

UBC Social, Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Reports

**Open Space Programming & Use:**

**A comparison of two Vancouver neighbourhood parks**

Anita Yufe

Megan Vogt

University of British Columbia

LARC 543

December 2009

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# **Open Space Programming & Use: a comparison of two Vancouver neighbourhood parks**

**DOCUMENT FOR SUBMISSION**

**LARC 543-001: Environment and Urban Form**

**Anita Yufe  
Megan Vogt**





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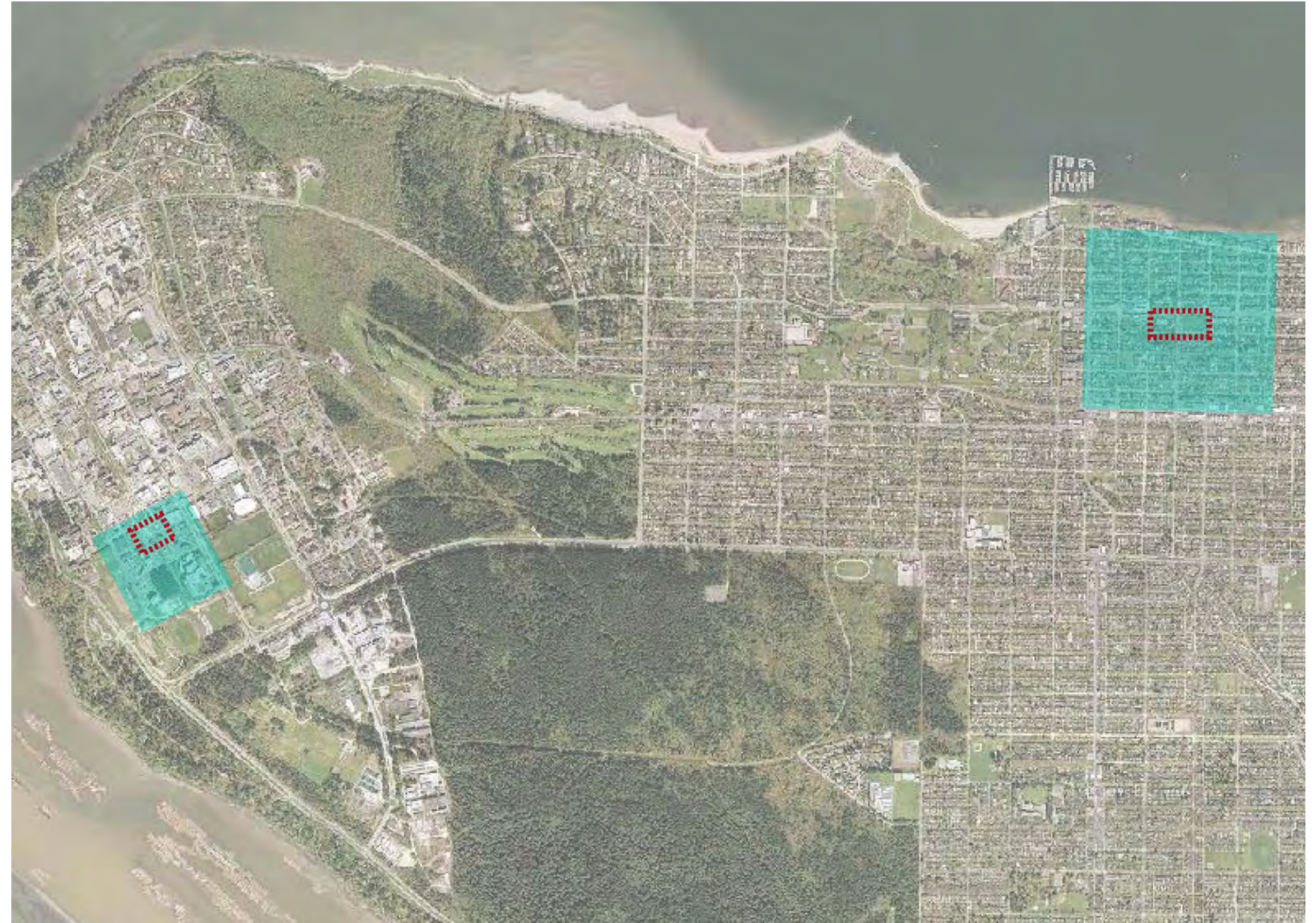
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# Project Definition

## Agenda

*Social sustainability based on how open space programming influences intensity and quality of use*

## Framework

*The relationship between open space programming and use as an indicator of the quality of urban space form and function*

## Indicators

*Spatial analysis and observation of neighbourhood parks*

## **GOAL: Interactions**

*Open space programs that promote interaction and neighbourhood building?*

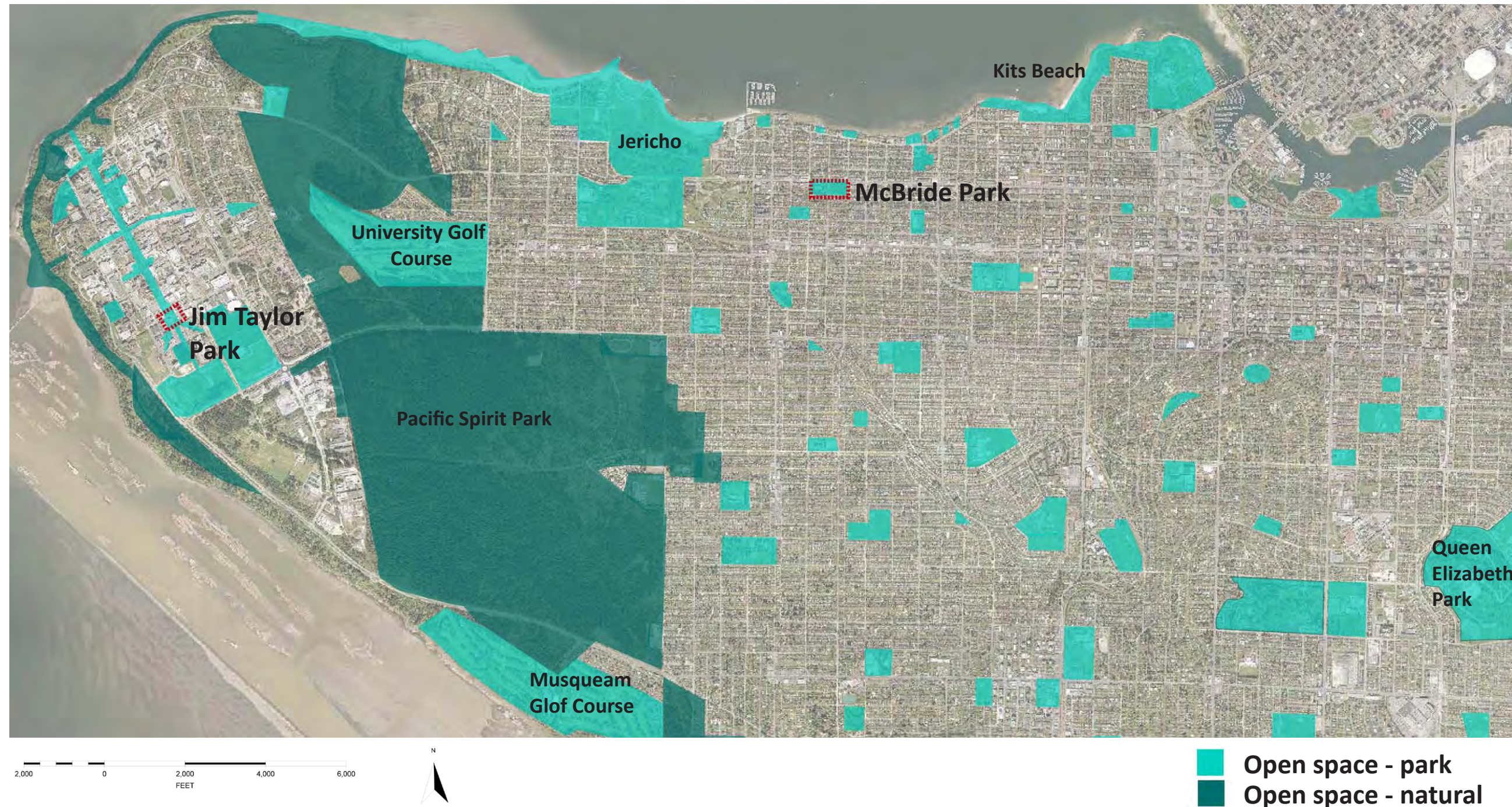






# Public Open Space in Vancouver (west side)

- consistent urban open spaces across Vancouver's west side
- significant 'natural' open space - Pacific Spirit Park
- major regional parks - Pacific Spirit Park, Queen Elizabeth Park
- urban open space - sports fields, neighbourhood parks, schools, golf courses, beaches









