

**TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT**  
**PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC PLAN**

**FINAL REPORT**

**PREPARED BY**  
**YATES, THORN & ASSOCIATES**

**WITH**  
**ANDREW GIBBS CONSULTING, AND**  
**CANNON JOHNSTON SPORT ARCHITECTURE**

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Other working papers from the strategic planning process are separately bound and can be obtained from the Township.

## **I. Preface**

In December 2002, one of the first acts of the newly elected Township Council was to retain the services of a consulting team led by Yates, Thorn & Associates to prepare a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. The previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan had been prepared in 1993 to cover the period 1993 to 2003. The time was right to renew the plan.

The Esquimalt Parks and Recreation Commission appointed a Steering Committee to work with the consulting team to prepare the plan. Its members were:

- Daryl Driemel, Chair
- Jamie Oldroyd, Commissioner
- Rick Sanderson, Commissioner
- Bruce McIlldoon, Councilor
- Louise Blight
- Bob Leach
- Brad Underwood
- Lynn Vornbrock
- David Speed, Director
- Ron Aubrey, Sports Centre Manager (until August 31, 2003)
- Suzanne Samborski, Community Services Manager

Input was sought from a variety of individuals, organizations and from the general public through a community survey.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the preparation of the strategic plan. Esquimalt is a community 'endowed by nature and molded by man'. Its parks and recreation services are among its most valuable resources. In many ways the Township stands at a crossroads. This strategic plan lays out a course of action that will move Esquimalt to a future vision of which its residents can be justly proud.

## **II. Introduction**

The Township of Esquimalt occupies a position across the harbour and across the 'Blue Bridge' from the City of Victoria. It is the home to the largest naval base on the Pacific coast, north of San Diego, and has a proud military history. It is one of the thirteen municipal units that make up the Capital Regional District. Its centennial will be celebrated in 2012.

Esquimalt's Parks and Recreation Department was created in the early 1960s. For forty years it has provided high quality services to the Township's residents. But there are many issues that are confronting the Township at this time which make a new strategic approach most timely:

- Its population has been stable at around 16,000 for many years, but is likely to grow slightly over the coming decade. There are also signs that the population is changing as young families and retiring people discover its amenities and its proximity to downtown Victoria.
- Economic growth is slow, with the Township's commercial areas showing the effects of big box stores on the urban fringe and the continuing attraction of mall-shopping. The naval base continues, and will continue, to be the Township's major employer.
- Recent federal decisions have provided impetus for the Department of National Defense (DND) to look at their landholdings and it is likely that they will divest themselves of much of the land on Work Point and will reconfigure their Colville Road lands with an emphasis on higher density housing.
- Public demand for quality parks, trails and green space is increasing.
- Regional approaches to the delivery of major parks, recreation, and cultural facilities are being discussed by politicians, recreation managers, and by the general public.
- The Township's two major recreation facilities are over 30 years old. One is in the process of being refurbished, but the future role of the other, the Archie Browning Sport Centre, needs to be determined.
- These are not the only facilities in Esquimalt's parks and recreation system that are old and in need of attention - from road end beach stairways to major trees to aging parks maintenance equipment. 'Making do' is acceptable as a short-term approach, but strategic planning is necessary to ensure effective long-term resource use.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to provide the Township, the Parks and Recreation Commission and Department, with a document that answers the key questions of why are parks and recreation important, what do we want to achieve, how are we going to get there, and what specific actions must we take.

- Why are parks and recreation important? ⇒ the 'benefits of recreation' as our values.
- What do we want to achieve? ⇒ a strategic vision to work toward.
- How are we going to get there ? ⇒ a set of prioritized initiatives.
- What specific actions must we take? ⇒ implementation steps for each initiative.

In preparing the plan, it has been difficult to separate the future of the parks and recreation system from the future of Esquimalt. The vision that is at the heart of this strategic plan is a vision for the community as a whole.

### **III. Values - the Benefits of Recreation**

Throughout the community consultation for this plan, the people of Esquimalt have indicated that they value parks and recreation and regard them as critical to their community. But parks and recreation go beyond being 'nice to have': they provide a wide range of benefits, all of which are well documented<sup>1</sup>. In preparing this Strategic Plan, we have been mindful of these values which underpin all our work on parks and recreation. These benefits are, in themselves, the reason why parks and recreation are so important to the community.

#### **Parks and recreation are essential to personal health**

- physical activity and fitness reduce risk of serious illness
- parks and recreation contribute to mental health - reducing stress, depression, and contributing to emotional/psychological well-being
- physical activity and fitness help people to live longer and extends independent living

#### **Parks and recreation is a key to balanced human development - helping citizens to reach their potential**

- play is essential to the development of our children and youth
- play and recreation provide opportunities for adults to develop their full and holistic potential

#### **Parks and Recreation are essential to quality of life**

- sport and outdoor experiences build self-esteem and positive self-image
- parks and open space provide opportunities to enhance life satisfaction levels
- parks and recreation enhance perceived quality of life for individuals, families and communities
- parks provide breathing space for residents living in higher density developments

#### **Parks and recreation reduce self-destructive and anti-social behaviour**

- recreation reduces negative social activity in youth
- recreation builds bridges between cultures, reducing racism
- recreation reduces isolation and loneliness, especially in seniors

#### **Parks and recreation build strong families and healthy communities**

- families that play together stay together
- outdoor recreation and sport produces leaders that serve their communities in many ways
- outdoor recreation and sport builds social skills and stimulates participation in community life
- parks and open spaces provide venues for social interaction

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<sup>1</sup> For more information: [http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/benefits\\_of\\_recreation.htm](http://www.bcrpa.bc.ca/benefits_of_recreation.htm)

- parks, recreation and beautification initiatives build pride in a community

**Parks and recreation reduce health care, social service and police/justice costs**

- recreation supports families, reducing costs of social service interventions
- recreation reduces crime and social dysfunction - reducing police, justice, and incarceration costs

**Parks and recreation are significant community economic generators**

- employee fitness improves work performance
- parks and open space attract businesses to the community
- parks and open spaces increase property values on adjacent land
- recreation and sport events are part of community tourism

**Parks, open spaces and natural areas are essential to ecological survival**

- green spaces protect habitat, biodiversity and ecological integrity
- green spaces improve air quality
- protecting land from development as open space mitigates against potential environmental disasters such as flooding
- trail systems save energy and protect air quality by encouraging non-motorized transportation.

Our strategic plan will bring these benefits to the people of Esquimalt.

A healthy community has space for people to interact 'positively' and 'healthily' together. It has a thriving ARTS culture and provides space for that to happen.

A healthy community has shared values and the use of its space should reflect those values. Esquimalt could be an area unparalleled in its parks, ocean space, rec, and arts facilities. It could encourage healthy living through walkways, bike lanes, and green space, and through its respect for the environment. We can be leaders in creating a sustainable and healthy community with the right leadership. I'd support those things - I'd volunteer and offer to pay more for those things. We have a lot of work to do, but it is difficult without VISION. I hope you work to develop a shared vision for our municipality.

Source: Community Survey Comment

A community survey was conducted as part of the planning process. Every household received a copy of the survey form. 950 completed survey forms were returned for analysis. A comments sheet was also included in the survey package. About 250 residents took the time to provide additional comments. We have used charts and quotes from the survey throughout this plan in order to illustrate the issues and the support that they received from the public. Wherever possible quotes are shown in original handwriting, but this one needed to be retyped.

#### **IV. A Vision for Esquimalt in 2013**

##### **Our Changing Parks and Recreation Services**

Imagine that it is the year 2013. You are asked to talk about parks and recreation in Esquimalt and how their delivery has changed in the previous ten years since 2003. Here is what we hope that you would be able to say:

*Ten years brings significant changes and Esquimalt has seen many of these since 2003. The community has changed considerably. Development of the Work Point lands for medium density housing; the transfer of the DND Colville Road lands to the municipality and the development there of over 300 units of housing; and a general refocusing of the community toward its waterfront. The proximity of the community to Victoria's downtown has turned Esquimalt into one of the region's premier housing communities.*

*But this development and its new residents have been drawn here by the community's revitalized focus on quality of life. The most important changes in the last ten years have been in community values and understanding of the benefits of parks and recreation.*

*In the last ten years, Esquimalt has strengthened its sense of community, increased its pride in its heritage and focused on its future potential. It is now a key part of the Greater Victoria region; we work with other municipalities when that is the best way of doing business, and on our own for community and neighbourhood issues.*

*Recreation has 'morphed' into lifestyle, with a strong focus on holistic health and active living. Our adoption of the benefits of recreation as key community values for our 2003 Strategic Plan has helped everyone to understand how central parks, recreation and community services are in everyone's lives. These values of inclusiveness, environmental and financial sustainability, community building and identity are central to Council's Vision for the Future.*

*Our mission is known to all our staff, our customers and to Council:*

- ***Working in partnership with our residents, organizations and other municipalities, to develop a healthy and active community by ensuring access to recreation, parks and community development programs and services.***

*We recognized in 2003 that we would have to fulfill this mission:*

- *by restructuring services to ensure long term operations are fiscally sustainable and reflect the community's ability to pay*
- *by making selective investments, both capital and operating, in projects that enhance the quality of life of Esquimalt residents, and the community's image and identity*

- *by building partnerships with other organizations to ensure that all Esquimalt residents have access to a wide range of parks and recreation services*

*We made sure that everything that we did furthered all three of these strategic directions, and that they moved us closer to our values as embodied in the benefits of recreation.*

*We have restructured services by focusing on partnership development as our main way of doing business, and by shifting from a 'doing' to an 'enabling' role*

- *by investing in our staff, through training and professional development (Initiatives #7 and 16)*
- *by aggressively promoting our services and capitalizing on opportunities to market our services, such as through an Events Strategy (Initiative #23)*
- *by getting out of those activities that were heavily subsidized and served few Esquimalt residents. The Archie Browning Sport Centre is now managed differently with a reduced municipal subsidy (Initiative #1)*
- *by ensuring that access to programs was extended to everyone regardless of income (Initiative #20)*

*We have also made sure that, through selective investment in capital and operating budgets, we have renewed the system:*

- *by securing an extension to the West Bay Walkway that now reaches to Macaulay Point Park, and by completing the Gorge Water Walkway (Initiatives #2 and 3)*
- *by securing land and facilities for parks and recreation in the redevelopment of DND's Colville Road lands and on Work Point (Initiative #11)*
- *by applying a 'Greenways and Livable Streets' philosophy, through which we have 'recaptured' Esquimalt from the car! Walking and biking (and the expanded harbour ferries) are now the main ways in which people move around Esquimalt. Many small road end parks have been established, allowing people of all ages to play, recreate and socialize. There are many community beautification and landscaping schemes (Initiative #5)*
- *by protecting our natural areas, rare ecosystems and species, through acquisition and other mechanisms (Initiative #13)*
- *by exploring options for small commercial activities in various parks, and by opening the historic Japanese Tea House in Kinsmen Gorge Park, we are increasing the year round*

*attraction of our parks, and the trail systems for which they are key nodes (Initiatives #10 and 14)*

- *by building phase 2 of the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, to provide a range of recreational opportunities for all age groups, especially teens (Initiative #24)*
- *by working with our sport groups to upgrade fields and enhance maintenance levels (Initiative #15)*
- *by supporting the development of the Work Point Visual Arts Centre (Initiative #12A)*
- *and we are a partner with other municipalities in the region's new Performing Arts Centre which will soon open on the Work Point lands, a jewel in the crown of our great harbour! (Initiative #12B)*

*All these investments, except for phase 2 of Esquimalt Recreation Centre, have been developed, and paid for, by the municipality working collaboratively with other agencies:*

- *the shoreline walkways - with CRD Parks and the Provincial Capital Commission*
- *the other new facilities on Work Point and Colville Road lands were part of the Federal government's DND Divestiture Planning*
- *the 'Greenways and Livable Streets' program was funding that was diverted from the municipal road maintenance/construction budget*
- *the Arts Centre and Performing Arts Centre received funding from Federal and Provincial sources, plus corporate and personal donations.*

*The operating budget has increased slowly in the 2003/2012 period. The savings from reducing the Archie Browning Sport Centre operating deficit have been reinvested in both community development and parks maintenance and infrastructure.*

*Reaching out and building partnerships has also been a key to fulfilling our vision.*

- *we have adopted a community development approach that has strengthened partnerships with our citizens and community agencies. Our Volunteer Program has engaged both our young people and our growing seniors population (Initiative #6)*
- *we have partnered with all the youth-serving agencies in Esquimalt to create a Community Youth Strategy that emphasizes Developmental Assets. Through a wide variety of facility-based and outreach programs, most children and youth are supported by and engaged in the wider community (Initiative #18)*

- *closely working with all our seniors agencies has created expanded services to seniors in Esquimalt with programs that enhance their health, activity levels and overall quality of life (Initiative #19)*
- *our heritage community has been assisted to be connected to residents and tourists, and is actively promoting our proud heritage and history through various interpretive activities, such as walking tours (Initiative #21)*
- *the High School has become much more 'community friendly', with the theatre now in regular use for community and joint community school productions. And the development of a youth park where once were two abandoned tennis courts has provided a much needed focal point for teens (Initiatives #9 and 22)*
- *we have developed a number of projects for sharing intermunicipal services. We also partner with our neighbouring municipalities and the DND regarding facilities that serve regional rather than community populations. Our residents can access arenas, pools, curling rinks and artificial turf fields across the region. (Initiative #8)*

Without question, the strategic directions adopted in 2003 have helped us achieve a much improved quality of life in 2013.

## V. Mission and Strategic Objectives

### *Mission*

Based on our values, our understanding of trends and change factors, and on our many discussions with groups and individuals, including those who completed the community survey, we believe that the mission of parks and recreation in Esquimalt should be:

***Working in partnership with our residents, organizations and other municipalities, to develop a healthy and active community by ensuring access to recreation, parks and community development programs and services.***

### *Strategic Objectives*

Three key objectives must be pursued if the Township is to deliver the vision of parks and recreation that is proposed. These strategic objectives are:

#### **Restructure services to ensure long term operations are fiscally sustainable.**

- The current operation of the parks and recreation system is not sustainable.
- The quality of service expected by the community, and which they have a right to expect, is not being delivered in many areas.
- This is negatively impacting the morale of staff, and this situation is self-perpetuating.
- The small size of the Township, at 16,000 people, makes efficiency hard to achieve.
- The low income nature of the community (vis-à-vis other communities in the region) further exacerbates this issue.
- The public is supportive of funding parks and recreation services, as shown by support for the Recreation Centre expansion and in the community survey results. The survey also indicated that Esquimalt residents do not want to see reductions in levels of recreation and parks service.
- Council has indicated that tax increases must be kept to a minimum in the short term.

- The resources to proceed with the strategic plan's initiatives must therefore first come from restructuring existing services. Some consideration of a special parks and recreation levy could be considered when progress is evaluated after three years.

