



NEWS

NEW SAANICH OFFICIAL COMMUNITY PLAN IN THE WORKS

On May 15, Saanich Council received a new draft Official Community Plan (OCP) for consideration.

The OCP is required by provincial law and is the core document that sets out the vision, objectives, and reasons behind all Saanich activities. The latest version incorporates other plans like the Active Transportation Plan and the Sustainability Plan with the aim of improving coherence in our approach to everything from development to parks acquisition and road work.

Some of the core new ideas outlined in the draft include planning development and transportation at the same time, focusing development on Centres, Villages and Corridors, and identifying "Primary Growth Areas." The aim is to create walkable communities where amenities are found within a 15-minute walk of most residential properties.

The main argument behind the new approach is the need to meet climate mitigation objectives and the urgent need for more housing, by adding housing in ways that reduce reliance on cars.

The most significant impact of the new draft is that it comes in the context of new provincial rules allowing municipalities to skip public hearings for projects that are OCP-compliant. The provincial government appears keen to remove what they perceive as obstacles to housing.

The logic here would seem to be that the urgent need for housing outweighs some of the concerns of homeowners who might oppose apartments next door. That being said, the Saanich draft OCP encourages more development along corridors with existing infrastructure and transit services than in single-family residential neighbourhoods.

From the GTCA's perspective, this draft plan offers some hope that at least some of the objectives our community signidentified nearly 20 years ago through our Design Charette and Local Area Plan might finally be realized.

The plan calls for mixed use development, up to six stories, along Tillicum and Burnside, which, if achieved, might bring us some of the restaurants, coffee shops, pubs and other amenities that community members have long asked for.



It allows for heights of up to 12 stories at the intersection of Tillicum and Burnside and eight stories along much of Burnside, so long as projects have "high quality design features" and include a mix of retail and residential opportunities. The plan emphasizes the desire to bring life to "village centres" by creating public gathering spaces, good sidewalks, bike lanes, and public transit options.

continued on page 4

Gorge Canada Day Picnic programme inside!
 July 1st Road Closure Advisory - see back page

We welcome comments—please let us know what you think of your newsletter!

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GORGE TILLICUM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The GTCA boundaries are the Gorge Waterway and Portage Inlet shorelines, the Trans-Canada highway to the north and Harriet/Burnside East/Whittier/Harriet to the east.

To learn more about Saanich Community Associations and view the boundaries, see

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/community-associations.html>

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Food in the Hood

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties. In the context of the newest Community Association initiative, the Food Resilience Working Group. It's about coming together to find ways to create a more food resilient neighbourhood. Climate changes and resulting floods, fires, drought, and war are making sources food from off island less dependable. And prices are rising. How can we ensure good healthy food is easy to access for those who need it?

Last fall, a small group formed to explore what local food resilience looks like and how to support those making food available where we live. Gabe Epstein, the Food Resilience Working Group's chair, and other members of the group (Darren Anderson, Jane Armstrong, Janelle Hatch, and Laurie Jones) met and chatted with folks from Saanich Neighbourhood Place, Les Passmore Centre, CRFAIR, the District of Saanich, and elsewhere. We asked three questions – what is your organization doing around food resilience?, what assistance do you need?, and how do you think members of the broader community might support local food resilience?

Out of these conversations came a draft document entitled GT Food Systems. It's an impressive compilation of the work being done by non-profit organizations, local government, and others, typically with limited resources. The themes that emerged included a need for more volunteers and produce donations, and to make it easier for more people to grow food.

In May, the Food Resilience Working Group reached out to members of the Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers (GTUF). GTUF members grow food, and one of the requests we often heard was that donations of fresh produce were always appreciated, so we asked GTUF members how they saw themselves fitting into the food resilience picture.

A group from GTUF folk met to discuss how they could further support our neighbourhood food systems. There

was no shortage of ideas. One – to Grow an Extra Row – was so well expressed and convincing that I immediately accepted the challenge of growing a bit extra and hope others can do so too. Planting extra in order to have enough to donate was only one of the small actions with big impacts to arise in our discussion. For example, one of our members now picks up extra food donations from a local grocery store.

Other ideas we discussed to make it easier to produce and do more included:

- Mentoring new gardeners.
- Or the logistics of sharing our under-used gardens with those short of space.
- Turning unused spaces into food growing areas
- Neighbourhood food stands; and
- Facilitating ways to get extra food to the organizations that can use it

We also talked about the power of highly visible vegetable gardening and all the connections we make and the sharing that happens when we grow food in our front yards.

Other meetings with GTUF will follow, building on the momentum of our productive first gathering and discussing how the GTUF might work with the Community Association's Food Resilience Working Group.

Are you interested in neighbourhood food resilience? If you live in Gorge Tillicum, are keen about growing your own food and would like to join GTUF, it's as simple as emailing Kate at gturbanfarmers@gmail.com and asking to become a member. And if you'd like to be part of the Food Resilience Working Group, send an email to info@gorgetillicum.ca. The need is there – let's see what we can do!

**Laurie Jones, member of the
GTUF Coordinating Group & of the
GTCA Food Resilience Working Group**



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Our primary concern is whether the OCP will lead to any new neighbourhood amenities or safer streets given that none of our previous plans have.

A key problem is that Saanich policy has been to rely on developers to pay to redesign streets and upgrade infrastructure. However, developers have largely not come forward. The few developers that have, have told the GTCA that the Saanich permitting process is notoriously difficult and uncertain, one of the worst in the CRD.

In a previous issue of this newsletter, we shared our excitement over a few projects that would have brought new housing and retail options along Tillicum and Burnside, as well as two townhouse projects on Gorge Road West.

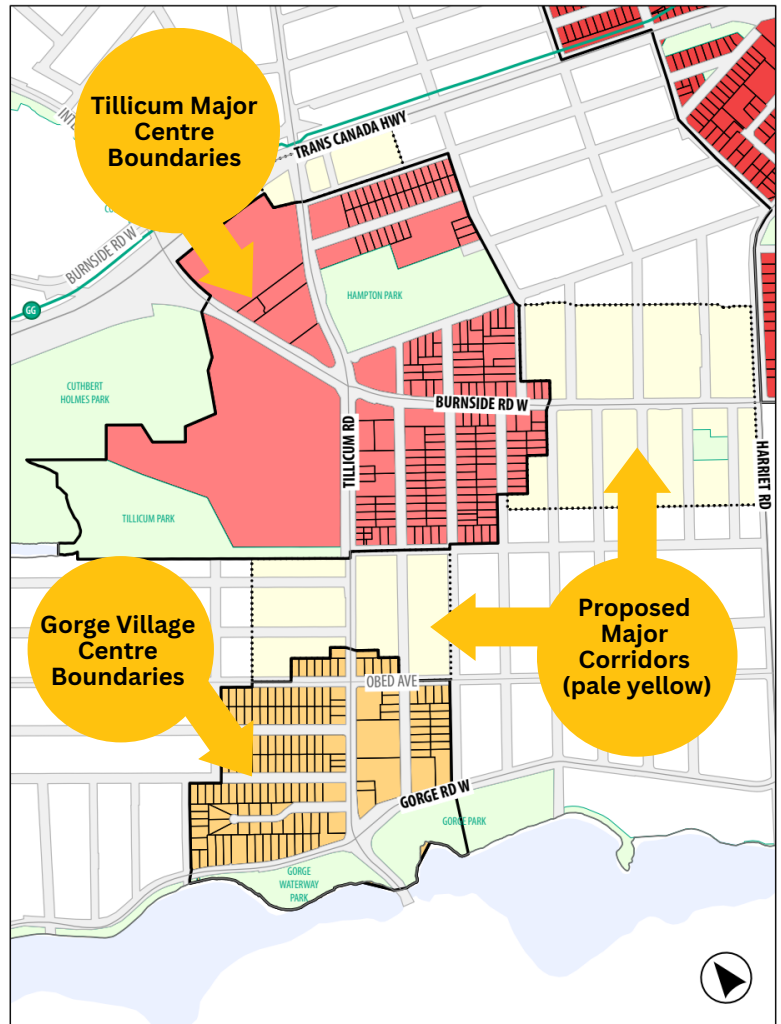
Some of these projects are still grinding through a painfully slow permitting process, but at least one has been abandoned and the viability of several more is being reviewed by their developers. As a result, we remain skeptical of beautifully crafted plans that fail to generate outcomes.

In essence, our community is told by Saanich staff and Council that we must get developers to pay for new amenities and infrastructure, but then Saanich obstructs them through the permitting process.

It also puts our community in a difficult position of negotiating neighbourhood improvements with developers - whose projects often have significant neighbourhood impacts - rather than designing the community we want and creating it ourselves, and then having developers fill in the housing around our vision.

