



We've Been Here Before



Photo Credit: McCann Collection, Royal Roads University Archives.

This photo struck a chord with many of our Facebook followers when it was posted, this past March, at the very start of the COVID 19 pandemic. Little did we know then how much things would change in the coming weeks and months.

The photo depicts five of the six daughters of Joseph and Eva Loewen, standing at their gate on Gorge Rd with

their dog. **The sign reads: "Scarlet Fever – This house quarantined until Oct. 31 by order of George Duncan."** George H. Duncan was the city of Victoria's health officer from 1893 till 1897 and the timing of the photo is thought to be 1895, during which time there was a small outbreak.

The Loewen family lived in a grand three-storey home on 12 acres of land at the corner of Gorge and Tillicum Roads. Named 'Rockwood', the house was built on the high ground now occupied by Arnot Ave. Rockwood had a commanding view of the Gorge waterway below and was host to many events and parties. Robert and Joan Dunsmuir and family were friends of the Loewen's and at the time this photo was taken, they were living farther up the Gorge in Vic West at their home 'Burleith'. The photo was part of their personal collection.

Two large Sequoia Trees, believed to have marked the entrance to Rockwood, now stand tall in the front yard of Purdy McDonald and Steve Edmison on Gorge Rd West.

-Scott Karpes

Inside This Issue

- 2 > GTCA AGM Notice
- 3 > An Update from the GTCA
- 4 > Daycare Spaces for Gorge/Tillicum
- 5 > In the Era of Covid
 - > Prevent Fires
- 6 > Farm Gate Sales in Saanich
- 7 > Gorge Park Community Gardens, Eight Years On
- 8 > The Green Space
- 10 > CGTUF - Come Grow With Us
- 11 > Gorge Tillicum Refugee Fundraiser
- 12 > GTCA Membership Form
 - > Developments in Gorge/Tillicum



Photo: Katrinka Karpes

Purdy McDonald, Steve Edmison and dog Stanley of 384 Gorge Rd West stand beside the large sequoia trees that are thought to once mark the entrance to Rockwood.

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

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Unsolicited articles welcome.

The deadline for submissions & advertising for the next issue is Oct. 1, 2020.

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All 3,800 copies of this newsletter are delivered by volunteers, and we could always use more help. Please contact Scott Karpes at 778-679-3545.

GTCA Board Meetings

The Board normally meets at 7pm the second Thursday of each month from September to June at Pearkes Recreation Centre. Due to Covid this schedule may change as we will follow provincial guidelines for gatherings. Please checkout 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.

Agendas will be posted to the GTCA website a few days in advance of the meeting.

Annual General Meeting

Due to the pandemic, our AGM scheduled for March was postponed. We are hoping to have our AGM in late September. In order to have a safe event, we are looking for a venue where we can safely socially distance or we may have a virtual AGM. At the AGM we will only conduct necessary AGM business. Members will be invited by email or mail once the AGM details have been set.



Photo: Vera Wynn-Williams

Socially Distanced Board Meeting in Meadow Park - June 2020

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The GTCA boundaries are the Gorge Waterway and Portage Inlet shorelines, the Trans-Canada highway to the north and Harriet/Whittier/Harrier 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>

an update from the **GTCA**

Well, this is different!

This past March we held our usual Board meeting, sitting around tables, shoulder to shoulder, in a small room with no windows capable of being opened. We were addressing our usual list of agenda items and receiving a proposal for a new development in our neighbourhood.

We were also aware of the growing number of coronavirus infections in BC, Canada and the rest of the world and were anticipating a change in the way the Board might operate. And that, indeed, is what's happened.

We postponed our planned Annual General Meeting for 2nd April -- it's now scheduled for late September, at a date yet to be determined and with COVID-safety protocols in place.

With deep regret, we cancelled the annual Gorge Canada Day Picnic.

Board and Working Group meetings were suspended -- though the Board did, eventually, meet in Meadow Park in mid-June. It was good to be together again, in person rather than digitally, while maintaining our physical distance from one another.

During this period, three directors who had planned to retire at the AGM -- Evan Leeson, Elise Cote and Lewis Rhodes -- resigned from the Board. We've enjoyed working with them and thank them for their time, energy and input over the years. We have been fortunate, however, to have 3 new interim directors, approved by a unanimous (email) vote by all the

elected directors, join the Board at this stage -- we welcome Sharifa Riddett, Erica McCollum and Larry Scott and look forward to working together with them.

While there are still a number of development projects pending for our neighbourhood, at various stages in the approval process, the Board has had no contacts with developers since March and none of the current proposals have come before Saanich council for consideration -- with one exception. We have had email and phone contact with Breia Holdings Ltd. regarding plans to extend the space available in the daycare facility at 2969 Earl Grey Street and will provide more information about this proposal as it becomes available. And, again, if you wish to keep up with the status of proposed developments for our area, you can check out the Saanich website at <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/development-applications/active-development-applications/tillicum.html>.

