base, and density. Peer municipalities were selected based on whether they shared similarities (i.e., within a 25% range) in one or more of the following attributes: geographical size, population, density, and/or area of parkland.

Table 4: Comparison between Parkland in Sidney and Peer Communities

Municipality	Municipal Park Area (ha)	Total Land Area (ha)	Population (2021)	Population Density (pop/ha)	Current Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)	Parkland Percent of Land Area
Sidney	23.43	511	12,318	24.1	1.90	5%
Colwood	89.7	1,766	18,961	10.7	4.73	5%
Comox	114	1,687	14,806	8.8	7.70	7%
Duncan	13	206	5,047	24.5	2.58	6%
Esquimalt	40	708	17,533	24.8	2.28	6%
Gibsons	19.7	431	4,758	11.0	4.14	5%
Nelson	23.7	1,193	11,106	9.3	2.13	2%
Parksville	117	1,452	13,642	9.4	8.58	8%
Powell River	164	2,891	13,943	4.8	11.76	6%
View Royal	35.99	1,433	11,575	8.1	3.11	3%
White Rock	33.98	517	21,939	42.4	1.55	7%

Notes:

- Light blue highlighting identifies similarities with Sidney. “Similar” is defined as within a 25% range.
- Light yellow highlighting identifies municipalities meeting the 2.4 ha/1,000 people threshold.
- Municipal Park Areas for other municipalities are approximate and have not been verified. This data represents what information is available on municipal websites and online resources, and may be outdated. This data only accounts for municipal parkland and does not include parks under other jurisdictions (i.e., regional, provincial, and federal parks).

The Township of Esquimalt, City of Duncan, and City of White Rock are the three municipalities in British Columbia with comparable land areas and similar or higher residential density to the Town of Sidney. These municipalities have population-based parkland supplies ranging from 1.55 ha/1,000 residents to 2.58 ha/1,000 residents, demonstrating that Sidney’s current parkland supply may be typical for a community of its characteristics, even if it is on the lower end in terms of overall park provision.

Table 4 also shows a correlation between lower density communities and higher parkland supply. The three communities with similar or higher population densities than Sidney have similarly low measures of population-based parkland supply, as well as Nelson, which has a lower density but is similar in parkland area. However, Duncan appears to meet the 2.4 ha/1,000 residents target, despite having similar density in a smaller land base than Sidney.

It is also worth highlighting that Esquimalt and Sidney are the only two municipalities within the CRD with no additional regional, provincial, or federal parkland to supplement their municipal park supply.



To provide context to the larger picture of parkland provision across British Columbia, two studies have been conducted that summarize the average parkland provision across the province. Key takeaways from these two studies are highlighted below:

- A survey conducted by the British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) in the mid 2000's found the provincial average of parkland supply to be 2.51 ha/1,000 residents, which has been referenced in at least six different municipal documents (see footnote for example plan).³
- A 2010 inventory by LEES+Associates Landscape Architects found the BC provincial average of municipal parkland supply to be 2.94 ha/1,000 residents without natural open space, and 4.98 ha/1,000 residents with natural open space.

As the referenced surveys and **Table 4** above shows, parkland provision varies widely across BC municipalities. While this is likely due to different communities having diverse historical development patterns and priorities, Sidney appears to be on the lower end of parkland supply in relation to established standards as well as peer communities.

Spatial Analysis: Resident Proximity and Access to Parks, and Gaps in the Network

A third method to analyse parkland supply is by spatial distribution, or the distance residents must walk to access a nearby green space. This analysis measures proximity to parkland using a distance-based network analysis methodology along the Town's road and trail network, in walking distance increments of 200 and 400 metres to account for a population with diverse levels of mobility. 400 metres is typically considered the maximum the average person is willing to walk to access a public service on a frequent basis, such as parkland or public transit; this is generally equivalent to a 5-minute walking distance. However, it should be noted that the distance a resident may be able to travel to access a local park depends on many factors, including infrastructure (i.e., availability of sidewalks or parking), as well as personal factors such as health, the presence of small children, or physical ability. As 400m within 5 minutes may be unrealistic for many Sidney residents, the 200m distance was also included in this analysis. As an analysis tool, the 200m distance can also help to better highlight some of the gaps in the park network.

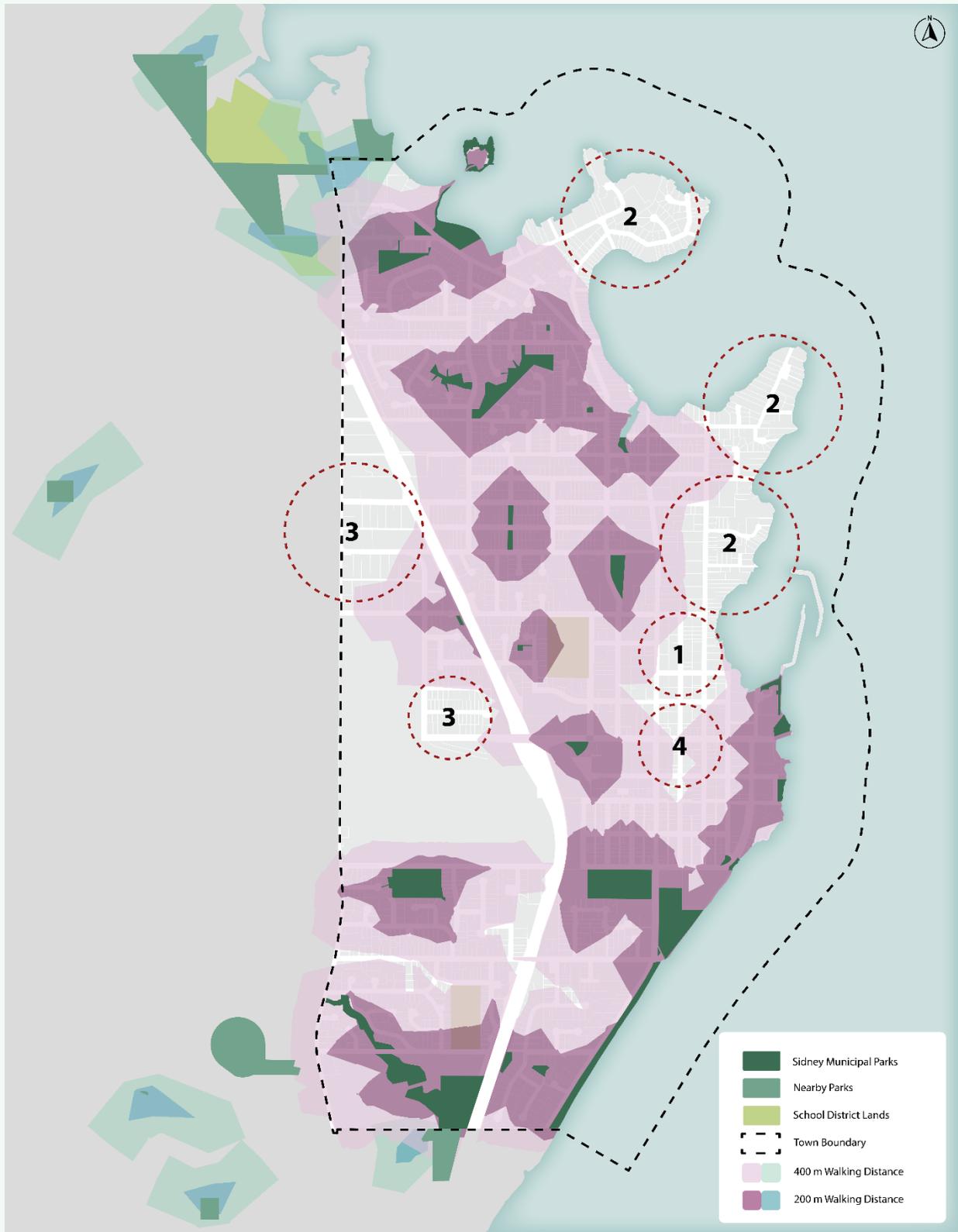
Map 4 on the following page illustrates walking distances to parkland within Sidney, shown as a calculated area extending a given distance from each park entrance. For Sidney's parks, these areas are shown in pink tones while for non-Sidney parks the areas are shown in light green tones. The map also identifies some of the larger gaps in the park network; the gaps are numbered to correspond to the analysis that follows. It is also important to note that this map only measures the proximity of parkland in Sidney, and not amenities within each park (i.e., accessing a swing set at a park may require a longer walk than is shown on the map).

