

Development Capacity Study Open House

Welcome!

What is the Development Capacity Study?

The Township of Esquimalt is undertaking a Development Capacity Study to better understand how much future growth our existing infrastructure and services can support.

The study evaluates how different variables may impact the township's ability to realize its full residential development capacity.

Project background

In recent years, Esquimalt has experienced increasing development pressures. To prepare for the future, the township is assessing our capacity to accommodate new residential development.

The Development Capacity Study is a decision-support tool that will help Council, staff, and the community understand where growth can realistically occur under current policies and infrastructure constraints. It will serve as an important component of long-range planning efforts, including potential future updates to the township's Official Community Plan (OCP).

Our approach

Staff and the consultant team have been conducting a mix of analyses:

- Spatial - analyzing where various features are located (e.g., households, parks, the fire hall), where more of those features are concentrated, and the distance between different features
- Quantitative - gathering and analyzing numerical data (e.g., traffic counts, pace of development, maximum permitted dwelling units, township revenues and costs)
- Qualitative - gathering perspectives from key groups that numbers and maps can't tell us, and to expand upon, challenge or validate our understanding

As part of the study the team has met with:

- Esquimalt staff in planning, parks and recreation, and engineering and public works
- CFB Esquimalt planning staff
- City of Victoria engineering and public works

Process overview



Today's open house

Around the room you will see boards that summarize our preliminary findings. Please take a look around, read through the material, and feel free to ask us any questions you might have.

At the end, you will have an opportunity to share your feedback with us.

You can also view the full draft report and leave feedback online by scanning the QR code or visiting enging.esquimalt.ca/development.



enging.esquimalt.ca/development

Growth context and variables

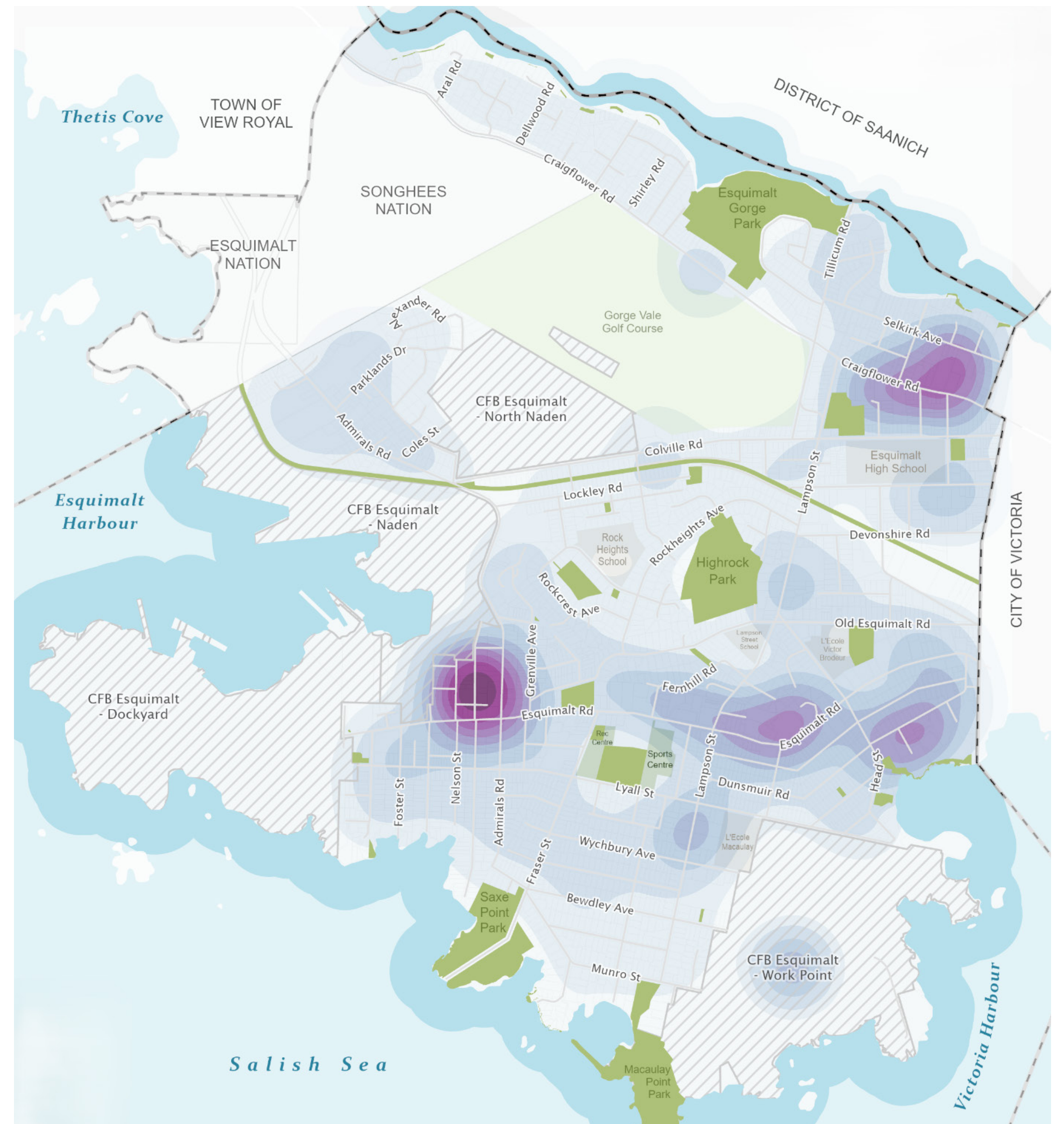


Growth context

The township's population is largely concentrated in a few areas: near the intersection at Admirals Rd and Esquimalt Rd; east of that intersection, along Esquimalt Road; and in the northeast between Selkirk Ave and Craigflower Rd.

