

SECTION 5 - PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

East Wellington - Pleasant Valley residents take advantage of the many outdoor recreation opportunities available within the Plan Area, including Benson Creek Falls Regional Park located at the convergence of Benson and Flynfall Creeks. Approximately 22 hectares in size, the park is secured under a long-term lease from the Province. Other areas used by residents include Mount Benson¹, the Lantzville Foothills, Brannen Lake and the top of Doumont Road. For more formalized or active recreation activities residents use facilities located in the City of Nanaimo.

Community Greenways are an integrated planning approach intended to balance the needs of humans with those of natural systems. Besides providing long-term protection of open space and environmentally sensitive lands, greenways further benefit a community by enhancing recreational and public access opportunities. Public access to, and through, greenways should generally be limited to non-motorized modes of transportation (such as walking, biking, riding etc.) and located within public rights-of-way, such as those for roads or utility corridors. They must be designed, managed and maintained to ensure that their ecological integrity is not diminished and that the rights of landowners are respected.

Policies in this section are intended to guide park acquisitions during subdivision or rezoning processes by establishing the suitability of potential park sites. The selection of parkland, or the payment of cash-in-lieu, will be in compliance with the parkland acquisition strategy of this Plan.

General Objectives:

- *Develop* a parkland and open space system, which complements community recreational, needs.
- *Implement* a cohesive and effective parkland acquisition strategy.
- *Encourage*, where appropriate, public access and linear connections on public lands.
- *Respect* the rights of landowners when considering acquisition or development of parkland or open space.
- *Ensure* that the design, development and management of parks, linear corridors and recreational facilities respect the rights of landowners and the natural environment and are compatible with established land uses.
- *Encourage* the use of forestlands for recreational enjoyment and education.

¹ It should be noted that the majority of Mount Benson is located in Electoral Area 'C.'

General Policies:*Action:*

1. Parkland shall be permitted in all land use designations of this Plan.
2. The Regional District shall support, where suitable and appropriate, the acquisition of parkland and open space for community recreation, nature preservation, linear connections and greenway purposes.
3. Linear connections should be designed to provide for a variety of users (including equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians) and located to connect identified recreation areas, parks or areas with aesthetic, distinct and diverse topography or vegetation.
4. Notwithstanding Policy 5.3, linear connections shall not be established along the Millstone River corridor, unless suitable agreements with landowners are reached, and means to preserve environmental values are found.
5. The Regional District shall encourage the Ministry of Forests and major forest companies to protect the natural woodlands and landscape features on lands adjacent to existing or identified recreation or open space areas and provide opportunities for controlled use of private logging roads during non-operation periods for outdoor recreation except during times of high and extreme fire hazard.
6. The Regional District shall encourage the retention of Mount Benson, Westwood Ridge and the Lantzville Foothills in a natural state for public use and enjoyment and recognize these areas as priority acquisitions as regional parks.

Development Activated:

7. Where parkland is required under Section 941 of the *Municipal Act* (i.e., a subdivision where more than three (3) new lots are created and the smallest of these lots is less than 2.0 hectares in area) the Regional District shall determine whether the owner of land being subdivided shall:
 - a) provide, without compensation, parkland equivalent to five percent (5%) of the parcel size in a location acceptable to the Regional Board; or
 - b) pay to the Regional District cash-in-lieu equal to the market value of the land that may be required for park purposes determined pursuant to Regional Board policy on calculating value; or
 - c) provide a combination of land and cash-in-lieu to the satisfaction of the Regional Board.

Where cash-in-lieu of parkland is received from development within the East Wellington - Pleasant Valley Plan Area, it shall be reserved for parkland acquisition within the Plan Area.