



Review and Comments on Parks and Trails Master Plan

Transition Sooke
July 2020

This plan can be found at: <https://sooke.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Draft-PTMP-2020.pdf>

Transition Sooke appreciates the call to preserve local ecosystems, protect urban forests, ensure future development does not disrupt wildlife corridors, and create a tree bylaw.

There are several ecosystem-preserving ideas incorporated into this plan such as on page 23 under “vegetation” where it says “add rain gardens and bioswales along trails . . . to infiltrate, clean and slow urban run-off.” On page 63, many of the actions suggested in 8.3 are forward-thinking.

Transition Sooke made extensive comments on the Transportation Master Plan, focused on more people-centred and less car-centric mobility. Those ideas also apply to this Master Plan. Similarly, the Parks and Trails Master Plan should become an integral part of transportation in Sooke.

Transition Sooke would like to present a few additional suggestions for inexpensive, simple, and innovative ideas that could be implemented in the very near future:

1. Provide habitat in parks specifically for wildlife such as birds and pollinators.
2. Have some areas of parks devoted to native plant ecosystems. This could be combined with #1.
3. Plant food forests and perennial edible vegetation such as berries, kale, mint and lemon balm in parks for people in the community to pick and enjoy. As an inspiring example of public food forests check out: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/what-on-earth-food-forests-1.5660211>
4. Have a Speaker’s Corner in one of the parks that is near the downtown such as Ed McGregor or John Phillips parks.
5. Create allotment gardens in John Phillips Park. Partner with a local non-profit to oversee the running of the gardens.

6. Parks can be so much more than swings and off-leash dog walking. Create a small courtyard in one or two of the bigger parks that could be used for small-scale entertainment such as puppet shows or buskers. Invite arts and cultural organizations in the community to create some new activities for the parks.
7. Consider reducing the use of cement and paving for walkways and sidewalks and instead use a permeable surface or recycled wood or paving slabs made with wood chips held together with an organic resin.
8. Commission an evolving app for parks and trails as a priority. The app would present such things as: information on environmental stewardship; where to report issues noted in the parks or on trails (broken equipment, trash, etc.); where to report crisis situations; and how to be a volunteer steward of a park or trail.
9. And, finally, one not inexpensive but still workable suggestion: Purchase all or part of Woodside Farm to use as a Food Security/Permaculture Demonstration Park featuring allotment gardens, teaching gardens, classrooms, places for folks to stroll and be inspired, a farm stand (already in situ) featuring produce or products made from things grown at the farm, and more.

There are also some clarifications or additions we would like to suggest:

1. When considering amenities in parks all options for providing “waste facilities” should automatically include “separate recycling bins for cans, bottles and plastic containers; paper and cardboard; compost and waste.”
2. Water-filling stations/drinking fountains should be included under amenities to help reduce the use of plastic water bottles that are polluting our oceans. In fact, the District of Sooke might consider purchasing a water-filling station for use at community events such as the one that the CRD has available.
3. Similarly, on page 53 under “Events,” The Community Park Regulations Bylaw policies for event management should include “user supplied recycling facilities for cans, bottles and plastic containers; paper and cardboard and compost as well as waste receptacles. Also include “provide a water bottle-filling station and require that all food vendors be zero waste (most food trucks already are).
4. On page 55 under “capital development” 6.16 add “minimum 3-bin recycling and waste receptacles”.
5. On page 70 8.7 “prepare urban forest strategy to . . . improve tree canopy” is considered to be a “medium” goal (5-10 years) in this plan. In view of the climate emergency and how long it takes trees to grow into a viable canopy and in view of the considerable loss of urban trees in Sooke in the past few decades as well as the increase in dryness and temperature we are experiencing due to the lack of a tree canopy, this is surely a plan that should not wait a minute more to be implemented.
6. Discontinue the practice of allowing developers to contribute cash in lieu for parks, trails and treed areas in their developments. This is a questionable practice for several reasons:
 - a. One cannot put a price on the provision of outdoor nature spaces for residents of a neighborhood. They contribute to the mental and physical well-being of

people in the community, which should be a primary consideration in building new neighborhoods.

- b. Just throwing some cash into a pot might remove any concern, thought or responsibility on the part of developers to create a neighborhood that reflects the natural ecosystems of the land that they are developing; of working with the natural terrain and maintaining as much of the original flora and trees and water flows as possible.
 - c. Cash in lieu is likely not enough to purchase sufficient land for parks and trails.
7. There is a private road off Highway 14 near Erinan Blvd that would make an excellent bike trail from Sooke to Kemp Lake and should be considered for development.