Household growth across the Capital Regional District (CRD) varies, with some communities experiencing consistent, rapid growth, while others have grown more slowly. The household growth rate in Esquimalt has remained somewhat steady, with a yearly average of 1.2% since 2011. This is on the lower end of the regional average.

In recent years, Esquimalt has experienced various development pressures. The township is surrounded by water, which means growth needs to be accommodated by medium- and higher-density forms of housing. Growth on CFB Esquimalt has increased as well.



Map shows population density across Esquimalt

Variables considered

The Development Capacity Study will help us better understand how much future residential growth our existing infrastructure and services can support.

As part of the study, we are considering several variables. Most variables were assessed at a municipal level and a couple at a regional level. The relationship between these variables to growth and development are twofold - some variables affect development, while others feel the effects of development.

The variables include:

Land Use: Ensuring enough lands are designated to accommodate Esquimalt's future housing needs.

Utilities: The capacity of our sanitary sewer, water, and electrical distribution systems.

Transportation: The capacity of our road network and public transit system.

Recreation, Greenspace & Tree Canopy: Access to parks and recreation facilities, as well as the protection of the urban forest.

Emergency Services: Fire and ambulance service coverage and response times.

Fiscal Considerations: Projecting municipal costs, revenues, and capital reserve funds.



Land use and capacity

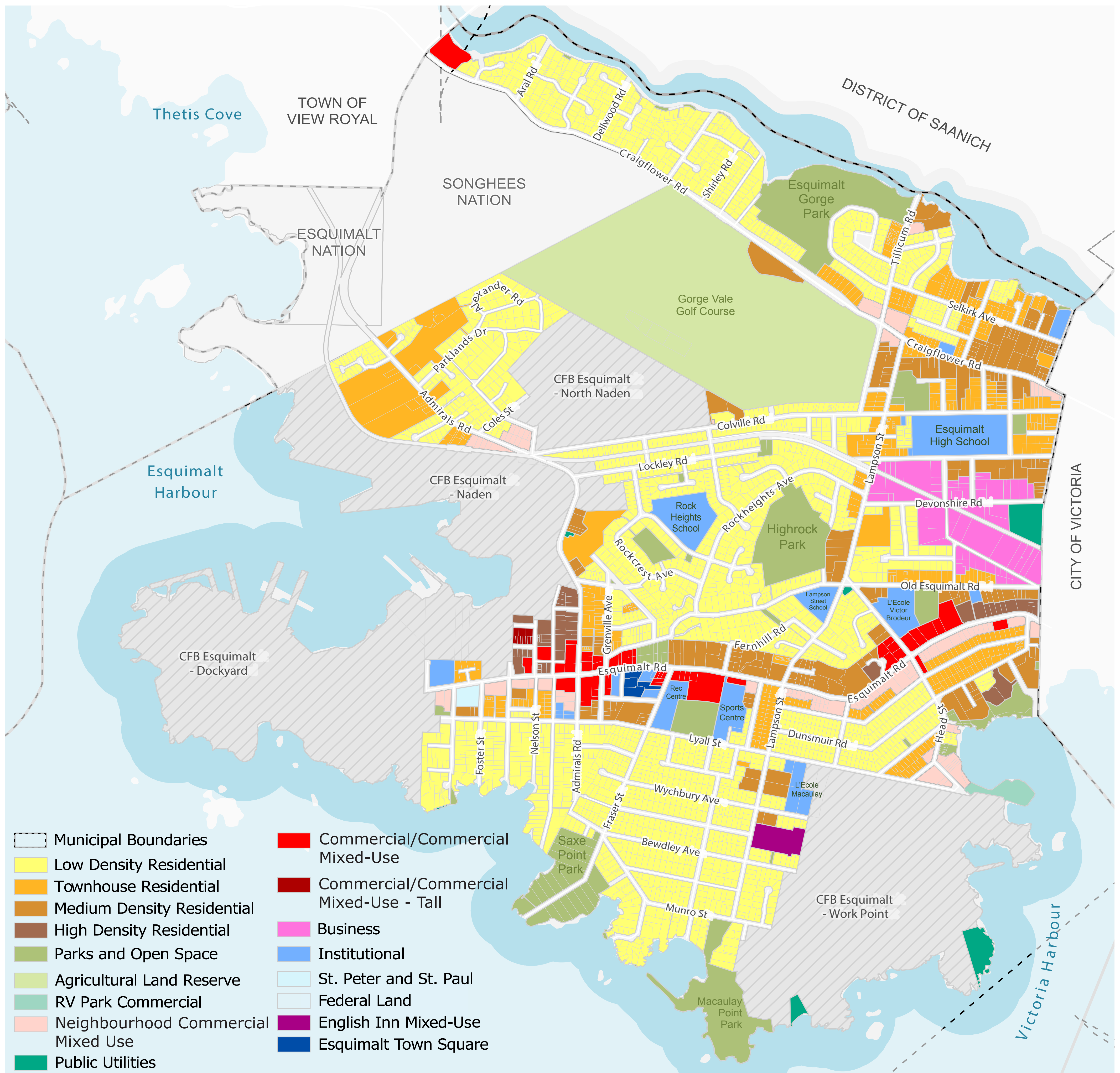


The Official Community Plan (OCP) defines the proposed land use for every parcel in Esquimalt. The density and form within each land use designation provides a theoretical limit for how many dwelling units could be built on a given parcel. By assessing land use, we can get a sense of the maximum allowable capacity for housing units across the township.

The land use map below shows how land is currently designated across Esquimalt.

Much of Esquimalt is designated as lower density. As such, about 1/3 of potential housing units are in lower-density areas, 1/3 in medium-density areas, and 1/3 in higher-density or mixed-use areas.

The total capacity available through proposed land use is:
30, 830 potential housing units.



Map shows proposed OCP land use designations across Esquimalt

Unit gap and development



As of 2024, there were **10,455 total housing units** in Esquimalt.

When we compare how many units exist on each parcel today with how many units could exist based on proposed land uses, that leaves a gap of approximately 20,000 additional potential future housing units. We call this the unit gap.

If we compare the unit gap to the 20-year projected housing need - which helps us better understand how our community is growing and how many new housing units we will need to accommodate between 2021 and 2041 - we might assume that enough lands are already designated for additional units to ensure we can accommodate our future need.

However, that doesn't give us the full picture. Development occurs over time, and the potential for a parcel or an area to be redeveloped is influenced by a wide range of factors.

The development pipeline - which consists of current rezoning applications, development permit applications, and building permit applications - helps to give us a reasonable sense of the pace of development in Esquimalt.

When we combine the number of units built between 2021 and 2024 with the number of units in the development pipeline, we expect that Esquimalt will need to deliver only an additional 1,400 additional housing units to meet the community's housing needs.

Based on our understanding of the pace of development this can be **achieved by 2039**.

20-Year Housing Need

4,213

Units Built (2021 - 2024)

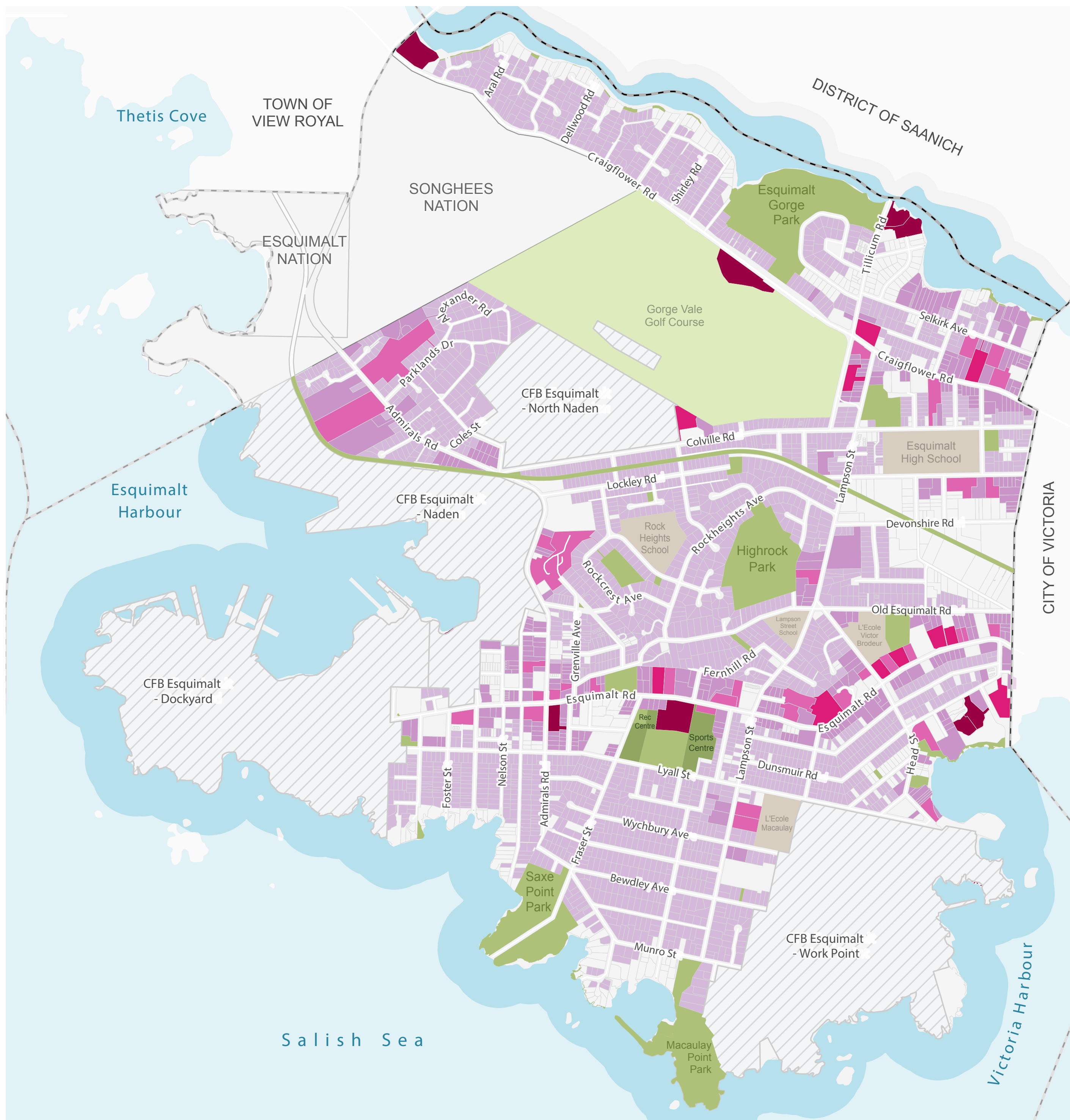
967

Units in the Pipeline

1,845

Additional Units Needed by 2041

~1,400



Map shows difference between current number (2024) of units and estimated maximum units per parcel where darker pink is a higher gap

Utilities



Utilities such as sanitary sewer, water, and electricity can represent a hard limit to future growth and development. Understanding to what extent these systems can support growth is critical.

Esquimalt's **sanitary sewer system** is operated through a shared responsibility between the Township and Capital Regional District.

The study looks at what happens to the sewer system if the community were to be fully built out, taking into account an evaluation of the overall condition and performance of the current system conducted in 2025.

The results show that the sewer system can accommodate enough new housing units to meet our community's project housing need. However, deficiencies in the system would need to be addressed in order to accommodate more growth above that.

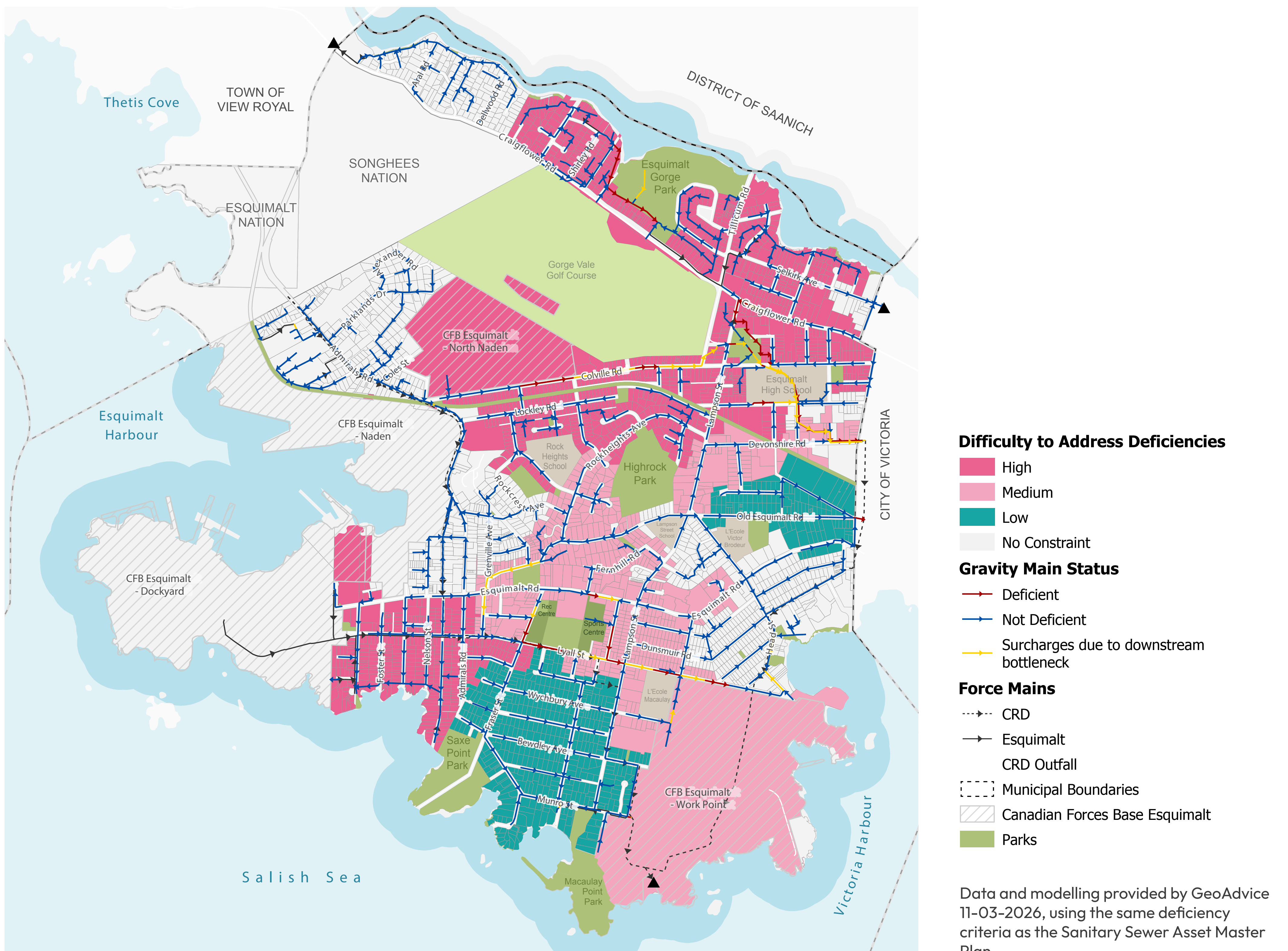
The map below shows the level of difficulty to address sewer deficiencies across different areas of Esquimalt.

The **water distribution system** in Esquimalt is operated by the City of Victoria and water is provided by the Capital Regional District.

