



Gorge Tillicum Community Association

Neighbourhood NEWS

The Bus Campaign and the Return of the Number 11

It seems somehow petty to write about reduced bus service when there is so much drama in the big wide world. Though the consequences of poor understanding of how important good Transit service is to our community may fall hard on some of us, no one is dropping bombs or trying to invade. Still, some of us feel an obligation to do what we can to try to keep our own little piece of paradise operating as the angels want. So, to the bus story.

As many of you may already know, the end of construction on Gorge Road West did not bring a return of the good old bus #11 as we had all expected. Instead, BC Transit, after extensive consultation with Burnside Gorge, mistakenly concluded that we didn't need frequent and convenient transit connections to downtown. The replacement service along Gorge on #25, involved a lengthy tour through Esquimalt and offered only 22 trips per day in place of the 65 trips per day that had been the norm for more than 50 years. We heard the complaints and passed them on to the Victoria Regional Transit Commission. Many people in the community added their own voices but the initial response was the typical anodyne piece of wordsmithing that one expects from any bureaucracy these days. However, behind the scenes, the message got through and it took just a little more effort to get a cooperative Transit official to offer to attend a community meeting.

On the 26th of September, the GTCA Board of Directors organised a public meeting at Saanich Neighbourhood Place. The turnout was enough to convince Mr Megenbir, who sat bravely through a heavy barrage of stories about how the service reduction was affecting people, that a mistake had been made. However, the initial offer to try to fix it came with the



excuse that there was nothing that could be done until April 2024, at the earliest. This was simply not good enough. The GTCA, together with a small group of community volunteers who met shortly afterwards to figure out how to get a faster resolution. We decided that we had a lot to work with, including the issue of the lack of coordination with Saanich Engineering that resulted in bus shelters being placed on the wrong side of the road and the fact that the Transit Commission, who are supposed to review and approve changes of this kind, had not done a good job. We crafted a strategy, organized messaging and communications and then reached out to media and to elected officials. The resulting storm of derisive media along with direct appeals to elected officials was enough to generate a phone call announcing that the old #11 route would be reinstated from the 8th of January.

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

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Published:
Spring (March/April)
Summer (June)
Fall/Winter (October)

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Distribution:
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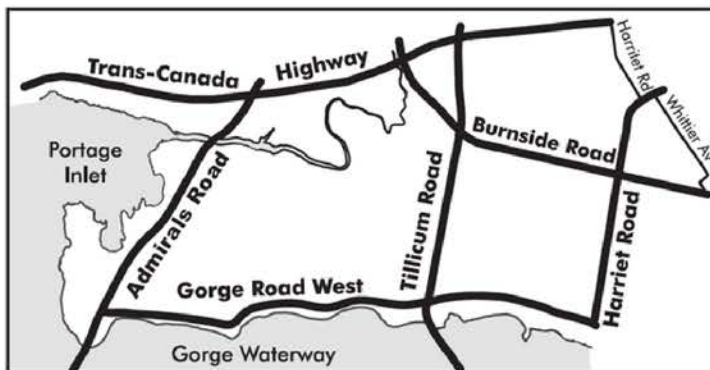
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GORGE TILLICUM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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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This initially sounded like victory. But it turned out that the reinstated service would not be as frequent as it once was. This was a disappointment as we had hoped that the aim shared by Transit and our community was to see service improve, not decline. We agreed to keep working together with Transit to figure out a better solution. By the time you read this, we should have held the second public meeting, planned for the 24th of October, and should have presented a community appeal for better service to the Commission, on the 7th of November.

There are a few lessons that came out of this whole adventure. First, that there are serious weaknesses in the way Transit service planning connects to land use planning. We have governments at all levels pushing for more housing without at the same time increasing the resources allocated to public transit. We also noticed the incoherent planning processes that brought about a new AAA bike lane at the same time as a reduction in Transit service adjacent to it. In addition, we learned that local elected officials have been pushing for the expansion of Transit service even though the most recent provincial budget did not include a line for Transit expansion. This leaves Transit staff trying to figure out how to spread too few resources over too much demand. Finally, we learned that we have a voice. We raised it and were heard. We now know how to use it for other issues – and we will.

Phil Lancaster

GTCA BOARD MEETINGS

The Board normally meets at 7pm the second Thursday of each month from September to June. Please check our website for the most up to date information. Everyone is welcome to attend board meetings. If you want to put an item on the agenda please email our president one week in advance. Please email info@gorgetillicum.ca if you would like a copy of the agenda in advance of the meeting.

The GTCA Social Media Campaign



Community PROFILE

DONNA ROTH - CELEBRATING THE LOSS OF A COMMUNITY CHAMPION



Donna Roth, January 1952- July 2023

On September 2nd, 2023 community members, co-workers, neighbours, friends and family gathered to celebrate the life of Donna Roth at the Victoria Scottish Community Center. There were 140 attendees, with an additional 16 joining via live stream from various locations, including her hometown of Edmonton, as well as Kamloops, Armstrong, Toronto, England, California, and Switzerland.

The Allegra Singers, the choir that Donna sang with for a number of years, gave a moving rendition of Hallelujah and Dona Nobis Pacem, two of Donna's favourite songs. To conclude the ceremony, the delicious strawberry shortcake honored Donna's dedication to the Gorge Canada Day Strawberry Tea.

Donna is remembered for her love of family, cats, and all living beings. She excelled as a nurse, enjoyed gardening, and loved to travel. Her legacy is one of genuine kindness and a strong sense of community.

Donna played an active role in the GTCA for many years. She took the lead in organizing the Gorge Canada Day

Strawberry Tea, served as a member of GTUF, volunteered for the Boulevard Brigade, contributed to the Traffic Committee, and distributed the newsletter. In addition, she acted as a Neighbourhood Watch Captain and participated as a Heart and Stroke Canvasser.

Donna moved into the Gorge Tillicum Neighbourhood in 1989 when she bought her first house – the little house on the corner of Austin and Ker with the big Willow tree in the front yard and the beautiful garden. Her house was a welcoming place where neighbours and friends dropped by for tea, a chat and freshly baked goodies. Her garden was an oasis, full of colour and life. When word got around that her bird feeders were always full, the bird bath water always fresh and the bird houses just the right size, the humming birds, the chickadees, the juncos, and the swallows came. Even the ducks from Colquitz Creek waddled over for a visit and a swim around in the ditch along her property that she made sure was clear of debris.

Donna loved her neighbourhood. She cared for her neighbours, their children, and their pets, remembered birthdays with gifts and cards, offered rides to those in need, and supported local home-based businesses.

Donna was a skilled gardener who loved to share her plants and her plentiful vegetables with others. She also enjoyed teaching people how to take care of plants.

Donna had a strong commitment to preserving the natural areas around her. She would routinely pick up litter during her walks and take care of weeding on boulevards and traffic circles.

Donna was a humble and loyal friend, known for her kind deeds and willingness to lend a helping hand. She dedicated herself to serving her community to the best of her ability, leaving a lasting impact on the many hearts she touched.

Anne Genuist



The GTCA is absolutely delighted that Donna's beautiful little home and lovely garden at the corner of Austin and Kerr was purchased by Saanich for a future expansion of Meadow Park.

BOULEVARD TREES

Would you like a FREE TREE to help increase our urban forest?



Saanich Parks is seeking the participation of neighbourhood organizations and residents to partner with the District to increase the number of trees planted on the boulevards within our neighbourhoods and to increase our Urban Forest Canopy.

Saanich will purchase, plant and prune the tree when needed. All you have to do is water it!

If you are interested in having a tree you can email Anne or Steve at genuistlegg@hotmail.com to get a Partnership tree application form/ Preferred boulevard tree selection list. The GTCA has 250 copies ready for distribution. You can also download these forms at the links listed below:

Partnership tree application form:

<https://www.saanich.ca/assets/Parks~Recreation~and~Community~Services/Documents/Boulevard-Tree-Application-Form.pdf>

Preferred boulevard tree selection list:

<https://www.saanich.ca/assets/Parks~Recreation~and~Community~Services/Documents/Saanich-Preferred-Boulevard-Tree-Selection-List.pdf>

According to Saanich Parks there were 27 partnership trees planted in the Gorge Tillicum Community Association neighbourhood during the winter of 2021/2022

Saanich plants trees between November and April.

There is still time to send in your application and get your FREE tree soon!





The Belted Kingfisher, seen in the Colquitz River estuary of the Park.

The Belted Kingfishers are often seen hovering in the air as they prepare to dive into the water for a fish. Belted kingfishers feed on a variety of aquatic foods that include fish, frogs, tadpoles, and insects. The best place to observe them is around water. They feed in rivers and lakes as well as ponds and streams.



Photo: Angela Wyatt



Photo: Angela Wyatt

Teddy the turtle, Red Eared Slider in Colquitz Estuary.

Red-eared sliders' most recognizable feature is the red patches just behind their eyes. These range in colour from bright cherry red to a ruddy brown. These turtles have green stripes going down their neck, along their legs and feet, and on their tail.