³ City of Colwood. (2021). *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* (pp. 44).

https://www.colwood.ca/sites/default/files/2021_04_08-PRMP-FINAL.pdf; see also the Parks plans of City of Courtney (2019), City of Fort St John (2017), City of Maple Ridge (2010), District of Sooke (2020), and District of West Vancouver (2012).



Map 4: Walking Distances to Sidney's Parks and Park Network Gaps



While the map analysis illustrates that many areas of Sidney are well served in terms of residents' proximity to parkland (although potentially underserved with respect to size or amenities) there are four significant gaps in the park network that were identified during this mapping analysis:

1. Downtown North

One significant gap in the park network is located in one of the most densely populated parts of Sidney, immediately north of the downtown area. This area has the highest concentration of townhouse and apartment units in the community but has relatively low access to parkland. This area does however have relatively good access to the waterfront walkway, a linear park with natural features viewing, but few recreation opportunities. This area shares some overlap with the Shoreacres Road area noted below.

2. Northern Waterfront Areas

Three waterfront neighbourhoods, Allbay Road, Beaufort Road, and the Shoreacres Road areas, are also underserved with parkland in terms of proximity to park type amenities. In these areas (particularly the Allbay and Beaufort Road areas) the lack of parkland may also be offset somewhat by the larger size of the properties themselves (i.e. private green space), as well as their proximity to the waterfront, which in itself provides access to significant natural space. However, it is worth noting that waterfront natural areas suffer from significant seasonality issues, and are often less appealing as places to spend time during the fall and winter, particularly during the storm season, whereas inland parks may be more sheltered from inclement weather. Most of these shoreline areas are also designated as "Environmentally Sensitive Areas" in the Town's OCP and minimizing human impacts on the foreshore area is a key policy goal in these areas.

3. West Side

The West Side of Sidney, north of Beacon Avenue West, also has little formal parkland. The only park in this area is Boulder Park, located at the end of Henry Avenue West within the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure's Highway 17 road right-of-way and leased and maintained by the Town. The Galaran neighbourhood within the West Side is also slated for significant redevelopment, necessitating the consideration of additional parkland for this area. Indeed, this area is already in a significant parkland deficit and is expected to be even more so by 2038. It is also worth noting that there is no public parkland within Sidney's industrial area. While there are only a handful of small, residential caretaker units within this area, the 2017 West Side Local Area Plan process identified the desire of many employees in the area for some type of public green space for use during work breaks.

4. Downtown Center

The central portion of Downtown Sidney also has little public open space outside of sidewalk areas. For many years the Town's Parks Master Plan and OCP have identified this area as the potential location for a new downtown plaza. The area continues to be a significant source of residential growth in the community and the recent 2022 OCP update confirmed the community's desire for a public square or plaza in this area. Following development of adjacent properties with residential units after 2020, the front lawn of the Town Hall has been used as de facto parkland, highlighting the lack of formal parkland in this area.



Parkland Supply by Catchment Areas

Introduction to Parks Catchment Areas

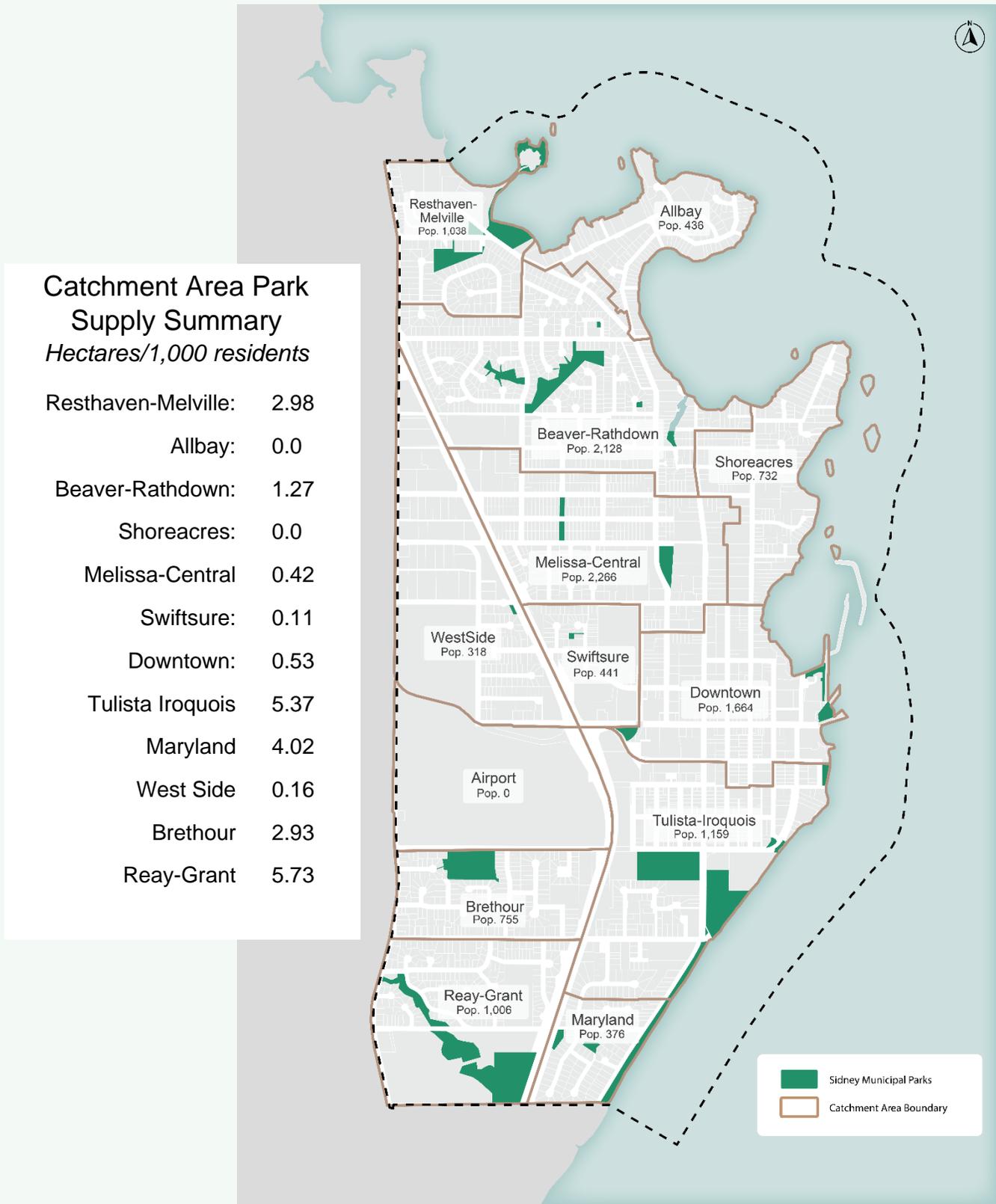
As part of the parks analysis for this report, the Town of Sidney was geographically broken down into twelve park “catchment areas” based on the location of Sidney’s parks, relative walkable distances, and census population boundaries (see **Map 5** for breakdown). Populations for each catchment area were calculated based on Statistics Canada 2021 census data that identifies localized population numbers in standardized geographic areas called “dissemination blocks.” Catchment area boundaries developed for this project and shown in **Map 5** generally follow these dissemination block boundaries to maximize statistical accuracy.

The intent of these catchment areas is to highlight parkland supply at a localized level, to better understand where there may be localized supply deficits in the park network and where additional parkland might be needed to improve supply in areas where there is a clear deficit. However, it should be noted that the catchment areas are not equal in area or population size. The catchment areas reflect the potential daily use of parks by households at a neighbourhood level. These catchment areas were then reviewed to assess whether there was adequate parkland supply for local residents using the area-based and population-based analysis method. This review highlights where additional parkland might be needed to improve supply in areas where there is a clear deficit.

Map 5 on the following page shows the boundaries and approximate current population of each catchment area.



