

Gonzales Park Sheltering

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Introduction

- Concern that City Council intends to continue to allow sheltering in Gonzales Park while closing other parks
- Acknowledge finding sheltering options for unhoused people is difficult
- However, Gonzales neighbourhood has been heavily impacted
- Many reasons why Gonzales Park is a poor choice for sheltering
- Need to find alternatives to urban parks

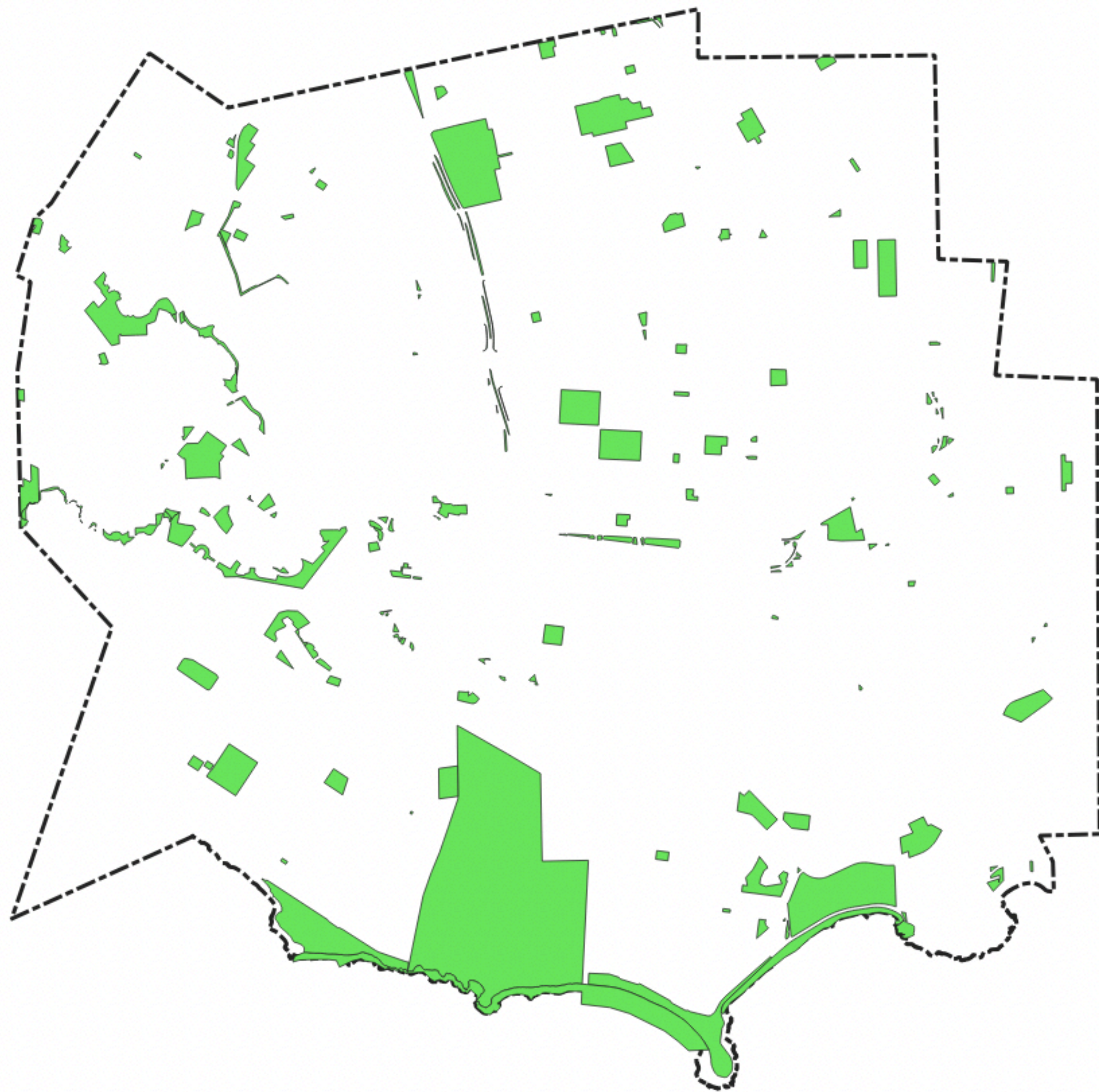


Recent History

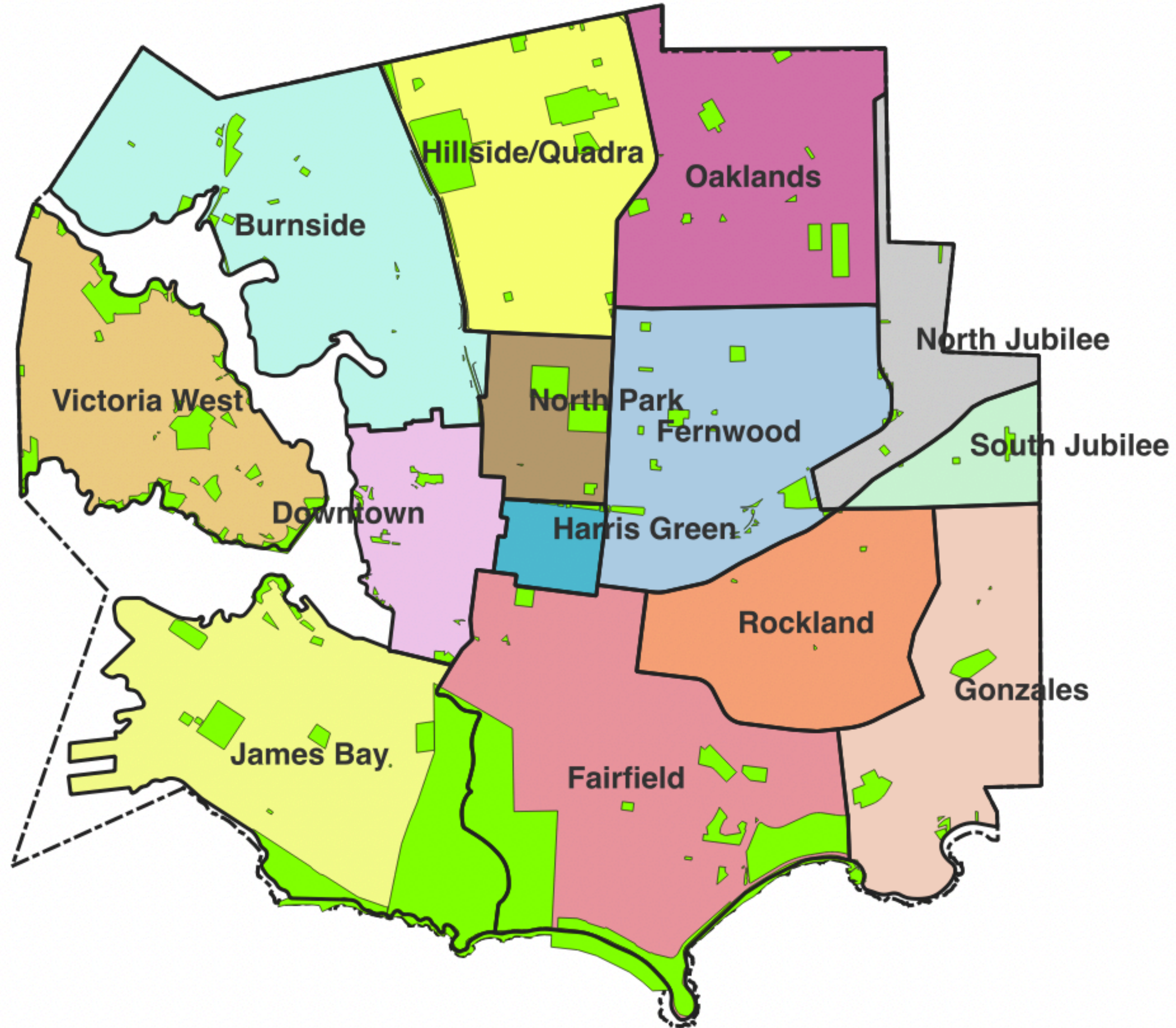
- Park used for sheltering continually since start of pandemic.
- Additionally, bylaw and VicPD transport high risk individuals to the park.
- Problems include threats, thefts, discarded needles, disturbances, etc. - the same as in other parks.



City Parks



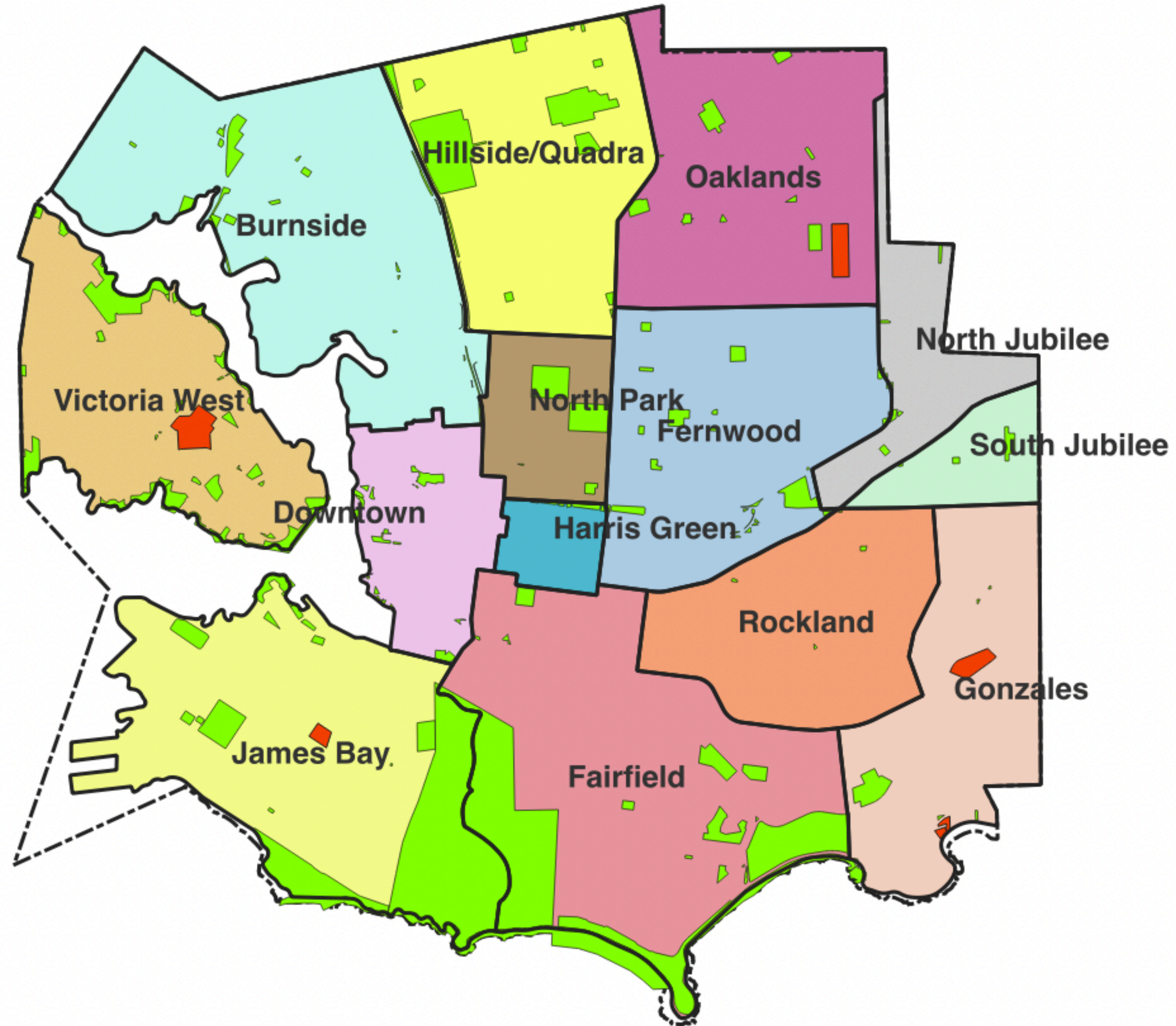
Parks by Neighbourhood



Sheltering Parks by Neighbourhood

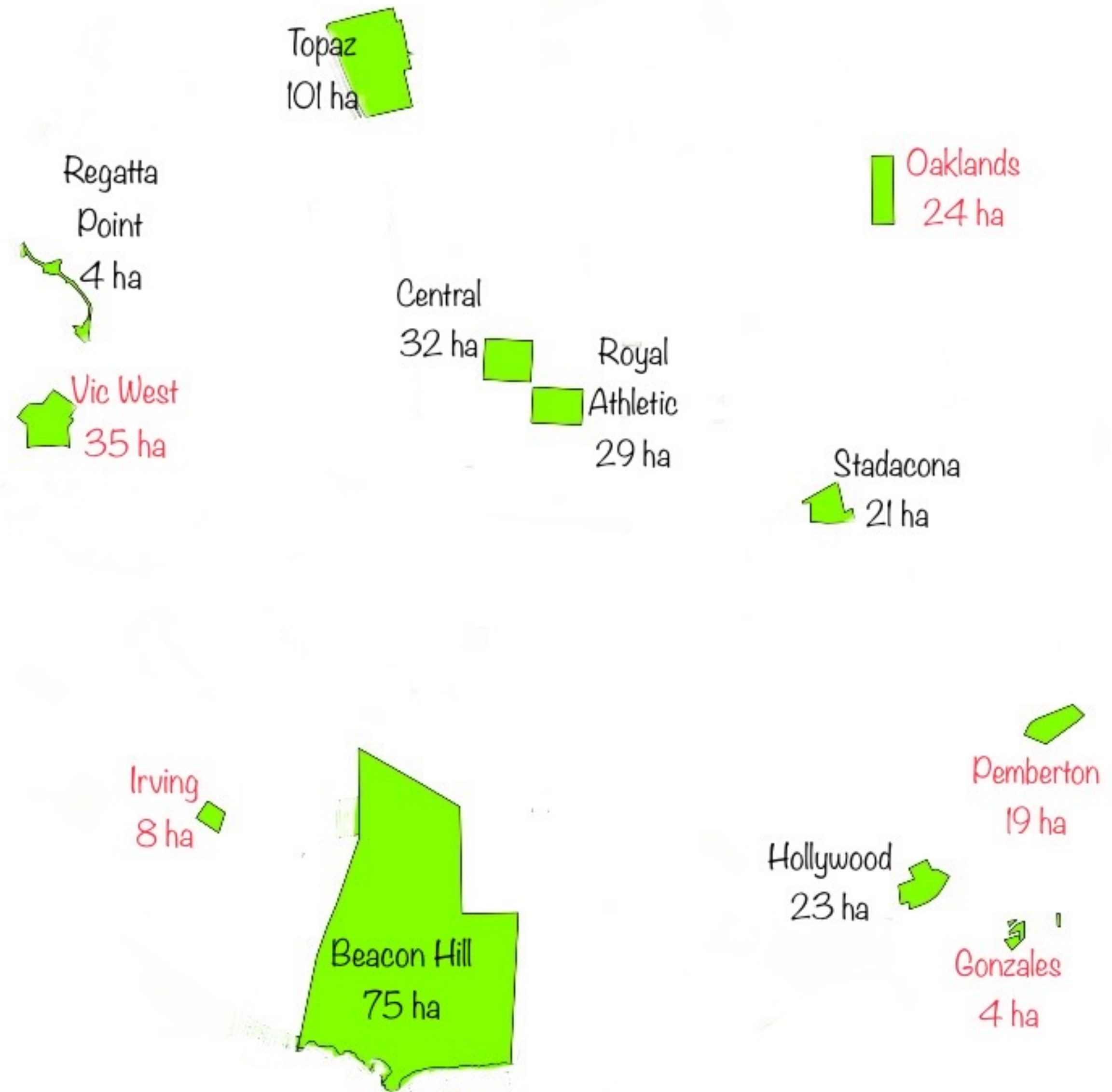
- Irving Park (James Bay)
- Vic West Park (Vic West)
- Oaklands Park (Oaklands)
- Gonzales Beach Park (Gonzales)
- Pemberton Park (Gonzales)

- 14 Neighbourhoods, 10 with no sheltering parks and only Gonzales with more than one.
- Gonzales and Pemberton parks only 700 metres apart.
- This places a disproportionate burden on the Gonzales neighbourhood.



Size of Sheltering Parks

- Number and size of sheltering parks has decreased.
- Gonzales much smaller than others.





Size of Park

- Park is only 83m across at its largest dimension.
- Impossible to get more than about 10 m separation from pathway, road, parking, private property.
- Regatta Point taken off sheltering list because too close to a pathway.



Gonzales Park

Permanent location for sheltering?

- We are concerned that City Council has unrealistic expectations about decreasing demands for sheltering, and their hopes to end sheltering in all parks.
- No endgame in sight
- People will continue to experience addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness.
- Unhoused people will continue to migrate here across the country.



Gonzales Park

Victoria's Best Beach

- The only sandy beach in Victoria
- Attracts users from across Greater Victoria and beyond
- High visitation year-round
- High potential for conflict with people sheltering in park
- Migratory Bird Sanctuary
- Visitation levels and wide range of beach and water activities available make this more than a neighbourhood park.



Gonzales Park

Important for Children

- Used for school field trips
- Used by pre-school and day care
- Unstructured play on the beach



Gonzales Park

Important for Seniors

- Structured activities such as art classes, yoga.
- Unstructured activities including walking, dog walking, enjoying park benches.
- May be more vulnerable than other adults



Gonzales Park

Borders Residential Property

- Unlike some other parks at which roads, buildings or green space providing a buffer.
- Tents erected within several metres of homes.
- Profound impacts on neighbouring housed residents due to disturbance, crime, and stress.
- Concerns re: increasing numbers of people who have been evicted from transitional housing facilities.



What we are Asking

- Immediately close Gonzales Park to all overnight sheltering.
- Use city- and government-owned properties as alternatives to parks for sheltering.
- Work with local municipalities and other levels of government to find options for people unwilling or unable to use transitional housing.