# The Role of Neighbourhood Parks

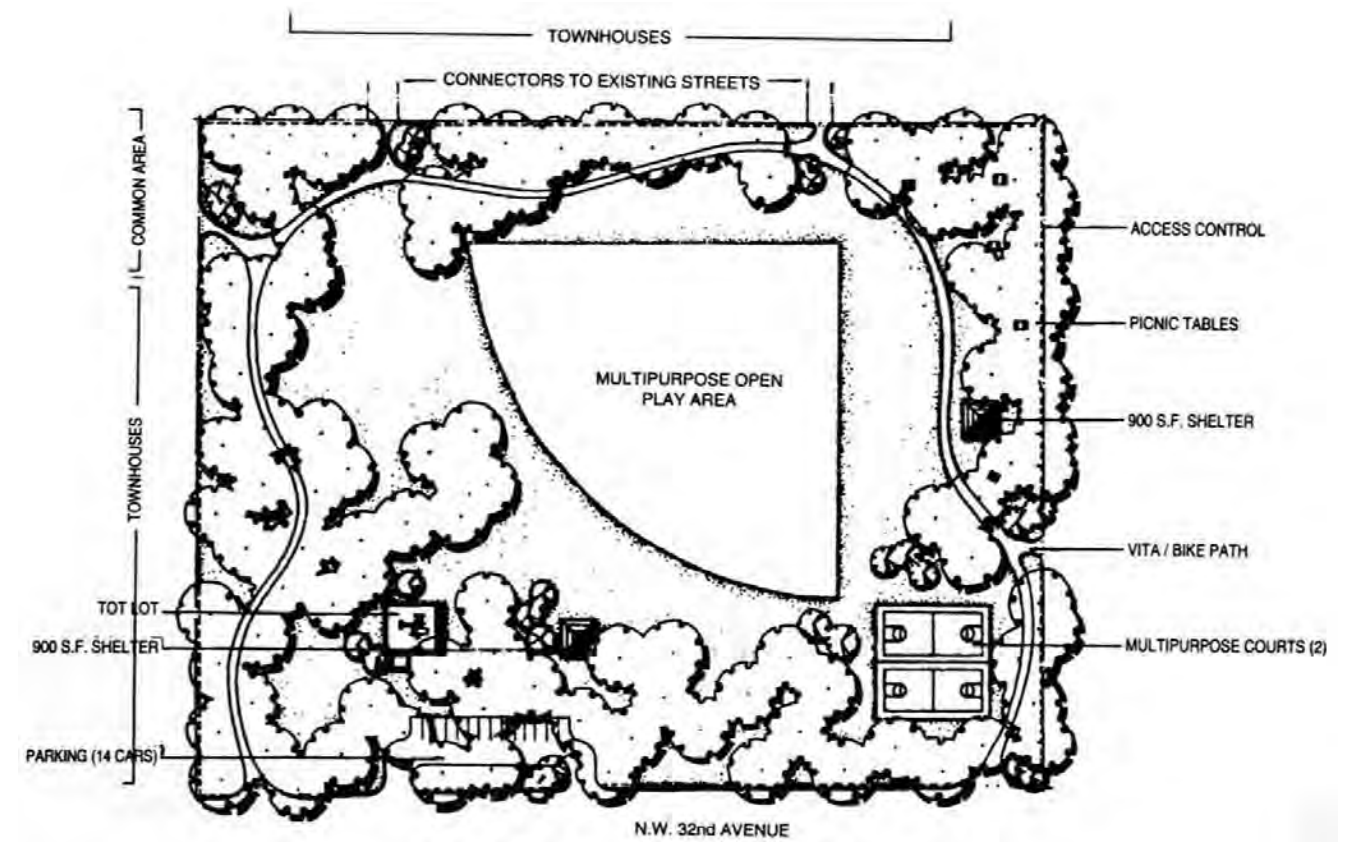
*“serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood.”*  
(National Recreation & Park Association 1995)

**Location:** within 800m of service population (+/- 5,000 people)

**Size:** 2-4 ha (0.5 to 1ha/1,000 population)

**Programming:**

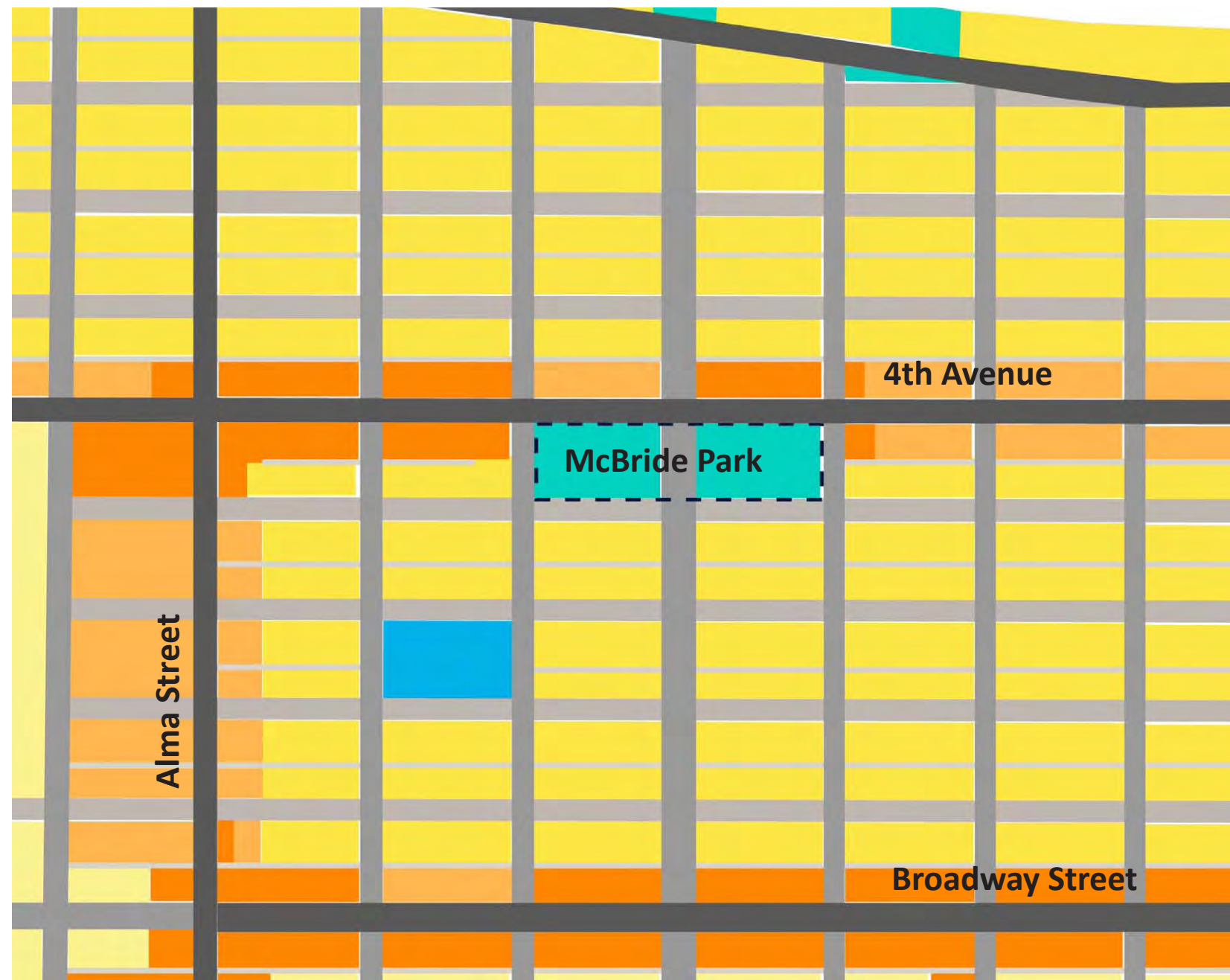
- both active and passive recreation activities
- geared for a variety of age and user groups
- create a sense of place using unique characteristics of site and neighbourhood
- typically includes multipurpose sports fields, playground, circulation system for walking with seating, and general open space