Map 5: Sidney's Park Catchment Areas



Area-based Analysis

Using an area-based analysis within each catchment area can supplement the population analysis by providing a more direct approach to determining which neighbourhoods have an undersupply of parkland. **Table 5** below provides a summary of the parkland supply within each catchment area using the area-based analysis approach, showing neighbourhood parkland as a percentage of the size of the catchment area. Although the 12% land area target is used below as a means to illustrate a relative measure of park supply in these areas, it should again be noted that given Sidney's context, achieving this level of parkland in most of these catchment areas is not considered a realistic goal. For reference, a large single-family lot is approximately 0.1 hectares.

Table 5: Area-Based Parkland Supply per Catchment Area

Catchment Area	Total Catchment Area (ha)	Percent of Parkland in Catchment Area	Total Area Required to Reach 12% (ha)	Additional Parkland Needed to Reach 12% (ha)
Resthaven-Melville	28.74	10.75%	3.45	0.36
Allbay	24.26	0%	2.91	2.91
Beaver-Rathdown	70.33	3.85%	8.44	5.73
Melissa-Central	51.57	1.86%	6.19	5.23
Shoreacres	33.14	0%	3.98	3.98
Swiftsure	17.07	0.29%	2.05	2.00
Downtown	39.89	2.19%	4.79	3.91
Tulista-Iroquois	60.79	10.23%	7.29	1.07
Maryland	15.91	9.49%	1.91	0.40
West Side	51.96	0.10%	6.24	6.19
Brethour	27.97	7.90%	3.36	1.15
Reay-Grant	45.12	12.77%	5.41	(0.35)
Airport	43.33	0%	-	-
Total	510.08	-	56.01	32.58

Note:

- Airport lands have been excluded from the parks analysis in this report.
- Numbers in brackets indicate a surplus of parkland over what is required to achieve a 12% area-based target.

The Allbay and Shoreacres catchment areas do not currently contain any parks, and both the Swiftsure and West Side catchment areas have less than 1% of their land area as parkland. The Reay-Grant catchment area provides the most percentage of parkland area of all the catchment areas throughout the community due to the presence of Reay Creek and Peter Grant Parks.

As discussed previously and further demonstrated by **Table 5**, meeting the previously discussed area-based standards (i.e., 12%, 17%, 30%) is not a feasible option across Sidney's catchment areas. For example, Reay Creek catchment area is the only catchment area that meets the 12% standard at 12.77%, with the Resthaven-Melville, Tulista-Iroquois, and Maryland catchment areas next, each at around 10%, and Brethour at about 8%. All other catchment areas are well below 4%. The intent of the analysis in this section is only to highlight areas where more focus might be needed to increase the supply of parkland over time to provide a basic level of service for parkland



provision. Rather than achieving 12% or another area-based standard across the board, Sidney will likely need to take a more measured approach to parkland acquisition.

Population-based Analysis

Table 6 builds on **Map 5** above. It shows that some catchment areas in Sidney are well-supplied with parkland relative to the population within each catchment area, while other areas have none or close to no parkland at all.

Table 6: Current Park Supply by Catchment Area

Catchment area	2021 Population	Current Parkland (ha)	2021 Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)
Resthaven-Melville	1038	3.09	2.98
Allbay	436	0	0
Beaver-Rathdown	2128	2.71	1.27
Melissa-Central	2266	0.96	0.42
Shoreacres	732	0	0
Swiftsure	441	0.05	0.11
Downtown	1664	0.87	0.53
Tulista-Iroquois	1159	6.22	5.37
Maryland	376	1.51	4.02
West Side	318	0.05	0.16
Brethour	755	2.21	2.93
Reay-Grant	1006	5.76	5.73

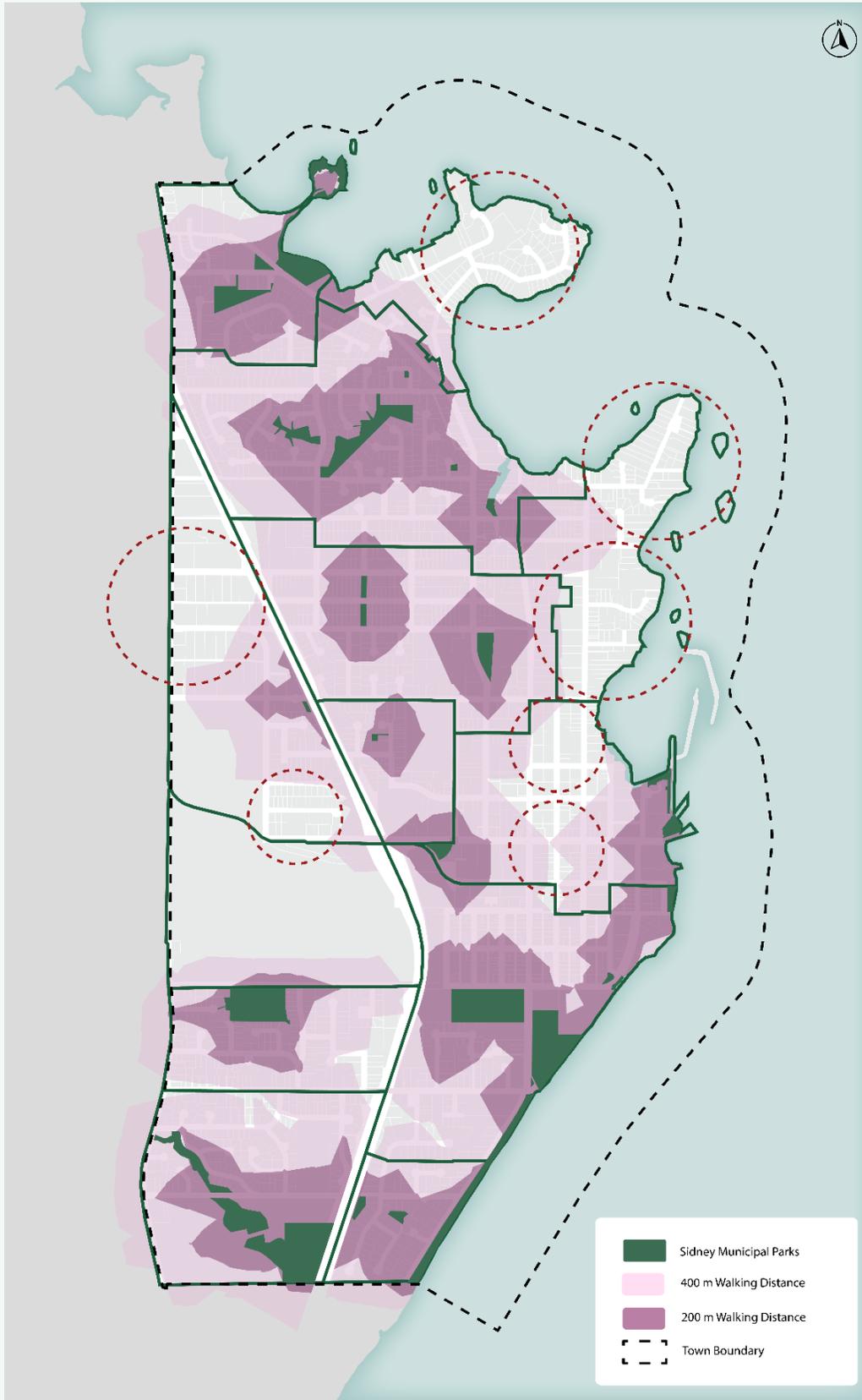
The areas most well-served by parkland are primarily centred around large parks that date back to the original land subdivisions of the 1960's and 70's. These catchment areas with Sidney's largest and oldest parks generally have park supply that is at or near the recommended standards identified in Part 1.

As would be expected, the areas with the least parkland align closely with those areas furthest from parkland in the spatial analysis in Part 2, notably the three northern waterfront areas, the West Side, and Downtown. However, both the Downtown and Melissa-Central areas also have populations in excess of 1,000 residents but less than 1 hectare of parkland supply. The neighbourhoods with little to no historical residential development (i.e., West Side and Downtown) that did not benefit from early parkland acquisition from subdivision (but are areas of recent growth) are now experiencing comparative shortages of park supply.

A separate spatial analysis of each catchment area was not performed, as it would essentially mirror the results of the spatial analysis completed in Part 2 and reiterate existing gaps in the parks network. However, **Map 6** overlays **Map 4: Walking Distances to Sidney's Parks and Park Network Gaps** with the catchment area boundaries. This helps to illustrate and emphasize which specific catchment areas are experiencing network gaps.



Map 6: Sidney's Park Network Walkability Map with Catchment Area Boundaries



Part 2 Key Takeaways:

- *Sidney currently provides 1.9 ha of municipal park area per 1,000 residents, for a total of 23.43 hectares of parkland, representing 4.6% of its land base.*
- *Sidney's 27 parks are supplemented by its beach accesses and School District 63 lands, which provide additional access to green space.*
- *With 4.6% of its land base as parkland, Sidney is below any of the area-based standards identified in this report.*
- *With 1.9 ha of parkland per 1,000 residents, Sidney is below most of the population-based standards identified in this report.*
- *Of the 8 peer municipalities analysed, only three others (Esquimalt, White Rock, and Nelson) do not meet the 2.4 ha per 1,000 residents parkland standard. Both Esquimalt and White Rock are similar to Sidney in their highly urbanized land use patterns.*
- *When considering residents' proximity to parkland, Sidney has a number of gaps in its park network.*
- *The catchment area analysis showed similar trends to the spatial analysis in terms of gaps in the parks network and deficiencies in population-based parkland supply.*
- *Catchment areas with large amounts of legacy parkland generally meet or are close to meeting the 12% area-based standard and show what a neighbourhood that is well-supplied with parkland can look like.*



Part 3: Future Conditions

Demographic shifts, migration, economics, and culture can all shape how communities evolve over time. Past trends in Sidney have typically seen growth in the community in terms of total population, economic activity, and the expansion of the physical built environment. When the population of a community grows, it can create a need for more amenities and services to support it. Particularly as urbanization takes place, new homes and households can lead to an increase in the need to dedicate outdoor green space for residents' health and wellbeing.

Growth in Sidney

Over the last few decades, Sidney has experienced modest annual population growth and land development. This modest population growth is projected to continue through 2038 as identified in the CRD's 2018 Regional Growth Strategy and the Town's OCP. Population data was updated in 2020 with additional detailed population projections prepared by Statistics BC. By 2038, the Town of Sidney's population is predicted to grow to 14,045 residents, an increase of approximately 1,700 people. The projections generally follow past growth trends of between 0.5% and 1% growth in Sidney's population each year. This projected population growth means there will be more community members looking to use Sidney's existing network of parks and trails. Of note is that much of this growth could come from multi-unit residential development (i.e., apartments, condos, townhouses), where access to public open space and green space is a critical need for residents.

Effect of Growth on Overall Town-wide Parkland Supply

If the Town were to acquire no additional parkland until 2038, despite an anticipated population growth to 14,045 residents, the parkland supply on a per capita basis would drop to approximately 1.67 ha/1,000 residents (a decrease of 13%) as shown below in **Table 7**. When incorporating School District 63 sites into the parkland supply analysis, the Town's current parkland supply of 2.44 ha/1,000 residents would decrease to 2.14 ha per 1,000 residents in 2038.

Table 7: Effect of Population Growth on Sidney's Park Supply by Park Type

Park Type	Park Area (ha)	2021 Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)	2038 Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)
Destination Park Total	5.69	0.46	0.41
Neighbourhood Park Total	10.60	0.86	0.75
Greenspace Total	1.30	0.11	0.09
Nature/Linear Park Total	5.84	0.47	0.42
Total	23.43	1.90	1.67
School District 63 sites	6.56	0.53	0.47
Total with School sites	29.99	2.44	2.14

To maintain the overall existing Town-wide supply of parkland of 1.90 ha/1,000 residents by 2038, the Town would require an additional 3.25 ha of parkland on top of what currently exists. To achieve a modest increase in parkland supply, such as the 2.0 ha/1,000 residents target or the stretch target of 2.4 ha/1,000 residents, the Town would need to acquire roughly 4.66 ha or 10.27 ha of additional parkland by 2038, respectively.



Catchment-Area Based Population Projections

In order to anticipate both current and future demand for local parkland, an analysis of current population data, land use designations in the OCP, and development history in the community was used to create specific population projections for each catchment area. As noted above, these projections are based on population projections developed by Statistics BC, which also informed Sidney's 2022 OCP update.

Using the OCP as a guide, this expected population growth was distributed across Sidney neighbourhoods using a growth potential method (i.e., the expected level of development a given area may expect to see based on its OCP land use designations and potential development patterns). Population projections in each catchment area are also based on factors such as available undeveloped land, expected growth levels in those areas, average unit occupancy based on unit type, and the relative development intensity of the land use designations. **Table 8** below provides a breakdown of existing and projected population in each catchment area. **Map 7** also provides a graphic representation of this analysis.

Table 8: Sidney's Anticipated Population Growth by Catchment Area

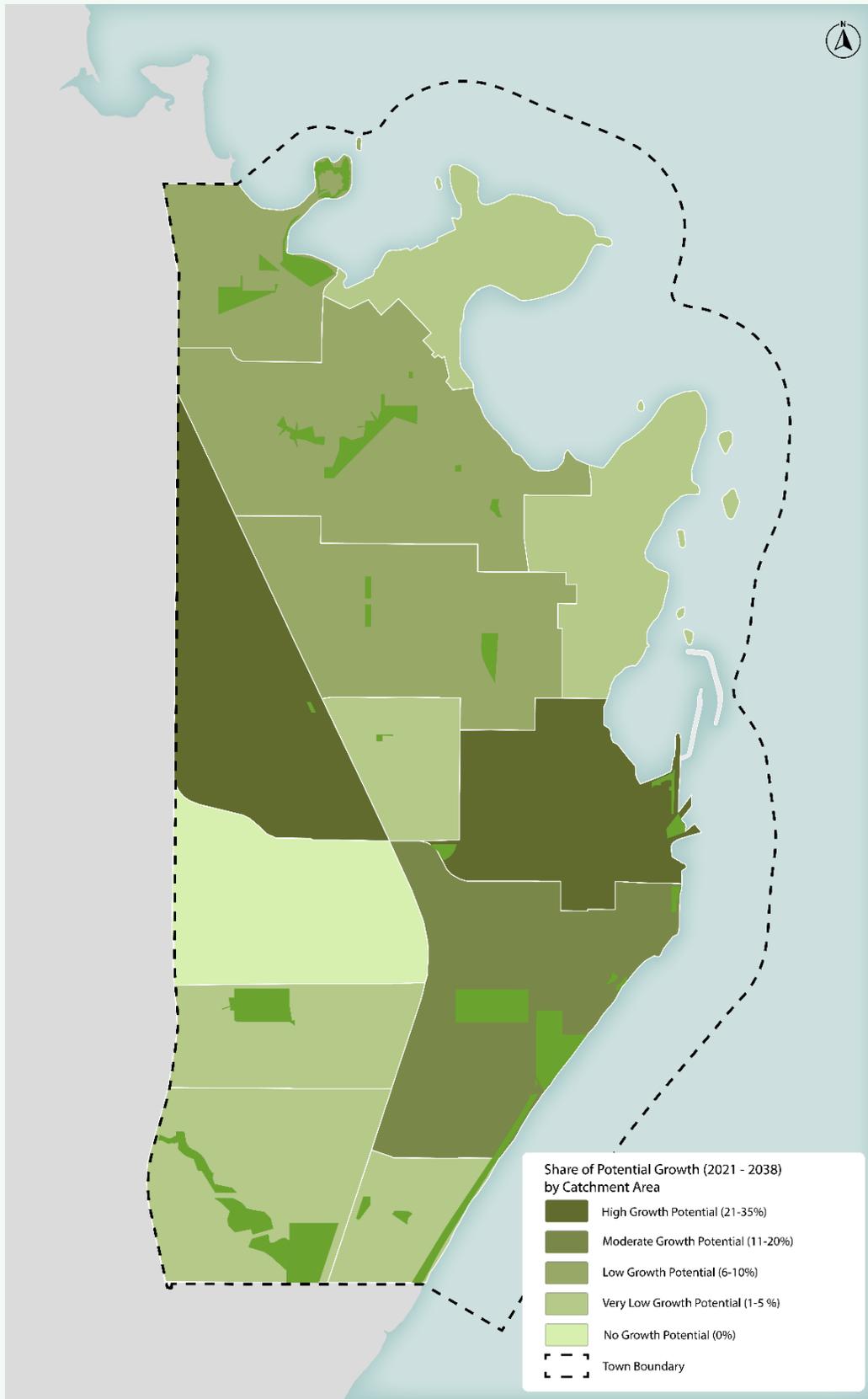
Catchment Area	2021 Population (estimated from Census)	2038 Projected Population	2038 Share of Projected Population Growth
Resthaven-Melville	1,038	1,166	7.4%
Allbay	436	443	0.4%
Beaver-Rathdown	2,128	2,224	5.6%
Melissa-Central	2,266	2,391	7.3%
Shoreacres	732	764	1.9%
Swiftsure	441	477	2.1%
Downtown	1,664	2,095	24.9%
Tulista-Iroquois	1,159	1,371	12.3%
Maryland	376	409	1.9%
West Side	318	882	32.7%
Brethour	755	780	1.5%
Reay-Grant	1,006	1,042	2.1%
Total	12,318	14,045	n/a