Help Keep our Parks Clean & Safe

- Dispose of garbage and dog waste in the receptacles
- Please report overflowing garbage cans or illegal dumping to Saanich Parks at parks@saanich.ca or 250-475-5522
- Report camping & campfires to the Saanich Police non-emergency line at (250) 475-4321





Community Events

ARTS & CELEBRATION

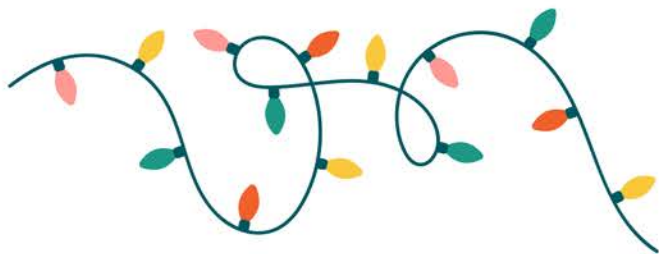
EXPLORING AN IDENTITY:

Poems, Songs and Prose from or about the Gorge-Tillicum Area



On October 15, singer, poets and writers came together to share their works. Held at Cedar Shores common room, it was a wonderful afternoon of art, community and treats.

HOLIDAY LIGHT INSTALLATION



Unfortunately we were not able to put on the Lights on the Gorge event, however we still put up the lights that we had up at the Canoe and Kayak Club last year.

Thanks to those who have come out to help put up the lights.

PUMPKIN PARADE

Another successful event featuring over 300 neighbourhood pumpkins. We also want to thank the little girl with her magnificent light up cape saved the day when our light artist backed out at the last minute.

Thanks to all who donated pumpkins, helped with set up and take down and for everyone who came out to enjoy this SPOOKY event.





Community Issues DEVELOPMENT

A VERY NECESSARY DEBATE

Is development a blessing or a curse? This age-old question continues to stir passionate debates and concerns. However, one thing is clear: stagnation is far more detrimental than too much development.

In my capacity with the GTCA, I've had the opportunity to assess numerous housing development proposals. Our group diligently engaged with developers, striving for better proposals and, in some cases, offering letters of support. Yet, a peculiar and somewhat predictable pattern has emerged. Most of these developments remain unbuilt. Our newsletters have been filled with stories of proposed projects, some even granted approval, but many have not seen the light of day.

Numerous factors come into play here. The development industry is profoundly influenced by market fluctuations and economic conditions. When times are good—high demand, robust labor markets, favorable interest rates—the appetite for development seems insatiable. Both planning departments and community groups like the GCTA share this belief, thinking the demand is endless. If we dislike a particular development, we reassure ourselves that another, more appealing, neighborhood-friendly, community-enhancing, and affordable project will come along.

But what if the development process is protracted, consultations endless, and years pass by, rendering the window of opportunity obsolete? What if the community's wishes are economically unfeasible, and nobody, not even the government, is inclined to fulfill

those preferences? And what if neighboring communities and municipalities outpace us in development approvals, deterring developers from dealing with our cumbersome processes?

The consequences are evident in our neighborhood—a growing number of boarded-up houses, an empty hole at the intersection of Gorge Road and Early Grey, and numerous underutilized lots. Many proposed developments have vanished into thin air.

In essence, Saanich's consultations and planning documents, while extensive, are meaningless unless they make economic sense. What seemed viable at 2% interest becomes unsustainable at 6%, closing the window of opportunity.

To compound this, Saanich's plan to finance essential road and sidewalk improvements hinges on new development. It's a catch-22 scenario: the same development that we debate endlessly also promises to provide the funding for our much-needed infrastructure. So, when you are wondering why there is not a proper crosswalk at Tillicum and Obed, it's because Saanich is waiting on development dollars.

If you've been following recent headlines, you're aware that the housing crisis has escalated, affecting us all. Employers struggle to attract talent because prospective employees can't find affordable or appealing housing—a problem that extends to doctors and nurses. As a result,

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people are channeling more of their income into housing, leaving them with less disposable income, which, in turn, jeopardizes the survival of small businesses. It's an interconnected economic web where even those with homes aren't immune to the crisis.

In the face of this housing crisis, it is imperative for the government to take decisive action. To truly make a difference, substantial investments will need to be made with our tax dollars. Yet, it's worth noting that just a few years ago, the solution might have been as simple as eliminating bureaucratic hurdles to ignite housing construction.

While there are a handful of developments still on the table for our community, I sincerely hope that Saanich will make every effort to expedite these projects.

Prolonged processes inherently inflate costs and, in times like these, can result in urban decay. Collectively, we must strive for more efficient and effective approaches to address the pressing housing issue and build more robust communities.

Vera Wynn-Williams
GTCA President

4,610 units

The Province has provided the District of Saanich with mandated housing targets, including **tripling** the volume of permits over the next five years to **4,610 units**. This is the total minimum number of net new completed housing units required to comply with this Provincial Housing Target Order.

DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

After a surge in development applications, there has been minimal progress in actual construction. However, there are a few projects that appear to be gaining momentum.

630 Gorge

The development process commenced in 2018, and the development permit received approval from the Council on July 12, 2022. Although the developer still needs to secure a building permit, site clearing has now begun. To provide a refresher, the project entails the construction of twenty-five traditionally-designed three-bedroom townhomes, featuring a mix of single and two-car garages. Abstract Developments is overseeing the construction.



