

“PARKS 4 US”

A civic consultation with Children and Youth

City of Victoria Master Parks Plan

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Terms of Reference

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City of Victoria Master Parks Plan

Saturday, September 22, 2007 at Victoria City hall (9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

1. Background:

The City of Victoria has been involved in a planning process for a master plan for the parks system throughout the city. In May 2007, a group of community members experienced with children and youth recognized that a piece was missing from the consultation process. This group set out to organize a formal discussion with children and youth, recognizing that they are a major user of the Victoria parks system and their input is vital to a comprehensive consultation process. The ideas, options and visions of children and youth regarding how parks meet their needs of over-all health and well-being was seen to be essential to the parks planning process.

2. Purpose:

On September 22, 2007, the City of Victoria hosted a community forum for children and youth to explore their ideas about the parks system. A panel of experts in children and youth play, recreation, natural play areas, safety in parks and multi-use spaces incorporated the views from the children and youth discussions with their professional ideas and expertise.

The following themes were explored at the forum:

1. Healthy play and active children in Parks (free play, organized)
2. Designing multi-use areas within Parks (multi-age, disabilities)
3. Parks as natural spaces to explore (beaches, woods, identifying nature)
4. Safety in Parks (feeling welcome and safe, taking responsibility for safe, adventurous play)
5. Issues in the Parks system for youth ages 14 – 20

3. Process:

During the morning session children and youth were divided into three age groupings to discuss a series of questions about the theme areas. Experienced facilitators and recorders worked with the children and youth. Panelists with expertise in the theme areas observed the youth and children's discussions. Following this discussion, the afternoon panel discussion explored the views, ideas, options of the children and youth along with their own experience and research. A moderator assisted with synthesizing the panel discussion.

Recommendations:

1. Provide opportunities for children to explore nature in natural areas, engaging with a naturalist and visiting a nature house. There is no nature house of naturalist program in the City of Victoria park system, thus requiring those interested to travel outside of the city for the experience (i.e. Swan Lake, Goldstream Park, Francis King Park).
2. Provide more adventurous opportunities such as high climbing structures and swings, such as zip lines, from preschool through the teenage years.
3. Provide designated areas designed for a range of wheeled activities, such as rollerblades, pedal bikes, and skateboard areas.
4. Provide opportunities that support children to be active and meaningful participants in their community by providing venues for child and youth focused events. For example, provided covered, community stages where children youth can be involved in planning community events.
5. Include a visible presence of authorized park attendants in the parks to support children and their parents need to feel safe in the park.
6. As supported by child specialists, provide materials for children to use to build things like forts and swings. This encourages natural exploration that involves children's senses in variety of materials, activities, built and naturally occurring.
7. As supported by child specialists, provide equipment that encourages adventurous activities and ensure equipment is stimulating and challenging throughout their growth and development towards adulthood allowing children to learn how to manage risk.
8. As supported by child specialists encourage parks that are legible to the user with a central focal point and designed with a variety of activities that circulate within the park, through the park, and to/from the park.
9. As supported by child specialists encourage safety in parks through careful design and community involvement through programs and activities.

Additional Recommendations:

1. That the city of Victoria commit to include in the Parks Master Plan a framework for ensuring that the park system is developed to provide more opportunities for older children to be challenged and stimulated with equipment and activities that is suitable for their age and development. This would include more adventurous and stimulating structures and equipment for children 9 and older that let them climb, swing and move and, develop a place for children and youth to ride bikes, scooters and skateboards. This could also include trails and mountain bike areas where children and youth could develop skills for mountain biking and a place for clubs to use.
2. The city of Victoria commit to providing the infrastructure within the park system to support and encourage children and youth to interact with nature in a meaningful way. Interaction in nature is identified as an important aspect to healthy development and the development of future, positive values about nature. This could include a nature house and nature programs.
3. The city of Victoria should ask for ideas and proposals from the public and interested groups about their ideas for developing programs and for supporting the building of infrastructure in the parks. For example, models for youth mentorship and community involvement could be explored. Look to other cities, municipalities, and organizations to learn how other areas overcome budget constraints and policy issues that create obstacles to providing healthy community plans that consider the needs of all children and youth.
4. The city of Victoria should support “families” and all ages of groups using the parks. It is clear from the snap shot observations that many parents/adults are using the park. This should be supported and seen as a positive aspect of our community. The city should provide structures like recycling, lighting, covered areas, visible parks- supervision, bike racks, clean bathrooms and paths for bikes and foot access into and around parks as a way to support all ages and encourage parents and adults motivated to get outside with the kids.
5. The city should consider employing staff that would assist with the lending of rental equipment and other creative supplies like wood for children and youth to create things (forts, tables etc.) and athletic equipment to provide all children with the opportunity to learn and develop skills like soccer, tennis, and games. This could be a ‘park shed’ that is available to all park uses.

Summary: Children and Youth in Parks 2007

Through anecdotal observations of children and youth in the city of Victoria park system it appears that many parents are engaged with their children in the playground areas of parks from ages 0 to eight. However, after nine there were fewer observations of older children & youth playing in parks. It has been identified by community members that this age group is involved in camps and other programs. The lack of adult supervision and/or encouragement to “get outside and play, may be restricting this groups ability to use the parks. It may be that parents are working and this age group is able to stay home on their own, but not old enough to go to the park alone.

Nurturing children & youth must continue after nine. The importance of community connections, physical activity including some risk taking, free play and nature exploration is important in these years. Therefore, providing the structures or support services (possibly supervision in the park and some drop in programming) for this age group of children and youth is important so that they are able to go outside into the park system and make use of the healthy activities available.

Older children and youth see park spaces as only a part of a system throughout the community such as a link between libraries, recreation and food services, possible job opportunities and volunteering. Older children & youth have a lack of interest in parks today because playground equipment is for younger children that they feel they have outgrown. There is still an interest to continue climbing and swinging but with more height and more risk taking and learning opportunities, like rock walls and swinging on a rope. As well, the current park system in Victoria lacks safe areas for children and youth to ride bikes, rollerblade, skate board or use other “wheels” in the parks. Providing opportunity for children to use wheels in parks would likely draw more children to the parks, increasing activity levels, health of community members and connections to community.

A potential rental system of park equipment that is non-static would encourage visitors to get involved with their park. With modern technology, a swipe card could be used similar to a library card for return of equipment rather than money generating.

Today’s families have changed over the years: more two-parent families both work out of the home, single parent families, blended families, second time parents and multiple births. Playgrounds should accommodate the varying ages to keep children engaged no matter what their age. Younger children observe what older children do and may interpret youth behaviour as a road map for their future choices. Parents and caregivers can take the whole family to a park if it accommodates the diversity of ages.

The police see fencing and gates as solutions to accommodate safety and create an environment for “code of conduct”. It can also provide nature experiences while protecting habitat necessary for this type of environment. This would need to be designed site specific according to the needs of the area.

To provide children and youth's development of community spirit, foster health through physical activity and support meaningful interaction with nature, a diverse range of opportunities ought to exist in parks. Consider comforts; like water fountains, picnic tables, shelter from weather and, washrooms. Consider community gardens. Consider varied types of surfaces: sand for creative play and digging; rubber matting for fall zones, concrete for wheeled activities, grass for walking, running, community get together; dirt paths for bike/walking/running trails. Encourage community spirit through ownership of the park space to bring neighbours together through events like poetry reading, corn roasts and neighbourhood projects. Provide frameworks for surveillance and community ownership with programs like Park Patrols, where community members of different age and use groups work together to create safe neighbourhoods for all users.

Design parks so the activity circulates inside the park, through and around the park. Have a central focal point and make the park legible so people understand how to use it appropriately. Ensure linkage so people know how to get to a specific park and then to other parks. Victoria is a park-like city where people want to connect to their many park experiences.

Guiding Principles

As key users of the City parks system, representing the future of our communities, children and youth should have every opportunity to contribute to the planning, design and implementation of parks planning, today and in the future."

**Co-sponsored by the City of Victoria
With thanks to Parks Master Plan Steering Committee
& the talented resource volunteers participating in the forum.
A special thank you to the City of Victoria staff for their assistance & the contributors to the children & youth "thank you for participating" gifts,
& the many children and youth participating in this civic project.**

Key Findings from Panel Discussion

Preschool: 3 to 5 years

1. This user group is fairly well served in the City of Victoria play lots as the equipment is designed and built for this group.
2. This group would like to learn more about and explore more in nature. Opportunities to learn about nature with a naturalist in the parks.
3. The possibility of more stimulating equipment that is safe and fun.

Primary: 6 to 8 years

1. This group desire designated areas for the use of “wheels” (bikes, rollerblades, skateboards, scooters etc.)
2. This group is nearing the end of enjoying and being engaged in the current playground equipment and would like more adventurous equipment.
3. There is a desire for this user group to have greater opportunities to explore nature and wild life.

Intermediate: 9 to 14 years

1. This user group would like the parks to provide an opportunity for a multitude of activities that supports community and provides more adventurous activities (large climbing structures, zip-lines, tree forts, a place for wheels (bikes, skateboards, etc). The current structures are not appropriate for engaging this age group in healthy and active play that allows for the younger user group to feel safe and welcome.
2. This group would like a visible presence of security and, programming of activities with a focal point such as teaching of games (new and traditional) in the park.
3. This group would like to opportunities to explore and learn about nature.

Youth: 15 and up

1. This group would like equipment and activities that are adventurous (big climbing structures, zip-lines, swings, trees), and a designated place for wheels (bikes, skateboards, rollerblades) for use in the parks.
2. This group values the effect of nature parks on the emotional health of their community.
3. This group would like the park system to be expanded from the playgrounds to include areas for community activities to occur that would be both organized and drop-in (e.g. Art in the park, poetry readings, community events and fundraisers, sporting competitions). They see this as a way to support many diverse interests while bringing community members together.

Key Findings from Panel Experts

1. Bev Windjack

Well-designed

- Means hospitable cities with a purpose for everyone. Park is land designated and the connection between. It must be designed...it does not just happen. Research says, "Children' needs are considered less than others needs and not taken seriously".

Traditionally:

- Children had reasonable access to lanes, vacant lots and beaches
- There were not the obvious concerns
- Larger families so older children could look after younger ones
- Streets were less busy with opportunities to use the hard surface to play on

Now:

- More single parent families or two parents working who register children with pre and after school care so they have others to play with
- Less neighbourly therefore less community
- Interaction with nature
- Helps mental development, which is critical in early development needs.
- Design is a health issue
- Parks offer a holistic contribution to the city. To keep it healthy, it requires maintenance.
- Space should not static or just for special occasions but it should be accessible outside your front door. Park is also air space, such as the third floor is disconnected from the environment but large trees can create a sustainable livable airspace.
- Design influences behaviour
- Children are not mini adults so you cannot scale down something and have it appropriate for children. They have sensory needs.
- Safety comes with accessibility
- The space must be legible so you can understand it and communicate what it is.
- Have connectivity around, through and how to circulate in the space because parks is one part of the system.
- Have mixed use and mixed materials and encourage plants for picking, fruit trees.
- Change attitude towards maintenance, messy versus too groomed.
- Children are listening to parents who are worrying. Safety is learnt and it is important keep wide-open spaces because children recoil from dark spaces.
- Create 2 dimension models showing how spaces interact together and create vocabulary about "Place".

2. Dr. Enid Elliot

- Richard Lou studied how to reconnect children with nature.
- Doctors see more stress injuries rather than broken bones.
- Children benefit from bushes, forts, climbing trees and intentional natured spaces with fixed structures.

- Susan Harrington studied that 85% of children do not use the structures.
- Draw to nature, Ian Nelson created the term bio-feelia: Learn through senses, movement, open-ended, life lessons,
- Taking risks provide practice for young to learn. Nature gives security and reassurances through life cycles.
- See children as capable and competent rather than vulnerable and at risk
- In Toronto, they built a brick oven in a neighbourhood park to bring people together. Uses food to bring communities together. .

3. Constable Lori Beauvais

- Some want more policing to keep parks safe.
- Look at the site, observe trends and particular problems, statistics, speak to people/users and quantify and use CEPTED in design. Each location is specific with its land & built environment.
- Use natural surveillance by pruning areas to see into the park and look out.
- Control access (the flow of traffic) with landscaping and gates.
- Territories define public & private space. A place can welcome you if you act in an accepted way or a call to the police.
- Ownership in maintenance such as graffiti tall grass, poor maintenance.
- Programs such as “Park Patrol Watch” with community involvement to report what is going on, or “Neighbourhood Park Watch” to see how children behave and empower parents and children.
- Early Child activity and Youth survey see age 6-12 as a critical time that \$1 spent on young people saves \$7 on healthcare or judicial time. Keep this age group in organized after school programs.

4. Dr. Tim Hopper

- Britain community and schools are more connected.
- Engagement of play and community equals healthy.
- Suggests children can do the work in the park with school involvement and there is a lot of learning that happens with children involved: being outside allows the child to know that a tree is growing; and, picking up weeds instead of using insecticide means that someone has no allergy response to the chemical, thereby learning this is a complexity system. Filling spaces becomes the child’s responsibilities.
- Today’s viscous cycle is trying to earn more money to support a lifestyle. Community involvement within the parks system teaches responsibilities for our community means doing it together.
- Recommended children should get 30 minutes/day of exercise but the focus is on physical activity alone. It should also focus on walking to school / riding bikes which is comfortable and within a day’s activity. Parks can support this.
- Perception of danger (higher risk taking activities) means lack of use. Instead of enforcing regulations should change the regulation to allow for activities that are engaging for children and youth. We should encourage the development of a perception of spaces we own and are responsible for.

- Parks gardener could be a resource person possibility linked to a school and could support children and youth in a park by suggesting activities and providing equipment. This person is part of the community not just a job. Do not focus on academic but understanding to become meaningful.
- Water play and community spirit was a common link to all ages in the discussion with children and youth.
- Young child moving in a space that is comfortable and learning new skills doesn't need a language - just park space.
- Parks are a meeting space for culture, connecting a mini society in parks that represents the larger community.

Synthesis of Panel Discussion (Experts and children and youth input)

How do children and youth explore nature in a park?

- Accessible (e.g. pick flowers/climb trees).
- Be responsible (e.g. school partnership for the nature in parks).
- Supervision for young or group play for mid ages
- Invite exploration by allowing non-manicured space – by informal design
- Establish connection between people who look after parks and the users
- Movable pieces and bits e.g. bugs under log. Integrate these in parks
- Enid's power point as a concept of total involvement
- Create places of engagement and where kids have power to change environment and take responsibility.
- Encourage other animals in parks by providing habitats and nature plants in a separate area.
- Promote ability for discovery
- Supervised or group activity.

How and when do children and youth feel welcome and safe? How do they play in an adventurous and safe way?

- CPTED – design it to detour and discourage illegal activities.
- Encourage program activities
- Concern with loose wood chips/sand. Prefer the rubber mat – dialogue needs to happen.
- CSA has hampered design – installation of equipment
- Increase in fear – perception or reality
- Empower and educate kids about risk
- More surveillance of parks and clean up a head of each day
- Have to allow children to take risks.
- Use natural lay of land to create adventurous places. Parks have to work for parents too. Kids need parents to take them there so consider their needs/errands to do.

How to design spaces for multi-use in parks?

- Encourage range for multi-age (young and old) by having a range of equipment/experiences that appeal to all ages e.g. similar to Warf St. Park
- Can we make space for youth at periphery of parks provided there is lighting?
- Over look onto the area. Maybe provide a program/supervision.
- Question re: need for sport facilities
- Design of parks needs to be done holistically not piece-meal.
- Create vision and respond

How Do Parks Help Children and Youth to Be Active and healthy through play

- Have enough smaller playgrounds in residential areas, so easy access and regular visits.
- Diverse opportunities/age groups welcome
- Climb, slide, swing. Not available at home so important in parks
- Older kids need height
- Multitude of activities in parks.
- Location of parks – encourage neighbourhoods to program activities in local parks.
- Link between rec. schools, generations in parks
- Central place to access equipment (park shed with rackets, balls, supplies like wood for building things).
- Park supervision system – other duties ** Would this bring back the 9 – 14 year olds through leadership programs
- Big place to swing and climb (natural or built)
- Places for wheels (not just skate boards)
- Enhance community with building for events like poetry readings

Key findings from Snap Shots Observing City of Victoria parks - summer 2007

1. Playground equipment is a focal point for young children with an equal number of adults engaging in their play on/around playground equipment (except in the north play lots near the municipal boundaries along Esquimalt and Saanich).
2. Large number of children enjoys the Gonzales beach in quiet play during the summer months.
- 3 Children engaging actively with playground equipment or near the equipment and playing quietly are toddlers, preschoolers and children up to eight years old (older children were not seen in parks except at the Vic West skate park or Central basketball court with youth, or with wheeled activities on road/laneways)
4. Youth use many of the same parks as children only they use the parks later in the day and into the night.

Parks 4 Us: Children & Youth Forum
September 22, 2007

Next Steps

A report of the key findings and recommendations from the forum is submitted to the City of Victoria Parks Plan Steering Committee for consideration in the over-all parks master plan and final outcome.

APPENDIX

Summary of program process, participants and recordings of sessions

Program:

Children and youth from ages 2 to 18 years old from throughout the City of Victoria were invited to participate in a morning discussion with a group of facilitators and experts in the area of child and youth development, health and safety and active living. All seven community associations in Victoria, the Youth Advisory Council, Boys and Girls Club, Queen Alexandra Youth Advisory Council, Scouts and Girl Guides, and all schools in School District 62 (Victoria), were invited to elect children and youth to participate or advise children and youth on their right to participate in the forum. Advertisements in the Times Colonist, Victoria News, community news articles and an interview on CBC radio describing the event and inviting participants to the forum.

On September 22, 2007, children and youth came to City Hall to participate in a discussion about the park system in Victoria and how well the parks meet their needs for ongoing health and wellness, and connection to their community.

A group of experts committed to the health and safety of children participated in the morning sessions and provided expert comment and synthesis of the children and youths ideas and visions for the parks system on the following themes. Comments by children and panelists were recorded and summarized in the key findings and recommendations:

1. Healthy play and active children in Parks (free play, organized)
2. Designing multi-use areas within Parks (multi-age, disabilities)
3. Parks as natural spaces to explore (beaches, woods, identifying nature)
4. Safety in Parks (feeling welcome and safe, taking responsibility for safe, adventurous play)
5. Issues in the Parks system for youth ages 14 – 20

Facilitators:

Rob Reid, Director of the Royal Victoria Marathon, Founder of Runners for Compassion and owner of Frontrunners, a local business.

Rob Reid is the Director of the Royal Victoria Marathon, the Founder of Runners for Compassion and is a long time competitive marathon athlete. Rob coaches cross country running at his son's school and his business, Frontrunners Footwear, sponsors Shoes for Youth which provides youngsters in need with footwear for sports activities.

Winona Pugh, Uvic Coordinator of Recreation

Winona graduated from the University of British Columbia with a B.Ed of Recreation and worked in the fitness profession in the provincial government Employee Fitness Program. She worked thirteen years with Victoria YM-YWCA focusing on youth and

adult Physical Activity and Fitness program. For seventeen years she has worked with students, staff, faculty and their families and recently finished implementing the Victoria Schools 30 Day Wellness Challenge as a pilot project designed to improve physical activity and nutrition habits at the elementary school level.

Margaret Lidkea, Program Naturalist

Margaret graduated from UBC with a B.Sc. in Zoology and became a registered BC teacher in 1973. Starting at Swan Lake in 1988, she became the Program Naturalist in 1989. She develops and teaches school programs, public special events and trains program volunteers. Margaret created and instructs "Birds and Butterflies", and many other nature classes on a variety of themes for preschoolers.

Chelsea Peddle, Past Coordinator of the City of Victoria Youth Council

Chelsea graduated from UBC with a Masters degree in Education, holds a certificate in volunteer management, and has over 6 years experience working in the field of youth engagement and social justice. She has considerable experience developing and managing programs for youth in a wide range of settings including non-profits, community centers, and government. In 2004, she spearheaded the development of the City of Victoria Youth Council and was its coordinator until February 2006. Chelsea currently works for Volunteer Victoria where she manages the Youth Volunteer Connections Program: an initiative designed to assist at-risk and marginalized youth to access supported volunteer placements.

Cornelia Lange, Early Childhood Educator, community activist

Observers and Panelists:

Bev Windjack, Landscape Architect

Bev Windjack is the Principal of LADR Landscape Architects, an award winning, multi-faceted consulting firm with expertise in landscape architecture, environmental design and management, and greenway master planning. LADR is known for integrating design excellence with sustainability initiatives and is proud to have received 2006 Environmental Design Achievement awards from both the Canadian Home Builders' Association and the British Columbia Landscape and Nursery Association.

Bev received Master of Landscape Architecture (1983) and Bachelor of Environmental Studies (1978) degrees from the University of Manitoba. She is currently co-chair of the City of Victoria Advisory Design Panel and has recently been a Director of the BCSLA, Chair of the BCSLA Island Chapter and juror for the CSLA National Awards program. In the past she has chaired the City of Victoria's Parks Recreation and Community Services Advisory Panel and served as a member of Victoria's Recreation Renewal Committee and View Royal's Advisory Design Panel.

Dr. Tim Hopper, assistant professor at the University of Victoria, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education.

Dr. Hopper's interests are in teacher preparation and physical education. Since arriving in Canada in 1992, Tim has taught at all levels of the school grades and has completed a Masters degree and a Doctoral degree at the University of Alberta. Dr. Hopper designs courses around learning systems theory focused on situated experiences in schools allowing theory and practice to flow together from shared experiences working with children and teachers. Dr Hopper was the Recipient of Teaching Excellence Award (2005) in the Faculty of Education. He is currently the president of the Canadian Association for Teacher Education.

Dr. Enid Frances Elliot, Adjunct Assistant Professor with UVIC's School of Child & Youth Care

Dr. Elliot has a specific interest in curriculum development and community development in Early Childhood Education. Dr. Elliot is the author of the book *We're Not Robots* (SUNY Press, 2006), in which the stories of infant/toddler caregivers illustrate the complexity of balancing various relationships yet remaining emotionally present and mindfully engaged. Enid demonstrates how caregivers can achieve a delicate balance. Dr. Elliot is interested in re-connecting children with nature and is currently working with four early childhood programs to naturalize their outdoor space.

Constable Lori Beauvais, Downtown Community Resource Officer, Victoria Police Department.

Constable Beauvais grew up in the Victoria area, completed 15 years as a police officer with the Ottawa Police Service and returned to Victoria in 2005. She has held numerous positions (patrol, patrol supervisor, SWAT team member, sex crimes investigator, internal affairs investigator) and currently works as the Downtown Community Resource Officer. She applies (CPTED) Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and (POP) Problem-Oriented Policing, to identify problems in the community and strategize and implement solutions.

Lori is a mother of four – two sets of twins, 7 and 9 years old and is passionate about the issues that relate to the safety and well being of children.

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Provincial Appointment to Represent Children and Youth in the Province of British Columbia

Honourable Judge Lafond has been sitting as a Provincial Court Judge in Saskatoon since 1988 and is the first native judge in Saskatchewan. She has a vision of aboriginal justice. Judge Lafond has several degrees and is one of the most highly educated judges in Saskatchewan. She holds a B.A. (Carleton University), LL.B (Osgoode Hall Law School), LL.M (Cambridge University) and a doctorate in law from Harvard University.

Judge Lafond was chosen by Time Magazine in 1984 as one of the 100 Global leaders in September 1999, Time Magazine again named her as one of the top 20 Canadian Leader for the next millennium. Mary Ellen & George Lafond have four beautiful children and currently reside the City of Victoria.

Snap Shot” Observations

By Cornelia Lange summer 2007

Objective:

The objective is to observe and record the attendance and activity of children and youth at a park at the moment of arrival at the park. Neither changes of children’s activity nor an inspection of the park were recorded (i.e. broken bottles, garbage, needles, graffiti, and equipment in need of repair)

Information Recorded at each visit:

Date, time of day and weather in the summer of 2007.

Number of children, youth and adults in the park?

Number of children on equipment, in active or in quiet play?

Number of children are engaged with adults in the park?

Observations:

There are as many adults (sometimes more) as children in the park. The children in various city parks did not outnumber the adults. Only three observations were made when of a child without an adult).

This observation may be due to parents feeling uneasy about not being present with their children, and or, that the park system is a place not only for children to meet and develop relationships, but parents as well.

Toddlers & preschoolers were highly visible in day hours whereas ages 9-14 less visible in parks. It appears that the area between Royal Athletic Park and the parking area is a common area for recreation and social gathering. Boys were often seen hanging out with a scooter, bike or skateboard in this paved area with limited traffic.

Youth use the same parks as children but usually later in the day. Sometimes youth worked as summer camp leaders with groups of children. Sometimes youth engaged with younger children such as the basketball court at Central Park or Skate Park at Vic West Park.

Youth can be both positive and/or negative influences on younger children. They can teach and role model positive activities and attitudes as well as the negative. One interesting report received from a Toronto visitor was that he (the visitor) saw and admired youth in Victoria thanking the bus drivers when exiting public transit. He did not observe this in Toronto.

The following parks are listed in order beginning with the park with the most children observed to the park with the least number of children observed. This included children from ages 0 – 14. Observations varied at the time of recording including late mornings, afternoon and close to nightfall:

Children seen and unseen – active and/or quiet play. Parks children attended in 2 to 3 “Snap Shot” visits:

High numbers:

- 8. Beacon Hill Park Central Playground 94 children
- 25. Gonzales Beach 41 children
- 35. Topas Park 28 children in summer camps
- 2. Cecelia Ravine Park to 58. Banfield Park 21 children in summer camp walking between the two parks

Medium numbers:

- 23. Stevenson 16 children
- 45. Redfern Park 16 children
- 46. Central Park 14 children
- 26. Hollywood Park 13 children
- 65. Songhees Walkway 13 children (mostly during the Dragon Boat festival and a tour bus destination stop)
- 42. McDonald Park 12 children
- 36. Wark Street Park 11 children
- 29. Blackwood Park 11 children
- 67. Victoria West Park 11 children
- 40. Irving Park 9 children
- 16. Porter Park 8 children

Low numbers:

- 17. Ross Bay Cemetery 6 children
- 12. Clover Point Park 5 children
- 44. Fern Park 5 children
- 13. Little Ross Bay Beach 4 children
- 22. Stadacona Park 4 children
- 43. Todd Park 4 children
- 53. Oaklands Park 4 children
- 51. Hillside Park 3 children
- 10. Bushby Park 2 children
- 11. Chapman Park 2 children
- 15. Pioneer Square 2 children
- 27. Pemberton Park 2 children
- 47. Mason Street Park 2 children
- 37. Centennial/Laurel Point 2 children
- 38. Fisherman’s Wharf Park 2 children
- 39. Holland Point 1 child
- 18. Alexander Park 1 child
- 31. Jackson Park 1 child

Parks that had no child in 2 to 3 “Snap Shot” visits:

- 1. Arbutus Park
- 3. Cecelia Cove Park
- 4. Ellice Street Park
- 5. Selkirk Green
- 6. Sumas Park
- 7. Cridge Park
- 9. Brooke Street Park
- 14. Moss Rocks Park
- 18. Alexander Park
- 19. Haegert
- 20. Kings
- 21. Queens
- 24. Wesley
- 28. Harris Green
- 30. Highview Park
- 32. Mars Street Park
- 33. Quadra Heights Park
- 34. Summit Park
- 41. Lewis Street Park
- 48. Royal Athletic Park
- 49. Clawthorpe Park
- 50. David Spencer Park
- 52. Mt. Stephens Park
- 54. Oaklands Holly Green
- 55. Oswald Park
- 56. Terrace Park
- 57. Arm Street Park
- 59. Barnard Park
- 61. Hillside/Songhees Park
- 62. Rainbow Park
- 63. Raynor Park
- 66. Triangle Park
- 68. Vista Park

Parks with play equipment that had no child in 2 to 3 “Snap Shot” visits:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 4. Ellice Street Park | 34. Summit Park |
| 6. Sumas Park | 41. Lewis Street Park |
| 18. Alexander Park | 49. Clawthorpe Park |
| 21. Queens | 52. Mt. Stephens Park |
| 24. Wesley | 55. Oswald Park |
| 30. Highview Park | 59. Barnard Park |
| 33. Quadra Heights Park | |

It is also interesting to note, that large groups of children were seen directly on the property of a community center. Examples include: Burnside Gorge Community Centre had 60 children, 4 youths and three adults on one day. Half of the group playing soccer and the other half playing on the climbing equipment; Oaklands Community Centre had 30 children 8 youth on two different days with a Peddle heads program for very young children to ride bikes.

The following parks had youth visible in 2 to 3 “Snap shot” visits. Some visits were late morning, afternoon and late evening as darkness set in:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 67. Vic West 46 youth | 28. Harris Green 4 youth |
| 22. Gonzales Beach 22 youth | 8. Beacon Hill Central Playground 4 youth |
| 46. Central Park (mostly basketball court) 22 youth | 23. Stevenson Park 3 youth |
| 35. Topas Park 14 youth | 11. Chapman Park 2 youth |
| 14. Moss Rocks Park 9 youth | 15. Pioneer Square 2 youth |
| 42. MacDonald Park 9 youth | 40. Irving Park 2 youth |
| 58. Banfield Park 7 youth | 64. Regatta Point (Railyards) 2 youth |
| 53. Oaklands Park 4 youth | 36. Wark Street 2 youth |
| | 29. Blackwood Park 2 youth |

DESIGN

It was noted during park observations that some parks had with equipment in areas without shelter from the sun and/or rain. Beacon Hill Park Central Playground is an example of such a park.

It is the writer’s opinion that the City of Victoria should consider the following when designing new parks, or making changes to established parks so that parks may be used throughout the year and during more extreme temperatures.

- sun safety
- temperature of equipment, like slides baking in direct summer heat
- rain, snow and ice protection

It was observed that some parks have large trees that provide some sun/rain shelter. The following parks had large trees.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 7. Cridge Park | 40. Irving Park |
| 11. Chapman Park | 45. Redfern Park |
| 15. Pioneer Square | 47. Mason Park |
| 29. Blackwood Park | 51. Hillside Park |
| 36. Wark Street Park | 53. Oaklands Park |

SAFETY

It was observed that in some Parks there were people behaving in ways that could create an unwelcoming environment and one that is unacceptable to families.

Mason Park – There were families using the park, as well as individuals who could be “homeless”. Parent’s stayed within arms reach of their children and it is assumed they did this because of feeling insecure about other people using the park who appeared unsafe. The bench swing was a wonderful, multi-age activity.

Central Park – It appeared that a family left the play equipment because youth were behaving as though they were “under the influence”. The youth were also playing on the equipment. A 25 year old approached me and asked for a job and said he came to the park to buy drugs.

WELCOMING

Many parks were hard to find, they are small and provided no parking. It is assumed these are community parks and meant for locals or as greenways.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Ceceila Ravine Park | 41. Lewis Street Park |
| 7. Cridge Park | 44. Fern Park |
| 14. Moss Rocks Park | 51. Hillside Park |
| 19. Haegert | 52. Mt. Stephens Park |
| 22. Stadacona | 56. Terrace Park |
| 24. Westley | 64. Regatta Point (Railyards) |
| 32. Mars Street Park | 66. Triangle Park |
| 34. Summit Park | 68. Vista Park |
| 37. Centennial/Laurel Point | |

Some parks had no visible sign to welcome the public. Without information about these parks, there could be confusion about whether the park is connected to nearby properties:

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Arbutus Park | 47. Mason (possible connection with commercial parking lot?) |
| 20. Kings | 52. Mt. Stephens Park |
| 21. Queens (possible connection with George Jay Elementary?) | 59. Barnard Park |
| 32. Mars Park | 60. Burleith Park |
| 44. Fern Park | 68. Vista Park |

Some parks were small lots and/or limited space. It was not legible what the purpose of the park was. It was assumed it was for resting, or for greenways to other area:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 5. Selkirk Green | 56. Terrace |
| 6. Sumas Park | 63. Raynor Park |
| 7. Cridge | 66. Triangle Park |
| 19. Haegert | 68. Vista Park |
| 20. Kings | |

It is the opinion of the writers that washroom facilities for park users create a more civilized society. It has been witnessed that young children are encouraged by parents to urinate in bushes and grass because there are no washrooms visible or close by. Parks with washrooms appeared more user-friendly.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 8. Beacon Hill Park Central Playground | 40. Irving Park |
| 7. Ross Bay Cemetery | 42. MacDonald Park |
| 22. Stadacona | 46. Central Park |
| 25. Gonzales Beach | 48. Royal Athletic Park |
| 26. Hollywood | 53. Oaklands Park |
| 27. Pemberton | 64. Regatta Point (Railyards) |
| 35. Topas | 67. Victoria West Park |
| 39. Holland Point | |

CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

In discussions with some Childcare providers, it was reported that they do not use parks because of:

- Unpredictable behaviour by some park users were unacceptable for children/ safety concern/ drug & alcohol use visible/ dogs
- Safety concerns of keeping children contained in the play area/lack of fencing
- No washrooms (note: safer with only one person per washroom)
- Self sufficient playgrounds within the childcare facility (the downside is that these children are not visible in parks – no community connectivity)

NATURE

Parks with animal interaction:

38. Fisherman's Wharf Park – this park offers a wonderful sea-side experience. A playground in the adjacent park, adequate bike/run/walk trails would add more diverse activities for locals and visitors of Victoria. It has been noted that the JBNEA offered to donate a gazebo in honor of Mr. Scott. Parks declined this offer because of cost of maintenance.

8. Beacon Hill Park – ducks, squirrels and petting zoo.

12. Clover Point Park – birds

POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR ENRICHING NATURE EXPERIENCES

1. 2. Cecelia Ravine Park – program to include SPCA with pet care – learning about abandonment of animals.
2. Naturalist who works in natural park areas for walk-talks like at the riparian shores of the Gorge waterway, Dallas Road waterfront, Dallas Road breakwater / woods and Garry oak meadows like Beacon Hill Park or Summit Park.
3. Partner with 4H clubs and locate in under used park (perhaps Topas).

4. Ask community associations to participate in programming in local parks? How unused parks can be animated? Many have after school care programs – do they consider local parks unusable? Unsafe? Uninteresting?
5. Find a pilot project to create comfort elements in a local park including equipment/services for middle children/youth and see if it revitalizes the park space.
6. Sign partnership agreements for non-profit, businesses and services that will adopt a park.
7. Create partnership agreements with schools for field/playground maintenance and use.
8. Create partnership agreements with neighbouring properties for amenities and facilities next to the perimeter of park space IE: coffee shop, gym services (Island Blue Print had art classes in the rear of it's building offering classes which could use the Pioneer Square space on beautiful days) (Dog trainers often meet their clients in parks for doggy training)
9. Children need a place to use their wheels in an area that will accommodate them. How can this be accomplished? Create trail system in parks or to parks. Convert roadways in parks for safe non-motorized access IE:
10. 8. Beacon Hill Park road through the park – center could be closed; cars access to parking areas only
11. Clover Point – roadway only to sanitation entrance and wheelchair access only – the rest could be roller rink etc.