Table 8 shows that the West Side and Downtown are likely to absorb the majority of growth over the next 15 years, which aligns with current planning policy. It also shows some modest growth in the Tulista-Iroquois, Resthaven-Melville, and Melissa-Central areas, which reflects OCP policy supporting gentle infill in those areas. Meanwhile, the Allbay, Shoreacres, Maryland, and Brethour areas may see the lowest growth.

While these are high-level population projections, and are also subject to influencing factors outside the Town's control (i.e., the economy, changing development trends, etc.), they can help to understand where additional parkland may be needed currently and in the coming decades as the community grows.



Map 7: Potential Growth by Catchment Area (2021-2038)



Effect of Population Growth on Catchment Area Park Supply

The analysis in this section looks at localized growth projections within the catchment areas to understand which neighbourhoods might face the most significant gaps in park supply as growth occurs.

Where **Table 8** above summarizes expected population growth, **Table 9** below demonstrates what acquisition would be needed to reach various targets for park supply in 2038 for each catchment area. This includes the additional parkland (in hectares) that would be needed to achieve the 1.9 ha/1,000 residents target, to achieve the 2.0 ha/1,000 residents target, and to achieve the 2.4 ha/1,000 residents stretch target for each catchment area.

Table 9: Future Park Supply and Target Comparisons

Catchment area	Park Area (ha)	Park Supply (ha/1,000 residents)		Additional parkland needed by 2038 to reach the following population-based targets (ha):		
	Current (2021)	Current (2021)	Future (2038) without acquisition	1.9 ha/1,000 residents	2.0 ha/1,000 residents	2.4 ha/1,000 residents
Resthaven-Melville	3.09	2.98	2.65	(0.87)	(0.78)	(0.29)
Allbay	0	0	0	0.84	0.89	1.06
Beaver-Rathdown	2.71	1.27	1.22	1.52	1.74	2.63
Melissa-Central	0.96	0.42	0.40	3.58	3.82	4.78
Shoreacres	0	0	0	1.45	1.53	1.83
Swiftsure	0.05	0.11	0.10	0.86	0.90	1.09
Downtown	0.87	0.53	0.42	3.11	3.32	4.15
Tulista-Iroquois	6.22	5.37	4.54	(3.62)	(3.48)	(2.93)
Maryland	1.51	4.02	3.69	(0.73)	(0.69)	(0.53)
West Side	0.05	0.16	0.06	1.63	1.71	2.07
Brethour	2.21	2.93	2.83	(0.73)	(0.65)	(0.34)
Reay-Grant	5.76	5.73	5.53	(3.78)	(3.68)	(3.26)

Note: Numbers in brackets mean that catchment area is in surplus compared to the amount of parkland required to meet the park supply target identified.

Table 9 shows how much parkland would be required to meet parkland supply targets by park catchment area. Comparing the population-based targets to the projected supply at a catchment level demonstrates which catchment areas may have a sufficient supply of parkland to meet these targets independently, and which catchment areas may require additional parkland acquisition. However, these numbers should be used only as a general indicator of which areas are lacking a sufficient supply of parkland and not as a guide to how much parkland exactly is needed. It is unlikely that the Town would be able to acquire sufficient land to meet any of the targets in most of the catchment areas where there is a deficit, particularly because some areas are in a significant surplus in relation to the targets.

Due to existing parkland supply and limited projected population growth in five of the twelve catchment areas, the level of supply in those five catchment areas is projected to continue meeting the 2.4 ha/1,000 residents level until 2038 without additional parkland acquisition. The remaining catchment areas are well below accepted standards of parkland supply, as well as



established targets, both now and increasingly into the future. These areas would benefit from some level of acquisition. The areas that appear to have the greatest deficit in parkland supply are the Melissa-Central and Downtown catchment areas, followed by the Beaver-Rathdown, West Side, and Shoreacres catchment areas.

Map 8: Projected Catchment Shares of Growth Overlaid with Park Walkability Map



Map 8 illustrates the expected population growth in each of the catchment areas, overlaid with the park network walkability map. This map shows clear gaps in the park network in two of the catchment areas that are projected to absorb a higher share of future growth: the northern portion of Downtown and the southern and northern portion of the West Side. As such, when considering future parkland needs, these areas should be prioritized.

Future Growth: Summary and Conclusions

Growth in Sidney, while modest by some measures, has been consistent in the past and is expected to continue. While its effect on the community is positive overall, this growth also needs to be considered from the perspective of the need to maintain service levels in the community as it occurs. Moreover, areas that have been identified as having a historical lack of parkland need to be addressed, along with planning for continued growth in the community.

Furthermore, both past and future growth will not be distributed evenly across the community, requiring a careful analysis of current and future conditions and a targeted approach to addressing any service level deficits that are identified. The catchment area analysis undertaken above has identified several neighbourhoods where there are opportunities to address service levels; the next part of this report provides some recommendations for action.

Part 3 Key Takeaways:

- *Sidney will continue to experience modest growth, growing to a projected population of 14,045 by 2038.*
- *Projected population growth in Sidney will likely be concentrated in the Downtown and West Side catchment areas, as well as some modest growth projected in the Tulista-Iroquois, Resthaven-Melville, and Melissa-Central catchment areas.*
- *Catchment areas with currently low parkland supply are also those projected to experience the bulk of population growth in Sidney (i.e., Downtown and the West Side).*
- *5 of the 12 catchment areas will individually meet or exceed the 2.4 ha/1,000 residents of parkland standard in 2038, with no parkland being added.*
- *In the current conditions analysis, there are park network gaps identified in areas with higher densities. Some of these gaps are in areas that are projected to absorb most of the growth for the Town in the future.*



Part 4: Findings and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

The Town of Sidney will continue to see modest growth for the next few decades, putting added pressure on the use of its 27 municipal parks. Although Sidney's parks are fairly well distributed across the community, no new parks or significant park acquisition funds have been added to the Town's inventory in recent decades. At the same time however, recent Town policy encourages ensuring adequate parkland supply and emphasizes the importance of natural areas as part of the parks network.

This report's analysis of various standards for parkland supply from a range of jurisdictions found that Sidney is on the lower end of parkland supply, but not atypical for its urban context. With a total of 23.43 hectares of parkland for approximately 12,300 residents, representing 1.9 hectares of park area per 1,000 residents, or 4.6% of its 511-hectare land base, Sidney is slightly below the British Columbia average for municipalities.

A number of physical gaps were also identified in the distribution of Sidney's parks. These conditions may be somewhat expected, as Sidney has taken on the role of "urban centre" for the northern Saanich Peninsula, while neighbouring jurisdictions have remained more rural (due in part to Sidney's role as the commercial hub).

As Sidney grows, the highest population increases will likely be concentrated in the Downtown and West Side areas, with additional modest growth projected in the Tulista-Iroquois, Resthaven-Melville, Beaver-Rathdown, and Melissa-Central catchment areas. Currently the areas with the highest projected growth also have some of the lowest supply of parkland (i.e., Downtown and the West Side) largely due to historical development patterns.

One significant issue is that the Town's regulatory framework and funding mechanisms (as well as Provincial parks legislation) are currently insufficient to address this parks deficit. New or updated funding and acquisition methods will likely be required.

Whatever approach the Town takes to parkland acquisition, its goals going forward generally should be to continuously monitor the supply of parkland in the community and ensure that the needs of the community are being met. More specifically, the Town should look to establish the capacity to be ready to take advantage of opportunities to acquire land in order to meet the park needs of the community. These capacity improvements may include budget provisions, organizational changes, monitoring market conditions, discussions with property owners, and clearly identifying and monitoring specific acquisition goals on an ongoing basis.

The following section details the specific findings and recommendations from the foregoing analysis. These recommendations are supported by recommendations in the Town's Parks Master Plan and policies within the Official Community Plan to identify lands lacking parkland and potential locations for acquisition.

Finding 1: Sidney has a relatively low supply of parkland when compared to most accepted standards and some peer communities.

The Town's supply of parkland is below most accepted standards, and on a per capita basis, supply will continue to drop as the community grows.



Recommendation 1: *Develop a parkland acquisition strategy to identify potential locations for new parkland and pursue them as opportunities arise.*

Although the above statement is a relatively simple one, the process and requirements to acquire parkland are often challenging. The development of a parkland acquisition strategy could help to address some of the following questions: What properties should be acquired? Where will the funds come from? How will the acquisition process be handled?

Supporting Policy:

- Identify areas lacking parkland, park amenities, and/or pedestrian connectivity then prioritize the acquisition of lands for new parks and trails via the development process (e.g., rights-of-way) or Town-purchased land (Parks Master Plan).
- Acquire, design, develop, and maintain parks, public spaces, and recreation facilities to fit the needs of residents of all age and abilities, including improving their social connections and well-being (OCP 14.3.2).
- To develop a high-quality parks and open space network that meets the needs of residents of all ages and abilities (OCP 14.2.6).

Finding 2: *The Town does not currently have sufficient financial resources to achieve any significant level of parkland acquisition.*

Sidney currently has several challenges from a parkland acquisition perspective:

- The current DCC fee for parkland acquisition is extremely low and does not reflect current land cost realities. Furthermore, increasing these fees will not necessarily address the short-term needs, as it is likely to take several decades to achieve the required funding levels; this will be exacerbated by rising land costs.
- The current balance of the Parkland Acquisition Reserve is relatively low, and will not increase substantially in the current regulatory/development environment; and
- There are very few subdivisions anticipated in Sidney that would provide any substantial level of new parkland or acquisition funds. Only larger subdivisions that create more than 3 new lots are required to contribute parkland or funds in lieu, while the majority of Sidney subdivisions have been and will likely continue to create only 2 lots.

The Town requires dedicated funds to acquire land. Even with some of the other indirect strategies above being utilized, outright purchase of land will be necessary. To ensure that the Town has the capability to respond to opportunities, sufficient capital needs to be put aside, collected, and/or borrowed.

Recommendation 2: *Consider implementing specific funding mechanisms such as the DCC bylaw, capital reserve transfers, or borrowing to achieve parkland acquisition goals.*

This will require a number of specific changes to be initiated by Town staff or Council. As of 2023, funding to update the DCC Bylaw has been set aside, while Council may consider budget transfers, borrowing, or other fund mechanisms for parkland acquisition in future budget years. These may include:



- Annual contributions to the parkland acquisition reserve fund should be initiated, while considering other budget priorities. The intent of this would be to build the reserve fund to a level that would make it possible to pursue acquisition opportunities in the relatively near future, potentially along with other funding mechanisms. Aside from tax-funded contributions, another possible source of funds is the Town's Amenity Reserve, which may be used for this purpose.
- The Town's Development Cost Charge Bylaw should be revised and updated as soon as practically possible to allow for the immediate collection of parks acquisition funds. However, collecting sufficient funds to acquire land with DCC's can take many years to realize, and should be used with this reality in mind (i.e. longer-term strategic acquisitions).
- Explore borrowing opportunities. Municipalities in BC have access to lower cost borrowing through the Municipal Finance Authority.

Other potential funding sources can be explored to help facilitate the acquisition of parkland. These include:

- Parkland dedication through development: Land can be acquired through the redevelopment process, provided it is adequately identified in advance.
- Grant funding: Opportunities for grant funding should be explored, although grants for direct land acquisition are rare.
- Donations: The Town could set up a dedicated page to advertise and accept donations of land or funds for parkland purposes. Naming rights, donation receipts, and other incentives could be included with this process.
- Land exchange or sale: In some cases, the Town may be able to swap or sell land to acquire needed parkland, utilizing other land with less desirable attributes from a park perspective (positive market value, land use change, or other attributes that would incentivize the other party would need to exist).
- Density transfer: The zoning powers of municipalities can be a powerful tool to create value on, and between, properties. The Town can acknowledge the dedication of parkland by a third party (and resulting loss of development potential) through increasing the development potential on another property.
- Investment return: In order to offset costs, the Town could purchase properties that provide a near-term return on investment, while planning in advance to convert that land to park over the long-term.

Supporting Policy:

- Develop a funding plan to address the acquisition of additional parks space in underserved areas within the community. (OCP 14.3.3)

Finding 3: *The Town will need improved internal capacity to purchase additional parkland (and meet other land needs) for the future.*

Due to the Town's lack of recent activity in conducting direct land purchases, it lacks an established real estate role and set of procedures. This is not uncommon in BC municipalities, particularly smaller ones like Sidney. However, in order to achieve even modest property acquisition goals, the Town needs to consider adding a more formalized real estate function. Regardless of the funding method, this will allow the Town to take advantage of funding and market opportunities as they arise, while also building internal capacity to assess, execute, and complete the desired real estate transactions and in doing so, achieve the community's goals as



articulated in the OCP and other Town documents. This would not be a dedicated staff position; rather it would be an established set of policies and procedures to help guide acquisition, facilitated by a position or positions tasked with fulfilling these functions on an as-needed basis. These resources would be supplemented by contracted services as required.

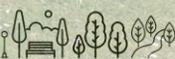
Recommendation 3: *Establish a set of policies and procedures to guide property acquisition and disposals.*

The following actions should be considered to build capacity:

- Develop a set of policy and procedures, as well as the appropriate documentation for use in the real estate transaction process.
- Identify a role tasked with coordinating real estate activities. While real estate acquisition and disposal activities are needed periodically across the organizational structure, it may be beneficial to have a position that is reasonably knowledgeable about the process, methods, and contacts necessary to coordinate and deliver this function. Even more important is the need to build an established process that can be utilized when required.
- Obtain legal guidance. Having the process, structure, policies, and procedures for municipal real estate transactions reviewed by legal counsel before and during the purchase or disposal process will ensure it happens smoothly and with the appropriate safeguards in place.

Supporting Policy:

- Strategically utilize parkland acquisition and development tools to enhance biodiversity and connectivity and facilitate the protection and restoration of natural assets. (OCP 12.3.3).
- To ensure sufficient system capacity exists to meet current and future servicing demands. (OCP 17.2.4).



Finding 4: Areas projected for higher population growth already have a parkland deficit.

Areas anticipated for higher population growth already have low parkland supply. These include the following catchment areas:

- Downtown
- West Side
- Melissa-Central
- Beaver-Rathdown

Recommendation 4: Actively pursue property acquisition opportunities in some or all of these areas as a high priority.

Given the lack of undeveloped land in Sidney, the key to acquiring property in these areas will be for the municipality to look for specific opportunities with property owners in each area. Strategies to acquire the land at a lower direct cost, or methods to sustainably fund acquisition, should also be explored. Parkland should be acquired in the near term in these areas to ensure that the land is secured as the areas grow, in advance of any price increases as redevelopment occurs.

Supporting Policy:

- Prioritize the acquisition of small “pocket” parks with new development, in order to mitigate the impacts of increased densities (PMP)
- To create attractive and usable public spaces for the residents and employees of the Mixed Use Village. (OCP 7.2.3)
- To provide more outdoor green spaces within, or conveniently accessed from, the downtown area. (OCP 6.2.3)
- As downtown is redeveloped, work with developers to prioritize the design ‘between buildings’ in the creation of a network of small plaza spaces, pedestrian connections, and similar public spaces (e.g., street corners) to support a growing population (PMP)
- Identify the location of and actively pursue the establishment of a central public square/ plaza for downtown. (OCP 6.3.16)
- Identify locations to develop a central downtown public space (plaza), such as on Fourth Street north of Beacon (PMP N.)

Finding 5: Spatial analysis showed some notable gaps in the parks network.