Rendering of Abstract's approved townhouse development at 630 Gorge Road.

Tillicum/Obed/Albina

This site has undergone changes in developers, and while a proposed development exists, it has not yet gone before the council for approval. Nevertheless, the site, comprising 14 houses, most of which were vacant, has become a target for squatting, graffiti, and vandalism. In response, the GTCA has advocated for the developer and Saanich to address these issues, leading to plans for the demolition of the vacant homes and site clearance in the near future.

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GET INVOLVED WITH GTCA

Whatever your interests, there are so many ways to get involved with like minded community members. Just email info@gorgetillicum.ca and we will connect you with the group.



LAND USE WORKING GROUP

Chair: Phil Lancaster

The purpose of this group is - amongst other things - to address, both reactively and proactively, all kinds of buildings, retrofits and new developments; to consider multimodal transportation and parking; and to promote the creation of new parks in our neighbourhood.



ARTS AND CELEBRATION WORKING GROUP

Chair: Reb Stevenson

The purpose of this group is to promote all things artistic in our neighbourhood - public art installations, performing arts, art shows etc. If you want to join others interested in the arts join this group.



FOOD RESILIENCE WORKING GROUP

Chair: Gabe Epstein

The purpose of this group is to promote activities that enhance the resilience of our local food system within the context of our changing supply chains and climate.



BOULEVARD BRIGADES

Are you an avid gardener and have an interest in meeting people and beautifying our neighbourhood? This group of dedicated individuals helps to plant and maintain the traffic circles and boulevards in our neighbourhood.



NEWSLETTER CARRIERS

Enjoy walking the neighbourhood and meeting people? Then help us deliver our GTCA newsletters. Various routes are available.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

If you are interested in meeting people from the neighbourhood and want to see a robust community, then help us organize community events. From small one day events to large signature events like Canada Day, there are a variety of opportunities.

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MANAGE YOUR FOG THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Did you know that almost one million kilograms of fats, oils and grease from residential sources enters our wastewater system annually? FOG (Fats, Oils & Grease) not only affects our wastewater conveyance system, it can also cause sewage back-ups into homes and businesses, as well as contribute to overflows into the environment.

With the holiday season approaching, and a lot more special cooking happening to gather with our loved ones, we want to share some tips to help protect your pipes and our sewage system all year round.

- Making bacon for breakfast? Be sure to wipe down with a napkin or paper towel small amounts of fats or grease left over in your frying pan with a napkin or paper towel. The napkin can be tossed with the rest of your organic materials in the compost bin.
- Larger amounts of fat that solidify when cooled can also be placed into your kitchen scraps bin. Some examples of solid fats may be your coconut oil, lard or even vegetable shortening. Although we may not use these in our day-to-day cooking, we might end up using them on special baked goods or holiday dishes. A great tip to dispose of larger amounts of solid fats is to line a plastic or glass container with newspaper or a paper towel to make it easier to transfer the fat or grease into the compost bin.
- Deep fried some appetizers and have a few liters of vegetable oil left over? Up to 10 liters of liquid cooking oil can be recycled at Hartland Depot free of charge. Just remember to bring it in a sealed, non-leaking container.



Although fats, oils and grease may seem harmless when you see them running down the drain, remember they are viscous and do not behave the same way as water. Many oils, such as coconut oil, will solidify when they come in contact with lower temperature water, therefore creating clogs. If the oils do not solidify, they may still create clogs as they often bind to other forms of fats and grease or solid material such as hair, or dental floss.

In a growing region, small amounts add up quickly, so remember to treat your fats, oils and grease the proper way to protect not only your sewage, but also the watersheds and wildlife in our region. To learn more ways to manage your FOG, visit www.crd.bc.ca/fog

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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!

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

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:

Please enclose payment and mail to above address

Individual: \$5/each x _____ memberships = \$ _____

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.

JOIN THE GTCA

More Members = More Influence

Please support the GCTA by buying or renewing a membership. Your membership you will not only help support our community initiatives but you will also amplify our voice. With a strong membership base we can better advocate for our community when it comes to issues such as planning, transportation and development.

One Year Memberships Fees:

\$5 Single

\$10 Couple

\$25 Business

How to join/renew:

- Use the form to the left to mail in your membership
- Go to our website gorgetillicum.ca
- Scan the QR code to go to the membership form



View of Gorge Bridge with bathing house in the distance, May 1915 (Saanich Archives)

INTERESTED IN NEIGHBOURHOOD HISTORY?

Saanich Archives proudly presents Neighbourhood History: Tillicum - a new online exhibit!

Read about popular regattas celebrated on the Gorge, Muggins the Red Cross dog that raised money during World War I and so much more!

Visit the online exhibit here:

