



Definition and Description

The City of Victoria cares for ornamental gardens, natural ecosystems, public squares, sport and entertainment venues, playgrounds and other open spaces for recreational and cultural enjoyment and preserves and enhances green spaces on public lands.

The City also facilitates recreation and wellness programs and services at Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre, Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre, Royal Athletic Park and Victoria's community and senior's centres.

Why Is This Topic Important?

Parks and recreation facilities provide multiple services and benefits in sustainable communities. Access to urban parks and recreation has been linked to increased personal health, commercial and residential property values, tourism, community development, and providing ecological habitat¹. Opportunities for indoor and outdoor recreation support physical activity and healthy lifestyles. Parks provide important habitat, and ecological functions such as clean air, the absorption of rainwater and the buffering of wind and noise.

1. For a review of benefits of parks in the U.S., see Project for Public Spaces, www.pps.org

The Official Community Plan (OCP) addresses the location of parks, open space and public facilities such as community centres. The quality, extent and proximity of parks and recreation facilities in a community help to create a unique identity and sense of place. Continued access to these places is a significant aspect of liveability in Victoria.

Did You Know?

Victoria has a total of **190 hectares** of public parkland. Approximately 50 parks contain natural areas, covering approximately 75 hectares in total.²

85 per cent of Victorians have a City of Victoria park within walking distance (400 metres) of their home.²

Victoria has **39 playgrounds**, plus two water/spray parks. Currently, 12 Victoria parks have designated **off-leash dog areas**.

Victoria's **recreation facilities** include 26 tennis courts, six basketball courts, three lawn bowling greens, one skating rink and one skate park. Seven community centres and three seniors' centres are jointly operated with other organizations. The City manages 19 sports fields for sports such as soccer and baseball, as well as one artificial turf field at Topaz Park.

The City also operates one curling club, one library, and one arena in partnership with other organizations.

The City of Victoria contains a number of parks and landscapes which have **heritage significance**. These include Ross Bay Cemetery, Beacon Hill Park and Pioneer Square. Many locations are also associated with First Nations peoples, such as Beacon Hill Park.

The Beacon Hill Park Nursery produces 132,500 annual plants for **horticulture** displays and hanging baskets. The City maintains plantings on 25 parks and boulevards and 60 beds outside Beacon Hill Park, and more than 1,600 hanging baskets.

Issues and Trends

Land Use Trends

- 85 per cent of Victorians have a City of Victoria designated park within walking distance (400 metres) of their home. Research indicates that neighbourhoods with walkable services and facilities, such as parks and recreation centres, have higher rates of physical activity.²

CONTINUED ➤

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Cameron Scott, Senior Planner, Community Planning Division | 1 Centennial Square, Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

T 250.361.0534

E ocp@victoria.ca

www.ShapeYourFutureVictoria.ca

- Many City parks are concentrated in the neighbourhoods of Fairfield, James Bay and Victoria West. Beacon Hill Park alone accounts for 50 per cent of Victoria's municipal park land.
- There are many competing interests for City of Victoria park space (e.g. dogs, playgrounds, sports teams). Parks are managed to avoid overuse and conflict among different users.
- Victoria has many other types of publicly and privately owned land that are used for recreation and green space. These include: schools, CRD parks and greenways, provincial property (e.g. St. Ann's Academy) and Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (e.g. Inner Harbour causeway). 96 per cent of Victoria homes are located within walking distance of some type of park or open space.²

Demographic Trends

- Over the next three decades, Victoria is expected to see a dramatic increase in citizens aged 65 and older, from 17 per cent to 29 per cent of the total population.³ Nearby parks and recreation can encourage people of all ages to be physically active. There may be an increased demand for facilities such as walking trails and dog-parks as people age.
- The 2007 Parks Survey indicated that a lack of time, concerns about social issues and public safety are the top three barriers to both adults and youth using Victoria's parks.
- Victoria's Leisure Involvement For Everyone (LIFE) program offers a combination of credits and savings for low-income families to use towards City recreation facilities. 3073 Victoria residents participated in the LIFE program in 2009, an increase of 555 people from 2008.

- The 2007 Parks Survey indicated that people use the following facilities in parks most frequently: walking paths (67 per cent), beaches/water access (53 per cent) and enjoyment of natural features/plantings (37 per cent). The least used facilities were tennis courts, basketball courts and skate parks.

Funding and Infrastructure

- Victoria's parks and recreation infrastructure is challenged by increasing population, rising costs, and ageing equipment, buildings and surfaces. New, innovative approaches to funding will need to be considered.
- The City manages 40,000 trees in its parks and boulevards, many of which are nearing the end of their life cycle. New garden beds and street trees are being established as part of redevelopments and traffic calming measures.
- Some recreation facilities, such as Crystal Pool and Recreation Centre, are in need of major upgrades.

The City in Action: What We Do Now

The City of Victoria guides and responds to the need for parks and recreation through land use plans, policies and operations. Planning goals include a wide diversity of services to meet the needs of all ages in the population, as part of planning for a liveable community. Land use plans support a distribution of parks across the city. The maintenance of gardens, trees and facilities enhance Victoria's natural and built environment. Active living is encouraged through barrier free access to facilities, affordable programs and athletic events in public spaces.



Share your thoughts and ideas

- What types of open spaces, parks and recreational facilities do you use regularly? Does your use change at different times of the year?
- What is important to you about Victoria's open spaces, parks and recreational facilities?
- What can be done to encourage more people to use Victoria's open spaces, parks and recreational facilities?

2. Source: City of Victoria.

3. 2006, Statistics Canada.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Additional topic sheets are available online at www.shapeyourfuturevictoria.ca/research-facts