Map 4 in Part 2 identifies several specific gaps in the parks network. While some of these areas overlap with the areas identified in Finding 4, other areas anticipated to have lower future growth are already in a parkland deficit, with residents unable to easily access parkland. These areas include:

- West Side
- Shoreacres
- Beaufort
- Allbay



Recommendation 5: *Acquire parkland to fill specific identified gaps in the network.*

Of the four areas noted above, the West Side should be given the highest priority due to its current lack of parkland and planned residential growth. Shoreacres, while not anticipated to have high levels of future growth, is already in a parkland deficit and sits on the edge of Sidney’s highest density area, just north of downtown. Beaufort and Allbay can be considered lower priority, as many of the properties in these two areas are larger and include their own substantial greenspace, reducing the need for dedicated parkland.

In these areas, the Town should rely on its acquisition strategy to help guide location selection and inform financial planning decisions. Strategies to fund the acquisition of land should also be explored, as noted above.

Supporting Policy:

- To ensure Sidney’s parks and green spaces, institutions, services, and cultural centres are accessible to people who live and work in or near Town. (OCP 14.2.5)
- Acquire land that can be added as municipal parkland in order to help preserve or enhance Environmentally Sensitive Areas. (OCP 12.4.6)

Conclusion

As this report has shown, Sidney has a below-average supply of parkland and some notable gaps in its park network. While this report recommends developing an acquisition strategy to help increase supply, the costs of even modest land acquisition are substantial. As elsewhere in the CRD, the cost of land in Sidney has reached historic highs, making the acquisition of land an expensive prospect. Estimating the current cost of land in Sidney depends on the existing land use. To purchase residential land (with neighbourhood residential making up the majority of land in Sidney) in lower-density neighbourhoods for use as parkland would cost, at 2023 prices, approximately \$10 million per hectare, or about \$1 million for 1,000 square meters (the size of a typical large residential lot). Higher-density residential land would likely cost more (i.e. multi-unit or mixed use zoned properties), while non-residential land (i.e., Institutional) may be less, depending on the actual use. These approximate costs are only estimates for the land purchase itself and do not include development of parkland, demolition of any buildings on site, or any new ongoing costs.

As an example of the significant costs associated with land acquisition, if residential land were to be purchased directly from private single-family residential property owners (who as noted above make up the bulk of land holdings in Sidney) at 2023 prices, the purchase of 3.25 hectares (to maintain the current per capita supply of parkland to 2038) would require an investment of approximately \$33 million in land acquisition costs. Without this acquisition, assuming that population growth continues as expected, the per capita amount of parkland will continue to decrease over time.

Clearly, a small community with limited resources like Sidney will be challenged to find even part of such a large sum for parkland purchases, given the other demands on the Town’s budget and limited financial resources for purchases of this type. However, given the importance of green

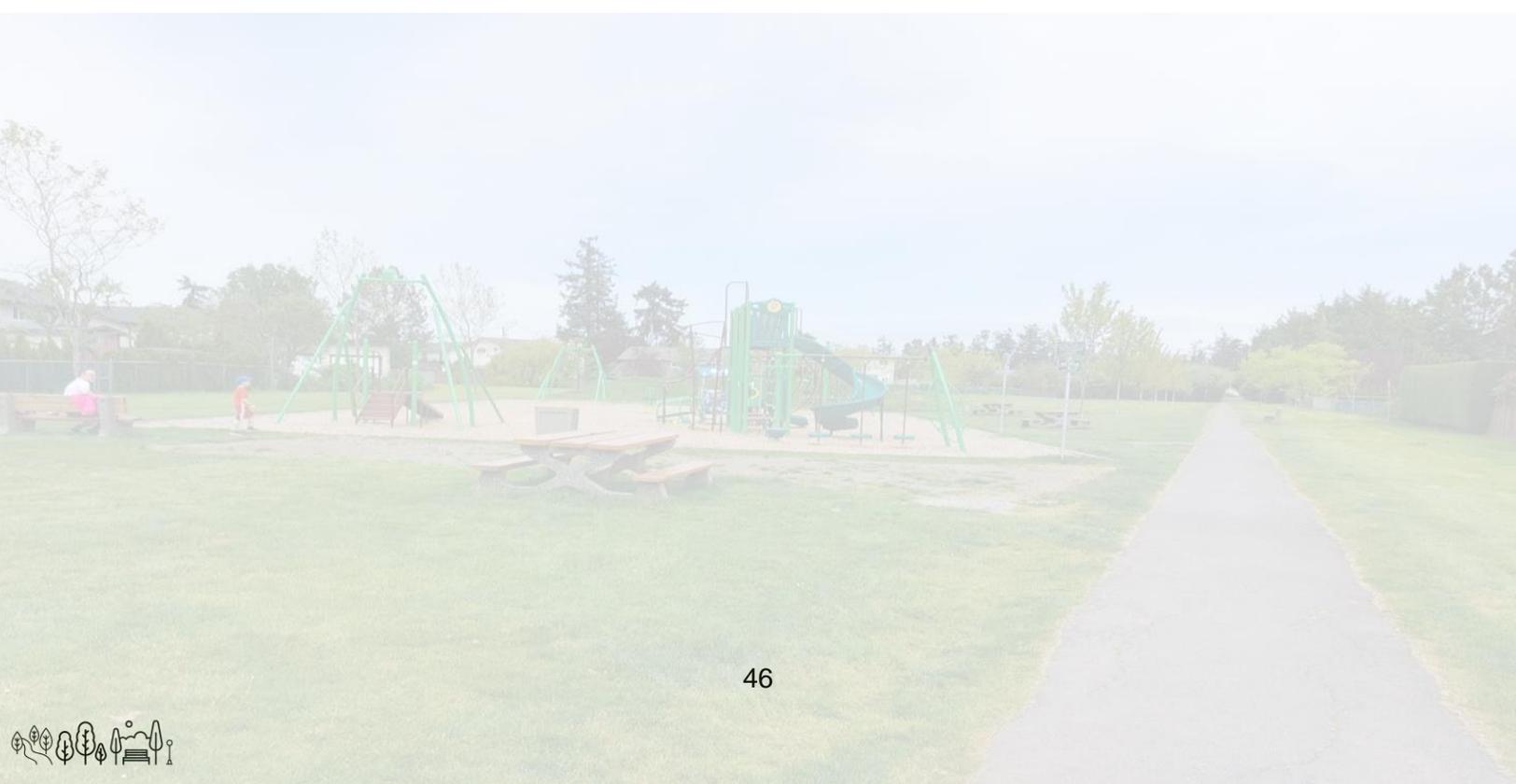


space to human well-being, and the expectation of continued growth in the community, some level of parkland acquisition needs to be explored. Some options include:

- First and foremost, there is a need to be realistic about the desired total amount of parkland in Sidney. Instead of recognized standards such as 4 hectares/1,000 residents, more realistic targets have been considered in this report, and even those targets should only be used as a general guide.
- Other sources of land already under municipal control can be considered for park use. For instance, road rights of way could be repurposed to create additional parkland. Melissa Park, for example, is a repurposed road right-of-way, not dedicated, titled land, as is Boulder Park. However, opportunities in this area may be limited due to transportation requirements and the perceived loss of on-street parking.
- Agreements with the Province, other public or non-profit organizations, and private landowners could be pursued to utilize land as public parkland through agreements.
- While the amount of land that can be acquired through this method is somewhat limited due to legislative limitations, land dedication through subdivision or rezoning applications could be utilized in some circumstances. This approach should be employed to acquire greenways and potentially parkland in the Galaran neighbourhood, given the expected land use changes in that specific area.

The most viable path forward is likely a combination of all of these options, and the Town should focus on acquiring or repurposing land to address the gaps identified in this document while considering all options that can help the Town to meet its current and future parks goals.

Acknowledging the difficulty of adding significantly to Sidney's land base for parks from the perspective of national or other recognized standards, this document recommends a more targeted approach to land acquisition, which, with some careful planning and organization, may be within the ability of the Town to undertake. Even so, sufficient resources and processes need to be arranged to achieve a modest expansion of the park network at a reasonable cost to taxpayers, while also improving the functionality and accessibility of existing parkland in Sidney.



APPENDIX



Appendix A

Supporting Policy

Planning documents reviewed:

- Official Community Plan (2022)
- Parks Master Plan (2018)
- Park Concept Plans: Rathdown/Resthaven/Brethour (2019)
- Development Cost Charge Bylaw No. 1440
- Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contributions policy
- Urban Forest Strategy
- Tree Preservation Bylaw No. 2138
- Downtown Waterfront Vision (2018)
- Climate Action Plan (2022)
- 2019-2022 Strategic Plan (2022)
- Parks Bylaw No. 1688

Policies from these documents specific to parkland acquisition have been collated below.

OCP and Parks Master Plan

The OCP and Parks Master Plan (PMP) guide and support parkland acquisition at a high level and the need to identify areas for additional parkland in underserved areas. Supporting policies include:

Source	Policy
OCP 14.3.2	<i>Acquire, design, develop, and maintain parks, public spaces, and recreation facilities to fit the needs of residents of all age and abilities, including improving their social connections and well-being.</i>
OCP 14.3.3	<i>Develop a funding plan to address the acquisition of additional parks space in underserved areas within the community.</i>
PMP	<i>Identify areas lacking parkland, park amenities, and/or pedestrian connectivity then prioritize the acquisition of lands for new parks and trails via the development process (e.g., rights-of-way) or Town-purchased land</i>
OCP 14.2.6	<i>To develop a high quality parks and open space network that meets the needs of residents of all ages and abilities.</i>

The two plans also include policies that emphasize the need to improve access to parks throughout the community, to find opportunities to enhance the park network, and to expand existing public open space and pedestrian linkages. Supporting policies include:

Source	Policy
OCP 14.2.5	<i>To ensure Sidney's parks and green spaces, institutions, services, and cultural centres are accessible to people who live and work in or near Town.</i>
PMP	<i>Identify strategies to increase accessibility for all abilities and enhance the mobility of all users between and within parks.</i>



OCP 6.2.2.	<i>To create comfortable, attractive, and walkable public spaces that support diverse and vibrant public life</i>
PMP	<i>As downtown is redeveloped, work with developers to prioritize the design 'between buildings' in the creation of a network of small plaza spaces, pedestrian connections, and similar public spaces (e.g., street corners) to support a growing population</i>
PMP	<i>Prioritize the acquisition of small "pocket" parks with new development, in order to mitigate the impacts of increased densities</i>
OCP 8.3.8	<i>Incorporate space for community gathering and connections in public spaces near neighbourhood commercial developments and on popular street corners.</i>
OCP 6.3.15	<i>Actively promote "places for people" by establishing public (or privately owned and publicly accessible) open spaces such as plazas, pedestrian mews, parklets, and view areas.</i>
OCP 16.3.8	<i>Work with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure to provide a "green" entrance to Sidney through tree plantings and landscaping displays within the highway right-of-way.</i>
PMP	<i>Utilizing parks and trails to enhance connectivity and mobility within and between neighbourhoods</i>
OCP 16.4.2	<i>Establish and improve pedestrian linkages between parks and public spaces.</i>

The OCP and PMP focus particularly on the acquisition of parkland to help in facilitating natural protection and restoration. The two documents encourage intentional parkland acquisition to facilitate multiple objectives where possible. Supporting policies include:

Source	Policy
OCP 12.2.3	<i>To support the role of parks and recreational areas in preserving, enhancing, and connecting areas of habitat and ecological significance.</i>
OCP 12.4.6	<i>Acquire land that can be added as municipal parkland in order to help preserve or enhance Environmentally Sensitive Areas.</i>
OCP 12.3.3	<i>Strategically utilize parkland acquisition and development tools to enhance biodiversity and connectivity, and facilitate the protection and restoration of natural assets.</i>
OCP 12.3.1	<i>Incorporate ecological connectivity into land use planning by prioritizing and building upon opportunities such as enhanced natural spaces, and trail and corridor development.</i>
OCP 12.3.4	<i>Consider opportunities in the active transportation planning process for greenways to enhance both natural connectivity and urban connection.</i>
PMP	<i>Use Active Transportation planning process to identify additional on-road greenways and off-road trails to enhance mobility between and within neighbourhoods, including wayfinding and signage, with a focus on north-south connections</i>



OCP 14.2.1	<i>To provide for a range of active and passive parks, recreational facilities, trails, and public beach accesses, and to protect the natural environment and habitat areas.</i>
OCP 12.6.4	<i>Provide opportunities for public enjoyment of natural areas and support low-impact, sustainable recreation where appropriate and without adversely affecting environmentally sensitive areas.</i>
OCP 12.4.22	<i>Work toward renaturalizing Mermaid Creek through land acquisition, lot consolidation and development opportunities, with a longterm goal of daylighting piped sections of the creek, increasing tree and native species cover in creek setbacks, and enhancing public amenities such as a creekside trail or park, interpretive signage, and other community education and stewardship opportunities.</i>

The OCP and PMP also provide more specific guidance by suggesting areas for public open spaces and improvements, particularly in the form of a downtown public plaza, and additional waterfront and beach access. Supporting policies include:

Source	Policy
OCP 7.2.3	<i>To create attractive and usable public spaces for the residents and employees of the Mixed Use Village.</i>
OCP 6.2.3	<i>To provide more outdoor green spaces within, or conveniently accessed from, the downtown area.</i>
OCP 6.3.16	<i>Identify the location of and actively pursue the establishment of a central public square/ plaza for downtown.</i>
PMP N.	<i>Identify locations to develop a central downtown public space (plaza), such as on Fourth Street north of Beacon</i>
PMP D4. D.	<i>Identify recommended options for a central downtown public space (e.g., plaza), with consideration given to Fourth Street north of Beacon Avenue.</i>
PMP	<i>Create a centrally-located downtown public space (i.e., plaza), by using existing Town-owned land and/or acquiring new land – give strong consideration to 4th Street north of Beacon</i>
OCP 14.2.4	<i>To maintain and expand a public waterfront open space network that offers safe and convenient public access to the beach and marine amenities.</i>
OCP 14.3.11	<i>Maintain and, where possible, expand an accessible public waterfront open space network, including expanding the waterfront walkway. Explore places where additional (or improved) beach access may be appropriate through land acquisition or securing statutory rights-of-way.</i>
OCP 14.3.12	<i>Multi-Unit Residential developments adjacent to the waterfront should provide a 4.5 metre wide strip of land abutting the landward side of the natural boundary, which will remain free of development with provision for public access through registration of a statutory right-of-way or other legal means. Provision will be made for access around any structure or development that extends below the natural boundary.</i>



Several of the recommendations from the Parks Master Plan have been acted upon. Most notably, these include the implementation of the park concept plans for Rathdown, Resthaven, and Brethour Parks.

Development Cost Charge Bylaw No. 1440

The DCC Bylaw establishes regulations that allow the Town to collect fees to support the future acquisition of parkland. The unit cost provided for Parks and Open Space for a specified area is located in Schedule E.

Supporting Policy

- Commercial Sub Area No.1, All Residential Multi-Family low medium and high density: \$245 per unit

Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contributions Policy DV-013

The Bonus Density & Community Amenity Contributions policy can be used by local governments to require developers to contribute to community improvements in return for the allowance of relaxations in specific regulations. Contributions can include either cash or other amenities, like affordable housing units. Under certain conditions, this policy allows for cash contributions of \$150 per square metre of additional gross floor area above the Base Density permitted by the property's existing zoning, as established in the bylaw excerpt below:

Development applications shall make a cash contribution of \$150 per square metre of additional gross floor area above the Base Density permitted by the property's existing zoning as it is designated at the time of submission of the development application in each of the following circumstances:

- 1. Development applications which propose to exceed the applicable Base Density but do not exceed the Bonus Density within that specific zone, as established by the Zoning Bylaw.*
- 2. Development applications which propose to change the zoning designation of a property or properties where the new zoning designation would allow a higher Base Density.*
- 3. Development applications which propose to exceed the applicable Bonus Density maximum of that specific zone, as established by the Zoning Bylaw, and therefore require a zoning amendment to allow additional density.*

The policy states that funds collected as amenity contributions can be used in eight eligible project categories which include Park improvements or parkland acquisition. The policy also allows for Council to accept an alternate contribution in lieu of a cash contribution, which may include land improvements that involve publicly accessible open space.

