



PART B: POLICIES

11. Park Areas and Natural Assets



11.1 Overview

One of Colwood's most cherished attributes is its open spaces and natural areas. The Colwood area is home to over 50 trails and parks that provide recreation for residents and habitat for wildlife, as well as green infrastructure that cleans water, assimilates greenhouse gas emissions, and offers other ecological services vital to human survival and quality of life. Through the engagement process for this OCP, Colwood residents have strongly indicated that Colwood's green spaces are what make it special and set it apart from other communities.

Approximately 75% of residents are within a 5-minute walk of a park, while approximately 97% of residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park, as shown on Figure 15: Parks and Open Space. These numbers reveal that residents enjoy easy access to natural areas and green spaces.

The Galloping Goose Regional Trail is a key regional amenity used by Colwoodians both within and beyond City boundaries. The trail provides an excellent cycling and walking route along Colwood's northern boundary. Colwood also has many other well-used trails and pathways meandering through parks and open spaces.

In addition to Colwood's many smaller neighbourhood parks, there are several larger community-wide parks that provide enjoyment for

residents and habitat for wildlife. These include Havenwood Park, Latoria Creek Park, Lookout Lake Park, and Gamble Park, all of which include remnant ecological communities. Other large parcels of land that are not owned by the City but nonetheless act as important green space and critical habitat areas include Fort Rodd Hill, and Royal Roads University and surrounding lands, Bee Creek at Pacific Landing and Esquimalt Lagoon.

Trees and topography are defining qualities of Colwood. Most of the area was covered with coastal Douglas-fir forest, and mature stands remain throughout Colwood. Garry oak ecosystems dominate other drier areas of Colwood, while red alder and western red cedar ecosystems inhabit wetlands, moist low-lands, and seepage areas. Trees and forested areas have been identified by residents as one of the community's most cherished assets.

Development has been recently shifting toward the steeper terrain of Triangle Mountain, rocky knolls, and the escarpment and coastal bluffs along the waterfront. In addition to issues associated with habitat fragmentation, increased rainwater run-off and flooding, conventional development on steep slopes presents challenges such as the use of retaining walls, which are expensive and can undermine views and natural character. There is strong interest in the community for more sensitive approaches to planning that protect and celebrate Colwood's natural assets.

This OCP takes a unique approach to future development in hillside areas that emphasizes the treatment of natural features as valuable assets.

11.2 Objectives and Policies

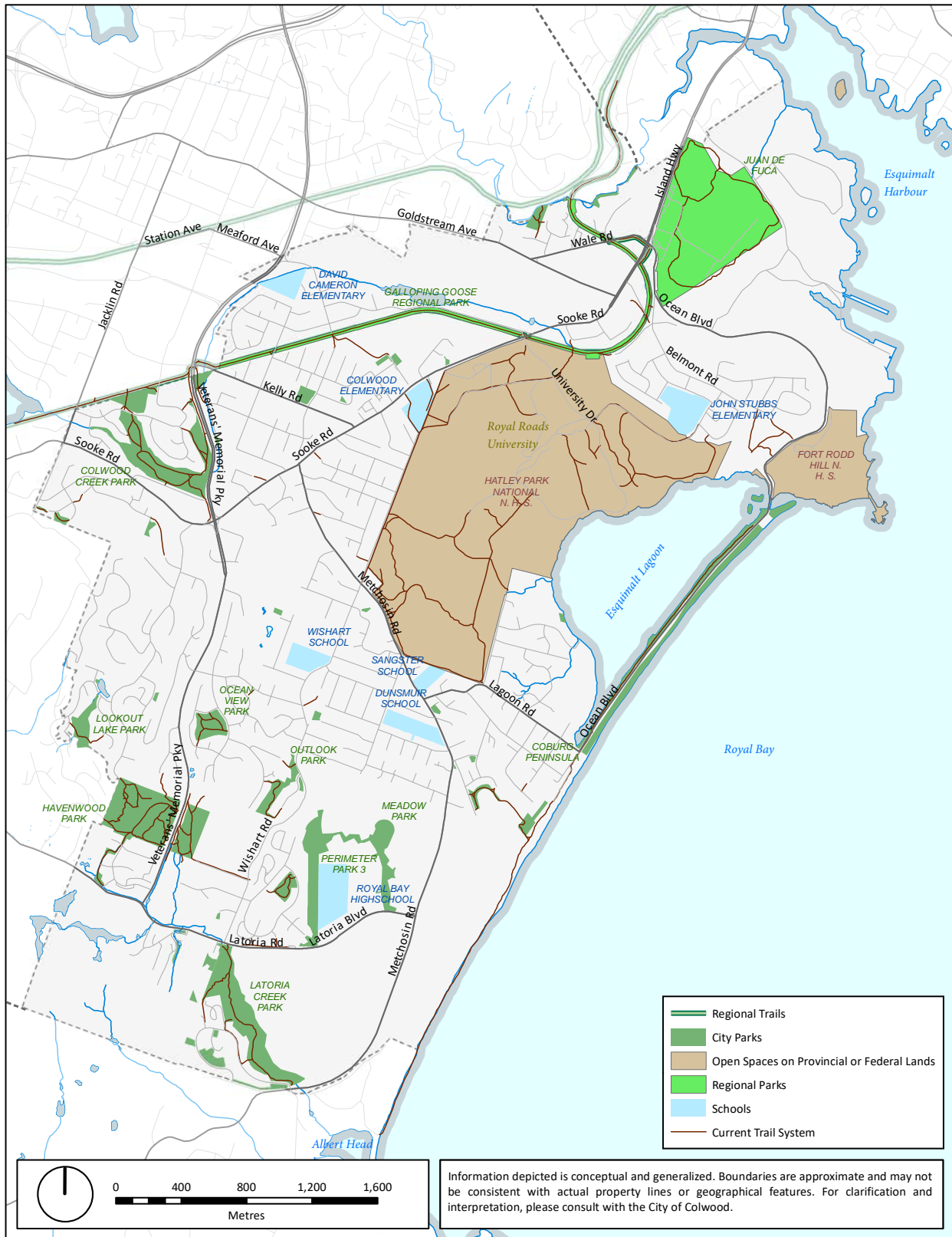
Objective: 11.2.1

To maintain and enhance park access to residents.

POLICY 11.2.1.1 WATERFRONT ACCESS

Provide continuous, uninterrupted public access along the entirety of the marine waterfront, while limiting human disturbance and managing access in ecologically sensitive areas. Avoid damage to natural vegetation by using already disturbed areas for public waterfront access.

Figure 15: Existing Parks and Open Spaces



POLICY 11.2.1.2 GREENWAYS AND GREENBELTS

Link parks and open spaces to major destinations and amenities through greenways and green streets, including to regional networks and greenbelts and through cross-jurisdictional planning efforts.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: The Parks Master Plan should also incorporate directions from other sections of the OCP where specified, including directions relating to climate adaptation and mitigation, natural assets including habitat and ecological function, cultural inclusivity and artistic expression, natural and built infrastructure, and the food system.
- TIMING: Before 2023

POLICY 11.2.1.3 PARKS MASTER PLAN

Create and maintain a Parks Master Plan that guides decisions about property acquisitions, planning, development, design, and delivery of amenities, programs, and services that:

- a. Incorporates the work of partners such as the West Shore Parks and Recreation Society;
- b. Identifies and establishes desired minimum park area to resident ratios;
- c. Maximizes the proportion of residents within a 5 minute walk (400 meters of real travel distance) to a park or other open space;
- d. Defines a parks and open space classification system; and
- e. Provides a range of park sizes, types, and programs, including both passive and active recreation opportunities.

POLICY 11.2.1.4 PARK DEDICATION AMOUNT

Require dedication of land as park land in the consideration of subdivision proposals in the amount of 5%, or obtain a cash equivalent when it is desirable to purchase park land in a different location, or when the dedication would amount to less than 700 m² and there are no opportunities for:

- a. Expanding an existing or potential park on adjoining properties;
- b. Adding park land to an existing community facility, school site, or other public amenity;
- c. Connecting to or extending a trail system;
- d. Acquiring land adjacent to a watercourse or other environmentally sensitive areas; or
- e. Establishing a community facility for recreational use.

POLICY 11.2.1.5 PARK DEDICATION TYPE

Require the park dedication to incorporate specific ecological, historic, or viewpoint elements that may exist, including if the land:

- a. Is or includes a heritage site, as defined by the City of Colwood Heritage Inventory;
- b. Includes or is adjacent to a lake, river, stream, or other body of water;
- c. Has features that are environmentally sensitive, such as stands of trees, native vegetation, and wildlife habitat, and/or has restoration opportunities;
- d. Provides a viewpoint; and/or
- e. Is adjacent to an existing or potential park on adjoining properties, and therefore provides the opportunity to expand or provide additional access to park space.

If none of the characteristics in this Policy 11.2.1.5 a-e can be met, then the City will accept cash in lieu of parkland dedication.

POLICY 11.2.1.6 PARKS IN STREETS

In addition to maintaining and expanding green park space, support the establishment of more urban parks that enhance the public realm in streetscapes, such as pocket parks and plazas.

Objective: 11.2.2

To ensure the long term health of environmentally sensitive areas.

POLICY 11.2.2.1 CONNECTED ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS

Protect and restore ecological networks and minimize habitat fragmentation by:

- a. Minimizing the number of stream crossings by roads and trails;
- b. Protecting wildlife corridors that enable safe wildlife passage; and
- c. Designing with a comprehensive view of planning across property lines, which involves maintaining connections to adjacent habitat.



Urban parks can be hardscaped and comprise an important part of a vibrant streetscape



Providing human access to ecologically sensitive areas with limited disturbance

POLICY 11.2.2.2 LIMITING HUMAN DISTURBANCE

Limit human disturbance and manage access to ecologically sensitive areas, through limited and clearly defined access routes such as boardwalks. Where possible, promote ecosystem restoration as a means of restoring degraded areas, mimicking pre-disturbance ecosystem qualities.

POLICY 11.2.2.3 CONSERVATION SUBDIVISION DESIGN AND SITE ADAPTIVE PLANNING

Require that all greenfield and hillside developments apply site adaptive principles by:

- a. Requiring that a natural assets inventory be provided to the City in support of site adaptive planning, as a first step in the development approvals process;
- b. Minimizing ecosystem disturbance, protecting habitat areas, and incorporating existing natural features such as rock outcrops, streams, cliffs, and stands of trees;
- c. Maintaining windfirm tree buffers between subject parcels and adjacent lots, and generally protecting from wind;
- d. Designating water flow pathways, and avoiding construction in these locations;
- e. Optimizing pedestrian connections and solar access, without compromising tree protection; and
- f. Encouraging the use of creative design solutions for development that supports and enhances ecosystem health and function.

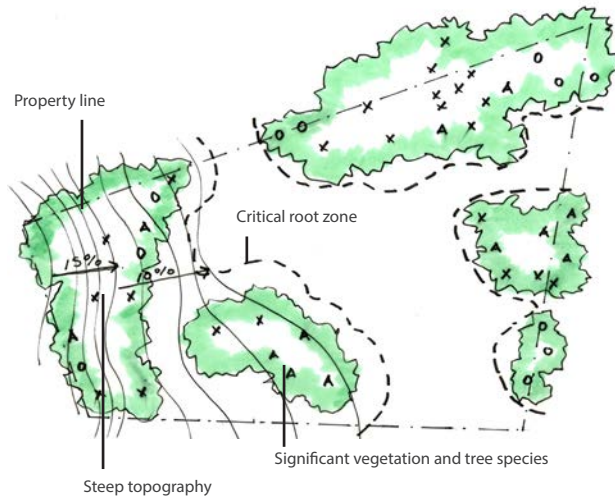
IMPLEMENTATION

- **ACTION:** The City should develop a guide describing required elements for assessment reports for Landscape Architects or, generically, Qualified Professionals.
- **TIMING:** Immediately

Figure 16: Site Adaptive Planning Approach

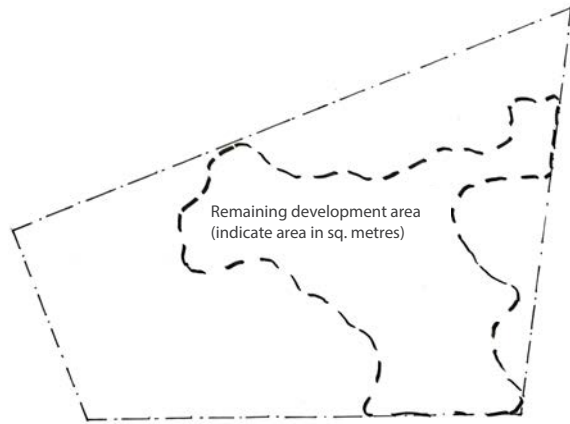
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Existing conditions are identified and natural assets are inventoried.



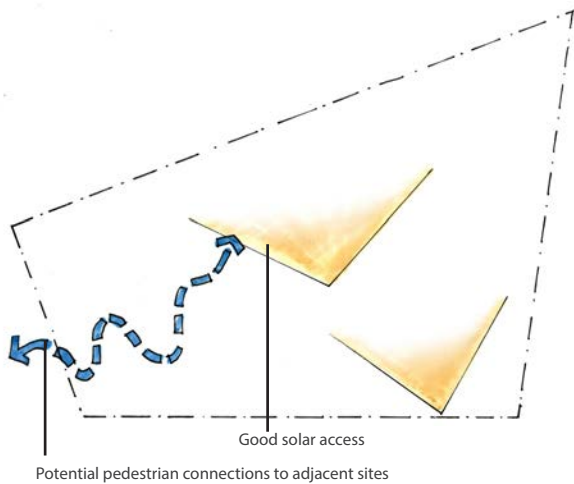
IDENTIFICATION OF IDEAL DEVELOPABLE AREA

The ideal developable area is identified, which avoids impacts on identified natural assets.



CONNECTIONS AND SOLAR ACCES

Solar access and pedestrian connections to adjacent sites are optimized.



SITE ADAPTIVE PLAN

Buildings and impermeable surfaces are laid out to fall within the ideal developable area, and to optimize pedestrian and solar access.

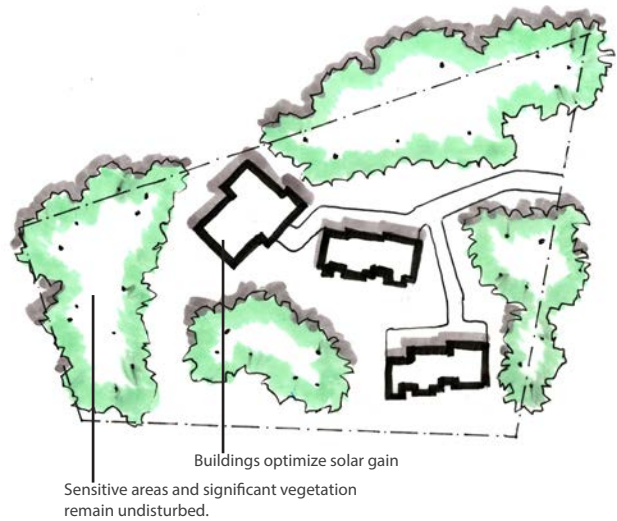


Figure 16 provides an overview of a site adaptive planning approach.

Objective: 11.2.3

To strengthen Colwood’s forested areas and overall tree canopy.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: Create and implement a Management and Protection of Urban Forest Bylaw.
- TIMING: Immediately

POLICY 11.2.3.1 TREE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

Consistent with the site adaptive planning policies, protect existing trees that do not pose danger to humans, support weather and wind protection, and enhance the overall tree canopy and forest ecosystems by:

- g. Prohibiting more tree and vegetation clearance than is necessary to install services;
- h. Prohibiting tree removal on steep slopes, in order to protect soils from erosion and high stormwater runoff volumes; and
- i. Encouraging the planting of new trees that are native to the Coastal Douglas-Fir Biogeoclimatic Zone, where soils are suitable, in urban forests and other treed landscapes on both private and public property. Identify tree replacement ratios in the Management and Protection of Urban Forest Bylaw.

Objective: 11.2.4

To protect topographical features and natural character.

POLICY 11.2.4.1 RETAINING WALLS

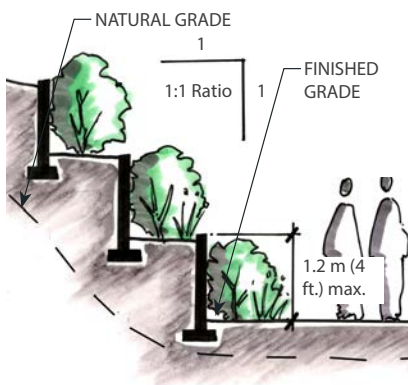
Avoid the use of retaining walls and, where they are required, adhere to the City of Colwood’s Retaining Wall Regulations.

POLICY 11.2.4.2 VIEWS FROM PUBLIC LANDS

Preserve natural character and views of the City’s natural heritage landscape from surrounding public lands.

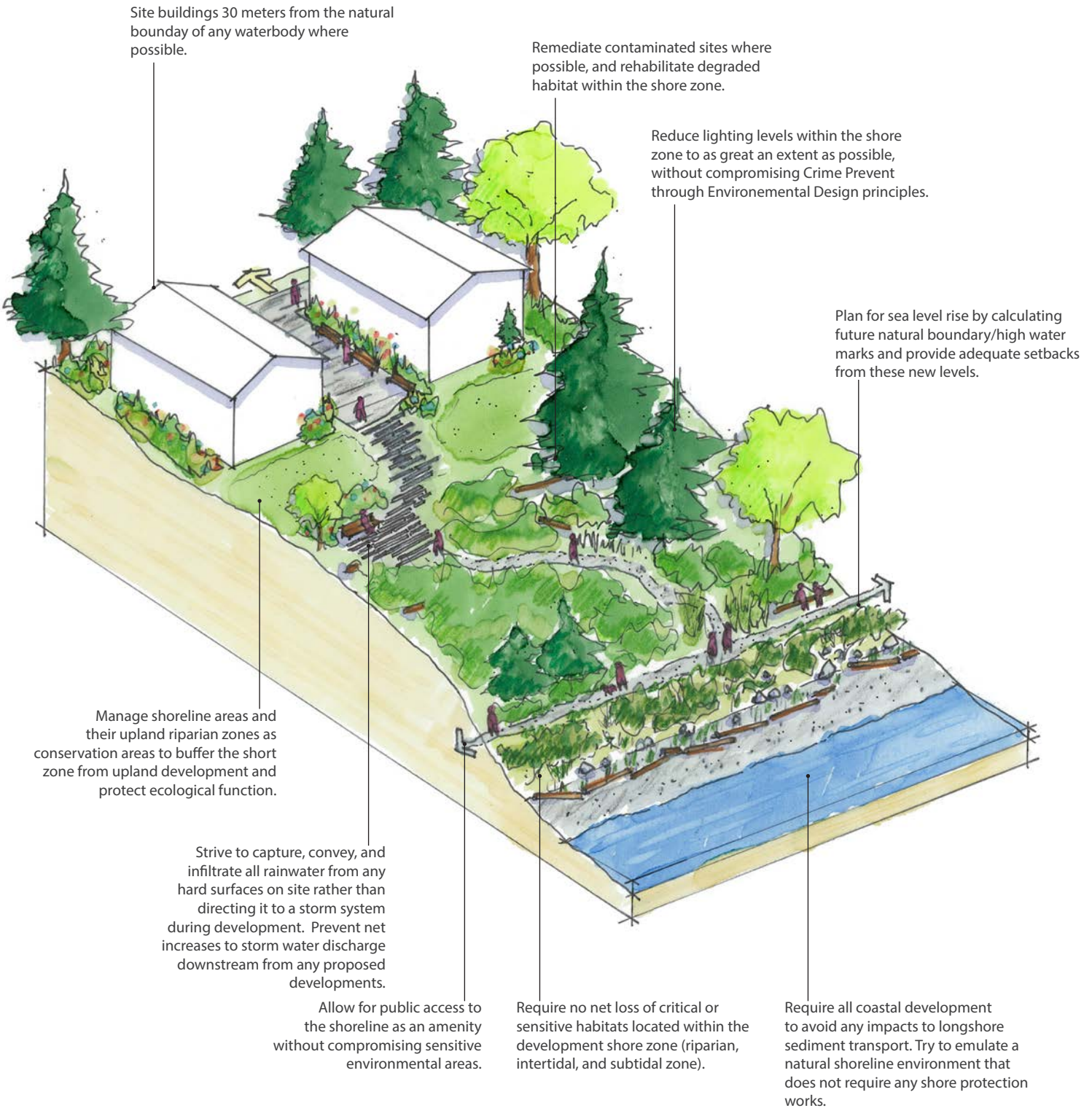
POLICY 11.2.4.3 PLANNING WITH TOPOGRAPHY

Require that site plans be laid out in patterns that complement natural site topography, while also ensuring a high degree of connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists, and prohibit grading or alteration of key topographic features such as knolls, ridgelines, rocky outcrops, cliffs, and



Design requirement for retaining walls

Figure 17: Shoreline Protection Measures



ravines.

Objective: 11.2.5

To maintain and regenerate the ecological functions of Colwood's diverse shorelines.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: The City should include the appropriate directions in this section within the Qualified Environmental Professional guide.
- TIMING: Immediately

POLICY 11.2.5.1 SHORELINE PROTECTION

Protect natural shorelines including those of marine, estuarine, wetland, lake, and freshwater streams, so that they can continue performing multiple ecological functions:

- a. Preventing hard shoreline development and requiring that all development and programming be designed to enable the constant ebb and flow of organic and inorganic materials, recognizing that the shorelines are dynamic ecosystems that change over time;
- b. Requiring shoreline protection measures that mimic functional ecosystems, such as planting salt-tolerant species;
- c. Administering soft shore restoration treatments as part of the Master Parks Plan;
- d. Supporting trails through stream protection and enhancement areas where appropriate;
- e. Not supporting fee simple conversion of lands created through accretion; and
- f. Adhering to Green Shores for Coastal Development criteria for any works undertaken by the City, including the the directions identified in Figure 17: Shoreline Protection Measures. Refer to Development Permit Area Guidelines.

Objective: 11.2.6

To protect and restore widespread presence of indigenous plant species.

IMPLEMENTATION

- ACTION: The City should include detailed actions relating to these directions in both the Parks Master Plan and the QEP Guide.
- TIMING: Immediately

POLICY 11.2.6.1 NATIVE HABITAT RESTORATION

Promote native habitat restoration by:

- a. Adhering to Integrated Pest Management practices and other sustainable landscaping strategies;
- b. Removing invasive species as part of broader habitat restoration work, consistent with the latest Invasive Species Council of British Columbia recommendations;
- c. Planting native species in parks, streetscapes, and other areas of the public realm; and
- d. Promoting planting of native species for private development.