We have some very nice features in our community, but we continue to live with boarded up buildings, dilapidated main streets and a lack of economic vibrancy that is easily found in most of the rest of our region. We need amenities, we need places to walk to and we need smart development to get them. Our community association board of directors will be monitoring closely the way in which the new OCP is used and what it achieves.

-Phil Lancaster



OCP -DRAFT PLAN PAGE 184

To learn more about the OCP process and see how you can provide input, please check out <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/community-planning/official-community-plan-ocp/strategic-ocp-update.html>



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Gorge Day Picnic

Saturday, July 1st, 2023 8:30 am - 4:00 pm
Gorge Waterway Park - Gorge Road West



gorgecanadaday.ca

Full, interactive, up-to-date event map available via website.



PRESENTED BY:



Features & Events

8:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Pancake Breakfast

9:00 AM
Canada Day Family Parade

9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Canada Day Market
Gorge on Art
Classic Car Show
Community Engagement Displays

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Gorge Soccer
Kids Activities/Inflatables
Road Hockey
VCKC Canoe Rides

1:30 PM - 3:30 PM
Strawberry Tea

Food Vendors

See zone numbers for vendor locations.

ZONE 1

Artisan Empanadas by Scorpion Chef
Namaste Indian Cuisine

ZONE 2

Istanbul Cuisine
The Clover Cafe

ZONE 3

Bite Me Cookie Company
Langos by Louie
Softies Ice Cream
Salt Spring Island Fruitsicles

ZONE 4

Ali Baba Pizza
Kuku's East Indian Cuisine
Oh Sugar!
Shiraz Persian Cuisine

ZONE 5

Judy's Snack Shack
Lemon Heaven
Tamales Don Carlos

ZONE 6

Optimist Club Food

Information

Lost & Found, information and memberships are available at the GTCA tent.

Recycling/Composting

Help the environment by using our designed recycling and composting containers located along the waterfront.



isine

e

Mexican

Truck

posting

by using the
composting
g the road.

Entertainment

BUSKERS' CORNER 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM

10:30 AM - Mark Comerford
1:00 PM - Penny Belle
Local Neighbourhood Talent

GORGE ON ART STAGE 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Music by Performers
from the Victoria
Conservatory of Music

MAIN STAGE

10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

see column on the right

ROVING ENTERTAINMENT

10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Enchanted Fables - Meet
& Greet the Mermaid &
Tower Princesses

**More info on
the website**

Main Stage Performers

12:00 PM - Paradise Street



1:15 PM - Stephanie Cadman Trio



2:30 PM - Freeze Frame



PANCAKE BREAKFAST



The pancake breakfast starts at 8:30 am at Craigflower-Kosapsom Park, on the Admiral end of Gorge Road, and runs until 11 a.m. This is a very popular event so come early.

Proceeds to the Saanich Fire Charitable Foundation. CASH ONLY.

STRAWBERRY TEA



The delicious Strawberry Tea is set in the Victoria Canoe and Kyak Club building. Fresh strawberries on cake are served with tea, coffee, or lemonade for \$5 per person. The tea is served from 1:30 - 3:30 pm. Enjoy a break and an excellent Gorge waterway view from a historic house.

TIPS TO ENJOY YOUR DAY

- Please bring a reusable water bottle. Water is available at the water fountain beside the public washrooms in Zone 3, near the Austin Street intersection.
- Bring hats & sunscreen.
- Look for the volunteers in blue shirts if you have any questions or need help.
- Some vendors only take cash. Please note there is no cash machine on site.

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Notable LOCALS

AMELIA WELLS : CHAMPION ATHLETE

This year, a young woman brought up on Obed Avenue in the heart of Gorge Tillicum has achieved significant prominence in the world of international sport. The sport in question is skiing and in January of this year, the young woman, Amelia Wells, became the first Vancouver Island-raised cross country skier to race for Canada in the 2023 Junior/Under 23 World Ski Championships in Whistler, B.C. Not only did Amelia qualify and compete, but she was also one of the youngest competitors in this category, racing against older skiers who had been contenders in skiing events on the Olympic/World Cup level of the sport.