One project, the Saanich-approved building of the "Little Woods Natural Play Space" behind Pearkes arena in Tillicum Park -- a project of Saanich Neighbourhood Place (SNP) -- has begun construction. (See the June 2020 SNP newsletter at <http://fullobeans.ca/fullobeansfulltimecare.html> for more information.) The addition of more daycare spaces in the area, particularly one in a woodland setting, is more than welcome. As of the writing of this update in mid-July,

it has become clear that there is some confusion and concern about the details of this project -- particularly relating to the potential impact on the adjacent woodland and waterway. There have been (and continues to be) numerous conversations between, and visits to the site by, Saanich councillors and staff, park advocates, SNP, contractors, GTCA directors, and other citizens. We trust that these conversations will serve to better inform all concerned and address the concerns that have been raised. (For more on this item, please see page 4.)

In general, as we proceed through this new COVID reality, questions arise as to how the GTCA will operate over the coming year or years. How will the Board and the Working Groups meet? What will work with developers look like? How much will we be able to do face-to-face and how much will we do online (via email or Zoom, for example)? While we expect things will be different, we'll do our best to figure out how to continue serving the well-being of our community.

Should you wish to join a Working Group or become a Board director, there is always more room at the table for another voice -- just send an email to info@gorgetillicum.ca and we'll get back to you.

-Gabe Epstein
GTCA President



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New Daycare Spaces for Gorge/Tillicum

There are two new day care facilities in the offing for our community. The first has been the subject of some concern as it is very close to Cuthbert Holmes park while the second is a development proposal on 2969 Earl Grey Street. While it is fair to state that development always comes with complications, it is hoped that the need for these two facilities will outweigh any reservations within our community. But some clear information may be useful for those wishing to understand what is happening.

For many years, daycare facilities have been developed as an afterthought using available space in homes and public buildings on an ad hoc basis. While this has answered some of the need, there has been a serious shortage of day care spaces for many years. Moreover, the spaces available seldom match the kind of facility that might be developed with the specific purpose of childcare in mind. This is particularly true in the context of a global pandemic, which forces us to pay much more attention to preventing the spread of communicable diseases such as COVID-19 by increasing the size of any indoor space to be used for group activities.

Both of the proposed developments mentioned here have been designed for the purposes to which they will be put. The Earl Grey development entails redesigning an existing house that has been used as a day care for some twenty years. The renovations will add 37 new spaces and modify the existing space to better meet their needs.

The Saanich Neighbourhood Place development entails the loss of some trees, about which much has been said in our local media, as well as some of the parking space behind Pearkes Arena. As I said above, development in the age of a global climate crisis always comes with concerns. However, the project has made its way through the torturous Saanich approval process and is now in



the early stages of construction with a completion date mid-way through next year. When completed, it will add just over fifty new daycare spaces to SNP and will include a 'wild' play area and some community spaces that can be used for meetings, once the danger of Covid 19 is past. Saanich has committed to replacing those trees that had to be taken down to accommodate the building site and playground as well as to limiting any further tree cutting as

much as possible. It might be observed that, though the approval process may have been somewhat flawed by incomplete appreciation of the number and kind of trees that would have to be removed, the actual building will replace a parking lot with something our community desperately needs.

The GTCA board of directors will follow this development closely.

-Phil Lancaster

Want to Know More?

Saanich Neighbourhood Place Daycare Centre - Currently under construction

This daycare was approved in 2018 and is therefore no longer listed on Saanich's developments page. The GTCA has posted all the relevant documents to our website www.gorgetillicum.ca under the proposed developments tab. We've created a new section for daycare.

New Kids on the Block Expansion (Earl Grey Street) - Consultation phase

This daycare is in the early planning stages and has not been filed with Saanich. You can see preliminary plans on our website (same as above). As this project is still in the consultation phase you can still make comments.

You can send comments to :

Breiaholdings@yahoo.com or call 250-893-9038

planning@saanich.ca

Please cc: info@gorgetillicum.ca so that we can include your support/concerns in our discussions and response to Saanich Planning.

In The Era of Covid



Omnipresent Social Distancing Decals.



Heart Flags in Windows



Spectrum Students Graduating Six at a Time.



Shopping Rules



Photos: Vera Wynn-Williams
Emerging Mask Regulations

Prevent Fires: Keep Household Hazardous Waste Out of the Landfill

If you are doing some clean-up around your home and yard, ensure that you are doing it safely and disposing of household hazardous waste properly. Old chemicals, cleaners or other hazardous products don't belong in the garbage, where they can create serious problems and potentially spark landfill fires. While most of these fires are quickly contained by staff, there's always potential for a fire to grow to an unmanageable level, especially in the dry summer and early fall, before winter rains arrive.

In the capital region, the majority of landfill fires are caused by these items:

Household batteries – These contain heavy metals like lead, cadmium, zinc, manganese and lithium that can be re-used if they're recycled properly. Drop your batteries off for free at one of more than 50 locations across the region that collect these items for recycling – visit Call2Recycle.ca to find the location nearest you.

Household electronics – Electronics that contain most of these batteries are also easily recyclable – both at the Hartland Landfill recycling depot and at various other community sites.

Hot tub and pool chemicals – The only safe place for pool chemicals is in your pool or hot tub. