

# **APPENDIX D** POLICY CONTEXT SUMMARY

## D.1 National & Provincial policy

### D.1.1 PATHWAYS TO WELLBEING

North Cowichan's existing and future parks and trails have the potential to contribute to meeting the National Framework for Recreation's 'Renewed Vision' for Canada, whose vision is a Canada where everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences that foster wellbeing at the individual, community and environmental levels.<sup>17</sup> Each level is summarized below:

- **Individual wellbeing:** Individuals have high mental and physical wellbeing, are engaged and contributing members of their families and communities;
- **Community wellbeing:** Communities are healthy, inclusive, welcoming, resilient and sustainable;
- The wellbeing of **places and spaces:** natural and built environments are appreciated, nurtured and sustained.

The framework describes five goals and corresponding priorities for action. Each goal relates to North Cowichan's parks and trails, both planned and existing. The goals are:

1. Foster active living through physical recreation.
2. Increase inclusion and access to recreation for populations that face constraints to participation.
3. Help people connect to nature through recreation.
4. Ensure the provision of supportive physical and social environments that encourage participation in recreation and build strong, caring communities.
5. Ensure the continued growth and sustainability of the recreation field.

The National Framework for Recreation in Canada provides important direction to the planning and design of North Cowichan's parks and trails. The framework was closely considered in the design of the Master Plan's priorities and recommendations. BC Provincial Trails Strategy

Trails planning through North Cowichan must consider the strategic direction provided at the provincial level. The 2012 BC Provincial Trail Strategy provides the framework, principles, and guidance necessary to develop a world class trails systems for BC.<sup>18</sup> It recognizes that trails are an integral to the landscape and enable meaningful connections between people and nature. The vision of the strategy is: "a world-renowned, sustainable network of trails, with opportunities for all, which provide benefits for trails users, communities, and the province" (p.5).<sup>18</sup>

The strategy is based on six key components ranging from environmental stewardship, collaborative planning, good governance and effective management. The strategy contains 22 actions across a number of categories including environmental stewardship, collaborative planning, effective

Implementation of the strategies in the North Cowichan Parks and Trails Master Plan will bring the Municipality into alignment with the Pathways to Wellbeing goals.

management etc. The following actions were considered in the preparation of this Master Plan:

- Integrate trail planning with the transportation network system;
- Work collaboratively with community groups at all orders and levels of government (local, regional, provincial, federal, and with Aboriginal governing bodies) in park and trail planning;
- Develop and maintain an inventory of trails;
- Undertake a comprehensive survey of trail users; and
- Integrate consideration of recreation trail use into resource road decisions.

The BC Trails Strategy's vision is a BC that offers a world-renowned trail network that is sustainable and provides opportunities for all. It contains a number of guiding principles to realize this vision, listed below:

- Sound Environmental Stewardship and Management
- Respect and Recognition for First Nations' Interests
- Mutual Respect amongst Trail interests, other resources users and existing tenure holders
- Respect and understanding among diverse trail interests
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Secure recreation opportunities for all trail users
- Benefits for individuals, communities and the province

## D.2 Local context

### D.2.1 MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH COWICHAN OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN

The Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in 2011 and serves three main purposes:

- 1) Set the community vision and values that will guide decision-making about our future direction.
- 2) Clarify for residents, businesses and institutions the primary goals and objectives, with the support policies that help the Municipality to meet its goals.
- 3) Inform neighbouring jurisdictions for our planned direction and identify the areas where mutual cooperation is necessary to help us meet certain goals.<sup>19</sup> The OCP contains specific policy direction under parks and recreation. It recognizes that parks and recreational facilities are essential features of a healthy community, and that trails help connect the community and provide recreational opportunities as well. The specific objective outlined in the OCP is to “ensure the community is well serviced with recreation facilities, including a system of parks, trails and open space” (p. 90). The two relevant policies are as follows:
  - Provide diverse and barrier free recreational opportunities for all ages
  - Integrate parkland acquisition, natural areas protection, and trail development plans

The OCP’s policies pertaining to parks and trails are not limited to parks and recreation. Other parts of the by-law that relate to parks and trails include Forestry and Transportation. Under Forestry, the OCP provides policy direction around sustainably managing North Cowichan Municipal Forest Reserve, and supporting responsible recreational uses of municipal forest lands. Under Transportation, the OCP provides direction for how the Municipality will achieve a complete pedestrian and cyclist transportation grid that, among other objectives, connect two existing routes and/or fill in missing sections of trails and improve access to recreational trails.

While the OCP does not provide detailed information about the design, location, and provision of parks and trails in North Cowichan, it does serve as an important contextual document to this Parks and Trails Master Plan.

The North Cowichan OCP contains specific policy direction under parks and recreation. It recognizes that parks and recreational facilities, along with access to natural areas, are essential features of a healthy community, and that trails help connect the community and provide recreational opportunities as well.

### D.2.2 1997 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY FOR THE DISTRICT OF NORTH COWICHAN

In February of 1997, the Parks and Open Space Strategy was released to direct the Municipality in acquiring parkland in strategic locations and to support the recreational needs of the community through a range of actions.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, its purpose was to provide a framework for protecting open spaces and acquiring land to create a park and open space system. The strategy included an assessment of existing parks and open spaces, which were classified as follows: play lots, neighbourhood parks, community parks, and publicly accessible nature areas. Each park type was evaluated to determine the existing supply, and the future supply to meet the needs of the population. The analysis found that the District was well served with recreational opportunities but would need additional acquisitions as the population grew.

The strategy has been the most comprehensive document to date for evaluating the parks, open spaces, and trail connections within North Cowichan. Importantly, it has set the park types and standards that are currently used by North Cowichan and has influenced the policy direction for parks and recreation within the OCP. As written on page 91 of the OCP, “the municipality’s park standards and types are based on the report *Parks and Open Space Strategy for the District of North Cowichan*.” (p. 91).<sup>21</sup> In addition, another one of the OCP policies, “integrate parkland acquisition, natural areas protection, and trail development plans”, clearly states the following: “the Municipality will partner, when possible, with federal and provincial environmental agencies and other groups to acquire park land that can be jointly managed for its recreational and environmental benefits” (p.92).<sup>21</sup>

In preparing the Parks and Trails Master Plan, special consideration was given to the actions outlined in the Parks and Open Space strategy.

### D.2.3 TRAIL NETWORK AND CYCLING PLAN

A few years following the adoption of the 1997 Parks and Open Space Plan, the Trail Network and Cycling Plan was implemented.<sup>22</sup> Funded by then Ministry of Community Development, Cooperatives and Volunteers, the plan had four broad objectives, listed as follows:

- To review the proposed Trans-Canada Trail Network in consultation with Cowichan Valley communities
- To provide Cowichan Valley communities with strategies to connect to the Trans Canada Trail, physically and economically
- To develop a network of neighbourhood trails that can tie into the Trans Canada Trail
- To develop a cycling commuter network around North Cowichan and into Duncan

The Trail Network and Cycling Plan was the first document to create different trail types in North Cowichan. The trail types ranged from the Trans Canada Trail to multi-use trails, undesignated and designated hiking and walking trails, equestrian trails, mountain bike trails, and forest roads. While there are several trail types, each can be summarized into one of the following categories:

1. Major trails that connect one part of the community with another;
2. Multi-use trails that serve various user groups within a community;
3. Neighbourhood links that connect residents to local destinations (e.g., school, store, park, waterfronts)

A summary of recommendations was prepared that described the trail upgrades and implementation actions needed to accommodate recreation uses. In preparing the Parks and Trails Master Plan, special consideration was given to the recommendations outlined in the Trail Network and Cycling Plan.

The Municipal Forest Reserve is an important asset in North Cowichan that has significant influence on the character of the jurisdiction. "The Municipality manages its forest reserve as a multiple, sustainable use resource. The forests are used for a range of purposes, including timber harvesting, recreation, education, protection of water supplies, local economic development, and conservation of the natural landscape (Municipality of North Cowichan, 2011).

### D.2.4 MUNICIPALITY OF NORTH COWICHAN FOREST RESERVE FOREST DEVELOPMENT PLAN: 1997 TO 2003

Our community is unique in that we are one of the few communities in North America that has privately owned forest lands managed for our residents.<sup>23</sup> Our Forest Reserve was created in 1946 by the Corporation of the District of North Cowichan and spans over 5,300 hectares which comprises 25% of the total land area of North Cowichan. The reserve consists of six major land holdings, listed as follows: Mount Prevost, Mount Sicker, Mount Tzouhalem, Stony Hill, Mount Richards, and Maple Mountain. Importantly, the forest reserve is managed for multiple use including harvesting of forest crops, recreational uses, forest education, domestic water supplies, visual landscape, economic development and as a revenue source.<sup>23</sup>

The Forest Reserve Forest Development Plan, adopted in 1997, was created to provide staff of the Municipality with information on the "location and scheduling of the proposed roads and cutblocks for harvesting timber in a manner which demonstrates management of all forest resources."<sup>24</sup> (p.1). As a large working forest, there are also opportunities for forest recreation. A number of non-destructive recreation opportunities are stated within the plan including the following: hiking, mountain biking, 4x4s on designated roads, nature watching, hunting etc.<sup>24</sup> There are a number of key recreation features in the Reserve including the *Preservation Zone* on Maple Mountain for recreation use only; hiking trails on Maple Mountain; and the future expansion of the Trans Canada Trail through portions of the Forest Reserve which have yet to be determined. Our Municipal Forest Reserve contains a number of official and unofficial trails; approximately 38 km of Municipally recognized trails currently exist in the Municipal Forest Reserve, with an additional 71 km proposed.<sup>25</sup>

# **APPENDIX E** PARK QUALITY AND CONDITION ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The park quality and condition assessment was completed to evaluate the park quality and condition of select parks in the Municipality of North Cowichan. During the field assessment, 15 parks were visited and assigned a score (from 0–3) that best represented the condition of the park. The scores corresponded to the following:

- 0 = the particular component does not exist;
- 1 = the component is below expectations;
- 2 = the component meets expectations;
- 3 = the component exceeds expectations.

Each score was based on a series of criteria, presented in Table E-1 Park Quality + Condition Criteria below.

<b>Table E-1 Park Quality + Condition Criteria</b>		
<b>Criteria Theme</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Park Intended Purpose	Intended Purpose	An overall assessment and quantification of how well the park is able to achieve its management intent as defined by the park class is able to deliver its intended function.
Park Condition	Condition	The extent to which the park requires maintenance and upgrades to satisfy public expectations.
	Location & Access	The extent that the park is used based on its location. Parks that are in higher density residential and commercial areas with good connectivity and access to transportation might yield higher use, for example.
	Naturalness & Low Impact Design	The extent to which ecological and low impact designs have been incorporated into the construction and operations of the park (e.g., irrigation).
	Accessibility/Inclusivity	The extent to which the park serves persons with mobility or physical constraints. For instance, is the park accessible to persons on wheelchairs, senior populations, or persons with other physical limitations?
Visitor Experience	Comfort	The extent to which comfort amenities exist to support and enhance the park users while visiting (e.g., washrooms, benches, picnic areas).
	Convenience	The extent to which amenities exist that enhance the park users' experience by offering convenience for the user (e.g., BBQ grills, bike racks, parking).
	Elements to Extend Use	The extent to which amenities extend the use of the park beyond day lights hours.
	Design/Ambiance	The quality of design of the park and the nature of the setting in which the park is situated including its sense of safety.
Attraction Capability	Community Significance	From the perspective of a community resident, this criterion measures the extent to which the park has unique features (e.g., community wide events) that attract visitors from throughout the community.
	Neighbourhood Significance	From the perspective of a neighbourhood resident, this criterion measures how well the park facilitates short and frequent visits and the park's overall degree of obtrusion to the neighbourhood (e.g., noise, light).
	Regional Significance	From the perspective of a resident living outside of the Town, this criterion measures the extent to which the park has unique features (e.g., facilities for community wide events) that attract visitors from outside of the community.
Capacity	Capacity	The ability of the park to accommodate a range of visitation intensities while serving its intended function and avoiding overcrowding.
Ownership	Ownership	The park is owned by the local government and the public has the control to access the park without permission, but in accordance with local bylaws.

Weighting for each criteria was determined using professional judgement and by drawing on research. For example, criteria such as park condition and visitor experience are more important for predicting park use<sup>1</sup>. Distance, proximity and easy access to parks have been shown to be a determinant of park use. Research has also found that the quality in outdoor recreation is equated with provision of a diverse spectrum of recreation opportunities<sup>2</sup>. As a result, both park condition and visitor experience received a weight of 30% each. Other criteria including park intended purpose, attraction capability, capacity, and ownership received lower weighting at 10% each as they were judged to be less important determinants of park use.

Once the weighting was established, each park was evaluated using the following equation:

$$[(\text{Park Intended Purpose Type} * \text{weight}) + (\text{Park Condition} * \text{weight}) + (\text{Visitor Experience} * \text{weight}) + (\text{Attraction Capability} * \text{weight}) + (\text{Capacity} * \text{weight})] + (\text{Ownership} * \text{weight}) = \text{Park Quality and Condition Score.}$$

Where:

- Park Intended Purpose is the Intended Purpose score that was assigned for the park
- Park Condition is the summation of scores for Condition, Location & Access, Naturalness & Low Impact Design, and Accessibility/Inclusivity
- Visitor Experience is the summation of scores for Comfort, Convenience, Elements to Extend Use, and Design/Ambiance
- Attraction Capability is the summation of scores for Neighbourhood Significance, Community Significance, and Regional Significance
- Capacity is the Capacity score that was assigned for the park
- Ownership is the score from the Ownership criteria

The intended purpose of the park influences expectations of the services or the quality available at the park. Therefore, it was important that the calculations reflected the management intent of the park. To do so, a minimum threshold score was developed to reflect the importance of each criterion to the respective park purpose. For example, a conservation focused park is not, and should not, be expected to provide the same level of comfort and convenience amenities as an active recreation park. In order to determine if a park was below, meeting, or exceeding expectations, a minimum threshold score was developed to reflect the importance of each criterion to the respective park typology. This was determined by using three categories that best describe the intent of Municipality of North Cowichan parks: Active Recreation, Passive Recreation, and Conservation, as shown in Table E-2 Park Intent/Criteria Matrix on the following page.

**Table E-2 Park Intent/Criteria Matrix**

Criteria Theme (corresponding weight)	Criteria	Park Intent		
		Active Recreation	Passive Recreation	Conservation
<b>Park Intended Purpose (10%)</b>	Intended Purpose	2	2	2
<b>Park Condition (30%)</b>	Condition	2	2	1
	Location & Access	2	2	2
	Naturalness & Low Impact Design	2	1	2
	Accessibility /Inclusivity	2	2	1
<b>Visitor Experience (30%)</b>	Comfort	2	2	1
	Convenience	2	2	1
	Elements to Extend Use	2	1	1
	Design/Ambiance	2	1	1
<b>Attraction Capability (10%)</b>	Neighbourhood Significance	1	1	1
	Community Significance	1	1	2
	Regional Significance	1	1	1
<b>Capacity (10%)</b>	Capacity	2	1	1
<b>Ownership (10%)</b>	Ownership	2	2	2
	<b>Total Score</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>
	<b>Minimum Threshold Score*</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>39</b>

Note: the scores in the table correspond to the following:

- 3 – This criterion defines this type of park or open space, and/or is critical to how this type functions
- 2 – This criteria exists in this type of park or open space, but is not a defining characteristic
- 1 – This criterion is not important in defining this type of park or open space

\*The minimum threshold score is the minimum score that the trail needs to achieve to “meet expectations”. As shown in Table E-2 Park Intent/Criteria Matrix above, a park that is classified as “Active Recreation” has a higher minimum threshold score because these parks are expected to perform higher on the criteria due to their purpose. To calculate minimum threshold score, the score values were inputted into the park quality and condition equation. These minimum threshold final scores were used to create the class breaks for each park purpose presented below.

## Total Score

To determine whether a park was **below** expectations, **meeting** expectations, or **exceeding** expectations, the scores were compared with the minimum threshold scores presented in Table E-2 Park Intent/Criteria Matrix. The minimum threshold scores were used to construct the standard for "meets expectations". Once this standard was created for each park purpose, professional judgment was used to create the standards for "below" and "meets" expectations. These standards (class breaks) are presented in Table E-3 Score Classes by Park Intent below.

Standard	Park Intent		
	Active Recreation	Passive Recreation	Conservation
Exceeds	67 >	57 >	49 >
Meets	57-67	47-57	39-49
Below	< 57	< 47	< 39

1. Giles-Corti, B., Broomhall, M.H., Knuiaman, M., Collins, C., Douglas, K., Ng, K., Lange, A., Donovan, R.J. (2006). Increasing walking: How important is distance to, attractiveness, and size of public open space? *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 28(2), 169-176.
2. Warzecha, C., Manning, R., Lime, D., Freimund, W. (no date). *Diversity in Outdoor Recreation: Planning and Managing a Spectrum of Visitor Opportunities in and Among Parks.*