Through a qualitative review provided by the City of Victoria, water distribution is unlikely to limit future growth in Esquimalt in the next 20 years. The City is in the process of updating their water system master plan. Once complete, information from that plan will be included in the Development Capacity Study.

BC Hydro builds and maintains the **electrical distribution and transmission systems** in Esquimalt. The substation that serves Esquimalt also serves other municipalities in the CRD. BC Hydro does not anticipate electrical distribution to represent a constraint to future growth in Esquimalt. They are also conducting further analysis.

Overall, the utilities systems in Esquimalt do not pose an immediate challenge to growth. The most limiting is the sewer system, which, can be addressed by "unlocking" opportunities through future infrastructure investment.



Map shows level of difficulty associated with addressing sanitary sewer constraints, thereby unlocking development capacity

Traffic



Increased growth and development has an impact on local traffic congestion. Understanding the extent to which the current road network can accommodate increased traffic is just as critical as understanding utility systems.

More transportation trips in Esquimalt, including those in and out of the township, are made by private motor vehicle than any other single mode.

However, over the last decade residents have increasingly embraced active transportation - walking, cycling, and public transit. Data from the CRD Household Travel Survey highlights a significant shift in habits for those who both live and travel within the township: from 44% of total trips in 2017 to 60% in 2022.

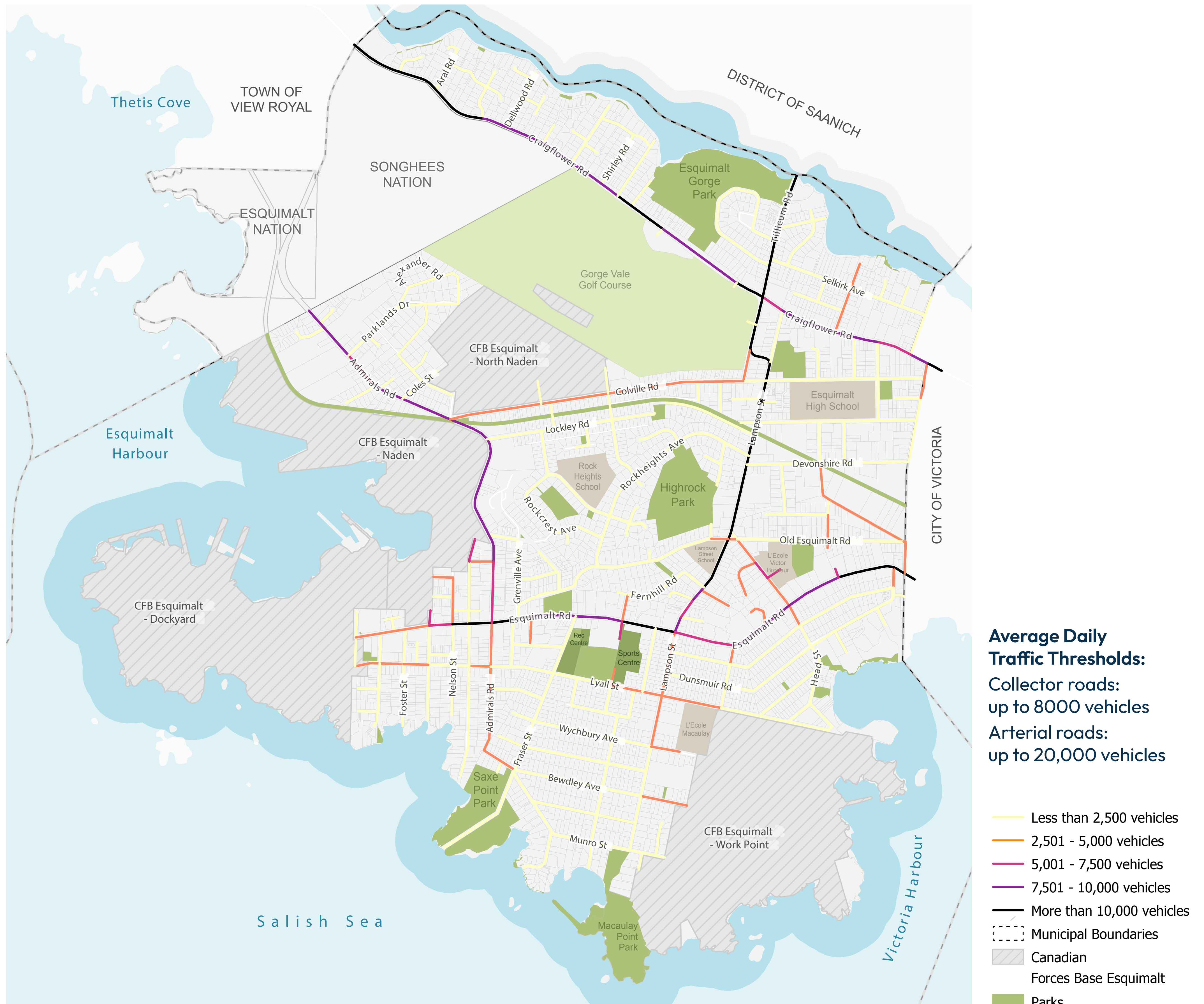
The study looks at how average daily traffic volumes today might compare to traffic volumes in the future if Esquimalt were to be fully built out.

The map below shows the average daily traffic volumes under potential future conditions for various corridors across Esquimalt.

Overall, the analysis shows that even under potential future conditions, all corridors will remain within typical two-way average daily traffic thresholds - which are established by the Transportation Association of Canada - and none will need to be upgraded to a higher road classification to accommodate additional vehicle travel.

Because of this, the study shows that traffic doesn't represent a constraint to future growth.

That being said, traffic congestion is a particular concern for many residents in the township and it should continue to be evaluated as the township, CFB Esquimalt, and neighbouring communities continue to grow.



Map shows average daily traffic volumes under potential future conditions

Public transit



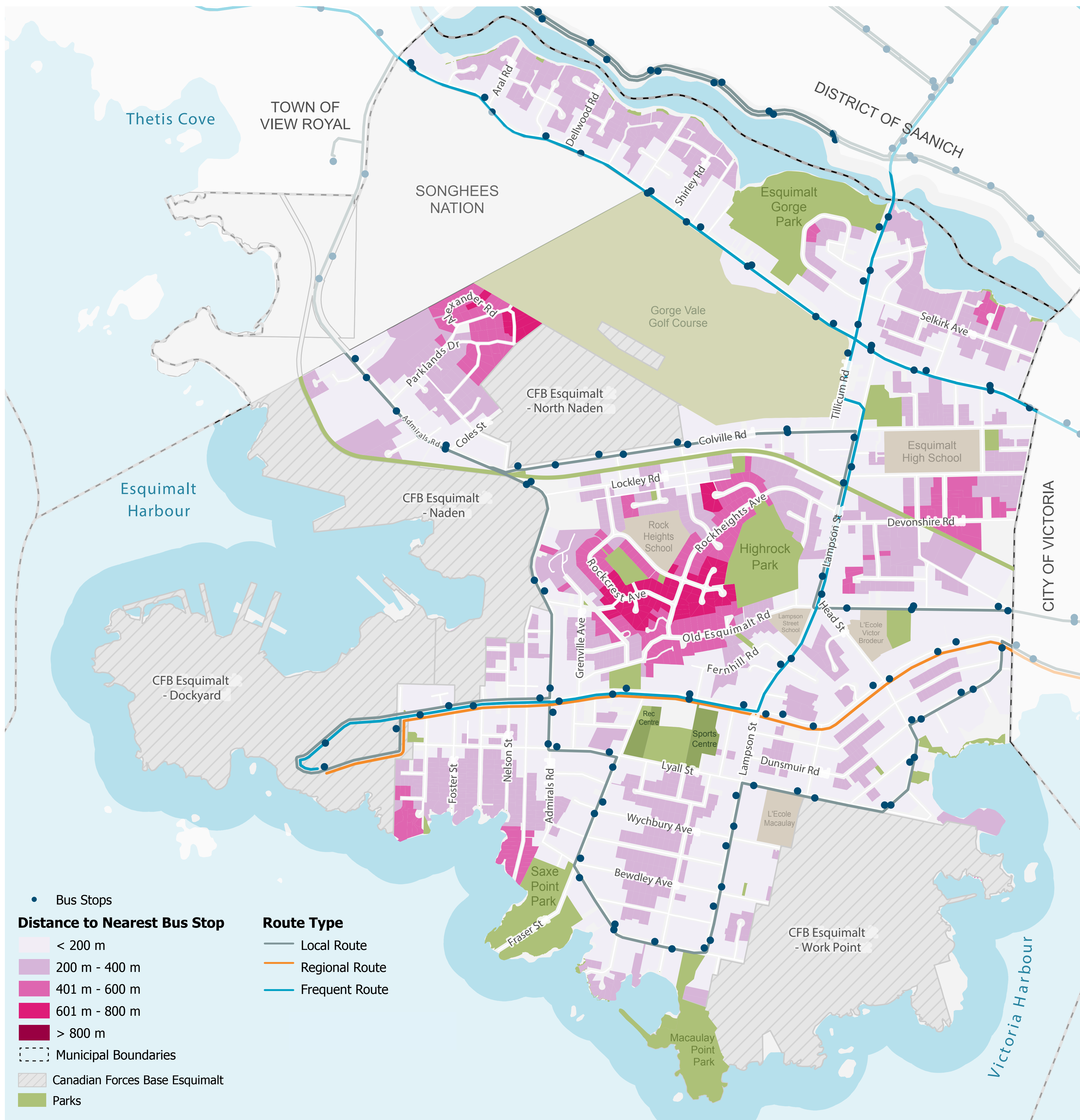
Access to public transit is key to accommodating future growth and development. As commuting patterns and transportation habits change, public transit plays a role in alleviating congestion, improving accessibility, improving health outcomes, reducing emissions, and supporting the local economy.

Esquimalt is currently served by seven distinct bus routes, including local, frequent, and regional routes.

94% of Esquimalt residents are within 400m of one of the townships 145 bus stops; about a 5-minute walk.

Based on current service levels, Esquimalt is adequately served with transit, meeting existing demand.

Increased development is not constrained by transit; instead, higher population densities in targeted areas help support future expansion to transit services. BC Transit is expected to accommodate new ridership through service increases (i.e., higher frequency, more routes) and higher-capacity vehicles.