There is a backstory of sport successes to this latest honour, including winning multiple medals at the 2023 Canadian National Ski Championships, including 1st in the Open Women's 10km race and 2nd in the Open Women's 30km race, being voted Alberta World Cup Academy (AWCA) "Athlete of the Year 2020-21," and many other race successes. What is particularly impressive about these achievements is Amelia's overcoming serious training obstacles, notably the distance of Victoria from the Nordic ski trails at Mount Washington, meaning that she was generally not able to train with the Strathcona Nordic Club midweek, nor, of course, for most of the summer and fall.

What is also impressive about Amelia is that she also has achievements outside the world of racing. She was on the honour roll at her high school for the last four years of her school career, and is now enrolled in an honours Bachelor in Health Sciences at the University of Calgary, and has been and is involved in several research projects, including with Alberta Health Services. There is also much caring



Photo: Nathaniel Mah

for others in her resume too, including work with children with behavioural difficulties in the Little Steps Services (Victoria) program, being an Inclusion Support Physical Literacy worker at the Pacific Institute for Sports Excellence in Victoria, and training and encouraging younger skiers in many settings and programs.

I often work in our neighbourhood and wonder who lives behind the doors of houses I've never been inside, and what their special gifts might be. Now I know that the doors of at least one house on Obed Avenue are those of the family home of an extremely talented young athlete and all-round person. May she achieve her goals on participating in the Olympics, continuing in helpful research projects, and encouraging younger female skiers to follow their dreams too.

-Chris Bullock

A Celebration – The Native Plant Garden Turns Nine Months Old!

The native plant garden under the mural at Burnside and Wascana has been in place for about nine months and is doing well. Shooting star, spring gold, western buttercup, sea blush, graceful cinquefoil, woolly sunflower, nodding onion, and sea thrift are a few of the native plants that have bloomed so far, with more colour to come as the months progress. The garden will fill in over time.

Native plants are so important to the bees and insects native to our area and there's so much to learn from watching a garden such as this. Native plants evolved defense mechanisms to native insects, who evolved in turn, enabling them to eat what others might find toxic. Each developing specific niches in which they can thrive.

Native butterflies and moths seek out and require specific native plants in order to feed and lay their eggs. If the plants that host them are not there, they decline. By being overly tidy in our gardening practices, we can sometimes send insect eggs off to be composted. Although many denizens of our gardens may seem undesirable, their presence turns our yards, parks, and boulevards into habitat for birds. Nesting birds need thousands of insects to feed their young at this time of the year. It could be that a few holes in our garden leaves might be a good thing after all.



Local pollinators know just how to access the nectar and pollen of native flowering plants. Bumble bees land on the flowers of shooting star, for example, and buzz loudly to vibrate the pollen loose. And the quality of pollen, too, is different between flowers. An open-flowered Nootka rose native to this area might be preferred over a lovely introduced rose with layers and layers of fancy, folded petals. Elsewhere in the world where the layered rose is native, local bees and insects more than likely evolved with mouthparts allowing them to easily get in and gather nectar and pollen from the flower.

All these reasons and more are behind the current drive to return more native plants to our landscaping. They are the restaurants that our native insects, bees, and birds prefer and in some cases need in order to survive. And in addition to pollinating flowers, native bees and insects pollinate our food gardens, ensuring that our pear and apple trees set fruit, our squash grow large, and our kale set seeds for planting in the future. Native plants increase the diversity of pollinators attracted to our gardens early and late in the season, helping our neighbourhood's flower and vegetable gardens thrive.

The native plant garden under the mural is intended to support local pollinators and insects and add beauty to the neighbourhood. It also showcases native plants that can be added to a sunny garden or balcony. On the mid-block of Orillia Street, between Maddock and Obed, is another bed planted with native plants that prefer shade. Wander by, see what plants you like the look of, and consider adding native plants to your spaces.

Laurie Jones
Gorge Tillicum Pollinator Project

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GTCA UPDATE

We held our Annual General Meeting in May at the beautiful Scottish Community Centre just over the Admirals Road Bridge. We had a good turnout and welcomed two new board members, Jennifer White and Marie-Nicole Dubois. Ed Pullman left the board, and we thank him for his contributions.

Our first priority is to see why so many developments are stalled in our area. So much work and potential have gone into working on these projects that it would be a shame if nothing came out of it - no new homes or services and no new development money for improved sidewalks, street crossings etc. Currently, we have the worst-case scenario with a large empty hole at the foot of Early Grey Street and a vacant and decaying site at Tillicum/Obed/Albina. The bulk of this work is being taken on by our Land Use Working Group, chaired by Phil Lancaster.