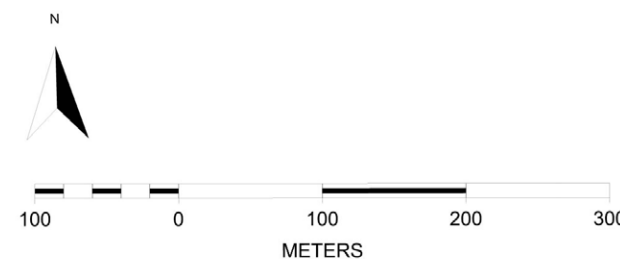


# Neighbourhood Urban Form - Kitsilano

- 6700 residents
- 90 hectares / 56 blocks (~73 people/ha)
- 3 hectares of public park (3.3% of area)
- low density, family-oriented
- 'traditional' Vancouver grid premised upon 400m walking circles



- Open space - park
- Mixed use commercial
- Residential - detached
- Residential - attached
- Residential - stacked
- Civic (Bayview Elementary School)
- Alleys
- Local streets
- Collector Streets
- Arterial Streets



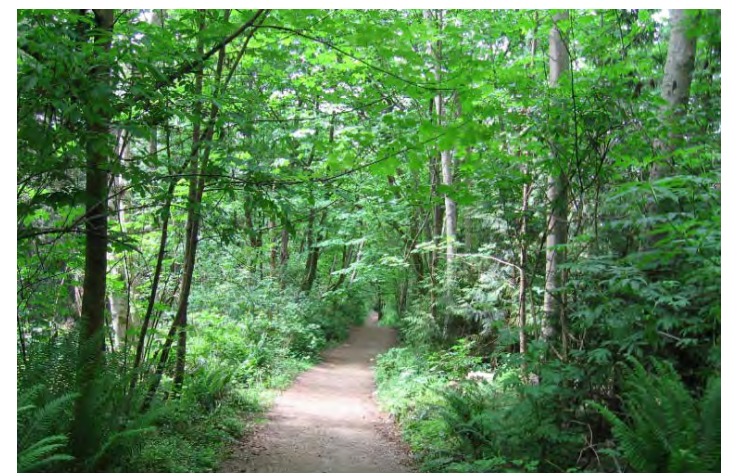
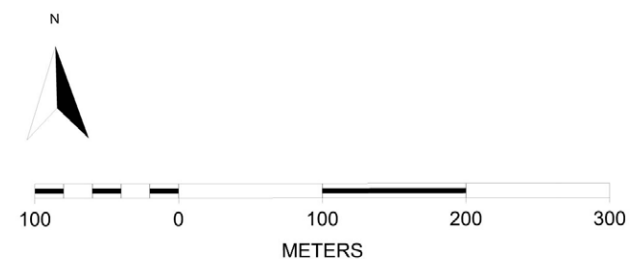


# Neighbourhood Urban Form - Hawthorn Place

- 1500 residents
- ~15 hectares / ~9 blocks (~100 people/ha)
- 4.12 hectares of public park (27.5% of area)
- medium density, family-oriented
- University Neighbourhood Association
- responds to the formal structure of the campus (Beaux Arts + Forest + Contemporary landscape typologies)



- Open space - park
- Residential - attached
- Residential - stacked
- Civic (UBC buildings/function)
- Local streets
- Collector Streets







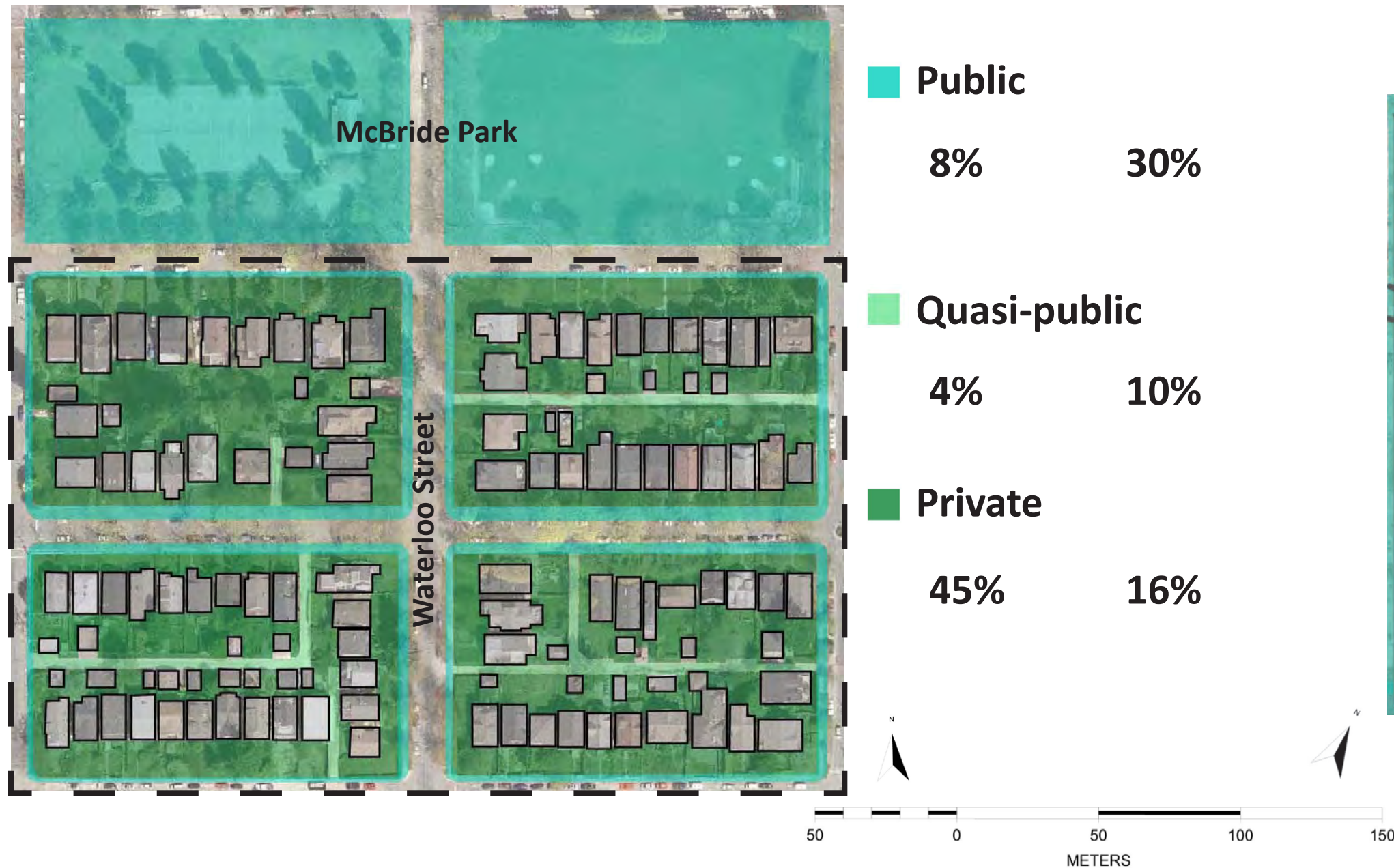
# Private vs. Public Open Space - Kitsilano and Hawthorn Place