Map shows current distance to nearest bus stop for all parcels

Recreation

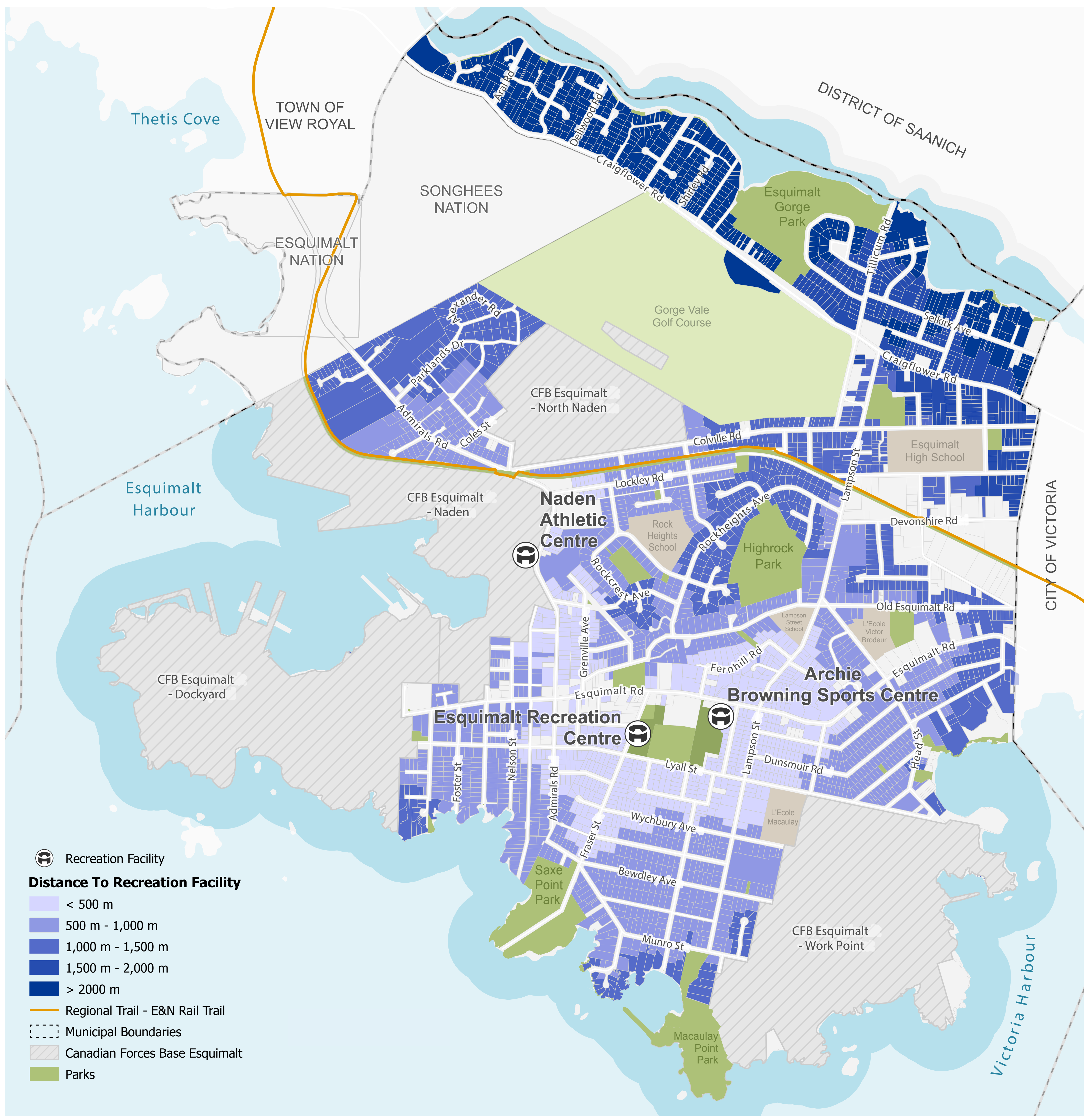


Access to recreation is vital for resident well-being. Growth and development means more residents, which impacts the provision and availability of these kinds of community services.

The study assessed the distance of each household to local facilities. There is adequate physical access to recreation services. Currently, about 60% of households are within 1km of Esquimalt Recreation Centre, Archie Browning Sport Centre, or Naden Athletic Centre.

Recreation facilities are also not isolated to local use. Throughout the region, there are many facilities.

Recreation services in the township are well used and at or near capacity, according to Parks and Recreation staff. As such, a separate but related study is being undertaken to better assess the current state of both parks and recreation services in the township. Once complete, this additional information will be incorporated into the Development Capacity Study.