We are also very busy preparing for another Gorge Canada Day Picnic, and we have been assured that the road will be ready on the day.

The Picnic is the GTCA's signature event, and after twenty-plus years, it runs like a good oil machine. However, this only happens through solid leadership and a committed group of volunteers. I want to acknowledge Rob Wickson and Ray Farmer, who have been there since the first Picnic! This will also be the last year for our amazing Gorge Canada Day Picnic Chair, Chris Kask.

Chris told over the Chair role from picnic founder Harry Lewis and has been at the helm for almost a decade. (No small feat for someone who also serves as the GCTA Treasurer) Chris has been instrumental in documenting the processes and procedures for the Picnic so that one day he could hand over the job.

So we are looking for someone to talk over from Chris. While this is a challenging role, it is very rewarding. So if you live in the community and are interested, please get in touch with us at info@gorgetillicum.ca or pop the GTCA tent on Canada Day. Look for the red tent at the Admiral's Road end of the site.

See you on Canada Day!

-Vera Wynn-Williams

Just another walk in Cuthbert Holmes Park.

A tired and cranky juvenile Elephant Seal found her way beside the Burnside exit off the TransCanada highway. (A wrong turn when looking for a quiet place to molt).

Two Federal Department of Fisheries Officers and Two Saanich Police Officers, nudged her up and over the berm into the park, with 1.5 hours of grunt work.

This is where I joined them, and another hour later we had her back into the Colquitz, where hopefully she hauled out somewhere isolated and safe.


-Dorothy Chalmers



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Membership Application

Membership in the GTCA is by calendar year. In December of each year, those paying membership fees during December may designate them to be the fee for the upcoming calendar year and, in such cases, membership is valid from January 1st to December 31st of the following year. Join or renew by mail or online on our website!

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PHONE NUMBER: _____

*EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

*This will be added to our distribution list for occasional emails regarding upcoming events or community issues.

If you are paying for other members of your household, please list the other Members' names:

PAYMENT:

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Couples : \$10/each x _____ memberships = \$ _____

Organization: \$25/each x _____ memberships = \$ _____

Donation: Your extra support helps offset
Newsletter and other costs. Thank-you! + \$ _____

Total Payment Enclosed = \$ _____

DETAILS:

Membership is open to any resident or property owner who is 19 years old or older living at a fixed and officially recognized street address within the Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood and to businesses and other organizations operating at a fixed and officially recognized street address within the Association territory.



SATURDAY, JULY 1, 2023 ROAD CLOSURE ADVISORY

On Saturday, July 1, 2023 the Gorge Tillicum Community Association is hosting the Gorge Canada Day Picnic to celebrate community and our beautiful neighbourhood. We again expect over 10,000 people to attend and stroll along Gorge Road itself and the Gorge Waterway paths.

An integral part of the day is the closure of Gorge Road West between Tillicum and Admirals. We applied for and received a Special Event Permit from the Municipality. This road closure is permitted by the Municipality of Saanich and the Saanich Police Department and coordinated with BC Transit.

Here are the details of the road closure:

- 1. Gorge Road West between Tillicum Road and Admirals Road will be closed to vehicle traffic from 7:30am to 5:00pm on July 1st.**
- 2. Vehicle access to/from Gorge Road West properties will be for emergency purposes only, and thus residents are advised to park their cars on the side streets on the evening of June 30th and all day on July 1st until 5pm if you need to leave the area. Access to and from all side streets will be by Vincent Ave, Cowper Ave, and Admirals Rd (for Rockwell & Inlet).**
- 3. All side streets will be blocked for the day at their intersection with Gorge Road West by a police vehicle or an unattended parked vehicle.**
- 4. The westbound lane of Gorge Road West is a designated emergency access route for police, fire, and paramedics. It MUST be kept free of obstacles for emergency vehicles if necessary. Please do not set up games, furniture, or anything at all on the road or public sidewalks.**
- 5. No residential parking is permitted in Gorge Road West parking lots/areas between 7:30am and 5:00pm on July 1st.**
- 6. Bus service is already suspended this year on Gorge Road West, but to be clear, there will be no BC Transit bus service on this section of Gorge Road West during the road closure.**

Thank-you for your understanding and co-operation. For further information and a detailed map of the Picnic, please visit the Picnic website at gorgecanadaday.ca