**Selective investment, both capital and operating, in projects that enhance the quality of life of Esquimalt residents, and the community's image and identity.**

- The plan's ten year time horizon, from 2003 to 2012, requires planning for major investments in the parks and recreation system. Investments planned now will avoid Council being faced with unplanned expenditures at a later date.
- Investments must focus on the priorities of the public, especially for improvements to the parks and trail systems.
- Investments must be designed to leverage resource commitments from other public agencies, such as DND, PCC and CRD.
- Investments must also leverage commitments from users such as sport and arts groups.
- Investments that enhance the system and yield a positive long-term revenue flow must also be given a high priority, as must investments that allow the Township to exit from money-losing ventures.

**Build partnerships with other organizations to ensure that all Esquimalt residents have access to a wide range of parks and recreation services.**

- Building strong families and healthy communities is best done by strengthening partnerships with residents, organizations and other municipalities.
- A comprehensive community development strategy must underpin all the Department's activities over the next ten years.
- Partnerships are an important way of delivering programs and services to vulnerable groups such as youth and seniors.
- Partnerships with other regional municipalities are one way to overcome the difficulties inherent in the Township's limited population size.

## **VI. Initiatives**

The Strategic Plan proposes 24 initiatives be undertaken to move Esquimalt's parks and recreation system from where it is now to the visioned future.

### **Phasing**

Work cannot begin simultaneously on all initiatives. Eight of these initiatives are considered key initiatives. Moving forward on these in the next two years (2004 and 2005) will set a new direction for the department and will open the way for other initiatives:

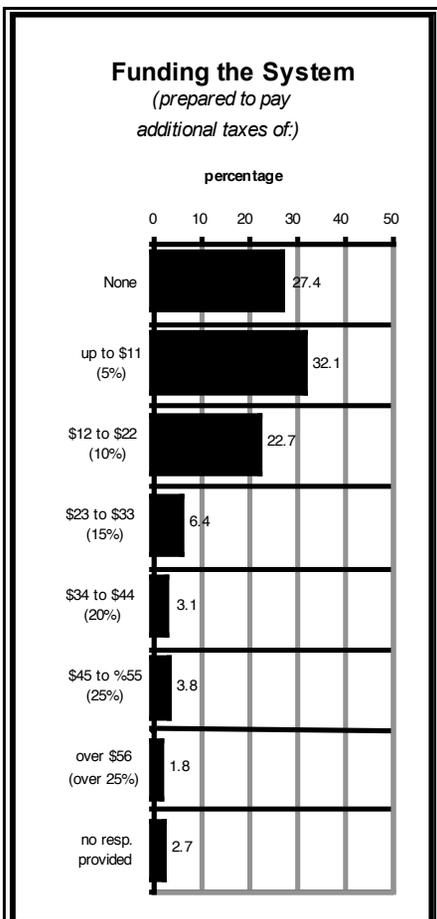
1. Commence a phased process to reduce the deficit and identify a sustainable future operating arrangement for the Archie Browning Sports Centre.
2. Ensure public recreational access, in perpetuity, to the waterfront from West Bay to Macaulay Point.
3. Establish continuous public access, and construct a multi-use trail system along the Gorge waterfront.
4. Increase the Parks Budget by 10% (approximately \$100,000) in each of the next five years.
5. Develop a network of greenways, trails and 'livable streets'.
6. Adopt a community development approach across all parts of the department.
7. Revise the organizational structure of the department and strengthen the human resource environment to meet the challenges of the next ten years
8. Initiate the development of a regional approach to the funding of region-serving facilities and services.

As well as working on these key initiatives, work should begin immediately on two other initiatives:

9. Support the development of the Esquimalt High School Theatre as a community theatre.
10. Conduct a feasibility study for the development of a revenue generating facility, such as a tea house/restaurant/rental amenity at one or more of Esquimalt's Parks.

....and on two initiatives where work relates to DND land and where the Township is not in charge of the timeline:

11. Ensure that new development on DND lands at Work Point and on Colville Road includes land and facilities for their increased population.



Source: Community Survey  
 Note: Approximately one third of respondents indicated a willingness to pay 5% more, one third more than 5% more, and one third no increase.

- Support the development of two major regional arts facilities on the Work Point Lands: a Visual Arts Centre (12A), and a Performing Arts Centre (12B).

Once Council has approved the key initiative of increasing the Parks budget by 10%, other parks related initiatives can follow:

- Prepare management plans for the significant natural open spaces of Esquimalt.
- Implement the recommendations of the master plan for Kinsmen Gorge Park.
- Enhance maintenance standards for playfields.
- Enhance the expertise, equipment and morale of Parks outside staff.

Once Council has approved the key initiative of adopting a community development approach across all parts of the department, other community development related initiatives can follow:

- Develop a program that strengthens the role of volunteers in the system.
- Develop an overall Community Youth Strategy based on an Assets Development framework.
- Work with all seniors and seniors serving agencies to develop a seniors recreation strategy.
- Ensure access for those for whom affordability is an issue.

This will be a heavy workload for the Township given its present resource allocation to parks and recreation. Over the longer term, or when positive circumstances arise, the following initiatives should be undertaken:

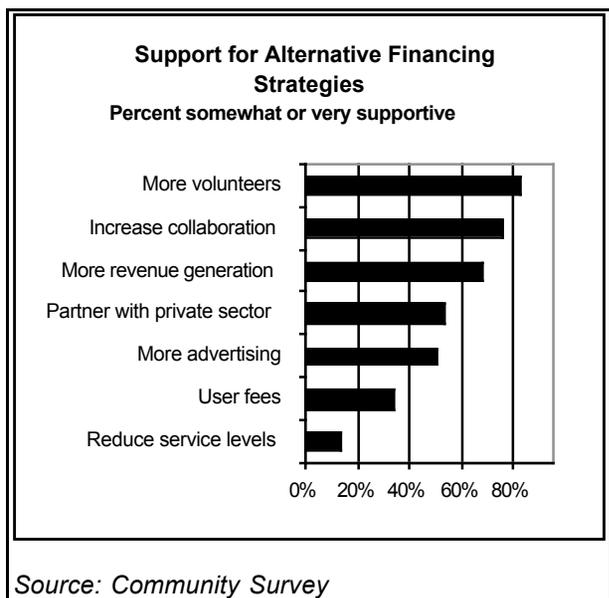
- Improve the signage systems of the park, recreation and cultural system of the community.
- Partner with Esquimalt High School in the development of a Youth Park.
- Prepare an Events Strategy for Esquimalt.
- Evaluate the need for further additions to Esquimalt Recreation Centre.

### Resourcing

The resource impacts and time frame of these initiatives will be as follows, with full information on each of them is presented on the following pages.

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Resource Impact</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1. Reduce the deficit of the Archie Browning Sports Centre	Potential to save up to \$500,000 annually	2004/2005
2. Recreational access to the waterfront from West Bay to Macaulay Point	Funding largely from other partners	2004/2006
3. Multi-use trail system along the Gorge waterfront	Establish a revolving fund of \$1m	2004/2008
4. Increase the parks budget by 10%	\$100,000 annually for 5 years	2004/2008
5. Network of greenways, trails and 'livable streets'	From within Parks 10% increase, plus funding from streets/upgrading budget	2004/2008
6. Adopt a community development approach	Use existing resources	2004
7. Strengthen the human resource environment	\$15,000, but likely from within the parks budget increase	2004
8. Regional approach to funding of region-serving facilities and services	None	2004
9. Esquimalt High School Theatre as a community theatre	Municipal funding of \$100,000 to leverage other funds	2004/2006
10. Feasibility study for a revenue generating facility	Staff resources in 2004, leading possibly to design work of \$20/50,000 in 2005	2004/2005
11. Ensure development on DND lands includes land and facilities for their increased population	Anticipated development should be self financing	ongoing
12. Two major regional arts facilities on the Work Point lands	Limited - perhaps some funding for an appropriate planning exercise	ongoing
13. Management plans for the natural open spaces	None beyond the 10% parks budget increase	2006/2008

14. Implement the master plan for Kinsmen Gorge Park	\$154,000 per year should be allocated as Major Capital funding to complete this project over 10 years	2004/2013
15. Enhance maintenance standards for playfields	None beyond the 10% parks budget increase	2006/2008
16. Enhance the expertise, equipment and morale of parks outside staff.	None beyond the 10% parks budget increase	2004/2008
17. Strengthen the role of volunteers in the system.	\$50,000 annually for two years	2006/2008
18. Develop a community youth strategy	\$50,000 annually for two years	2004/2005
19. Develop a seniors recreation strategy	staff and consultation resources (\$30,000).	2006/2008
20. Ensure access for those for whom affordability is an issue	Minimal	2004/2008
21. Improve the signage systems	\$15,000 for a Signage Master Plan, with \$25,000 annually for three years to implement – again likely possible within the parks budget increase	2009/2013
22. Develop a youth park	\$20,000 for design work, and \$200,000 to create the park	2006/2008
23. Prepare an events strategy	Strategy development will require \$10,000; ongoing support may require additional staff resources	2009/2013
24. Evaluate the need for further additions to Esquimalt Recreation Centre	Unknown at this time	2009



**The Ten Year Budget Projection**

Over the next ten years, there will be a need for more capital and operating resources both to maintain the current level of services and to increase programs and services. These selective investments can only occur if there is restructuring of services and increased partnering. The responses to the community survey indicated that the public wishes to see greater use of volunteers and increased collaboration with other local government agencies; that they are prepared to see more revenue generation, more advertizing (although not in parks), and more partnering with the private sector. They also made it clear that they do not want to see reductions of service levels. The initiatives in this strategic plan speak to those community aspirations, but can the department's budget handle expenditures at this level in the next ten years?

First let's look at the changes over the last ten years.

In 1994, the total departmental expenditures were \$3.19 million, and the total subsidy – the amount of this provided by the municipal taxpayer – was \$1.8 million. However if this is to be compared to the current expenditures, it must be adjusted for the 19% inflation that has occurred from 1994 to 2003. This brings the total expenditures to \$3.8 million, and the total subsidy to \$2.2 million.

The distribution of this subsidy is shown in the second chart. Administration absorbed 14%, and Parks 39%; both areas with little revenue potential. The Recreation Centre and associated programs received 31% of the subsidy, while only 15% of the total subsidy went to support the Sports Centre.

Net Budget Amounts	1994	1994
	Actual	Inflation adjusted to 2003 \$
Administration	\$260,000	\$309,400
Recreation Centre / Programs	\$570,260	\$678,609
Sports Centre	\$282,710	\$336,425
Parks	\$711,940	\$847,209
Total Subsidy	\$1,824,910	\$2,171,643
Total Expenditures on P/Rec	\$3,186,650	\$3,792,114

Net Budget Amounts	1994	
	Inflation adjusted to 2003 \$	%
Administration	\$309,400	14%
Recreation Centre / Programs	\$678,609	31%
Sports Centre	\$336,425	15%
Parks	\$847,209	39%
Total Subsidy	\$2,171,643	100%
Total Expenditures on P/Rec	\$3,792,114	

Parks and Recreation Budget - Ten Year Increase, 1994 to 2003			
Net Budget Amounts	1994 Inflation adjusted to 2003 \$	2003	%
Administration	\$309,400	\$250,030	10%
Recreation Centre / Programs	\$678,609	\$843,570	34%
Sports Centre	\$336,425	\$483,520	19%
Parks	\$847,209	\$928,040	37%
Total Subsidy	\$2,171,643	\$2,505,160	100%
Total Expenditures on P/Rec	\$3,792,114	\$3,959,700	

Over the ten year period, 1994 to 2003, change has occurred. While total expenditures have increased by \$168,000, the total subsidy has increased by \$333,000. The share of this subsidy has increased for the Recreation Centre and associated programs from 31% to 34%; this is largely due to the addition of a Community Services component in 2001. The net expenditures on the Sports Centre have increased from \$336,000 to \$484,000, or from 15% to 19% of the total subsidy. The proportions of the subsidy allocated to administration and to parks have declined.

The trends over the last ten years can therefore be summarized as follows:

- The total expenditures on parks and recreation have increased marginally faster than inflation, at 0.4% per year.
- However the amount of the total expenditures covered from tax revenues has risen faster, by 1.5% per year, while the balance, covered by revenues, has fallen in inflation adjusted terms.
- While the real cost of administration has fallen, and parks has risen by only 10% in inflation adjusted terms, the Archie Browning Sports Centre has risen by 4.4% per year after adjusting for inflation.

If the trends of the past ten years continue over the next ten years, what will the budget, especially subsidy levels, look like in 2012?

Trend Projection to 2012	
Net Budget Amounts	2012 Inflation adjusted to 2003 \$
Administration	\$202,052
Recreation Centre / Programs	\$1,048,630
Sports Centre	\$694,930
Parks	\$1,016,583
Total Subsidy	\$2,962,196
Total Expenditures on P/Rec	\$4,134,693

Assuming the patterns of change of the last ten years are applied to the next ten years, the following will occur:

- Total expenditures will rise to \$4.1 million, but the public subsidy will rise faster, to almost \$3.0 million.
- The proportion spent on administration will shrink further to \$202,000, while that spent on parks will rise by \$89,000.
- The cost of recreation programs will rise to \$1.049 million, and while the cost to the taxpayer of the Archie Browning Sports Centre will rise to \$695,000.

We can compare these projections based on continuing the trend of the last ten years with the trends proposed in this strategic plan.

However the strategic plan proposes that the increases over the next ten years be allocated differently between these line items:

- Administration should be held steady at \$250,000.
- The park’s budget should increase by \$500,000, to \$1.428m.
- A new operating arrangement at the Sports Centre will allow the operating subsidy there to be substantially reduced, if not eliminated
- The recreation centre/programs budget line should increase in line with past trends.

This approach will still allow \$235,000 to be allocated either to Archie Browning Sports Centre, or to other programs.

Proposed Projection to 2012	
Net Budget Amounts	2012 Inflation adjusted to 2003 \$
Administration	\$250,000
Recreation Centre / Program	\$1,048,630
Sports Centre	\$235,000
Parks	\$1,428,000
<b>Total Subsidy</b>	<b>\$2,961,630</b>
<b>Total Expenditures on P/Rec</b>	<b>\$4,134,693</b>

This assessment looks at the overall budget of the department. Within that budget, many of the initiatives that are proposed for the next ten years can be accommodated. In particular, this overall budget will allow short term projects to be undertaken, as long as they are phased appropriately, and not all planned for the same year:

- The Parks upgrading projects that will be handled within the 10% Parks budget:
  - Greenways, Trails and Livable streets (Initiative #5)
  - Management plans for natural open spaces (Initiative #13)
  - Enhanced maintenance standards for playfields (Initiative #15)
  - Enhanced expertise, equipment and morale for parks staff (Initiative #16)
  - Signage (Initiative #21)
- Developing a community youth strategy (Initiative #18) - \$100,000 over two years
- Strengthening the role of volunteers (Initiative #17) - \$30,000 over two years
- Developing a seniors recreation strategy (Initiative #19) - \$30,000 over one year
- Developing an Events Strategy (Initiative #23) - \$10,000 over one year.

This assessment does not address the department’s capital budget. Clearly within the overall Township priority setting process for capital, specific funding will need to be found for other initiatives:

- Kinsmen Gorge Park (Initiative #11) - \$1.54 million over 10 years
- Youth Park (Initiative #22) - \$220,000 over two years

- Theatre Upgrading (Initiative #9) - \$100,000
- Revenue generating facility (Initiative #10) - \$25,000

This totals close to \$1.9 million which is achievable in a ten year time frame if Council and public support are forthcoming.

**Initiative #1 Commence a phased process to reduce the deficit and identify a sustainable future operating arrangement for the Archie Browning Sports Centre**

**Background**

The Archie Browning Sports Centre was built in 1961 and partially upgraded in the 1970's, 1984-86 and 1998. The arena, originally developed as a regional facility, has a NHL-size ice-sheet with seating for 1,250 (1,700 standing room). The facility also includes a 6-sheet curling rink, a lounge and banquet room, administrative offices and support spaces. The curling rink is currently being refitted with hockey dasherboards to allow multi-purposing of the ice. Total gross building area is approximately 76,000 square feet (7,130 square metres). Current program users include Victoria Minor Hockey, the Esquimalt Curling Club, adult hockey rentals, summer box lacrosse and dry floor rentals.

The annual operating budget (adjusted 2002) indicates for the Archie Browning Sports Centre:

- revenues of \$812,000
- operating expenditures of \$1,259,000
- net operating expenditure (loss) of -\$447,000<sup>2</sup>
- per capita net operating expenditure (loss) of -\$27.76

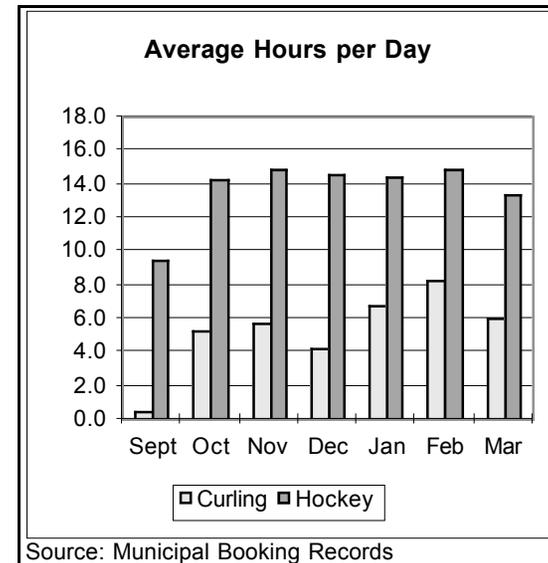
This net expenditure represents:

- 18% of the total Parks and Recreation net expenditures
- 64% operating cost recovery

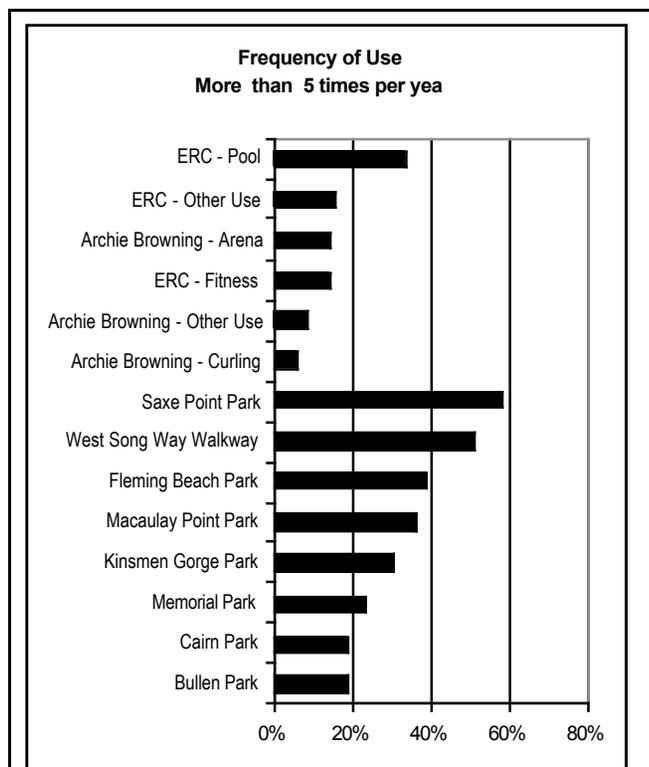
Issues identified in the strategic planning review process included:

Servicing a regional market

- While the arena and curling rink both operate at acceptable levels of utilization (see chart), a review of where the participants actually live indicates that only 25% are Esquimalt residents. This is not surprising; the facility was designed to serve a regional market, and is in an urban area where people buy services where it is convenient to them rather than in the municipality that they live. However the focus in the last decade in recreation has been on increased user pay, and many of the Victoria area municipalities have responded by adjusting their facility mix to focus on revenue generating facilities. The recent conversion of the curling rink at Oak Bay Recreation Centre is an example, and has or will further reduce the local proportion of curlers at the Archie Browning Sports Centre. This is a problem in a region which has no cost sharing for loss-making region-serving facilities.



<sup>2</sup> The 2003 budget indicates a loss of \$485,360.



Source: Community Survey

Note: Frequency of usage for parks is considerably higher than for facilities, except for the pool. Lowest use is for Archie Browning Sport Centre Curling.

The high proportion of adult use

- There is limited minor hockey and figure skating and approximately 50% of ice time is used by adult groups. Curling is predominantly an adult sport. One result of this is the relatively high cost recovery that the Archie Browning Sports Centre achieves, but the rationale for any public subsidy is stronger for youth sports. The future for these sports in terms of youth participation is not good: the age cohort of 0/19 years is projected to decline in absolute size for at least the next ten years, and the attractiveness of both curling and hockey to children and their parents is declining in favour of sports, such as soccer.

Development of new ice facilities in the region

- The construction of the new arena on the Base in 1999, and the current construction of new arenas by the City of Victoria (replacing Memorial Arena) and Juan de Fuca Recreation Commission, will further erode Esquimalt's position in the ice time and dry floor markets. The supply of curling ice was diminished when Oak Bay closed their rink in 2002, and as a result Esquimalt has received an increased number of curlers in 2003.

High operating costs

- In fact, the operating costs are not high when compared with other regional arenas, but only with other arenas with a similar usage mix of largely adult sports and special events. Many arenas/clubs with this usage mix are operated by the private sector, and make money. There are many reasons for the higher operating costs : the old facility, high staffing ratios, slightly under market rates due to age of the facility, to mention just a few. In addition, from the municipality's viewpoint, running two separate facilities in close proximity, duplicates administrative and maintenance staff.
- The question must also be asked whether the current rates charged for adult sports are adequate, or whether rates could be increased to cover more of the deficit from user fees rather than municipal tax revenues. With revenues of \$80,000 and 600 curlers, the annual cost per curler per season is approximately \$120.00; this would seem quite low in relation to the cost to play other adult sports.

Likely future major capital upgrading costs

- Within the next five years, Esquimalt will need to plan a major upgrading of the building. This will include roof replacement (approximately \$500,000), major electrical upgrade including lighting systems (approximately \$1.0m) and heating, cooling and air handling systems upgrade (approximately \$1.0). More general upgrading of the building will also be required at that time to ensure that it meets all current codes (eg seismic); a total cost for upgrading may well be in excess of \$4 or 5m. The building has a replacement value of \$11/12m, and this level of upgrade is not unreasonable. Nor is it essential to do it in the next five years, although each year will take the building closer to major system failure, and

ongoing maintenance costs will continue to rise (eg patching roof leaks). But within the 10 year time horizon of this plan, these costs will be required, and the municipality would be wise to plan for them.

From a program priority perspective, the future role of the Archie Browning Sports Centre must be questioned. The allocation of almost one-fifth of the Parks and Recreation budget to the operation of the facility is disproportionate. The community is clearly indicating that other aspects of the department's operations, such as parks and community services, require a higher priority. And in an environment that encourages 'doing more with less', finding ways of reducing the Archie Browning Sports Centre deficit must be a priority for the short term.

The municipality may be able to increase the Centre's contribution to overall program delivery. This may be facilitated with new management direction. More youth camps, better linkages with the schools may help at the margin, but will not fundamentally change the situation or remove the Township's dilemma.

While more information is required before a fully informed decision can be made, there would seem to be six possible directions available to the Township:

- Upgrade the building and retain the current municipal operating arrangements - This model would see the Township investing the funds required for major upgrading, and continuing to be the operators of the facility.
- Status Quo - This model would see the Township continue with the likely escalating net expenditure until building failure occurs, or the building is closed for other reasons (rebuilt elsewhere, decommissioned, etc).
- Upgrade the building and move to Not-for-Profit Society-Stewardship - This model would see the building operated by a not-for-profit society. It could be operated with or without an operating subsidy from the Township. The Township would retain ownership of the asset, and would continue to fund lifecycle improvements. Dependent on the subsidy arrangement, the department would lose some or all influence over programming.
- Contractor Operator / Private Owner - This model would see the Township sell the building to private interests, with a negotiated rental agreement for ice programming. The Township would not be involved in any capital upgrading costs, unless this was agreed as part of the sale agreement.
- Decommissioning - This model would see the Township close the facility and dispose of the property. Capital and operating dollars would be freed to be allocated to other department priorities. Esquimalt- resident ice-users would become dependent on facilities in other communities, to which the Township may or may not offer partial support. A portion of the capital proceeds from the sale of Archie Browning Sports Centre could be

<b>Budget 2003 - Projected Actuals for Curling</b>	
<b>Revenues:</b>	
Curling Rentals	\$80,000
Programs and Equipment Rentals	\$5,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$85,000</b>
<b>Expenditures:</b>	
Ice Makers Contract	\$54,000
Share of Building Operations Costs	\$122,500
Share of Building Admin Costs	\$52,700
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>
<b>Total Annual Subsidy</b>	<b>\$145,000</b>
<b>Recovery rate</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Note:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• calculation of operation costs = total operation costs \$752,000 (less ice maker contract) divided by 1/2 year times 35% (because curling is 35% of total building operation / hockey 60% and rental rooms 5%) = \$122,500.</li> <li>• same calculation for administration costs which currently includes manager, program staff and office staffing costs = \$52,700</li> <li>• This estimate is fairly conservative in that utilities and maintenance for example are more expensive when ice is in and during winter vs. ice out time.</li> </ul>	



**Phasing**

- Immediate - critical to the overall resource situation of the department over the next 10 years
- Complete discussion and decision-making processes within two years

**Partners**

- Potential to extend partnerships with current sport groups, or to enter into new partnerships with the private sector

**Resource Impact**

- Reduction of the current net operating loss of \$447,000

**Departmental Leadership**

- Operations Division

used to fund the upgrading of the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, which could include ice sport facilities, subject to future demand.

- Upgrade building and reprogramming - This model would see the Township upgrade and re-position the Centre to serve other growing priorities with lower operating costs (i.e. converting the curling rink into gymnasium / indoor soccer, retaining lacrosse and other dry floor uses). The Township would continue to operate two facilities and commit to significant lifecycle upgrade of the facility.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are several major steps that should be taken:

1. Conduct a full facility review to include, but not be limited to:
  - a full building assessment, including a property appraisal
  - a review, and where appropriate implementation, of strategies that will decrease the deficit
  - in-depth reviews of food services, curling, and dry floor strategies
  - discussions with user groups and third parties on these matters.This facility review should be accompanied by a study of the economic and other benefits that the Centre brings to Esquimalt.
2. Immediately, place on hold any proposed lifecycle improvements until a decision has been achieved regarding the long-term role and operation of the facility.
3. A decision on the future of the Archie Browning Sport Centre should be made within a two-year time frame and the operating and financial commitment removed by 2005.

**Initiative #2 Ensuring public recreational access, in perpetuity, to the waterfront from West Bay to Macaulay Point**

**Background**

Esquimalt’s most significant asset is its waterfront. The objective of ensuring public access along the waterfront is well established. The Official Community Plan (2002) and the West Bay Local Area Plan (1996) both call for a continuous and accessible public waterfront, from Buxton Green to the West Bay Walkway, and beyond, to Victoria. This stretch of waterfront provides panoramic views of the harbour and skyline of Victoria and more distant views of the Olympic Peninsula. These views are arguably as good as or better than any available from waterfront land in Victoria.

From Toronto to San Francisco, and from Port Alberni to Nanaimo, the vast majority of post-war and post-industrial waterfronts have been re-developed with a strong public component. Public waterfronts define the image of a community, enhance the quality of life of its citizens and contribute to the economic sustainability of a community, whether it’s in the form of taxes or tourism.

**Implementation**

Of all of the initiatives identified in this strategic plan, there is none other that would better mark the Township’s 100th birthday or affect how the community will develop over the next 100 years than this one.

- Aggressively undertake this initiative to ensure that the acquisition and development of a major and continuous waterfront walkway is achieved by 2012, Esquimalt’s centennial year.

The length, ownership and existing condition of this 2.14 km waterfront, most of it undeveloped, is significantly beyond the current ability of the municipality to achieve on its own. It will require the investment of capital, time and cooperation between Esquimalt, the Capital Regional District, the Department of National Defense (DND), the Provincial Capital Commission, developers, private landowners and citizens. Implementation tasks include:

- Define this strategic initiative in appropriate policy documents.
- Confirm funding commitments from the Provincial Capital Commission.
- Communicate this strategic initiative with DND and work with DND throughout their divestiture and development planning to ensure that this initiative is achieved.



*I thought the idea of extending the West Long Way to Fleming Beach was an excellent one - can it be pursued again?*

Source: Community Survey Comment

Note: a previous attempt to establish this pathway in conjunction with the Provincial Capital Commission was initiated in 2000.

Phasing

- As fast as possible, given that DND are just starting their planning for the divestiture of the Work Point lands. The goal should be to have the waterfront secured and the walkway built within five years

Partners

- Capital Regional District
- Department of National Defense (DND)
- Provincial Capital Commission

Resource Impact

- The majority of funding for this regionally significant project should come from other funders, but the allocation of some leverage/planning funding would be advisable

Departmental Leadership

- Administration

Esquimalt has no regional parks; and this continuous public waterfront is a prime candidate for an amenity that, quite rightfully, will have significant regional importance.

- Negotiate an agreement with the Capital Regional District whereby they become the developers and operators of this major public open space.

**Initiative #3 Establishment of a continuous public access, multi-use trail system along the Gorge waterfront**

**Background**

The Gorge is a unique water feature shared by the municipalities of Victoria, View Royal, Saanich and Esquimalt. The north, or Saanich side of the waterway, is characterized by a linear open space that is landscaped and has almost continuous public access. The south, or Esquimalt side of the waterway, is largely characterized by single and multiple family residential land uses that back onto the water. While much of this waterfront is privately owned, the municipality has been gradually securing public access along the water's edge. Based on the guidance of the Official Community Plan, much of this access has been acquired upon redevelopment of properties as a public right of access over private land or by dedication upon subdivision of a parcel parallel to the waterfront. In fact, of the 2,960 linear meters of shoreline along the Gorge Waterway, 1,520 of them are owned by the municipality or have waterfront public access routes on them. That's more than 1/2 way there!

Input received from community leaders, staff and the general public during the preparation of this document provide a clear mandate for the short to medium term acquisition and development of public access along the Gorge.

**Implementation**

There are two aspects to this initiative - securing public access and developing a multi-use trail. The first priority is the acquisition of the necessary land or rights thereto such that in 10 years' time 100 per cent of the Gorge waterfront is accessible to the public. While much of the public access that has been secured in recent history has been achieved using the land development process, this method will not achieve the goal in a timely manner. To this end, the Township should take more proactive measures to achieve this goal. These measures may include:

- Continued dedication of land upon subdivision.
- Continued dedication of public route of access as a part of redevelopment
- Acquisition of entire residential lots by the municipality, followed by severing of a municipally-owned waterfront corridor and the re-selling of the residential lot. This method is a practice common to many waterfront communities in the province.
- Establishment, funding and use of a budget line item for the acquisition of waterfront land. Given the significance of the waterfront issue to the community, the capital for this fund could be generated by a time-limited increase in taxes or through a financing referendum



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|--|
| <p>Phasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As soon as possible</li> </ul> <p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capital Regional District</li> <li>• Provincial Capital Commission</li> </ul> <p>Resource Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a waterfront acquisition fund of \$1m, to be used as a revolving fund</li> </ul> <p>Departmental Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration, with assistance from Planning Department</li> </ul> |
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for specifically this use. The use of the Parks Acquisition Fund for this purpose should be investigated by the Township.

In recognition of the limited financial capacity of the municipality and the importance that a public recreation corridor will have regionally, a partnership with the Provincial Capital Commission and/or the Capital Regional District should be established to:

- Assist with the acquisition of the outstanding waterfront land.
- Ensure the timely construction of the waterfront recreation corridor once developable sections and loops of the route are acquired.
- On-going maintenance and operation of the corridor.

**Initiative #4 Increase Parks Budget by 10% each year, in each of the next five years**

**Background**

The strategic planning process identified a significant discrepancy between the public's expectations for their park system and the resources available to manage it. This desire was reflected in the community survey, as well as the workshops and leadership survey conducted during the planning process. Work by the consultants during the planning process observed the discrepancy between community expectations and funding. For example, evidence of this can be seen:

- visually, comparing Esquimalt's park spaces with similar spaces in other regional communities and seeing a noticeable difference in maintenance levels;
- functionally, in sport fields that have surfaces that are uneven and are, in some instances, close to being a hazard for field users;
- environmentally, in natural open spaces where vegetation is being impacted by ever increasing levels of use and is unable to recover from these impacts, resulting in a slow and steady decline in the health and productivity of the natural environment; and
- strategically, by examining the annual parks budget and seeing an inability to meet the needs of the future or respond to unique opportunities as they arise.

The bottom line is - the existing allocation of funding for parks does not enable Esquimalt to meet the basic expectations of its citizens, let alone enable the community to meet any of the strategic initiatives identified in this strategic plan. Additional resources are required.

**Implementation**

- Increase the Parks budget by 10% each year, in each of the next five years. The current budget is a little short of \$1m. By 2008, it should be \$1.5m (excluding inflation).
- Review the initiative after the third year of its implementation, prior to setting budgets for the fourth year. The intent of this review is to evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative over the previous 3 years and confirm the need for following through on it for another 2 years.

The increase in the Parks budget need not come entirely from increased taxation, but also from a variety of initiatives to restructure services. The speed of implementation of these initiatives will in part determine the speed with which the parks budget can be increased.

Phasing
• Immediate, continuing over five years
Partners
• While this funding will allow various partnership initiatives to be undertaken, it is for Council to raise this funding
Resource Impact
• Approximately \$100,000 per annum for five years
Departmental Leadership
• Administration

In order to maximize the effectiveness of these budget increases it is recommended that the priority for expenditures should be focused on the parks initiatives identified in this Plan. The allocation of these funds over the next five years would be somewhat as follows:

DESCRIPTION OF ADDITIONAL BUDGET ITEM	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>					
Consultant support (mgt. plans, designs, etc.)	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$30,000
Park partnerships (maintenance, capital & other)		\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
<b>ADMINISTRATION SUB-TOTALS :</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>	<b>\$25,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>
<b>MAINTENANCE</b>					
1 FTE (environmental/urban forestry technician)		\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Seasonal garden help	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Improvements to Parks' yard and building	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Tree & plant replacement	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Infrastructure repair/replacement	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000
Park equipment (aerator, top-dresser, mowers)	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
<b>MAINTENANCE SUB-TOTALS :</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>\$135,000</b>
<b>CAPITAL OPERATING</b>					
Playground replacement/upgrading	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Misc. park development/enhancement	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Liveable streets, greenways & beautification	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$25,000
Trails, sidewalks and pathways	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Irrigation systems	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Sign program	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Natural areas (restoration, public education)	\$5,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
<b>CAPITAL OPERATING SUB-TOTALS :</b>	<b>\$45,000</b>	<b>\$65,000</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>	<b>\$115,000</b>
<b>MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS</b>					
"Surplus" to Major Capital Projects Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$40,000	\$125,000	\$210,000
<b>MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS SUB-TOTALS :</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$40,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$210,000</b>
<b>PROPOSED ADD'L ANNUAL EXPENDITURE :</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>	<b>\$300,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>

**Initiative #5 Develop a network of greenways, trails and 'livable streets'**

**Background**

Most research on trends in recreation participation shows that the fastest growing activities are walking, cycling, bird watching and nature appreciation, as well as gardening and looking at other people's gardens. This results from several other trends:

- Shortage of time for more complicated recreation activities involving partners, teams, or travel to a facility
- Increasing age, and a focus on gentler activities
- a desire to be closer to nature
- it is a very low cost form of recreation.

The West Bay Walkway is the most used Esquimalt recreation facility. The community survey revealed that greenways and trails are the number one service area which Esquimalt residents want to see improved.

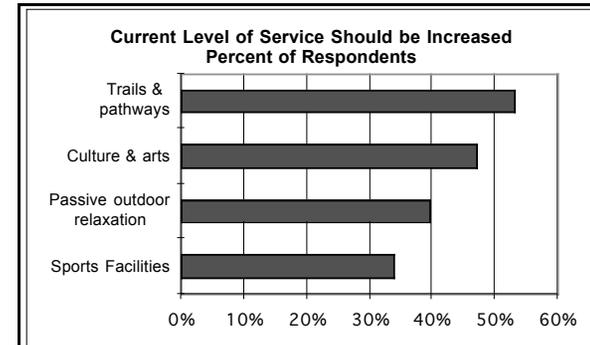
In broader terms, the desire for more greenways and trails is also a reaction to the dominance of the car in our communities. Over the past several years, the Township has initiated several attempts to change the balance of power on its residential streets: the installation of bike lanes on Dunsmuir and Lyall is one example. Creating more 'livable streets' where the car is less dominant and there is more space for walkers and bicyclists, should also be a long-term strategic goal.

A strategic approach to the development of greenways was recently begun through a one day workshop (June 14, 2003). It suggested that greenways should be developed in a number of corridors:

- Extension of West Bay Walkway to Macaulay Point (Initiative #2), and along the Gorge (Initiative #3)
- Along the E&N Railway corridor
- Through Gorge Vale Golf course.

Upgrading streets by improving sidewalks, landscaping, and additional signage was also suggested for Selkirk (from Kinsman Gorge Park to Vic West), Fraser Street (from Saxe Point Park to the City Centre, and Drake (linking Memorial Park with High Rock Park).

Other suggested approaches included daylighting buried streams and closer cooperation with DND as they plan changes to Work Point and their Colville Road lands (Initiative #10).



Source: Community Survey

*Note: More respondents thought that Trails and Pathways should be increased/improved than any other of the municipal parks and recreation services.*

Phasing

- Immediate - Continue the work now underway

Partners

- Neighbourhoods and citizens
- Environmental organizations

Resource Impact

- Will be addressed within the overall Parks budget increase
- Streets upgrading/maintenance budget

Departmental Leadership

- Parks Division (Environmental Management and Tree Specialist).

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Continue the work now underway to develop a Greenways, Trails and Livable Streets Plan. identify priorities, including the establishment of a Greenways Committee.
- Engage neighbourhoods in defining their own greenways, and support them to develop them.

***Initiative #6 Adopt a community development approach across all parts of the department***

**Background**

While recreation services have always had the mission of improving community, their approaches have been around the provision of leisure services and opportunities, generally focusing delivery out of facilities. Esquimalt has historically adopted this model. The 1993 Master Plan did speak of Community Services/Development, but in a fairly limited sense of 'liaising with and coordinating groups'. It is only since 2001 that Esquimalt has staffed a position with the words Community Services in the title.

There is no doubt that the mandate of parks and recreation services is ever increasing. The pressures on staff and budgets are greater now than at any time in the past - and they cannot do everything. The mandate of the department has to be cast in terms of what is achievable, and must be focused on its strengths and expertise. It must work to enable the community to achieve change, rather than doing it for them. This is a paradigm shift of major proportions and will require significant support from management and Council.

Community development is about sharing with the community the work of enhancing community life. It is about assisting existing groups to be more effective, and facilitating partnerships where the goal is shared by several organizations. It is about opening up to the community, and it is about letting go of power and protectionism. The skills that are inherent in the community development model are:

- Sharing information so that communities and individuals have the best knowledge on which to base their decisions
- Supporting community leadership and facilitating skills development
- Providing resources to start good things happening
- Developing partnerships, alliances and coalitions where goals can only be achieved by groups working together
- Maximizing the use of community assets while ensuring their long-term stewardship.

These are not skills just for those who work in the Community Services Department. They must be core competencies for all parks and recreation staff from the gardener to the zamboni driver. And developing these skills and attributes must be the prime job of all the department's managers. Community development must be a philosophy that runs through the whole department.

The roles that can be played by the department in support of community development could include the following:



- Information sharing between groups - newsletter, listserv, monthly 'brown bag lunch' are just some ways that this can be achieved.
- Skill development workshops - for volunteers in community organizations as well as staff people, with topics suggested by the people who attend.
- Administrative support for community groups - a place to meet<sup>3</sup>, access to a computer and copier, a consistent mailbox/address.
- Equipment sharing service - an inventory of what groups have, and a commitment to share, with the municipality providing storage space.
- Community development grants - seed money is essential, and allows other funds to be leveraged. This could be undertaken in conjunction with service groups or the Victoria Foundation.

### **Implementation**

It is essential that this philosophy is adopted not just by the staff in the department but also by Commission and by Council.

- Present to Commission and Council a paper describing the changed roles that are inherent in a community development approach.
- Ensure that training is available for all staff as they learn to adapt to a community development philosophy.

#### Phasing

- Immediate
- Policy confirmed by Council within one year

#### Partners

- Policy must be a collaborative effort of all Esquimalt's community organizations, but with the department taking a leadership role

#### Resource Impact

- Most of the work on this initiative should be able to be accomplished with existing staff resources

#### Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation Division

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<sup>3</sup> An example of this approach is the new fees and charges policy of the Department which makes available meeting space for community groups in the new City Hall, free of charge.

***Initiative #7 Revise the organizational structure of the department and strengthen the human resource environment to meet the challenges of the next ten years***

**Background**

The current organizational structure is a traditional, hierarchical, command-and-control model. Headed by a director and two managers, the department is organized principally to operate the Township's two indoor facilities. This emphasis on facility operations does not adequately provide leadership for other key departmental functions: external relations, recreation and community programs, and parks and open spaces.

Analysis of the current organizational model conducted by the consultant team, including confidential interviews with the director, managers and the department's two co-ordinators, revealed a number of key observations:

- The current model is confusing to those who work in it: the director sometimes does manager level work, the managers sometimes do coordinator level work, and coordinators sometimes do programmer work. In addition, the department 'management team' sometimes includes coordinators while at other times excludes them.
- Its hierarchical nature is also a barrier to integrating and linking the department's program areas: recreation, community services and parks
- The current leadership team and department do not function at their potential. Contributing factors include: the absence of shared values; lack of agreement on the department's vision and purpose; lack of information sharing; lack of corporate support for departmental activities; and low morale.
- The current leadership team's skill sets are principally technical and operational. The team has uneven experience and expertise in strategic planning, relationship development, performance management and monitoring, program development and delivery, and parks design and development. The members of the current leadership group, collectively, ranked themselves as being: below average in leadership skill sets; average in management skill sets; and good in technical skill sets.

In summary, under the current organizational model, and given its limited financial resources, the department struggles to meet the demands and obligations of its current mandate. To successfully meet its proposed future mandate, a re-organization and new skills set are required.

## **Implementation**

Embracing a community development philosophy (Initiative #6) enables the department to reposition and reorganize itself for this new way of doing business. The following steps are recommended:

- Adopt a new organizational model with balanced focus on: leadership and relationship management; strategic planning and development; contract development and performance management; and organizational flexibility and sustainability. This new model is critical to meeting the organization's new priorities: partnerships with others; innovative business methods; and customer service.
- Reorganize the leadership team:
  - \* to free the director to concentrate on long-term priorities, external relationships and resource development;
  - \* to better balance leadership and management in priority program areas: programs, parks and facilities.

The recommended organizational structure includes four (4) management positions:

- **Director, Parks and Recreation**  
This position will be responsible for: overall leadership and direction of the department and its strategic relationships; long and mid-term strategic planning; resource identification, allocation and monitoring; performance management and monitoring; and integration with the Township's corporate leadership team.
- **Manager, Community Recreation**  
This position will be responsible for: identifying market needs; developing strategic program delivery strategies and relationships; monitoring and evaluating customer satisfaction; and leading the Township's program planning, development and delivery activities.
- **Manager, Parks**  
This position will be responsible for: identifying market needs; preparing strategic park and open space development strategies and relationships; monitoring and evaluating customer satisfaction; and leading the Town's parks operation activities.
- **Manager, Operations**  
This position will be responsible for: strategic facility renewal, operations and maintenance plans; monitoring and evaluating customer satisfaction and leading the Town's recreation facility operations.

Other implementation tasks will include:

- Recruit/appoint, to the above positions, candidates possessing strong skill sets including: strategic planning; interpersonal communications; partnering and relationship development; leadership and motivation; performance management and monitoring; and contract development and monitoring.
- Develop and implement an open, respectful department culture based on mutual respect, trust and support.
- Develop and implement a decision framework, ensuring that staff members and volunteers are empowered and supported to make decisions at the most appropriate level.
- Develop and implement mechanisms to involve other department staff in program and budget planning, delivery and monitoring.
- Develop and implement a department-wide program to foster staff and volunteer awareness of the organization's mission, strategic direction and operational plans and their role in achieving its success.
- Develop and implement a career development strategy for each member of the department's leadership team, with an emphasis on acquiring, developing and refining skill sets critical to the organization's continued viability and sustainability.
- Develop and implement a career development strategy for department staff members demonstrating potential and commitment.
- Develop and implement customer service training programs for all staff and volunteers involved in customer contact.

**Phasing**

- Immediate

**Partners**

- Potential to partner with other municipalities on training

**Resource Impact**

- \$15,000 to upgrade one coordinator position to manager position

**Departmental Leadership**

- Administration

### ***Initiative #8 Initiate the development of a regional approach to the funding of region-serving facilities and services***

#### **Background**



Note: The skateboard park in Victoria West was built by the City of Victoria with a financial contribution of \$25,000 from the Township of Esquimalt.

The delivery of recreation and park services in the region is handled by many different government bodies:

- Municipal Parks and Recreation Departments - Saanich, Victoria, Oak Bay, View Royal and Esquimalt
- Recreation Commissions - Juan de Fuca serves the West Shore municipalities, while Panorama serves the three municipalities on the Saanich Peninsula. Other Commissions serve Sooke and west, and Saltspring Island. In most of these areas parks are a local municipal function
- The CRD has a regional parks function and provides parks in most municipalities except for Esquimalt and Oak Bay, although it does not provide active parks or playfields
- Other agencies whose primary function is not recreation or parks, but who are involved in some related service delivery: Department of National Defence, Greater Victoria School District, First Nations Bands, to name just a few.

At a population of 16,110, Esquimalt experiences problems that are not experienced by larger or more affluent municipalities:

- Its administrative staffing and overheads are necessarily higher than in larger municipalities; the staff to population ratio for recreation (excluding parks, but including community development and cultural services) is 1:666 in Esquimalt, 1:808 for Juan de Fuca, and 1:851 for Saanich<sup>4</sup>.
- Its access to specialized personnel has to be done on a contract or rental basis, which involves higher unit costs; Esquimalt contracts a private service to maintain its trees, while Saanich do the work in-house.
- Its larger facilities must be supported by a smaller population which either requires marketing to non-residents, or not being able to operate at capacity; arenas and pools are examples.

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<sup>4</sup> Esquimalt has 24 FTEs for 16,000 population; Juan de Fuca has 68 FTEs for 55,000; Saanich has 121 FTEs for 103,000 - Data from Departments concerned. Data not provided or not comparable for other municipalities/commissions

- It is simply not able to consider the provision of certain facilities; artificial turf fields will soon be available to Saanich, West Shore and City of Victoria residents.

There is some working together of staff across jurisdictions: in-service training, lateral secondments, meetings of recreation directors are examples. Some joint studies have been initiated: a region-wide review of fees and charges, and a review of the demand and supply of artificial turf fields.

These discussions are not always possible at the Council level, given the complex service delivery structure noted above. But each recreation jurisdiction has a commission, and meaningful dialogue could occur at that level.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Host a meeting of the Chairs of the recreation commissions<sup>5</sup> or equivalents to discuss areas where inter-jurisdictional collaboration might be possible.
- Invite other organizations to be observers at these meetings: PacificSport, Recreation Integration Victoria.
- Focus attention initially on the provision of major facilities where the standard level of provision is greater than 1;20,000 people: pools, arenas, artificial turf pitches, curling rinks.

Phasing
• Immediate
Partners
• Other regional municipalities
• PacificSport
• Recreation Integration Victoria
Resource Impact
• None
Departmental Leadership
• Commission

<sup>5</sup> Currently, the City of Victoria has an Advisory Committee, not Commission.

## ***Initiative #9 Support the development of the Esquimalt High School Theatre as a community theatre***

### **Background**



The region has many small theatre, dance and other performing arts companies and yet few publicly accessible small theatres. Many of the region's small theatres are located in high schools, and have experienced problems over the last ten years:

- Low maintenance budgets have left the theatre equipment in unacceptable working order
- Low custodial budgets have caused the costs for the community of using the theatres to rise to levels that are uneconomic for these amateur groups
- A variety of factors have conspired to limit the potential for joint school -community productions.

The school, School Board, and community groups are supportive of working together to make Esquimalt Community Theatre a model for the rest of the region. The first step has been to develop a coalition of the many agencies that are involved. This will eventually become a not-for-profit society. The second step has been to identify funds to upgrade the theatre, especially the lighting, so that it meets acceptable community level standards.

#### **Phasing**

- Work has started on this project and should be ongoing

#### **Partners**

- School District
- Performing arts organizations

#### **Resource Impact**

- Municipal funding of \$100,000 should be allocated in order to leverage other funds

#### **Departmental Leadership**

- Community Recreation

Both these steps have been facilitated by Township staff. The final stage is to develop the tripartite agreement between the school administration and School Board staff, the Community Theatre Society, and the Township; this will be underway in the 2003/4.

Once the theatre is refurbished and managed by the community, it will provide a venue and a process for broadening the arts and cultural opportunities open to Esquimalt residents. The municipal role will be ensuring that the process works smoothly, and is in keeping with the Department's new community development philosophy.

### **Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Review alternatives for theatre governance and operation.
- Continue to work forward the idea of school-community theatres, with the goal of developing a formal joint use agreement with the School District.

- Discuss with the Community Theatre Society the potential for the theatre to be a location for community-led events.

**Initiative #10      Conduct a feasibility study for the development of a revenue generating facility, such as a tea house/restaurant/rental amenity at one or more of Esquimalt's Parks**

**Background**



Esquimalt has several parks whose amenities could be enhanced by the addition of a revenue generating facility, such as a Tea House/Restaurant/rental amenity. For instance:

- Saxe Point is the park that is most frequently visited by Esquimalt residents. It is a mature passive park with fine groves of trees and a waterfront that is planted with ornamental shrubs and annuals. It is used regularly in summer as a venue for weddings and wedding photographs. It arguably offers the best views over the Strait of any park in the region. It has good parking, although access by road and on foot is through the Saxe Point residential area. It probably receives close to 100,000 person/visits per year<sup>6</sup>. Located in a prominent position on the waterfront is a residence. It was built in 1945 and has been used as a rental house since it was acquired in the early 1980s. Demolition of this house would provide an appropriate location for the new building.
- Macaulay Point Park, while not in District ownership, has a similar location, and will eventually be the end point of the waterfront walkway. It also has a small facility on its land, run by the Esquimalt Anglers, but this is likely not the best location for a facility.

During the consultation process for the Plan, many people spoke of the potential for a tea house or small restaurant in Saxe Point Park, replacing the current residence. They talked of the benefits it would bring:

- an opportunity to add refreshment to a trip to the park
- a greater reason to visit the park in the winter when the wind can make it too cold for both old and young
- a spectacular opportunity to showcase the views from the Esquimalt waterfront
- an opportunity to enhance the 'wedding business' that is already a Saxe Point specialty
- an opportunity to create revenue for the park and recreation system.

There were also people who spoke against the idea. Their concerns included:

- a belief that such commercial ventures should not be allowed in parks
- the impact that it would have on the peaceful nature of the park
- the additional traffic that it would bring to the Saxe Point neighbourhood.

These are legitimate concerns, but the idea certainly has merit and should be explored. While fewer people spoke of Macaulay Point Park as a location, it should also be investigated, as

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<sup>6</sup> Calculated from community survey results.

should Kinsmen Gorge Park, where a Japanese Tea House is already included in that park's master plan. However any proposal must be both environmentally and aesthetically beneficial to the park, and financially sustainable in the long term. The first step in determining this is to prepare a feasibility assessment, comparing the possible kinds of development and the various locations.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Commission a site/design study to determine possible locations, as well as options for these sites, and to determine the data required for a Feasibility Study.
- Conduct or draw up terms of reference for a Feasibility Study.
- Review the results of the Study and determine whether to proceed further.

<p>Phasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Within the next two years, as staff workload allows</li></ul> <p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• While consultation with the community and other groups such as the Chamber of Commerce will be part of the feasibility study, the District should proceed independently in these first stages</li><li>• Eventually, the potential for private sector partnership is high</li></ul> <p>Resource Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Staff resources in 2004, leading possibly to design work of \$20/50,000 in 2005</li></ul> <p>Departmental Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Operations</li></ul>
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***Initiative #11 Ensuring that new development on DND lands at Work Point and on Colville Road includes land and facilities for their increased population***

**Background**



The Dept. of National Defense is Esquimalt's largest landowner. It has three major land holdings:

- The Naval Base
- The lands at Work Point (66 hectares) - these used to be the base for the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry until it moved to Edmonton in 1995. Since then, these lands have been used for various naval training purposes. These lands also accommodate some military housing, and Macaulay Point which has for many years been leased to the municipality for park purposes.
- The lands north west of Colville Road (58 hectares) - these have a number of institutional uses, several playing fields, and a number of housing units.

DND intend to consolidate their landholdings and divest themselves of those that are not required in the long-term. This process is beginning, will be fully planned in the next five years, and will take 20 years to be fully completed. There is little doubt that this divestiture will have an enormous effect on the rest of Esquimalt and on the region. While the planning is only in its very early stages, the following can be said with relative certainty:

- DND has plans to divest itself of 90% of its Work Point lands, retaining only those in the area of West Bay.
- All the waterfront and high grounds from West Bay to Macaulay Point will be disposed of.
- The 'highest and best use' of this land in real estate terms is high quality housing, and there is capacity in the land to build literally hundreds of units.
- Under provincial subdivision statutes, only 5% is required to be dedicated to the municipality for parks and open space purposes.
- The Federal government will be subject in its planning to other pressures - the land is subject to a First Nations land claim; there are pockets of vegetation that are covered by the Species At Risk Act (SARA); the lands have considerable heritage significance; CRD will want to secure additional land to expand their sewage treatment facility.

- It is likely that accommodation for services personnel will be concentrated on the Colville Road lands, with the potential to develop over 300 units of housing.
- DND would be happy to see all land not required in the long term or disposed of to other owners, dedicated to the municipality. This would include roads, parks and open space. This would mean that these amenities would be maintained by the municipality rather than by DND as at present. The long term operating costs of these amenities will have to be considered by the municipality, as will the benefits of having these lands under long term local control.

This process offers unbelievable potential for the municipality, although it is not in a position to 'control' what might happen. It will need to clearly articulate its objectives, some of which may relate to parks and recreation planning. In this regard, the following objectives should be stated (several of which form initiatives in their own right in this Plan):

- Lands which are currently used as parkland, either by the base population, or by the general public, should remain as parkland. This would include Macaulay Point Park and the various playfields along Colville Road. It could also include the one playfield on Work Point, but this is in poor condition and is the least important of the playfields.
- Any local neighbourhoods which increase in population must have neighbourhood parkland and other recreational amenities dedicated to them. Thus if the population of Work Point increases to, say, 2000 people, then neighbourhood parks for that population should be dedicated.
- The ecological integrity of these lands must be protected; for instance, the waterfront lands are home to many very special plants and animals. Some of this protection is covered under SARA; these lands must be protected by the Federal government as the current owner, and should not be included in land dedicated to the municipality.
- The heritage and military history of the lands must also be protected. The Work Point site is one of the most significant heritage sites in the region, rivalling Fort Rodd Hill.
- The regional significance of these lands should be considered. The highest priority should be placed on securing all the waterfront lands with a view to their ecological and heriatge protection and the creation of a multiuse trail. The potential for the region to develop a multipurpose performing arts centre on Work Point should also be considered, as should the dedication of the Work Point Officers' Mess as a Visual Arts Centre.

<p>Phasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• While it is likely that DND's planning process for this land will proceed slowly over the next four years, Council should be proactive in defining what their objectives are for the land</li></ul>
<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DND</li><li>• CRD</li><li>• PCC</li></ul>
<p>Resource Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anticipated development should be self financing</li></ul>
<p>Departmental Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administration</li></ul>

### **Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Incorporate these priorities into Council's overall set of objectives for the Work Point and Colville Road lands, and communicate these objectives to all levels of government and the DND.
- Initiate discussions with DND to ensure that these objectives are moved aggressively forward at every opportunity.

**Initiative #12 Support the development of two major regional arts facilities on the Work Point lands**

**Background**

Arts and cultural programming was noted in the community survey as one of the three main service areas that required strengthening. Other initiatives in this strategic plan focus on providing the community base for this programming, in particular the development of the Esquimalt High School Theatre as a community theatre (initiative #8).

In addition, there is potential to develop a portion of the Work Point lands as a location for two significant arts facilities, that would serve both Esquimalt residents and those from the rest of the region. These are the Regional Visual Arts Centre proposed for the Work Point Officers' Mess; and the Performing Arts Centre.

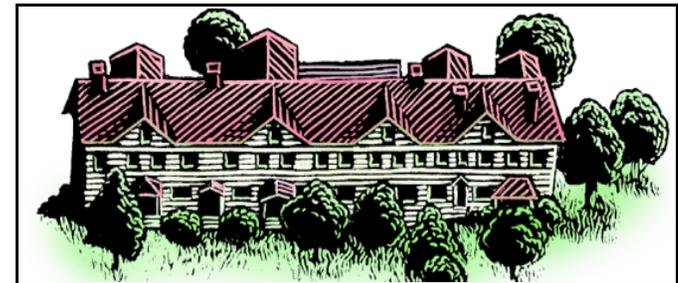
Work Point Visual Arts Centre

The Work Point Officers' Mess, also known as Building #1027, is no longer used for its original purposes, and is, to all intents and purposes, totally unused. It is a heritage building having been built in 1890/1892 on land that was originally owned by the Hudson Bay Company. It has a spectacular site on a promontory with West Bay to the north and Rose Bay to the south. The proposed extension of the West Bay Walkway would likely go round this promontory on its way from West Bay to Macaulay Point.

It has been proposed that it be developed as a regional Visual Arts Centre. This concept has been proposed to the DND, who are prepared to give the Work Point Arts Project Society a lease for the building. The concept was endorsed by Esquimalt Council in March 2002, and was noted in the Regional Arts Strategic Plan as a proposed facility that merited consideration for capital support. There is some talk of it being designated as a National Historic Site, as well as receiving funding from the Federal government (such as under its Cultural Capitals Program).

The proposed Visual Arts Centre would provide studio space to about 30 artists, as well as providing two galleries, a board room and workshop space, with a tea room and museum on its main floor. The grounds north and south of the Centre also offer potential for complimentary arts events, receptions and displays. Artists would be required as part of their lease agreement to provide at least 3 hours per month as community work, either teaching or working with local schools or recreation classes.

The adjacent building, #1020, is also a heritage building, and is being investigated by the Victoria College of Art as a potential replacement for their current home on Bank Street in Victoria. Another proposal for this area of West Bay is for a Saturday or Summer Farmers or



Initiative 12A - Work Point Visual Arts Centre

Phasing

- Project is currently ongoing

Partners

- Work Point Arts Society
- Will also need the support of DND

Resource Impact

- No financial support to be provided

Departmental Leadership

- Council/Senior Administration

Community Market, using the parade ground adjacent to these buildings. Clearly there is potential for a cluster of community arts activity which, given its accessible location to Victoria's downtown, make for an attractive arts precinct.

There is significant potential for the Parks and Recreation Department to partner with the Work Point Arts Project Society and other agencies in this precinct to develop their arts and cultural programming. The whole site will provide a cultural tourism site for both regional and out-of-region visitors.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Lobby DND and the Federal Government to support the Work Point Arts Project Society, and to ensure ongoing community input.
- Ensure tht the Officers' Mess building stay in situ to preserve the heritage legacy of coastal defence and to maintain its historical site status.

Regional Performing Arts Centre

The region has been discussing the need for a performing arts centre for at least 30 years. The issue has focused on the ability of the Royal and MacPherson Theatres in the Downtown to meet the expectations of a provincial capital and its growing population. The general consensus has always been that the MacPherson is too small, the Royal adequate for the short term, but in the long-term both should be augmented by a new performing arts centre. The recent decision to build a multiplex will meet a small part of the need, primarily for more popular music. But the need for a true performing arts centre still remains.

Since 1999, certain groups, including the CRD board, have promoted a new performing arts centre on Ship's Point in the heart of Victoria Harbour. However the Regional Arts Strategic Plan suggested that this site was likely inadequate and that a formal site study should be initiated. It also suggested that the harbour was the right location, but that the site study should look beyond the Victoria city boundary.

The main part of the Work Point land has much to recommend it as a location for a performing arts centre<sup>7</sup>. It has site size, good access to downtown via the (extended) Walkway, Harbour Ferries and by road, and a prominence of position that would lend itself to the 'branding' of the

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<sup>7</sup> While we refer to these lands as 'Work Point', the preferred location for the performing arts centre would be on the main part of these lands, closer to Macaulay Point than Work Point itself. In particular it should be noted that the location of the current Officers Mess building is not appropriate for the performing arts centre, being too small and confined.

region as a cultural destination. It would also be a centrepiece for the redevelopment of these lands.

As with the Visual Arts Centre, this is not a project which the Township would control, although it is one from which it would benefit. The partners in such an initiative must include the federal and provincial governments, as well as a local consortium of business, municipal and not-for-profit groups. The Township's role would be to champion the idea, and lend it support.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Promote the idea through the CRD's Arts Committee, and seek for the relevant recommendations of the Regional Arts Strategic Plan to be initiated.
- Lobby the Provincial Capital Commission to undertake a Harbour Visioning project, and be prepared to fund part of this work.
- Include the performing arts centre as one of the Township objectives to be pursued once DND starts work in earnest on its Work Point divestiture plan.

<p><u>Initiative 12B - Regional Performing Arts Centre</u></p> <p>Phasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The search for a site for a new regional performing arts centre is ongoing</li></ul> <p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• CRD</li><li>• Performing arts organizations</li></ul> <p>Resource Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Limited - perhaps some funding for an appropriate planning exercise</li></ul> <p>Departmental Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Council/Senior Administration</li></ul>
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**Initiative #13      Prepare management plans for the significant natural open spaces of Esquimalt**

**Background**



Esquimalt is blessed with a number of significant natural open spaces, including its waterfronts, Cairn Park, the West Bay Walkway, the Matson Lands slope, and the forest of Saxe Point. These open spaces are representative examples of natural South Island landscapes, providing critical habitat and biodiversity values in an urban setting. They also provide important amenity value to the citizens of Esquimalt. In the community survey conducted as part of this Strategic Plan, respondents identified natural areas as one of the top three areas requiring more focus.

The gradual encroachment of urban land uses on these remnant areas and the ever increasing use of them for passive recreation (e.g., walking, dog-walking, sight-seeing) has resulted in significant negative impacts to these natural areas. The anecdotal and visible evidence of these impacts includes:

- Proliferation of invasive non-indigenous species (e.g., broom, blackberries and ivy)
- Decreased populations of song birds and small mammals from hunting and harassment by cats and dogs
- Declining stands of arbutus and Garry oak
- Proliferation of trails and footpaths, causing loss of vegetative cover, soil compaction and erosion
- Decreased ability of vegetation communities to rebound in the spring

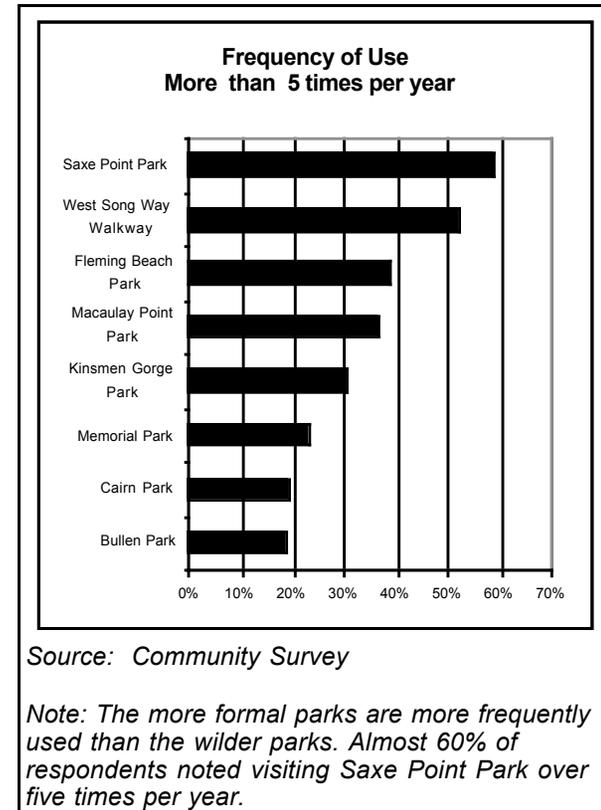
Left unchecked this pattern of use will continue to degrade the unique natural areas of the community to the point where they will no longer look or function as they once did. Given the sensitivities of natural areas to human use, and the strong desire of people to use these areas for recreation, any improvised or ad-hoc attempt to manage the environment and human use of it will likely have negative impacts on both. Educated and tested approaches are required to manage these remnant natural areas of Esquimalt and preserve them for future generations.

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Inventory and assess the existing ecological resources of these open spaces.
- Develop recommendations for protecting and restoring the landscape, as well as educating users and controlling their use of these spaces.
- Do not promote the knowledge of or access to Esquimalt natural areas to non-residents until management measures are in place and functioning well. In the near term, provide educational information and implement preliminary protective measures to minimize impacts on the natural areas.

Since considerable research and management work has gone on throughout the South Island it is not necessary for Esquimalt to “re-invent the wheel” on this issue. There are municipalities, agencies, societies and educational institutions that have dealt with many of the natural landscapes and issues present in Esquimalt. Drawing on these resources can enable the municipality to address the issues of natural area management in an efficient and effective manner.



- Phasing**
- Should be part of the ongoing activity of the department
- Partners**
- Environmental groups
  - Community groups
- Resource Impact**
- None beyond the 10% parks budget increase
- Departmental Leadership**
- Parks



**Initiative #15      Enhance maintenance standards for playfields**

**Background**

In general the quality of existing sport fields in Esquimalt can be ranked as low to moderate. This intuitive assessment is based on basic investigations of the existing sport fields in the community and the testimony of user group representatives.

Improving the level of maintenance of the sport fields will enable the community to enhance the quality of play and the capability of the fields to sustain existing levels of use. In addition, it may also provide a modest improvement in the capability of existing fields to support increased use. Many fields would benefit from such an approach: Lions Little League Park and the Victor Brodeur school fields are examples.

The community survey found that a considerable majority of people preferred that, if there were to be expenditures of capital, that it be spent on outdoor park facilities rather than indoor recreation facilities. Likewise, a considerable majority of people preferred passive park amenities (e.g., trails, nature areas) over active park facilities (e.g., sport fields). Therefore, it is more appropriate to tackle the issue of sport field quality through maintenance measures rather than major capital improvements.



**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Work closely with staff to identify potential shortfalls and opportunities in existing maintenance resources and practices.
- Meet with sport groups to identify their priorities for maintenance and minor capital improvements. Introduce and develop the possibility of sport groups taking on an expanded role in the operation and maintenance of sport fields.
- Discuss the opportunity of sharing specialized sport field equipment and personnel with other municipalities in the region.
- Undertake minor capital improvements to gradually enhance the quality of the sport fields. To get the maximum benefit out of capital improvements, employ qualified/professional expertise (e.g., to assess, design & implement the improvements) and provide sufficient resources to do the work properly.

<p>Phasing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved procedures should be instituted within the next two years</li></ul>
<p>Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sport organizations</li></ul>
<p>Resource Impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None beyond the 10% parks budget increase</li></ul>
<p>Departmental Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parks</li></ul>

- Look for and, where possible, implement scheduling changes that provide an opportunity for a sport field to have a fallow period (e.g., late opening, early closing, 50% booking); a time of decreased or no use, to give the turf an opportunity to recover.
- Be regular, thorough and consistent in the basic turf and soil management practices (e.g., aerating, topdressing, overseeding, fertilizing and liming).

From a regional perspective, concentrating on maintaining high quality sport fields in Esquimalt (given that, regardless of the maintenance level, these facilities are generally too small or under-serviced for elite or sport tourism use) could mean that Esquimalt specializes as a regional resource for beginner to intermediate sport, while the larger communities of the region provide service for advanced and elite sport.

**Initiative #16      Enhance the expertise, equipment and morale of  
Parks outside staff.**

**Background**

The primary focus of Parks' outside staff is on maintenance – the management, upkeep and minor enhancement of horticultural displays (e.g., flower beds), traditional parks (e.g., large grass areas with cultivated trees) and recreation facilities (e.g., playfields, playgrounds). While existing staff qualifications and abilities are well-suited to this type of work and much of Esquimalt's park inventory, there are two significant deficiencies in the system:

- **Equipment and Infrastructure:**

Esquimalt lacks some equipment and infrastructure (e.g., turf aerator, irrigation systems) that is essential to the maintenance of quality parks (e.g., regular use of a turf aerator improves the condition and capacity of playing fields) and the cost-effectiveness of maintenance work (e.g., even rudimentary automated irrigation systems can be used instead of the current practice of manual watering of parks and planting beds by costly personnel, enabling their time to be better employed at other duties).

- **Specialized Expertise for Special Assets:**

While staff are very capable at the horticultural aspects of the park system, Esquimalt's park system also includes a significant urban forest (i.e., the inventory of indigenous and cultivated trees in parks, natural open spaces, boulevards and other public lands) and several unique and sensitive natural open spaces (e.g., Cairn Park, Saxe Point). The trees and natural areas of Esquimalt are some of its most important and valuable assets. The current skill set and allocation of staff is not capable of adequately maintaining an aging urban forest or of sustainably managing the community's sensitive ecosystems.

In addition to the above issues it is noted that, based on interviews of outside staff by the consulting team, there seems to be particularly low morale among these staff. Ongoing low morale has significant impacts on staff productivity and innovation – and these attributes are essential for successfully running a heavily tasked operation on limited resources.

The lack of a parks manager as a member of the management team has no doubt added to these difficulties.

Phasing

- Ongoing

Partners

- Other municipalities

Resource Impact

- Included in 10% Parks budget increase

Departmental Leadership

- Parks

### **Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Hire/appoint a parks manager.
- Acquire, through purchase or partnership with other municipalities, specialized equipment and install or upgrade park infrastructure in order to improve the functionality and aesthetics of parks, as well as the cost-effectiveness of maintaining them.
- Train an existing staff person or hire a specialist to function as an urban forestry technician, responsible for developing and operating an urban forestry program.
- Train an existing staff person or hire a specialist to function as a natural areas technician, responsible for developing and operating a natural areas program.
- Train an existing staff person or hire a specialist to function as a soil and turf technician, responsible for managing sport fields.
- Discuss the opportunity of sharing specialist expertise and personnel with other regional municipalities.
- Work to improve the morale of outside Parks staff (e.g., involve staff in capital and operational planning; foster innovation; provide training to improve staff skills; establish/rotate team maintenance teams; improve communications between management and union staff).

***Initiative #17      Develop a program that strengthens the role of  
volunteers in the system.***

**Background**

Volunteers are already active in the delivery of parks and recreation services. They assist in planning and direction setting as Commission members, they work in programs for seniors and youth, they work with sports groups to mark lines and raise funds for capital improvements. Volunteers, and the organizations they are part of, are the lifeblood of recreation.

These are times of rising costs, growing service demand, higher service expectation, and public reluctance to pay either higher fees and charges, or higher tax levels.

Volunteer recruitment is becoming more difficult, and committed volunteers are working longer and harder - a recipe for burn-out. Yet there are trends that would indicate that the sources of volunteers are likely to increase: seniors and those taking early retirement are two groups which will increase in number over the next ten years - both are groups with a high propensity to volunteer.

Research indicates that the main reasons people do not volunteer is because 'no one asked me', or 'I didn't know where to'. And experience tell us that when an occasion presents itself, the volunteers are there: the 1994 Commonwealth Games for instance recruited 14,000 volunteers.

One approach to this problem is to develop more systematic ways to encourage and recruit volunteers. One program that could serve as a model for Esquimalt is Kelowna's Partners in Parks Program. It was specifically focused on parks, as opposed to recreation and parks, and on partners, which included groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce, as well as individuals. Some of its parameters that could be used in Esquimalt include:

- A clear program, consistently promoted
- A wide range of opportunities specified
- A focus on individuals and organizations
- Volunteer job descriptions, as well as a listing of organizational opportunities
- Staff hired specifically to run the program and to act as welcomers and facilitators, determined to find an opportunity for everyone who says 'maybe'.

Phasing

- Within the next three years

Partners

- The purpose of the initiative is to recruit partners

Resource Impact

- A budget needs to be established for this initiative that covers staff and community development time; a budget in the region of \$50,000 annually for two years, would not be excessive, and it would generate many more dollars in partner support

Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation

**Implementation**

Approval by Council of the Community Development philosophy (Initiative 6) should precede action on this initiative. Once approved:

- Research the Kelowna Partners in Parks program, and other similar programs
- Develop a made-in-Esquimalt approach that extracts the best of these models.

**Initiative #18      Develop an overall Community Youth Strategy  
based on an Asset Development Framework**

**Background**

Esquimalt Parks and Recreation offers a range of recreation opportunities for youth. These include:

- Archie's Teen Centre is in a house next door to the Esquimalt Recreation Centre, providing a range of drop-in services and programs for youth aged 10 and up. This was originally a temporary arrangement prior to creating a Teen Centre in the renovated Esquimalt Recreation Centre, although this part of the plan has been moved to the as yet unscheduled phase 2.
- Evening and weekend events and activities, including monthly pre-teen dances, generally staged in the Esquimalt Recreation Centre
- Drop in swim and skate programs in the pool and arena

Sports programs are also hosted in municipal facilities through local sports groups. In addition, limited recreation programs and services for youth are provided by other organizations such as the Vic West 'Y', the Military Family Resource Centre, and the Esquimalt Neighbourhood House.

These programs draw a range of youth, both in terms of numbers and in terms of degrees of 'at-risk'. Some run on a break even basis (mainly the dances and registered programs), but most involve a subsidy, either direct or indirect.<sup>8</sup> In addition, a number of children and youth access programs through the municipality's LIFE program.

Programs are mostly are well attended - the pre-teen dances attract over 200 youth, and Archie's can have 30 or 40 youth 'dropping in' at their peak hours; the occasional events specifically for youth, at the pool, such as the *Splash Bashes*, could be better attended.

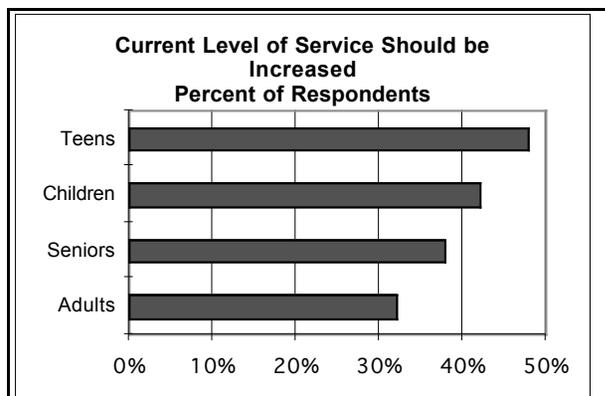
The majority of programs however appeal to pre-teens rather than those aged 14+. Even after its renovation, the pool is unlikely to compete with Commonwealth Pool for the attention of this age group. However for the pre-teen age group, the current focus on cheap, fun activities, combined with parental criteria of safety and good supervision, are providing an adequate but limited program.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the subsidy of the after school programs is a direct subsidy, while the subsidy for youth hockey programming is indirect.

I think that youth facilities such as the Vic-West youth park (skate park) should be a main focus for development. The skate park is an awesome place for people of all ages to go and have fun. It is low-maintenance and offers a range of recreation opportunities. Either, there should be a plan to expand it further, or more such parks/facilities should be constructed. It's a great park!

Source: Community Survey Comment

Note: The Skatepark is in Victoria City but is used by many Esquimalt Youth.



Source: Community Survey

Note: Almost 50% of respondents thought that services for teens should be increased.

There are few programs which serve the 14+ year market, although efforts are underway to address this issue. Clearly Esquimalt has received poor national media attention around the 1997 murder of Rena Virk, and the 2001 beating of Nicholas Johnson. It has also spent time over the last ten years looking at youth services (seven reports have been written during this time). The community survey results also indicate that teens were the group for whom service increases were considered most necessary.

The question is what strategic directions should the municipality, particularly the Parks and Recreation Department, pursue to address this program deficit.

A community committee has been working on this issue for some time, and consensus is nearing about what steps to take. In addition, all local municipalities have improved their services for youth in the last ten years. National and international frameworks, such as *Developmental Asset Building* and *Child, Youth Friendly Communities* and *High Five*, have been reviewed and adopted locally. Other agencies have also contributed to various aspects of youth development: the Victoria-Esquimalt Police support Community Policing practices and have developed the very successful *Rock Solid* program.

There is a need for a commitment to a broad framework at the community level. The *Developmental Asset Building* framework, championed in BC by the Boys and Girls Clubs, has been supported by youth recreation leaders across the region. Some of its elements include:

- A vision for children and youth in the community as well as a shared language for all youth workers and policy developers - everyone is working from the same conceptual page.
- It requires everyone to take responsibility for the youth of the community - not just the youth workers or the recreation department.
- It requires agencies to work together - recreation people, church groups, police, and more.
- It is about all children and youth - not teens, but 0 to 18+ years.
- It is about all youth, not just 'youth at risk'.
- It sees children and youth as resources, not problems.
- It is about making youth part of the community - about building relationships with youth over time, not offering a series of 'youth programs'.

A Community Youth Strategy is needed. Its foundations have been put in place over the last several years, but it needs a little further articulation, and confirmation by Council and other key agencies. Its vision, strategic objectives and suggested key actions might be somewhat as follows

Vision	Esquimalt is a community where children and youth are valued and respected. Esquimalt is a community committed to developing, supporting and promoting youth initiatives and building relationships that positively contribute to the lives of Esquimalt youth.
Strategic Objectives and Suggested Actions	<p>To support a wide range of recreation opportunities for children and youth by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• discussing with youth ways in which more programs can be offered, especially those that link age groups</li><li>• enhancing the services provided through Archie's Teen Centre, and extending them to youth access of the new Esquimalt Recreation Centre once it is opened</li><li>• working directly with and in local schools</li><li>• providing specific and separate programming for both girls and boys</li><li>• improving communication between staff of youth serving agencies, and bringing greater integration to the promotion and delivery of programs/services</li></ul> <p>To empower youth and give them a voice for speaking to Mayor and Council by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• developing a Youth Advisory Council (YAC), ensuring that it has the opportunity to meet frequently with Council, and that Council listens to what these youth leaders have to say</li><li>• ensuring that representatives of the Victoria/Esquimalt Police and the School Board are also listening to what YAC has to say</li><li>• continuing to partner on the <a href="http://www.youthvictoria.com">www.youthvictoria.com</a> website</li></ul> <p>To improve the image of youth in the community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• working with schools and community agencies (including Rock Solid) to increase the delivery of violence prevention, conflict resolution and other personal skill development programs for teens</li><li>• ensuring that more opportunities are created for youth to volunteer (Linking to initiative # 17)</li><li>• creating an Esquimalt Youth Awards program, and further developing the Summer Youth Intern Program</li></ul> <p>To use civic resources for youth development by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• using schools to increase the supply of after school programs</li><li>• developing a close relationship with Esquimalt High School so that students who are Esquimalt resident are able to complete their 30 hour work experience through working for the municipality</li></ul> <p>To put a youth perspective into civic policy development and planning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ensuring that there is a specific youth component in all civic planning initiatives</li></ul>

Phasing

- Immediate

Partners

- All youth serving agencies in Esquimalt
- School District

Resource Impact

- Implementation will require the allocation of additional financial and staff resources - \$50,000 annually for two years

Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation

**Implementation**

- Review the Vision and Strategic Objectives with other youth serving agencies in Esquimalt and develop a common vision for the Community Youth Strategy.
- Review and revise the Strategic Objectives and refine into a budget and workplan.

Present these to the Commission and Council for approval.

**Initiative #19      Work with all seniors serving agencies to develop  
an overall seniors recreation strategy**

**Background**

Over the next ten years, the over 55 year population of Esquimalt will grow significantly. Initially it will be those aged 55 to 65 years, but by 2013 this 'front end baby boomer' age cohort will be moving into its 70s. These next ten years will be crucial ones: research has shown that patterns of activity are established between age 55 and 65 years, and persist as those seniors age. And an active senior is happier, healthier, less isolated and less dependent on the health care system.

Seniors are more active now than their parents, and this is even more true for those aged 55 to 65 years. They seek active organized recreation: golf, tennis, Slopitch, curling for instance. But they also are the main reasons for the rise in popularity of gardening, walking, bird watching and nature appreciation; as well as arts and cultural activities. And even with these activities, they like to do it socially, with others and in groups.

Once into their 70s, the life patterns of seniors do change. They are more frail or at least less active, more likely to be living alone, more isolated.

Esquimalt has for many years worked in partnership with Silver Threads to provide seniors recreation services. This organization runs a seniors centre within the Esquimalt Recreation Centre. It provides some outreach programs from that centre for at-home seniors, and it works with VIHA on initiatives such as On The Go Again.

There are many other organizations in the community that provide services, including recreation, for seniors; these include not-for-profit agencies such as churches, and public agencies such as VIHA.

There is, however, no overall seniors recreation strategy in Esquimalt, although many of the building blocks are there. The strategy needs to be holistic, and focus on active living, healthy eating, positive social and community interaction. It needs to stress intergenerational linkages and outreach programming. It needs to be a partnership of all seniors organizations. A steering committee of seniors' organizations should be formed (including Silver Threads, Kiwanis, Lions Club). The department, using its community development skills, should resource this planning process.



Phasing

- This initiative should be developed once Council have approved the Community Development philosophy (Initiative 6)

Partners

- Silver Threads
- Other seniors serving agencies
- UVic Schools of Gerontology and Leisure Studies

Resource Impact

- Preparation of the strategy will require staff and consultation resources (\$30,000). Implementation may require the allocation of additional financial and staff resources.

Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation

**Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Develop a plan through a steering committee of seniors organizations committed to creating high quality seniors' recreation.
- Enlist the support and resources of VIHA in this process.
- Research best practices in other communities. Seek assistance from the UVic Schools of Gerontology and Leisure Studies in this research.

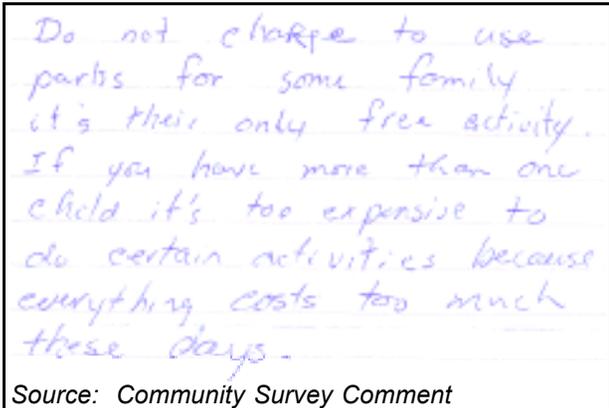
**Initiative #20      Ensure access for those for whom affordability is  
an issue**

**Background**

Our values are that the benefits of recreation should be available to everyone. Yet we know from much research that affordability is the most frequently cited barrier to recreation participation. At 21.6%, Esquimalt also has the highest proportion of people living below the poverty line of any municipality in the region. It also has among the lowest median household income of any municipality. Recent cuts to MCFD's preventive services budget will mean more children and youth unable to attend summer camps and after school care programs. If access to the benefits of recreation is to be extended to those lacking the resources to pay, then mechanisms have to be put in place to cover those costs.

Esquimalt has taken up this challenge. For several years it has been a partner in the regional LIFE Program (Leisure Involvement For Everyone). In 2002, 965 visits drop-in visits or program registrations were paid for through the LIFE program, at a cost of \$7,010. It is likely that this represents a small percentage of those who are eligible. Research, both academic and anecdotal, has identified several issues with the program and suggested modifications for overcoming them. For instance requiring a parent's signature for a youth from a low income family to access the program may in many cases prove too great a barrier for the youth. Another barrier is that the program only works within the municipal recreation setting; it cannot be applied to not-for-profit groups such as sport and art programs, scouts and guides (although it is recognized that these groups frequently waive fees for those who show need).

Changes to the program are being considered at the regional level. Esquimalt should take a lead role in these regional discussions. Additional funding may be required, although it is more a matter of revenue forgone than hard costs outlaid. There is little doubt that this is one investment that pays dividends long-term.



Do not charge to use parks for some family it's their only free activity. If you have more than one child it's too expensive to do certain activities because everything costs too much these days.

Source: Community Survey Comment

Phasing

- This initiative should be developed once Council have approved the Community Development philosophy (Initiative 6)

Partners

- Other regional municipalities
- Esquimalt Neighbourhood House
- MCFD

Resource Impact

- Minimal
- Hopefully, expanding the program will add to the overall number of visits, with no changes in revenue

Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation

### **Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Work with other regional municipalities to enhance the LIFE Program and make it easier for those with low incomes to become aware of the program and to access its benefits. These changes should include a review of its access requirements, especially for children and youth.
- Work with community groups and local foundations to extend the principles of the LIFE Program to not-for-profit based programs.
- Work with staff of the MCFD (and its successor regional agency) and with local agencies such as Esquimalt Neighbourhood House to mitigate the effects of provincial budget cuts which will further reduce the ability of Esquimalt's low income residents to access recreation programs.

**Initiative #21      Improve the signage systems of the park,  
recreation and cultural system of the community**

**Background**

It was repeatedly mentioned during the planning process (in leadership surveys/workshops, focus group meetings and the public open house) that residents and visitors sometimes had a difficult time:

- knowing the amenities and facilities available in the community – and being able to find their way to them; and
- knowing about the special areas, history and features of the community – and being able to have a better understanding of what is unique about Esquimalt.

During the planning process a number of specific sign needs were identified:

- Identity signage – the individual signs that mark the entrance to or arrival at a specific park or facility, including the “Welcome to Esquimalt” signs at the boundary of the community. In many cases the community’s existing identity signs are too small, improperly located, undistinguished or absent.
- Way-finding signage – a system of signs designed and employed to help people find their way through and to the amenities of the community. These include directional signs and maps, graphically coordinated to help people navigate the community by foot, bicycle and vehicle.
- Interpretive signage – the signs, kiosks, maps and brochures that tell people about the unique heritage and environment of the community. Examples include interpretive information on the military history of Macauley Point.

The above observations, made by the consultants and Esquimalt residents, provide an opportunity to make positive and cost effective change over a short or extended period of time. In addition to providing a functional improvement to the community (e.g., enabling tourists to find Saxe Point Park) and enhancing appreciation of the community (e.g., information displays on the military history of Macauley Point), they can improve the image and identity of the community.



Phasing

- Undertake when improvements have been made to the system, especially the upgrading of maintenance and service levels for natural parks and playfields

Partners

- Potential to partner with Chamber and community groups

Resource Impact

- \$15,000 should be allocated for the Signage Master Plan, with \$25,000 annually for three years to implement its recommendations. Given other commitments, it might be possible to address this initiative through the 10% parks budget increase.

Departmental Leadership

- Parks

### **Implementation**

In the short term there are a number of actions to be taken:

- Undertake a signage master plan for Esquimalt. The plan should address the functional, informational and aesthetic aspects of the different types of sign systems described above.
- Make progressive improvements to the signage system. Focus on making noticeable and localized improvements to specific sites or areas of the community instead of spreading sign improvements thinly across the entire community.

**Initiative #22 Partner with Esquimalt High School in the development of a Youth Park**

**Background**

The success of the Vic West Skate Park can be measured by its use...and it is always packed with young people mostly aged 10 to 19 years. It is close enough to serve Esquimalt's youth. Some parks in Esquimalt do offer some attractions for youth: a few basketball hoops, some mountain biking paths (some official, most not), some social gathering places with a bench or two. Fleming Beach is a regional rock climbing facility, but free climbing is discouraged.

A youth park provides amenities such as blacktop and hoops, rock structures for bouldering, some skateboard elements, a sand volleyball court, social areas and seating, and lighting. They have been developed in many communities and serve as gathering places for teens after school, in the evenings and at weekends. They need to be located where they are accessible to youth, they are visible, but are not too close to private residences.

There are two broad locations where youth parks would work in Esquimalt - around the High School, and in the vicinity of the Recreation Centre or Town Square. While there is likely less supervision at times when youth will be using the Park, the High School location offers potential for higher use. There has been discussion of adding youth elements to Anderson Park, but the proximity to residences would be problematic. A preferable option would be to renovate the two tennis courts on the school site facing Colville Road. This site is on school property, but the tennis courts are currently unusable; the area to the west of the courts could also be used for park elements and is little used by the school.

At a later date, if there is major redevelopment on the Bullen Park site, an area in this park could also be developed as a youth park.



Phasing

- Plans for this park should be built on the foundation of the Community Development initiative (#6), and the Community Youth Strategy (#18)

Partners

- School District
- Community agencies to support construction costs

Resource Impact

- \$20,000 for design work, and \$200,000 to create the park (should be phased)

Departmental Leadership

- Community Recreation (consultation) and Parks (design)

**Implementation**

A number of actions can be taken to implement this initiative:

- Approach the School Board regarding the development of this site for a youth park.
- Form a committee of youth to visit other youth parks and to identify elements to be developed in the park.
- Hire a design firm to work with the youth committee on park design.

**Initiative #23 Prepare an Events Strategy for Esquimalt**

**Background**

Community festivals and events are wonderful opportunities for community celebration. Esquimalt has its Buccaneer Days, and other festivals such as the Lantern Festival also contribute to community spirit and togetherness. Tourism Victoria also uses 'Summer of Festivals' as part of its branding and marketing; Esquimalt is on the edge of some of these festivals, such as providing venues for the Jazz Festival, Literary Arts Festival, and others. The Archie Browning Sport Centre and the Esquimalt Recreation Centre have also been venues for many community events: dog shows, boat shows, Bridge Tournaments to name just a few. The arena is also the venue for many sport events, such as hockey and lacrosse games, while Bullen Park hosts small ball tournaments.

These events all bring life to the community, as well as leaving some economic impact through spending at local shops, restaurants and in tourist accommodation.

With the addition of the new Town Square, the potential for outdoor events will be enhanced. Activity on summer evenings or winter weekends will add a sense of place, of economic vitality, and will enhance the spirit of community that is essential to the overall successful implementation of this strategic plan.

Events do not happen by chance. They must be planned and orchestrated by volunteers. The Township can assist with the planning process through the development of an Events Strategy, and by the creation of a position within the department to facilitate municipal support.

**Implementation**

This initiative should be addressed in the long term. It is essential in the short term that the move to a full community development approach be operationalized, which includes creating full public understanding of this new approach. If this is not done, then any staff involved in events will find themselves organizing the event rather than facilitating the community to do so.

In the long term there are a number of actions that could be taken:

- Provide leadership in the development of an Events Strategy. This will involve engaging partner organizations in a process of identifying the community's strengths, challenges and opportunities. The process would inventory community groups and identify their event potential and ideas, as well as the Township's facilities. It would include an action plan.



Phasing
• As resources allow
Partners
• Chamber of Commerce
• Tourism Victoria
Resource Impact
• Strategy development will require \$10,000; ongoing support of community events may require additional staff resources
Departmental Leadership
• Community Recreation

- Invest in a person, organization or coalition to provide 'one stop shopping' for community event organizers in their dealings with the municipality.

**Initiative #24 Evaluate the need for further additions to  
Esquimalt Recreation Centre**

**Background**

The Esquimalt Recreation Centre was built in 1973 and this summer will begin a major renovation and expansion result in a repositioned and revitalized state-of-the-art wellness and recreation centre. Gross building area will increase from about 34,400 square feet (3,200 square metres) to 46,800 square feet (4,350 square metres).

The health and wellness programming emphasis will see the existing 25-metre pool augmented with a new hot pool and a variable depth “lifestyle” pool capable of supporting diverse activities from play activities to rehabilitation and therapy. The fitness centre will expand to almost 4,700 square feet (434 square metres) and various other program spaces will be expanded and enhanced. The open courtyard will be covered and made into a welcoming new community-gathering place. Overall operational efficiency will be improved in the 25% larger building with negligible added operating costs.

The facility layout has been designed to accommodate an eventual future Phase II addition of a full-size gymnasium and, if demand merits, a possible Phase III ice arena and additional on-site parking, although this would necessitate shifting Bullen Park eastward.

**Implementation**

No action required in the short-term.

Actions in the long-term might include:

- Conduct a review of the Strategic Plan after five years to determine new or changing program needs.
- Develop a plan for a Phase II expansion (eg full-size gymnasium, teen centre and additional program spaces)
- Investigate the potential regional demand and local support for a Phase III addition which could include a new single ice arena. Site encroachment for this addition would require a shifting and redevelopment of the Bullen Park sports fields and amenities.

Phasing
• Evaluate in 2008
• Possibly earlier depending on the outcome of planning for the future of the Archie Browning Sports Centre
Partners
• Other regional municipalities
Resource Impact
• Unknown at this time
Departmental Leadership
• Facility Management

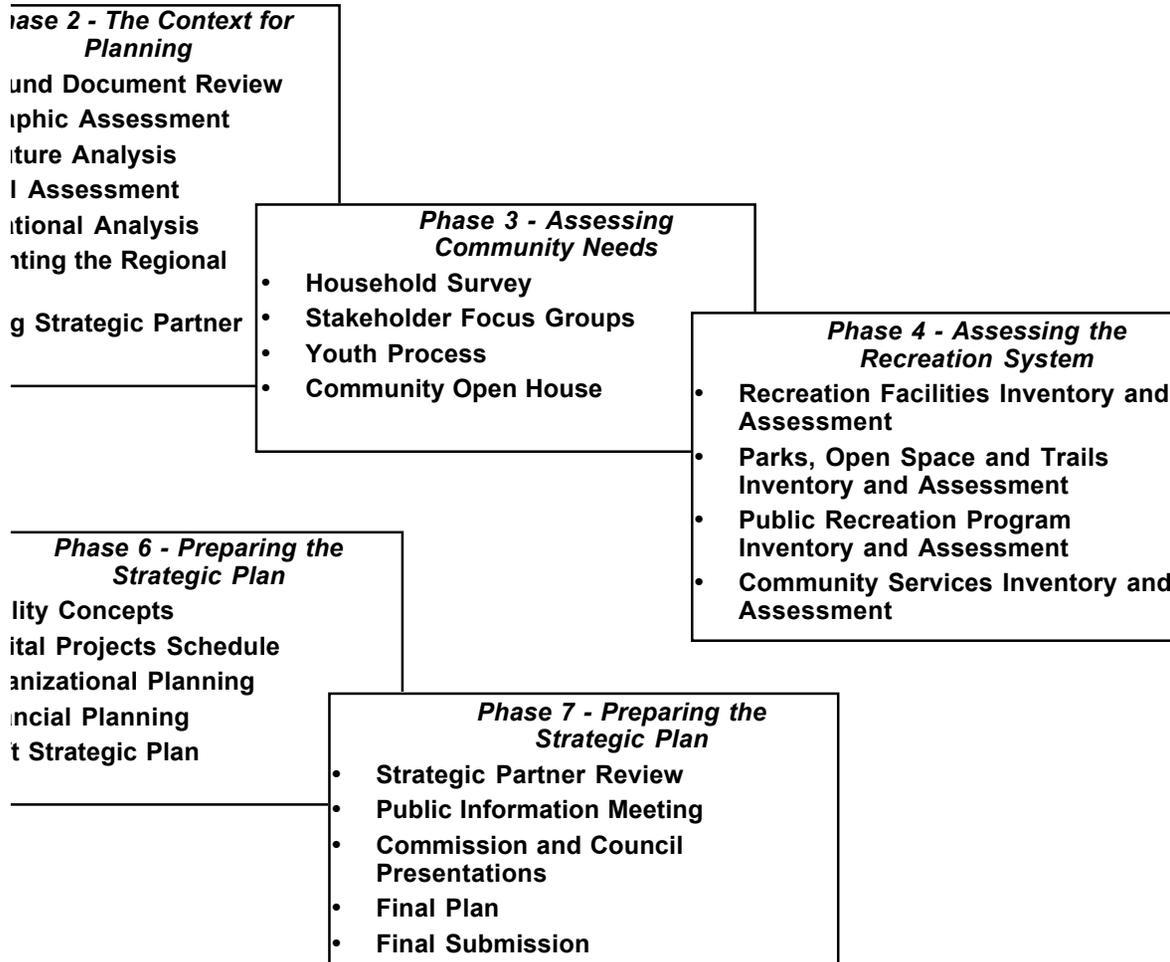
## **VII. Appendices**

*Planning Process*

*The Community's Views*

*Context and Trends*

Additional information about these topics is contained in separate working papers which are available from the Township.



## ***Process***

The preparation of the strategic plan was divided into seven phases:

### **Phase 1 - Getting Started**

Meetings were held to confirm the scope of the project, to plan its various stages and to start gathering critical information. The consulting team worked with the Steering Committee to start defining strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Press releases were prepared to ensure that the public was fully informed of the project and opportunities for input. A survey tool was completed by 32 community leaders to determine their broad values, objectives, issues and concerns related to parks and recreation. A workshop was facilitated with staff to identify key issues and opportunities.

### **Phase 2 - The Context for Planning**

All relevant documents and files were reviewed. The impacts of population growth, population aging, etc were interpreted and summarized. Significant local and provincial recreation participation trends were also interpreted and summarized. Data were gathered to provide a clear picture of the current financial dimension of recreation in Esquimalt. Current governance, management organization and staffing were examined. Discussions were held with officials of the school district, Region Health Board, and other potential partners to identify opportunities for increased collaboration.

### **Phase 3 - Assessing Community Needs**

A four page survey was distributed to every household in Esquimalt, with 950 being completed and returned for analysis. A series of focus groups were organized to which representatives of local parks and environmental groups, sports groups, community agencies and arts and cultural groups were invited. In total, over 50 people contributed their ideas. Meetings were organized with several groups of youth, and with youth workers. A community open house was held.

### **Phase 4 - Assessing the Recreation System**

A physical and functional assessment of the all existing recreation facilities was conducted. A complete inventory of the public urban open space assets of Esquimalt was developed. An inventory and assessment of public recreation programs and community services was prepared.

**Phase 5 - Developing a Vision**

All identified issues were reviewed at the macro scale, and grouped into broad areas reflecting the main functional areas to be covered in the Strategic Plan. A community vision was generated in two sessions with key members of the community and with senior staff. This vision represented the community's ambitions and dreams for the future of recreation in Esquimalt.

**Phase 6 - Preparing the Strategic Plan**

Data was prepared outlining future facility requirements, how they might be met with the current inventory, and what options and actions were open to the Township to achieve these ends. The implications for staffing and other aspects of the organization were explored. New governance models and potential partnership opportunities were investigated. Recommended alternative service delivery models were outlined. A simple financial model was constructed to identify the ten year impact on the Department's financial situation. All these were gathered into a draft strategic plan which was reviewed with the Steering Committee.

**Phase 7 - Finalizing the Strategic Plan**

A presentation of its principal recommendations will be made to the Project Committee; it is suggested that partner agencies (other Recreation Departments, Capital Regional District, Health Board, School Board, etc) be invited to this briefing. A public information meeting was held. The final draft of the plan was presented to Council and Commission.

## ***The Community's Views***

The vision for the future must be built on a clear understanding of what the general public value about their parks and recreation system. This understanding was gained primarily through a community survey that was completed by almost 1000 residents. Some of the key points included:

- In terms of being used on a regular basis by the largest number of people, trails and attractive passive parks are the most popular. The pool also reaches this level of regular users. Sports fields are used by considerably fewer people than passive parks, although it is likely that the per person frequency of visiting is higher. The curling facility recorded the lowest level of use.
- When asked about their degree of satisfaction with the service level of various services, about one third of survey respondents noted that service levels should remain at their present levels, and slightly more thought they should increase. Only about 1% thought they should be decreased, and the remainder gave no response to the question. General satisfaction with current service levels was strongest for:
  - \* spaces for passive outdoor relaxation
  - \* social and community meeting spaces, and
  - \* sports facilities.

The service areas most frequently noted as requiring to be increased were:

- \* community landscaping and beautification
  - \* trails and pathways, and
  - \* culture and the arts.
- When asked about their degree of satisfaction with the level of service provided to various demographic groups, there was again strong agreement that service levels should not be decreased. Strongest support was expressed for increasing service levels for teens: almost 50% of respondents agreed on this. Support in the 40% range was expressed for increasing services to children and to seniors, although an almost equal number of respondents thought services to seniors were adequate at the present level.
  - The survey asked people if they would be prepared to pay more for park and recreation services. The responses to this question fell into three roughly equal groups:
    - \* 27% of respondents indicated that they were prepared to pay no additional taxes.
    - \* 32% indicated that they were prepared to pay a small increase in taxes, no more than 5%
    - \* 38% indicated that they were prepared to pay more than that, mostly up to about 10%.

- In terms of ways in which the Township could find alternative strategies to resource parks and recreation services; almost 80% of respondents noted that they were either very supportive or somewhat supportive of both using 'more volunteers' and 'increased collaboration'. The very opposite was true for 'reducing service levels' and increasing 'user fees'; in both cases, 50 to 70% opposed these strategies, although there were about 26% of respondents who were 'somewhat supportive' of increasing user fees.

In summary, the community:

- Believe in parks and recreation and feel that it is operating at about as low a level of service as is possible.
- Support increasing service for community landscaping and beautification, trails and pathways, for culture and the arts.....and for teens.
- Do not want to see increased user fees as the way additional services are paid for, but are willing to pay modest increases in taxes for these services.
- Support the Township being creative, such as by using more volunteers and by collaborating with partners including other regional municipalities.

## **Context and Trends**

Our strategic plan is for the next ten years. It needs to focus on the world as it will be in 2013, making sure as well that the parks and recreation system is also ready for the years that follow. What do we know about that time frame to, say, 2020? The work of the consulting team was built on a comprehensive review of these demographic, life pattern, public economic and leisure trends. Here is a brief overview.

### **Demographic Trends**

- There will be little change in total population, except for eventual growth on current DND lands.
- The current population is made up of families (60%), and non-family households (40%). This is unlikely to change much by 2013.
- Over the next ten years, the aging of the 'baby boomers' will be the most significant demographic trend, but for the next ten years they will remain active and engaged.
- The 'echo' generation, currently aged 15 to 30 years, will also increase rapidly during the next ten years
- Esquimalt has a high numbers of apartments and other non-single family dwellings, and people who live on their own. Recreation offers them social and activity-based experiences.
- Esquimalt has a smaller multicultural population than many places, although it does have the region's largest First Nations group living next door.
- Esquimalt has a high proportion of both single parent families and low income earners. Affordability of recreation services is an issue for both groups.

### **Life Pattern Trends**

- The world will continue to be transformed by the electronic revolution. People's expectations will be coloured by what they see on TV and on the internet. They will expect services on-line. Recreation clearly has a role to play in providing alternatives to electronic based activity, while incorporating its powers of information dissemination.
- Everyone has limited time and stress is an issue in many people's lives. The delivery of recreation services must adapt.
- Increasingly sedentary lifestyles are the norm for many people, with obesity increasing, and various health risks along with it.
- Women's roles are still evolving. They work more and still carry the majority of household responsibilities. For women, recreation time is even scarcer than for men.

- There is increased environmental awareness.
- Community organizations and their facilities are declining.

**Public Economic Trends**

- There will be continuing tax restraint pressures over the next ten years, although voters, such as in Esquimalt, have shown themselves ready to make strategic investments for specific recreation projects.
- The general trend away from public subsidization toward more user pay philosophies will continue, although the impacts on those with limited incomes will have to be mitigated.
- There will continue to be federal and provincial downloading of responsibilities, without sufficient resources to do the job properly. It is likely that cuts to the Ministry of Children and Family Development will be the first felt by the recreation system in Esquimalt.
- There will continue to be pressures for cross-jurisdictional integration and amalgamation.
- There will continue to be pressures to partner with the private and not-for-profit sectors.

**Leisure Trends**

- The public's increasing time pressures will cause recreation delivery to be rethought. More recreation will happen outside the recreation centres, closer to home, in parks and on trails.
- The focus on structured activities among youth will continue, with a slight back-lash looking for unstructured time for kids to 'just play'.
- As the population ages, there will be less focus on vigorous activities, and more on gentler pursuits such as gardening, walking, and nature appreciation.
- There is a greater holistic life view, with linkages between recreation and health, the power of recreation to build strong families, the role of parks in environmental conservation all being recognized as the benefits of recreation.
- The cost of recreation is the biggest barrier to gaining its benefits from recreation. The community must provide increasing access to recreation opportunities for all demographic groups.
- Recreation creates a greater sense of place, and builds a greater sense of community pride - there is increasing recognition that recreation is the 'glue' of the community.
- The concepts of partnering are broadening, and it is becoming the central part to the delivery of new recreation opportunities.
- Volunteers are the lifeblood of recreation. New ways must be found to strengthen the role of volunteers.