Map shows current distance to nearest recreation facility for all parcels

Greenspace



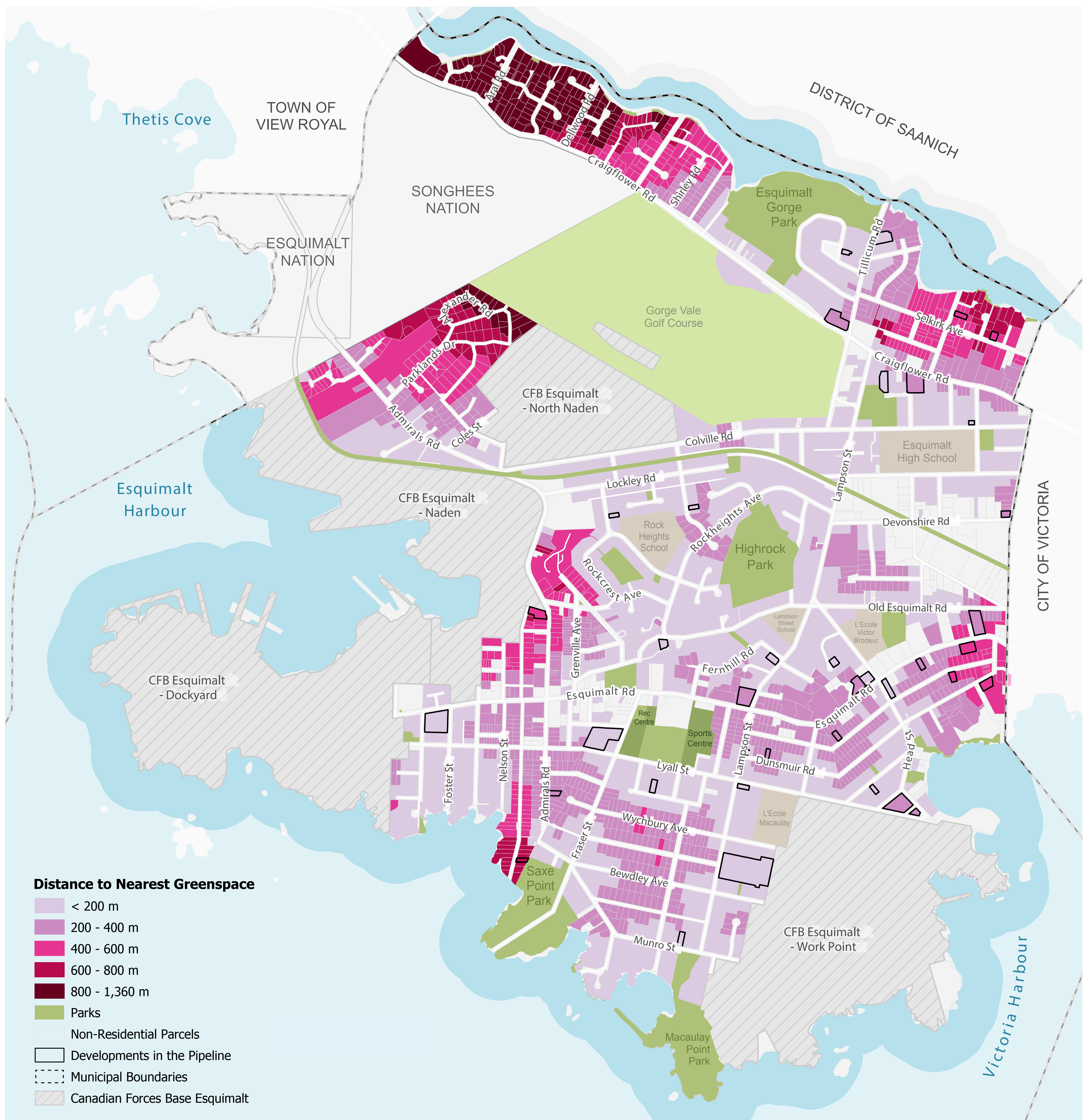
Similar to recreation, access to greenspace helps to support resident health and well-being.

The study assessed the distance of each household to parks, sports fields, greenways, and water access points; of which there are 39 across the township.

76% of households are about 400m away from greenspace; about a 5-minute walk.

Neighbouring municipalities also have greenspace closely accessible; however, the analysis focused on greenspaces within Esquimalt, and so the map below shows that areas in the north are further from greenspace.

Overall, there is an abundance of greenspace across the township and across the region, with ample access for most households.



Map shows current distance to nearest greenspace for all parcels

Emergency services



Emergency services are essential and as growth and development occur, understanding the location and intensity of new development helps service providers plan their deployment and maintain safe response capabilities.

Esquimalt has one fire hall operated by the Township, which includes a fire chief, two assistant fire chiefs, 32 full-time firefighters and one admin staff. A new fire hall is under construction at 500 Park Place, off Esquimalt Rd.

Esquimalt also has mutual aid partnerships with Victoria, Saanich, Oak Bay, View Royal, Colwood, and Langford.

The study assessed the road-network distance for each household from a fire hall - using thresholds established by the Fire Underwriters Survey. The thresholds are 8km for single family dwellings and 5km for commercial, industrial, and multi-unit residential.

All households are within the appropriate threshold and most are within a 2.5km distance from a fire hall.



Map shows distance to nearest fire hall for all parcels

The BC Ambulance Service, operating under BC Emergency Health Services within the Island Health Region, serves Esquimalt and surrounding neighbourhoods. The ambulance service station is located on Ellery St.

The study also used standard targets - established by BC Emergency Health Services- to assess ambulance response times for severe or emergency calls in different community types. The target is 9 minutes for urban communities.

All households across the township are comfortably within the 9-minute drivetime boundary from the service station.



Map shows drive times from the ambulance service station for all parcels

Your feedback



We'd like to hear from you. Leave us your feedback in the space provided.

- Did you find the information provided useful and/or informative?
- What surprised you the most about the study's findings?
- Do you have suggestions for how we could make the information clearer?
- Do you have big questions that you think we should answer in the Final Report?
- Which of the variables considered in the study do you feel are the most critical for us to monitor as we grow?
- Is there something you disagree with that you'd like us to investigate further?

A large, empty light blue rectangular area intended for providing feedback.