## Kitsilano

- extensive private space
- neighbourhood parks provide significant public open space
- some blocks have minimal public realm
- alleys are under-used open space

## Hawthorn Place

- private space largely patios or heavily landscaped buffers
- extensive public space
- quasi or questionably public space creates ambiguity throughout the open space realm





# McBride Park - Kitsilano - a 'traditional' neighbourhood park

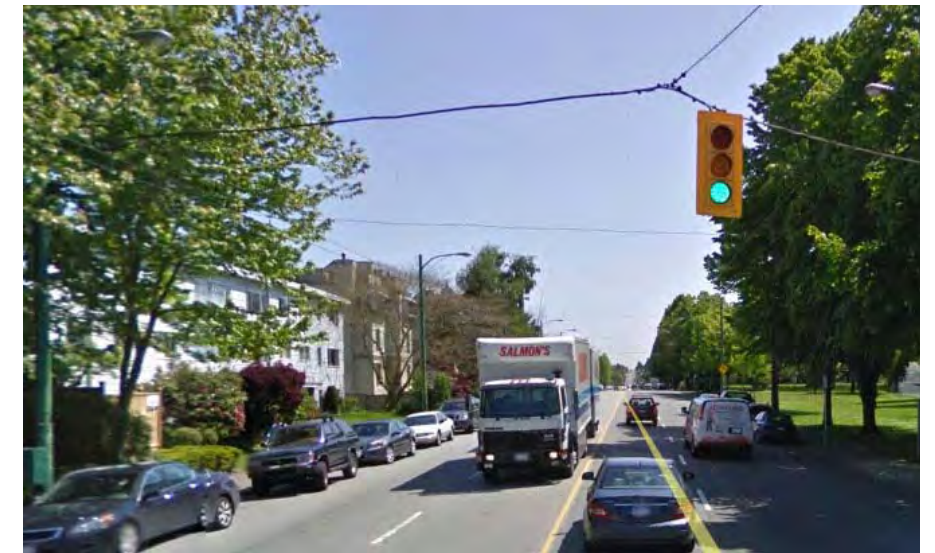
1.71 ha (0.26ha/1,000 people)

## Origins

- 1911 donation from Provincial Government, named for premier Richard McBride
- WWI war garden (vegetables)

## Description

- two blocks on either side of Waterloo Street
- one large open sports field and the other with a playground and tennis courts surrounded by mature trees; established street trees border the entire park
- failed 2006 bid to close Waterloo to cars





## **Jim Taylor Park - Hawthorn Place - a new neighbourhood park**

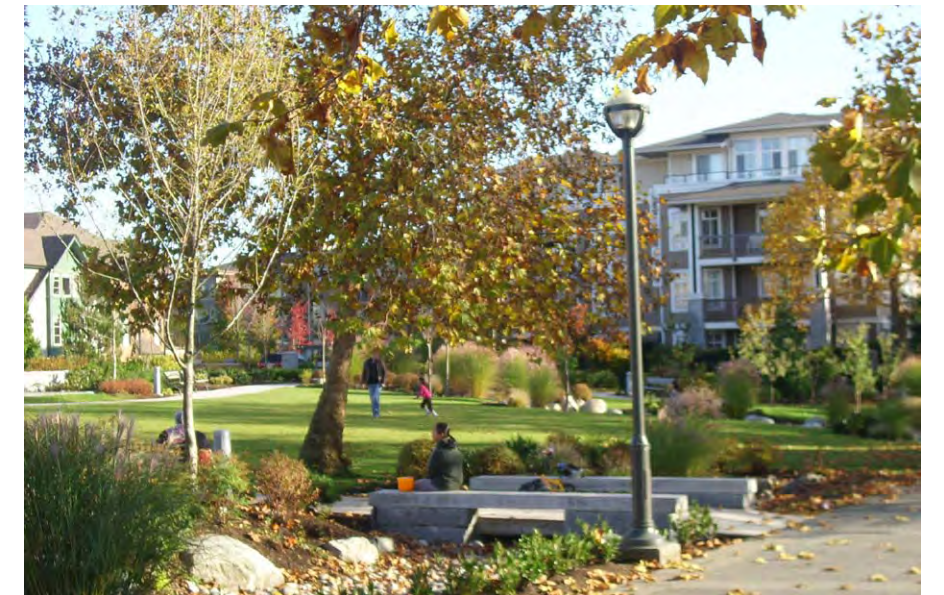
0.5 hectares (+ approx. 1.0 additional pocket park hectares)(~1ha/1,000 people)

### *Origins*

- part of Hawthorn Place neighbourhood development (2001-2007)

### *Description*

- intersected by main north-south axis of the UBC campus
- public open space adjacent to local community centre and coffee shop
- centrally located within the neighbourhood








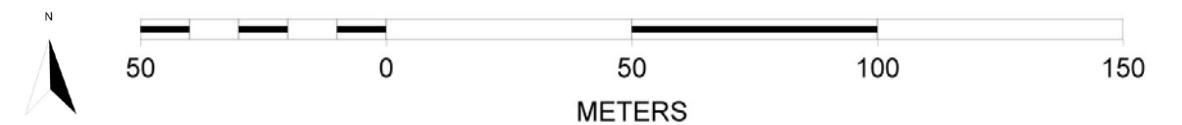




## Programming McBride Park

- field house - washrooms, caretaker's cottage
- soccer fields (x1) / softball fields (x2)
- playground (x1)
- tennis courts (x4)

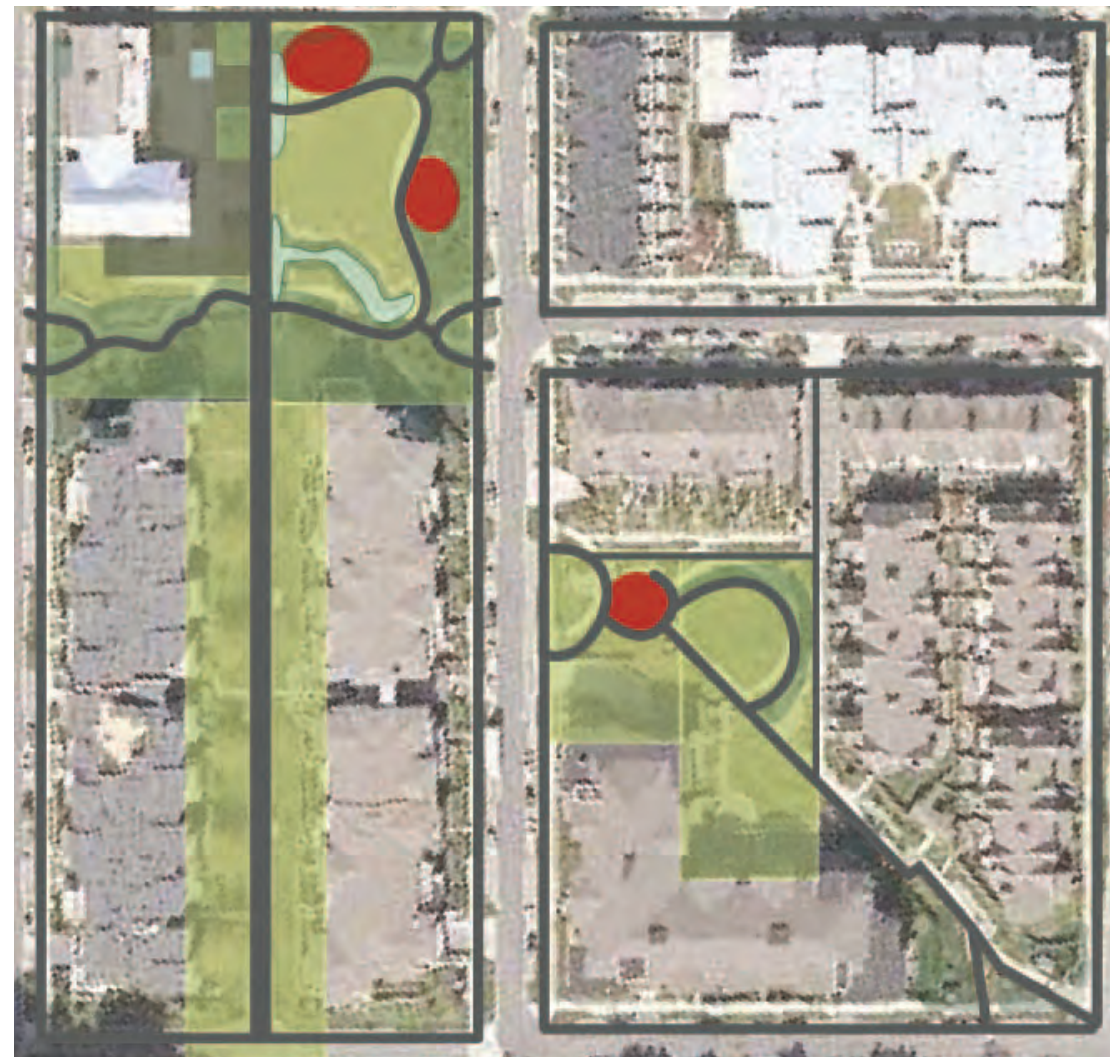
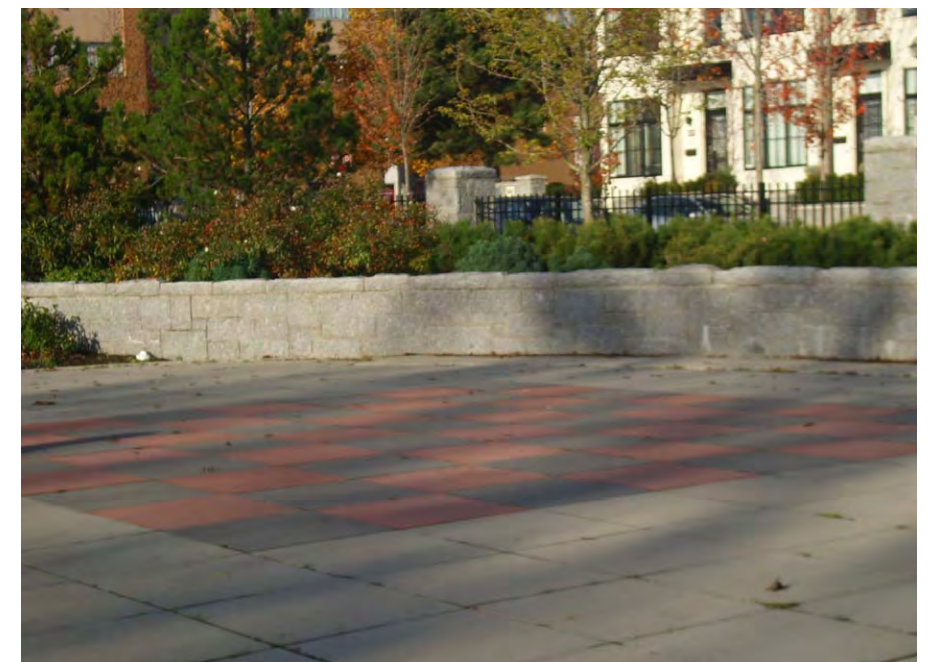
-  General open space (unirrigated grass)
-  Field House (washrooms)
-  Multi-use sports field
-  Tennis Courts
-  Playground







# Jim Taylor Park

- active and passive spaces
- strong connection to coffee shop and community centre, with welcoming plaza
- playgrounds and checkerboard gathering space for play
- opportunities for community events
- seating encourages social gathering and/or personal reflection



-  General open space (irrigated grass)
-  Community Centre Plaza
-  Playground










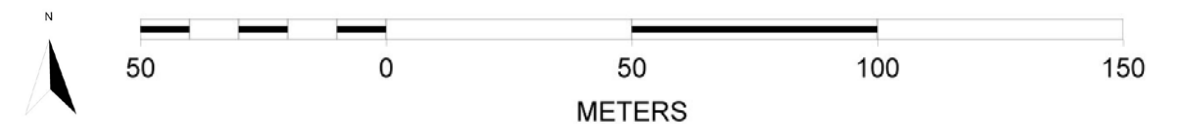
## Circulation

### McBride Park

- peripheral circulation
- minimal defined circulation within



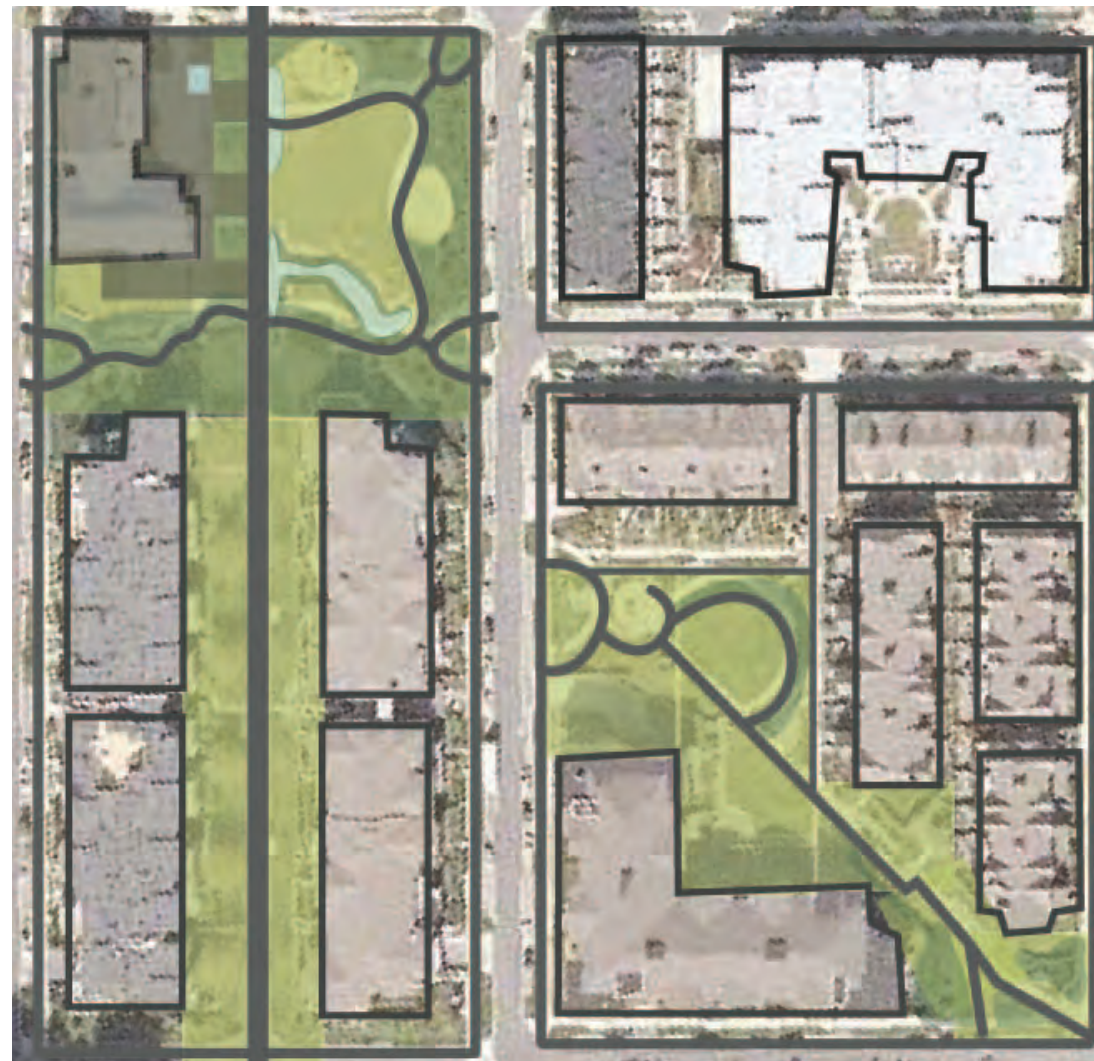
-  Grass
-  Circulation Routes
-  Bus Stops





# Jim Taylor Park

- responds to the campus grid with paths that connect to the campus main axis
- curvy secondary paths allow experiential interest for the user
- paths contrast grid, have places for rest and allow for views into the park
- circulation routes feel very public; rest areas feel more private
- pedestrian oriented routes support biking, bike racks provided
- adjacent collector street (Thunderbird Blvd) medium intensity slow traffic equals safety for children and people



- Grass
- Circulation Routes
- Bus Stops





- Grass - unirrigated
- Grass - irrigated
- Hedge
- Street trees
- Interior trees
- Impervious surfaces

## Landscaping & Maintenance McBride Park

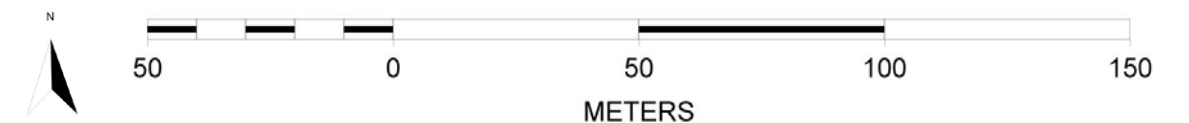
### Landscaping Elements

- mature street & interior trees - create residential feel, establish a canopy
- Berberis hedge - separates sports field from 4th Avenue traffic
- grass
  - highly maintained sports field - irrigation system, frequently mowed
  - low maintenance grass on west side - no irrigation, rarely mowed

- lack of shrubs increase safety, reduce hiding places & maintenance

### Maintenance

- high maintenance sports grass; everything else very low maintenance





# Jim Taylor Park

- nice planting palette frames circulation and edges of the park
- sense of enclosure and protection
- shrubs intended to protect the bioswale may need more consideration
- mature trees along central axis give it a strong sense of place and identity



- Grass - unirrigated
- Grass - irrigated
- Hedge
- Street trees
- Interior trees
- Impervious surfaces





## Use

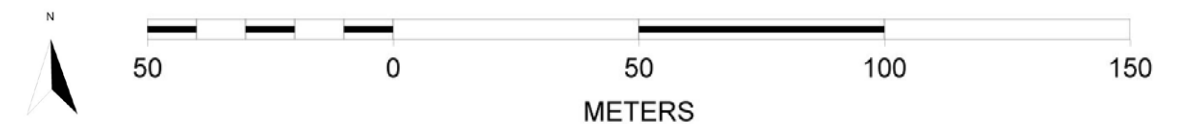
### McBride Park

Saturday October 31st, 2009

Weather: clear, cold

Use:

- 3 individuals at playground
- dog walkers using open space on west side
- no organized activity on the sports field
- runners and walkers on the sidewalk perimeters





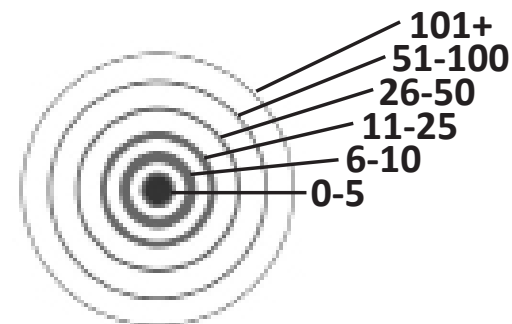
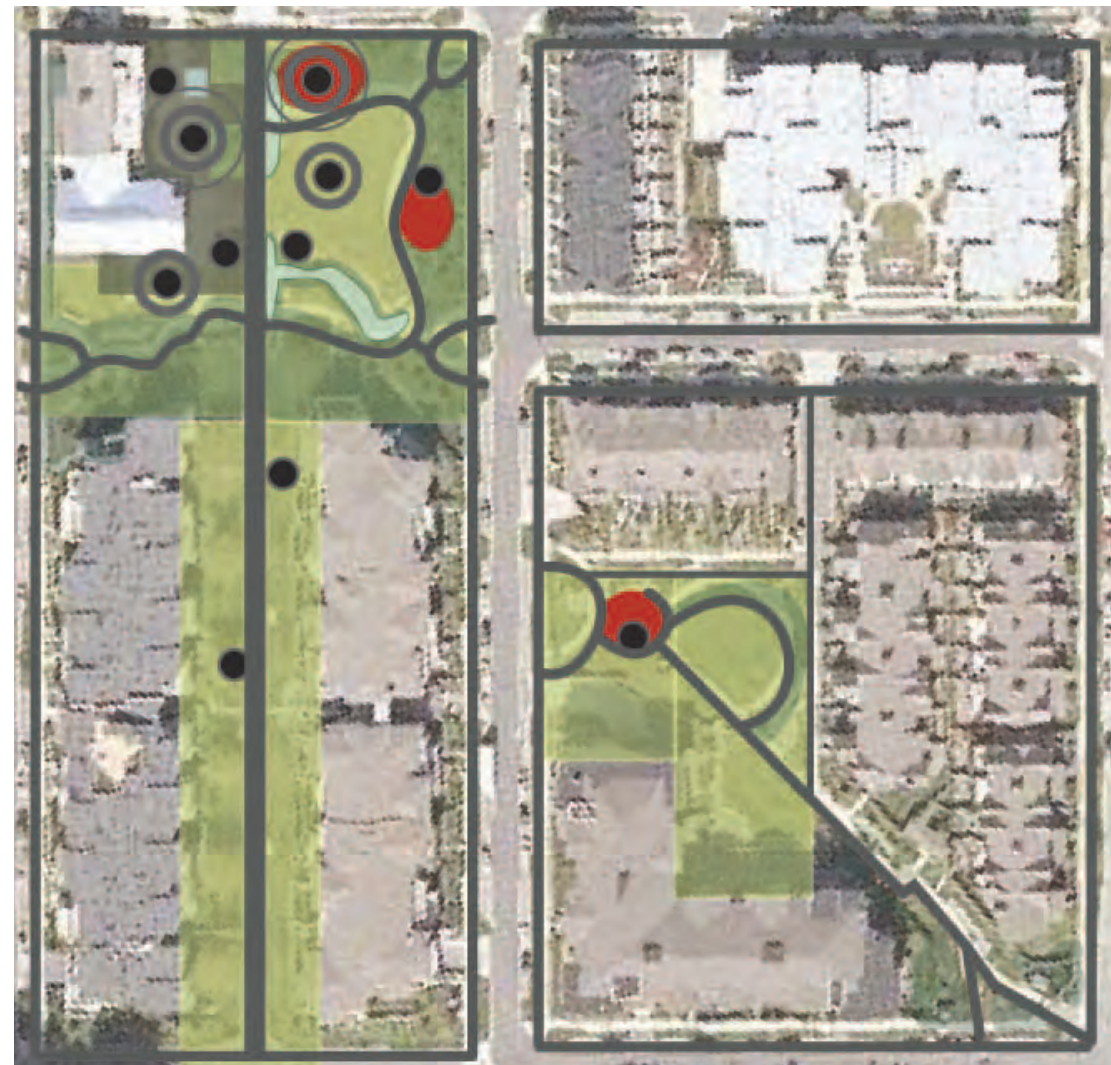
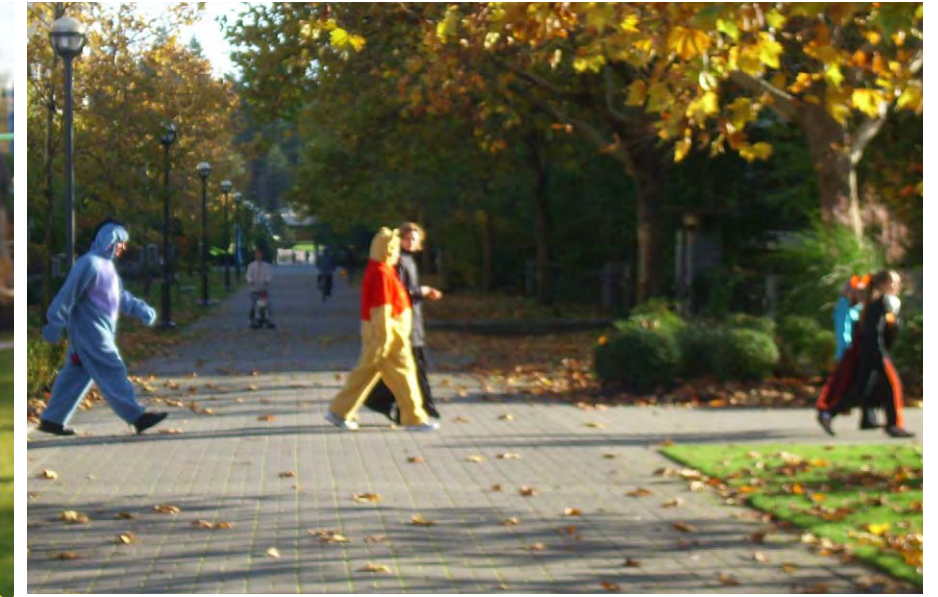
# Jim Taylor Park

Saturday October 31st, 2009

Weather: clear, cold

Use:

- 50+ parents and children celebrate Hallowe'en at Community Centre, many dressed in costumes
- gatherings occurred around building entrance and playground
- children play in dry watercourse, fountain and run on grass







*Use*

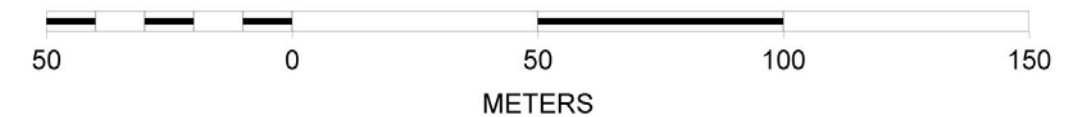
## **McBride Park**

**Saturday November 14th, 2009**

*Weather:* Overcast but dry

*Use:*

- frequent organized sport and recreational activities
- children's soccer games x6 = 100+ parents, children and spectators
- smaller children playing at the park





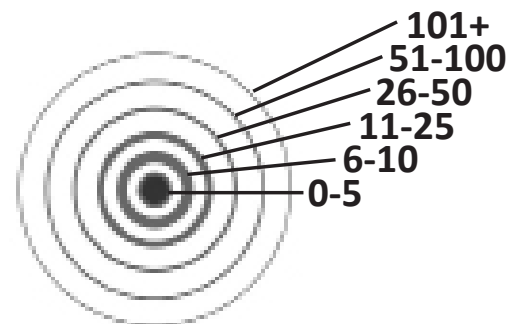
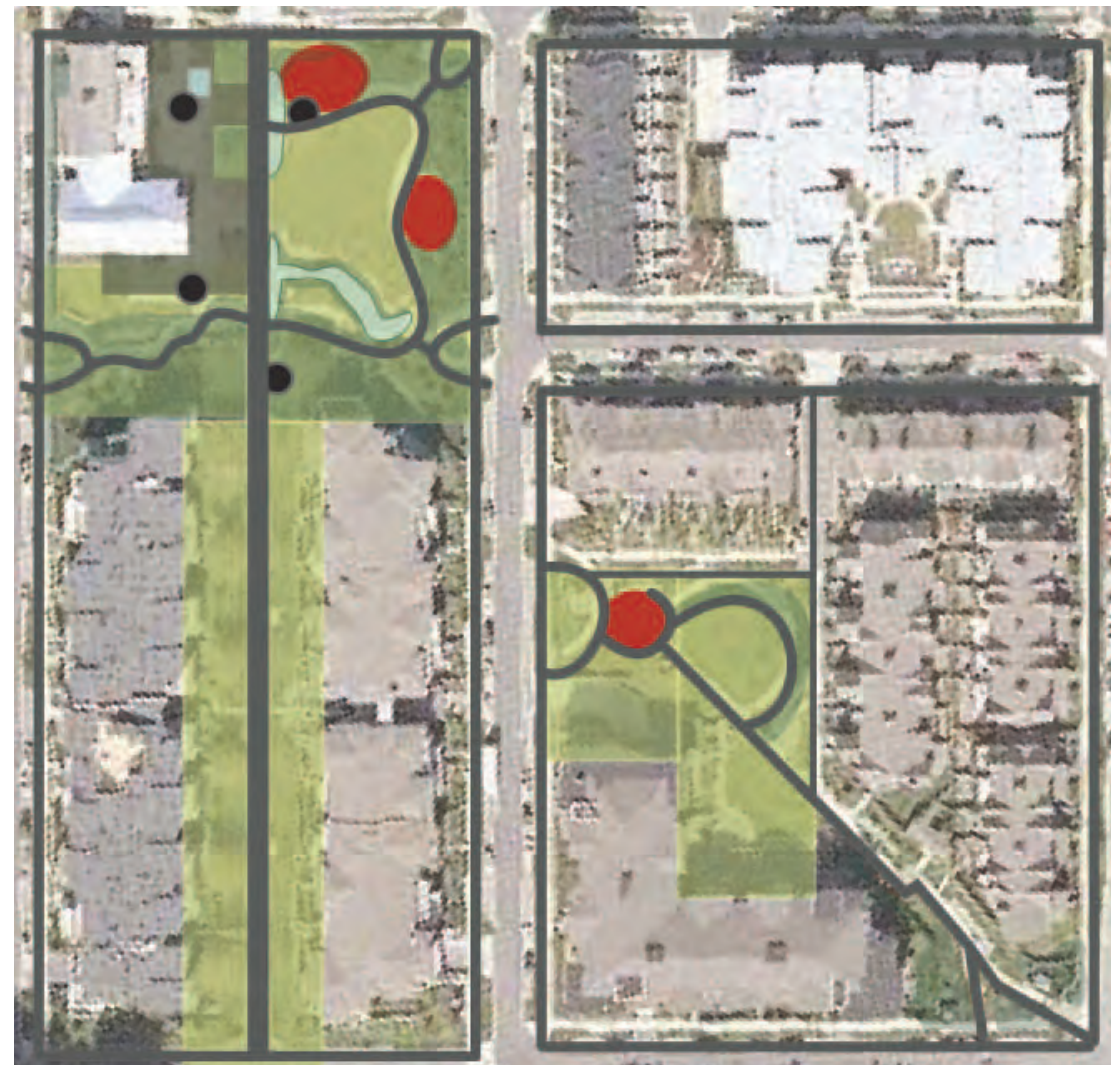
# Jim Taylor Park

Saturday November 14, 2009

Weather: overcast, dry and then spitting

Use:

- 'typical' quiet day
- coffee shop closed for renovations reflect lack of intensity and use
- individual parents with children out for a walk, used playground but left due to rain
- 5+ people moving by on the sidewalks and main mall axis



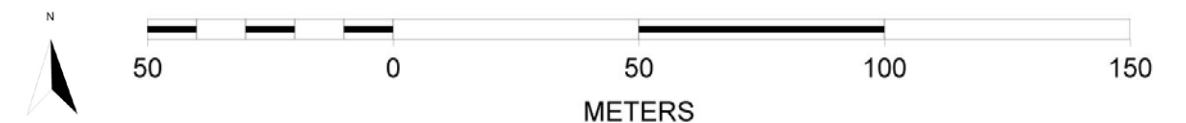




## *Use Patterns*

### **McBride Park**

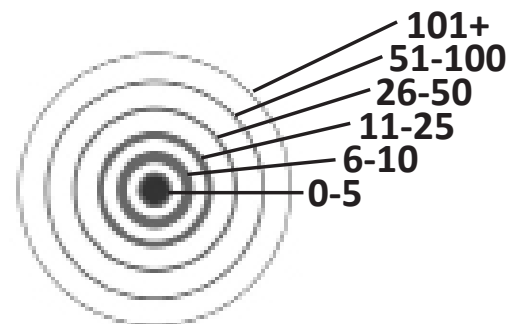
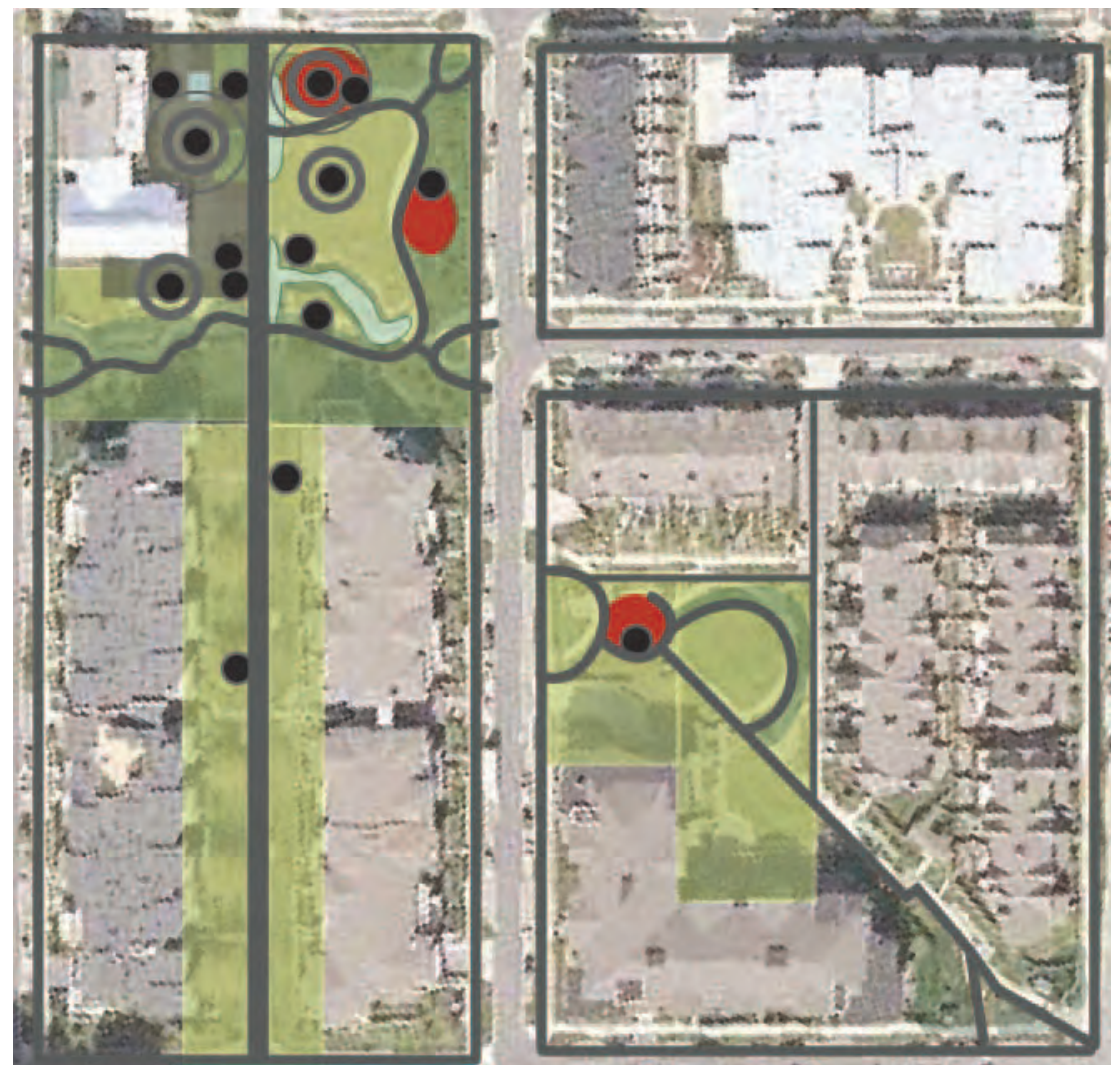
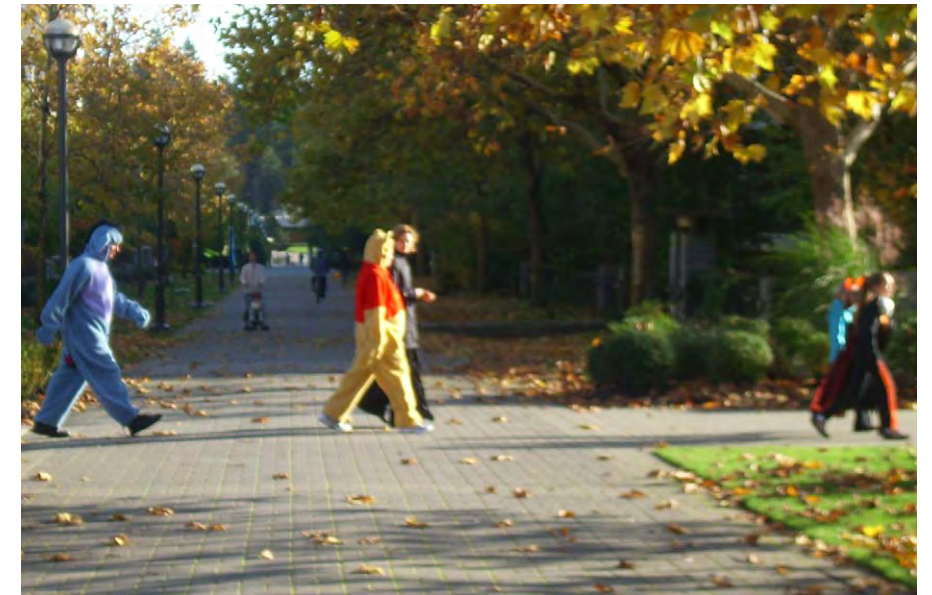
- The multi-use sports field is an important community feature for organized events to activate the space
- sports field most active on weekends in the neighbourhood, regardless of the weather
- informal uses mainly around the edges and variety of programmed spaces





# Jim Taylor Park

- community centre and coffee shop programming significant for Hawthorn Place's open space
- Main Mall axis is an important circulation route and populates the park with passersby
- the secondary pocket parks are not as well used, perhaps because of ambiguity of publicness
- the central grassy area is not as activated as McBride Park's grass





# Key Comparisons

## *Programming*

- organized activities animate space, encourage community involvement and interaction, especially when ritualized and expected
- designation of active and passive play for different age groups
- multiuse grass & programming should provide for a variety of types of recreation, for sport or community based activities

## *Circulation*

- meandering circulation systems define destination rather than grass used for circulation
- open edges help break down barriers to entrance
- strong central axis pulls people through the park
- Jim Taylor park is more interesting, diverse
- highly connective, helps to emphasize pedestrian movement

## *Landscaping & Maintenance*

- high levels of maintenance, landscaping, and irrigated grasses are not directly correlated with high levels of use
- shrubs define edges
- provide aesthetics and visual interest
- importance of trees
- active vs passive





# Conclusions

## *The role of neighbourhood parks?*

	<b>McBride Park</b>	<b>Jim Taylor Park</b>	
Size	B	<b>A+</b>	• Hawthorn Place has extensive public open space
Proximity	A	<b>A</b>	• It is set centrally within the neighbourhood
Programming	A	<b>B</b>	• Programming limits organized recreation within the community
Circulation	A	<b>A+</b>	• Extensive circulation and strong connectivity
Landscaping/Maintenance	A	<b>A+?</b>	• High levels of maintenance... does it improve use? sustainable?
Use	<b>A+</b>	<b>A?</b>	• good informal use; could it be better used evenings/weekends?

## *Interactions & neighbourhood building?*

- McBride Park currently holds more day-to-day place in the community than Jim Taylor Park based on the ritualized variety of organized activities
  - Jim Taylor Park achieves this in terms of social gathering, but could improve in terms of recreational activities, other than/including sports
- Old Barn Community Centre hold events that spill out into the park, creating social interaction
- Jim Taylor Park has much higher levels of landscape maintenance and aesthetic interest than McBride Park, however it is not better used
- Circulation in Jim Taylor park is more diverse and interesting but remains highly connective and helps to emphasize pedestrian movement
- Ambiguity between public and private space can lead to under-used open space 'dead-zones' where people may feel uncomfortable