# Introduction

The Town of Smithers acknowledges the Gidimt'en Clan and the Witsuwit'en people, on whose unceded ancestral territory we live, work and play.

# Welcome to the Parks and Facilities Master Plan Open House!

The Town of Smithers has developed a Draft Parks and Recreation Master Plan that will guide how the Town provides and invests in parks and recreation services (facilities, programs, and events) over the next 10 years.

Today, we want to share:

- An overview of the Master Plan purpose and process
- A summary of the engagement and research that informed the Master Plan and;
- Key recommendations and guidance provided by the Master Plan

### What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a long- term planning document that provides a roadmap for the future and will be used by Council and staff on an ongoing basis to inform prioritization and decision making.

# The Master Plan Purpose – Why did the Town decide to develop a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The Master Plan was developed to ensure that future decision-making is informed and best aligned with community needs and opportunities while also making the best use of limited resources. The Master Plan process also enabled the Town to:

- Analyze the current state of parks and recreation.
- Identify trends (emerging interests, changes in activity preferences, etc.).
- Establish focus areas for capital facility investment and programming.
- Identify opportunities to optimize how the Town partners, invests in existing facilities and spaces, and makes decision pertaining to programming and potential projects.

## How was the Master Plan Developed?

The Master Plan was developed through comprehensive research and engagement over the course of approximately one year

**1. Learning About Parks and Recreation in Smithers**

a) Research and service level analysis
**Findings in the "Current State" Research Report*
b) Engagement with groups, key interests, and the community
**Findings in the "What We Heard" Engagement Summary Report*

**2. Strategic Direction Setting**

a) Using the research, analysis, and engagement to identify key areas of focus.
b) Working with the Task Force to test potential strategies and actions.

**3. Developing the Master Plan**

a) Draft the Master Plan
b) Community review
c) Final Master Plan

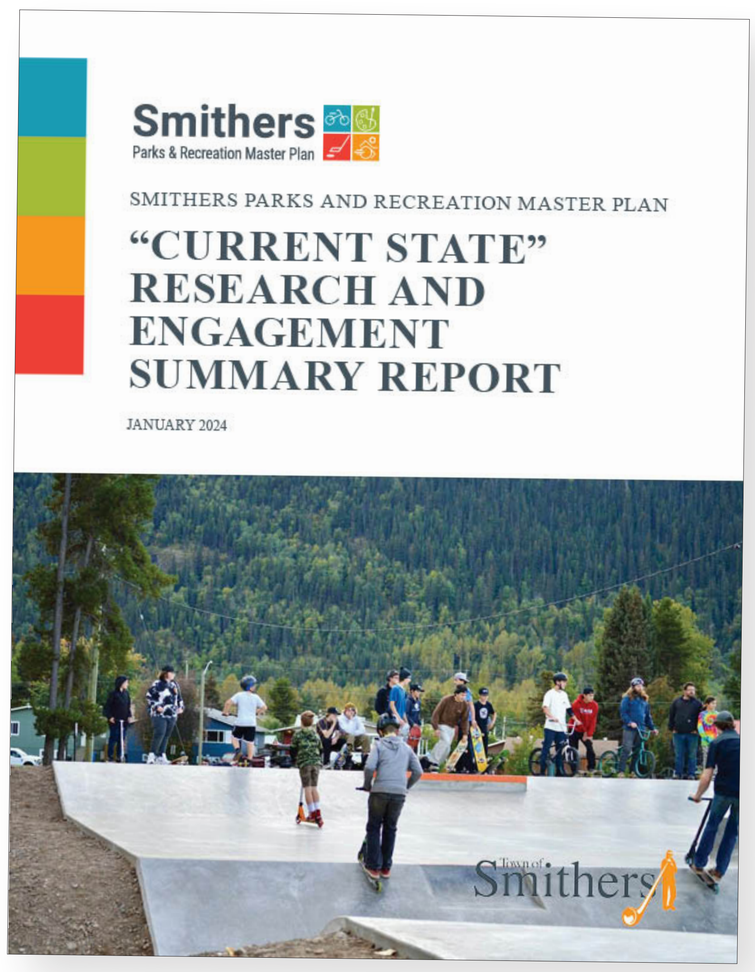
# Research and Analysis

To develop a Master Plan that sets forth the best roadmap for the future of parks and facilities in Smithers, it was important to first understand the current situation and identify strengths, gaps, opportunities, and key factors that will influence future parks and recreation interests and needs.

The project team undertook comprehensive research and analysis aimed at exploring several key topics. The detailed findings are available in the **Current State Summary Report.**

## Overview of the Research Inputs

- Inventory of amenities and spaces
- Population and demographics analysis
- Spatial analysis
- Benchmarking
- Trends and best practices review
- Functional assessments of the park system



# What did the community tell us?

Engagement with the community allowed the project team to learn about parks and recreation in Smithers from resident, community organization representatives, youth, and other targeted population cohorts.

Through the community engagement the project team had over 600 touchpoints with the community!

The detailed findings are available in the **"What We Heard" Community Engagement Findings Report.**

## Overview of Engagement Inputs

**HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (CODED VERSION)**
276 Responses

**HOUSEHOLD SURVEY (NON-CODED VERSION)**
95 Responses

**YOUTH SURVEY**
127 Responses

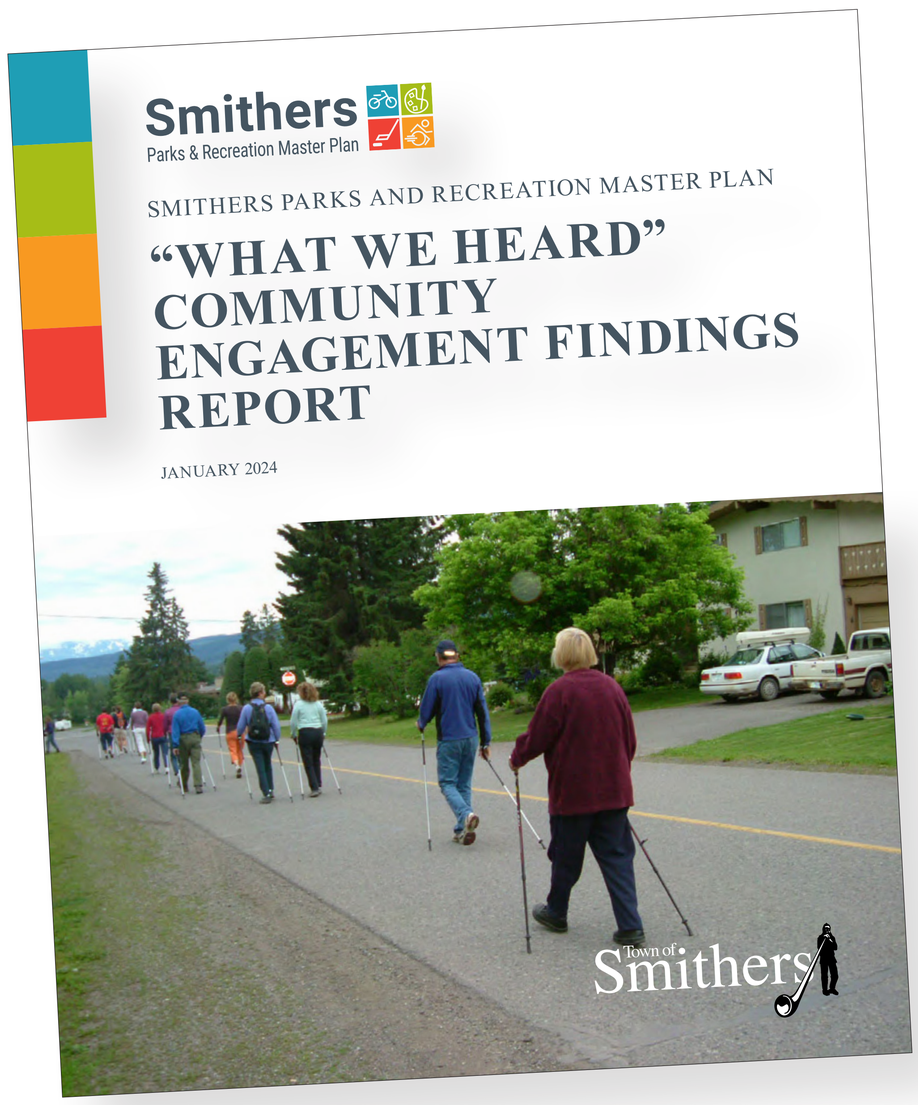
**GROUP SURVEY**
24 Responses

**COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSIONS**
22 Discussions with 38 Participants.

**PROJECT WEB PLATFORM TOOLS**
(www.engagesmithersrecplan.ca)

**Mapping Tool** – 65 'pins' from 26 contributors

**Recreation Interest Quick Polls** - 23 responses from 17 contributors




### The Project Task Force

The Master Plan process was guided by a Project Task Force consisting of representatives from a number of community organizations and partners. The Task Force played a critical role in shaping the Master Plan by providing a local lens and feedback at key stages in the process, including the community engagement.

# Overview of Key Strategic Direction in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Sections 4 – 7 of the Master Plan provides forward looking strategic guidance for parks and recreation in Smithers over the next 10+ years. This guidance is organized into the following four sections of the complete Master Plan document.

- **Section 4: Service Delivery Objectives:** Foundational statements that identify what the Town is looking to achieve through its ongoing in investment in parks and recreation. The Service Delivery Objectives also articulate key values that guide focus areas and priorities.
- **Section 5: Key Directions:** Significant focus areas for investment and action over the next 10 years. The Key Directions are targeted at meeting gaps, needs, and opportunities identified through the research and engagement.
- **Section 6: Amenity & Service Delivery Strategies:** 38 Amenity Strategies are provided which outline recommended approaches across several types / categories of parks and recreation infrastructure. The Amenity Strategies suggest ways for the Town to sustain and enhance existing facilities and spaces, align with trends, and further explore potential gaps and opportunities. 4 Service Delivery Strategies are provided which include 11 actions aimed at optimizing how the Town provides services, including areas where improvement may be needed and re-embedding practices that the Town does well. This section also includes two decision making tools that the Town can use on an ongoing basis to support programming and capital planning.
- **Section 7: Implementation Plan:** Provides an initial, high-level implementation plan that outlines timing and resource requirements for the Key Directions and Strategies.

**The following panels summarize key elements of Sections 4 – 6 from the Master Plan. Please refer to the final panel (Implementing the Strategies) for additional information on how you can view the complete Master Plan and background documents.**

# Service Delivery Objectives

Publicly supported parks and recreation services are most effective and efficient when they are rooted in clear objectives. The Service Delivery Objectives provide a foundation that identify what the Town is looking to achieve through its ongoing in investment in parks and recreation and articulate key values that will guide focus areas and priorities.

The following six Service Delivery Objectives were created based on key values explored through the community engagement and align with other Town strategic planning and priorities.

## Service Delivery Objectives

1. Parks and recreation services provide physical, social, and creative opportunities for all.

2. The ongoing investment in parks and recreation results in a more vibrant, appealing, connected, and flourishing community.

3. Parks and recreation services are aligned with best practice and provide high quality experiences.

4. Parks and recreation services are financially sustainable.

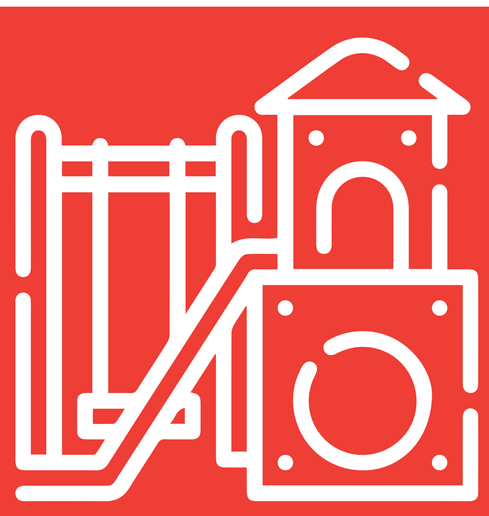
5. Parks and recreation services are collaborative, adaptable, and able to meet dynamic community needs.

6. Parks and recreation services show environment leadership.

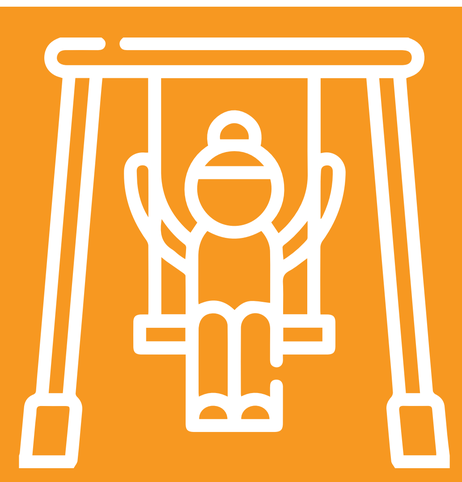
# Key Directions

The Key Directions are significant focus areas for investment and action over the next 10 years. Undertaking these priority recommendations will address gaps, enhance active living opportunities for residents and visitors, and help achieve the Service Delivery Objectives outlined on the previous panel.

## Summary of the 4 Key Directions

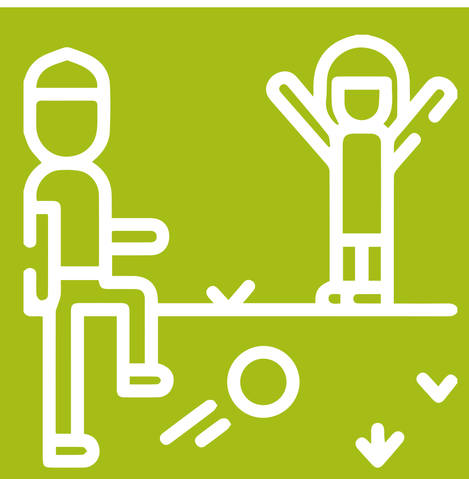


**Key Direction #1: Re-imagine Heritage Park and Central Park.**



**Key Direction #2: Create more structure and purpose around park experiences and uses.**

**Key Direction #3: Prioritize trail investment to create better connectivity and all-season opportunities.**



**Key Direction #4: Prioritize working with partners to meet community needs for large span multi-use space.**

# Key Direction #1: Re-imagine Heritage Park and Central Park.

Heritage Park and Central Park are major outdoor hub spaces in Smithers that have an opportunity to become more significant destinations for both local residents and visitors to Smithers. As many existing amenities on both sites are aging and in need of renewal or replacement, the Master Plan process was tasked with providing a long-term vision and concepts for both sites. These concepts provide a point of reference for future phases of planning, community engagement, and detailed design.

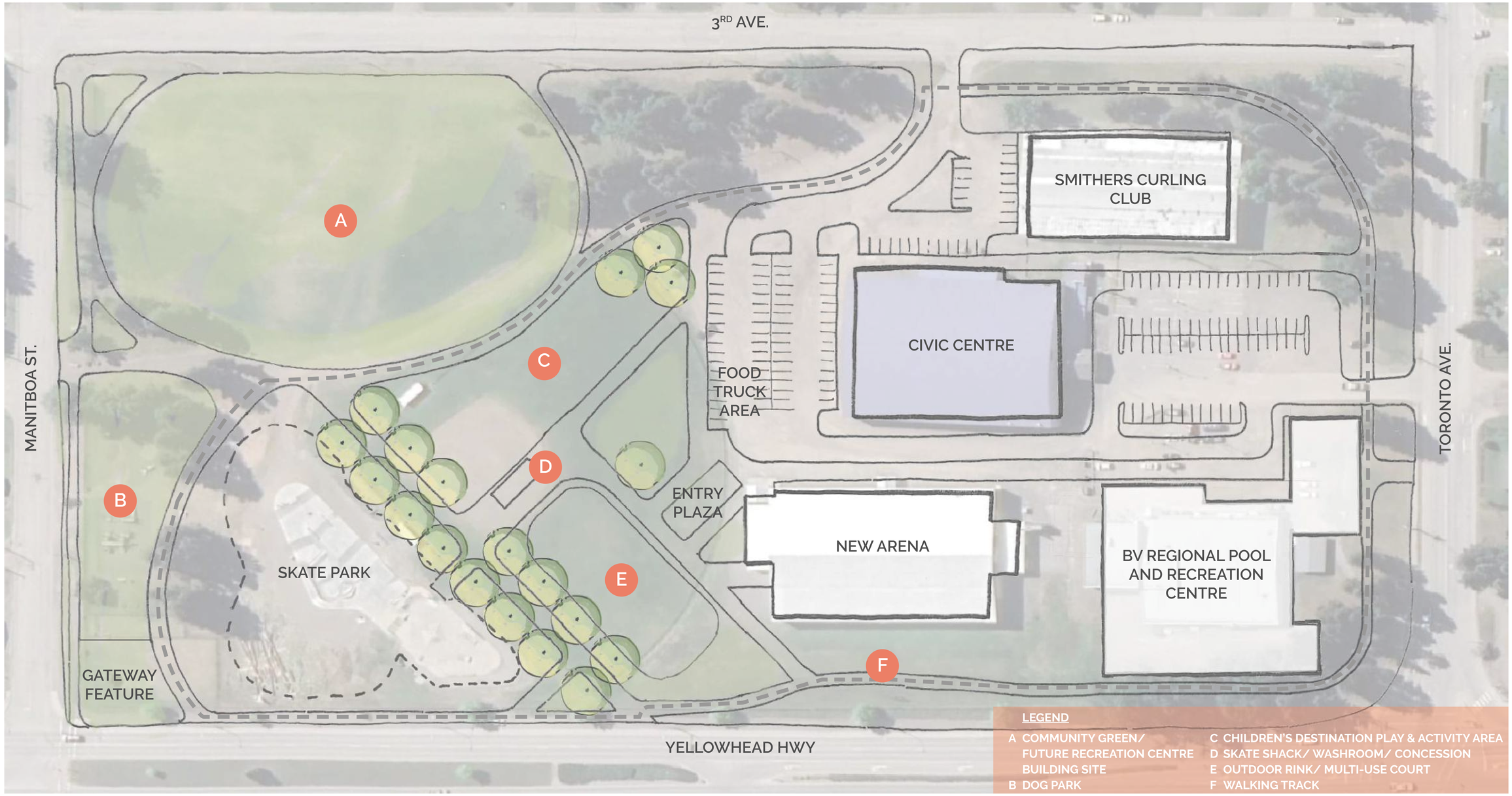
## Important Heritage Park Planning Considerations

- Removing the underutilized ball diamond and consolidating ball use at Elks Fields provides an opportunity to make higher value use of the space within Heritage Park.
- Re-locating a new boarded rink to Heritage Park (Space E) provides the opportunity to create programmatic synergies with the two indoor arenas. Creating a boarded rink that can transition to court use in the summer also maximizes use of the space. However, as noted under the Central Park Planning consideration below, further discussions are required to determine the best location for the rink that considers operational factors, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- The space identified for Community Green / Future Recreation Centre Building Site (Space A) provides flexibility for spontaneous / casual use in the short term and potential use for new recreation infrastructure in the future.
- The concept image reflects all phases of the potential expansion to the Bulkley Valley Pool and Recreation Centre.
- The space identified for a children's destination play and activity area (Space C) requires further engagement to identify the types of play amenities and opportunities that are most desired and viable. Options could include natural play, adventure play, or spray / splash features.

## Important Central Park Planning Considerations

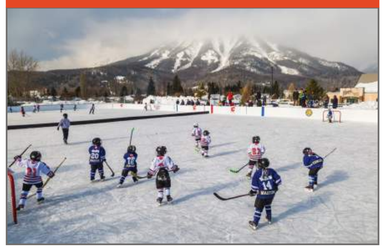
- The space concept targets reimaging Central Park as a community hub for festivals, events, and cultural activities.
- Flexibility is a key space design element, recognizing that potential space characteristics, phasing, partnerships, and feasibility requires further exploration by the Town and its partners.
- The outdoor boarded rink has been re-located to Heritage Park. However, ample space has also been left on the Central Park site should post-Master Plan decision making determine that sustaining this amenity on the Heritage Park site is a better course of action in order to leverage the existing volunteer efforts of the Fire Department in maintaining the ice rink. If the outdoor rink is replaced in its current location, the market pavilion space will need to be shifted elsewhere on the site.
- The flex use building (Space B) responds to identified community needs for multi-use performing and creative arts space. Further planning and concept design is needed to identify priority amenities that could go within this facility and associated capital and operating costs.

# Heritage Park Concept Plan



# Heritage Park Amenity Example Images

**These images are examples only that reflect potential space characteristics for the amenity types identified. Future engagement, planning and design will be undertaken to refine amenity spaces and characteristics.*

| COMMUNITY GREEN | DOG PARK | PLAYGROUND<br>CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, EVENT PAVILLION/STAGE | SKATE SHACK / WASHROOM / CONCESSION | OUTDOOR RINK / MULTI-USE COURT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |  |
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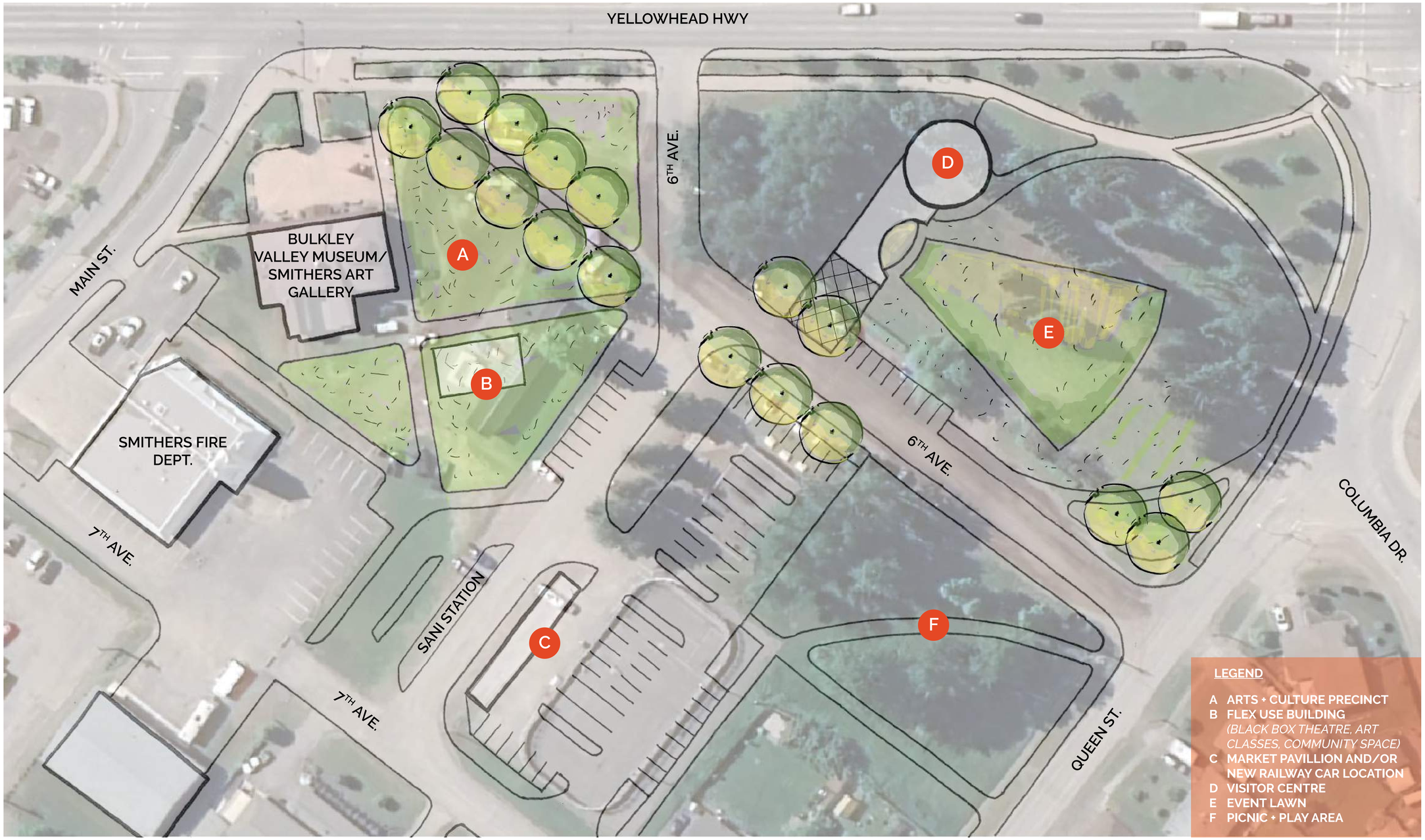
# Central Park Concept Plan



# Central Park Amenity Example Images

**These images are examples only that reflect potential space characteristics for the amenity types identified. Future engagement, planning and design will be undertaken to refine amenity spaces and characteristics.*

| ARTS + CULTURE PLAZA | BLACK BOX THEATRE | MARKET PAVILLION | VISITOR'S CENTRE<br>CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, EVENT PAVILLION/STAGE | EVENT LAWN | PICNIC + PLAY AREA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

# Tell us what you think about the park concepts!

## What do you like?

PLEASE PLACE YOUR STICKY NOTES HERE.

## Is there anything you don't like or think is missing?

PLEASE PLACE YOUR STICKY NOTES HERE.

# Key Direction #2: Create more structure and purpose around park experiences and uses.

A new Parks Classification system is proposed to guide park planning, management, and design. Implementing this system will help the Town create more dynamic park experiences, more effectively manage the park inventory, and help guide future park projects.

The new Parks Classification Systems includes five categories of parks:

- **Destination Parks** – these are major park spaces with multiple amenities and experiences that should receive a high level of maintenance with amenities to support higher levels of visitation. Examples in Smithers: Central Park, Heritage Park, Willowvale Wetlands
- **Plazas and Specialty Parks** - These spaces are typically small in scale with amenities aimed at encouraging social gathering and/or feature key placemaking installations. Examples in Smithers: Bovill Square, Gordon Williams Rotary Park
- **Dedicated Sports Parks** - These parks are geared towards organized sport use. Surface quality and support amenity provision are targeted towards higher levels of booked use. Examples in Smithers: Elks Fields, Chandler Park
- **Community Parks** - These parks are typically 2 -5 ha. and serve a few neighbourhoods within the town. They include amenities like a playground, single sports fields, sport court, community garden, etc. Accessibility to these parks is usually via a mix of vehicular and active modes of transportation. Examples in Smithers: Riverside Park, Dogwood Park, Montreal Tennis Courts Park, Veteran Peace Park
- **Neighbourhood / Pocket Park** - These parks are typically smaller tot lot style parks (less than 2 ha.) with a single amenity such as a smaller playground structure. The majority of use is from adjacent residents that walk to the site for basic, short duration use. Examples in Smithers: Bulkley Valley Drive Park, Yorke-Hardy Park Alfred Park

Please refer to Section 5.2. of the Master Plan for additional detail on amenity and maintenance standards pertaining to each parks classification.

**Please use the space below to tell us what you think about Key Direction #2.**

PLEASE PLACE YOUR STICKY NOTES HERE.

# Key Direction #3: Prioritize trail investment to create better connectivity and all-season opportunities.

Trails are the most used recreation amenity in the town (as validated through the community engagement) and serve a key active transportation purpose. Smithers has significant trail opportunities due to the natural setting of the community, however barriers also exist (e.g. Highway 16 bisecting the community).

**Recommended Next Step Identified in the Master Plan:**

The Town should undertake a Trails Strategy to better understand the current trail inventory at a deeper level and gain a better understanding of specific trail gaps, issues, and opportunities. A Trails Strategy will:

- Help the Town prioritize investments into projects aimed at completing connections and improving user experience.
- Explore opportunities to enhance accessibility.
- Leverage trail investment to achieve economic benefits.

## Please use the space below to tell us what you think about Key Direction #3.

PLEASE PLACE YOUR STICKY NOTES HERE.

# Key Direction #4: Prioritize working with partners to meet community needs for large span multi-use space.

The lack of available large span indoor recreation space is a key gap in Smithers that has also been identified through previous facility studies, including expansion planning undertaken for the Bulkley Valley Pool and Recreation Centre (BV Pool).

**Recommended Next Steps Identified in the Master Plan:**

- The Town should continue to support the advancement of the expansion plans of the BV Pool and advocate for the community gymnasium to be prioritized.
- If the phase 3 expansion plans do not move forward or sufficiently meet community needs, the Town should explore alternative options to develop a new large span recreation facility.
- The Town the Town should continue to work with school partners to maximize community access.
- Explore opportunities to make off-season use of the arenas for dry floor activities.

## Please use the space below to tell us what you think about Key Direction #4.

PLEASE PLACE YOUR STICKY NOTES HERE.

# Amenity Strategies

The following amenity strategies are recommended approaches for 11 different types / categories of parks and recreation infrastructure. These strategies will help the Town make the best use of existing infrastructure, plan for the future, and ensure resources are allocated to facilities and spaces that result in maximum community benefit.

***The Amenity Strategies highlighted in blue reflect those that help further advance the Key Directions identified on the previous panels.**

| Amenity type | Strategies |
|---|---|
| Arenas | A. Sustain two ice sheets over the next 5 - 10 years.<br>B. If Civic Arena re-investment approaches or exceeds 20% of the estimated replacement value (Facility Condition Index rating of Poor to Very Poor), re-evaluate the long-term need for 2 ice arenas and the cost-benefit of replacement or reinvestment versus other recreation priorities.<br>C. **Finalize the best future location for a new boarded outdoor rink (currently included within the Heritage Park concept).** |
| Arts and Cultural Facilities | A. **Enhance and expand arts and cultural space capacity through the recommended revisioning of Central Park.**<br>B. **Further explore indoor arts and culture space needs and the highest benefit amenities to include in the "Flex Use Building" identified in the concept plan.**<br>C. Continue to support the Bulkley Valley Museum and Art Gallery and work with partners and stakeholders to identify a long-term capital maintenance plan.<br>D. Continue to advance public art provision in parks and recreation facilities.<br>E. Develop a maintenance plan for public art in Smithers. |
| Ball Diamonds | A. **Remove the ball diamond at Heritage Park and consolidate organized ball groups at Elks Fields.**<br>B. Enhance the Elks Fields ball diamonds to meet user needs, improve safety, provide an approved experience, and better position diamonds to host tournaments. Prioritize fencing, surfacing (shale and grass), dugout and other capital works in collaboration with user groups. |
| Campgrounds and Day-Use Areas | A. As part of the recommended Trails Strategy, explore opportunities to better connect Riverside Campground with the community through accessibility and experiential improvements to the Perimeter Trail.<br>B. Develop a Riverside Campground Strategic plan to guide site management and development for the next 10 years. |
| Gymnasiums and Other Dry-Floor Indoor Recreation Facilities | A. **Continue to support the BV Pool expansion plan and work with partners to advocate for prioritization of the community gymnasium.**<br>B. **If the BV Pool expansion plan does not move forward or sufficiently meet community needs, identify alternative options and potential** partnerships to develop a large span gymnasium or field house facility.<br>C. In the short to medium term, work with school system gymnasium providers to develop new joint use agreements that can help provide increased school gymnasium access to community groups.<br>D. Identify opportunities to make off-season use of the arenas for dry floor activities. |

# Amenity Strategies

| Amenity type | Strategies |
|---|---|
| Libraries | A. Develop a Library Facilities Master Plan to further explore specific library space needs and options.<br>B. Consider including a new library as part of a future new indoor recreation facility should one be developed. |
| Parks | A. **Adopt and regularly update the new Parks Classification System.**<br>B. Develop a more robust playground assessment and renewal schedule.<br>C. **Develop Park Management Plans for all Destination Parks identified in the new Parks Classification System.**<br>D. **As playground renewal occurs over the next 10 years, focus on diversifying play experiences to create increased play opportunities for older children and youth. These efforts should include more integration of natural and adventure play features.**<br>E. **Undertake the recommended steps to advance the Central Parks and Heritage Park concepts.**<br>F. **Undertake a park visioning and concept planning exercise for Ranger Park to further explore options and opportunities to create a new destination park.** |
| Sport Courts | A. Sustain the existing tennis courts.<br>B. Address identified needs for pickleball as part of the boarded ice rink/sport court recommended for Heritage Park. |
| Sports Fields | A. Continue to sustain fields at a quality level.<br>B. Consider funding requests for amenity upgrades if sufficient rationale, benefits, fundraising contributions are a sustainable operating plan are demonstrated. |
| Trails and Trail Related Amenities | A. **Undertake a detailed trails inventory and assessment.**<br>B. **Undertake a Trails Strategy to guide priority investments and projects.**<br>C. **Work with Smithers Golf and Country Club to provide and manage off-season (winter) use of the gold course trails.**<br>D. **Identify creative opportunities to provide increased winter trail opportunities in-town.**<br>E. Utilize the adopt and align future trail planning, design and amenity provision with the Trans Canada Trails' National Guidelines for Classifying Multi-Use Trails for all multi-use trails. *Provided in Appendix B are cut sheets for the recommended Trail Design Parameters for each type of trail activity. |
| Wheeled Sports | A. Retain professional expertise to re-design and improve the bike skills parks located adjacent to Elks Fields.<br>B. **Explore additional opportunities for accessible sports in Town parks and facilities.**<br>C. **Support the expansion of the skate park located in Heritage Park (as outlined in the concept images).** |

# Service Delivery Strategies

The Master Plan's Service Delivery Strategies identify four Strategies to support optimization of overall service delivery. It is important to note that while some of the Strategies suggest changes or adaptations to current practices, others imply embedding those that are already being done and work well. The Strategies also encompass 11 actions aimed at providing tactical solutions / approaches to implementing each Strategy.

| Strategy | Actions | Rationales and Benefits |
|---|---|---|
| A. Increase promotion of available supports available to community organizations. | • Develop an online portal with links to Town and external training, funding, and other supports.<br>• Develop an annual or biannual recreation guide. | Community organizations play a critical role in the delivery of parks, recreation and culture opportunities. Provided information on resources can help groups access needed training and funding opportunities. Additionally, findings from the community engagement indicate that a lack of clarity exists on the role that the Town plays in supporting parks, recreation and culture. Sharing successes and examples of how investment occurs can help increase clarity. |
| B. Ensure renewed and new partnership agreements outline clear roles and responsibilities. | • Create standard definitions for capital repair vs capital maintenance to include in all future partnership agreements.<br>• Develop a partnership agreement evaluation process that integrates the Service Delivery Objectives and includes clear performance measurement metrics. | A number of Town owned community facilities are operated by partners. |
| C. Continue to focus efforts on reducing financial barriers to participation. | • Continue to promote initiatives and programs like KidSport, Jumpstart, the Bulkley Valley Youth Sport Foundation, Bulkley Valley Community Foundation, and Athletics4Kids.<br>• When consideration funding requests from groups, prioritize supporting groups that demonstrate a commitment to financial accessibility. | Parks and recreation services are most effective when they can be enjoyed by all residents. As in every community, some individuals in Smithers face financial barriers to participation. |
| D. Enhance the collection, management, and use of data that provides insights into trends and levels of use. | • Conduct a new parks and recreation needs assessment every 5 – 7 years and use this information to update the Master Plan (the engagement methodology used to develop the Master Plan could be replicated to allow for a comparison of results).<br>• Invest in bookings and data software that can support ongoing data collection and management.<br>• Ensure decision making is data driven wherever possible.<br>• Develop and implement a regular user group questionnaire to compile data and track changes / trends in registration numbers, key participant characteristics, and other data points. | Opportunities exist for the Town to make more use of data and compile a database of information that provides key insights into trends (which groups are trending upwards or downwards) and other key data points that can be used to assess future facility needs and inform ongoing programming decision making. |

# Implementing the Strategies

## How will the Town use the Master Plan?

The Master Plan is intended to be a long-term guiding document that Town Council and staff can refer to as priorities for parks and recreation are set.

Section 7 of the Master Plan identifies plans for implementing the Strategies – including suggested timing / sequencing and considerations for resourcing and partnerships. However, more specific timing and consideration of how these potential focus areas and projects fit into broader Town priorities and financial commitments will need to be reviewed, refined, and updated on a regular basis.

## What do you think of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan?

The Town and project team need your feedback on the draft Master Plan. Your feedback will help us refine the Master Plan before a final version is presented to Council.

Please follow use the QR code below to provide your feedback using the online form! The complete draft Master, project background documents ("What We Heard" Engagement Findings Report and "Current State" Summary Report), and a web based version of these open house panels are also available through this link.

https://engagesmithersrecplan.ca/public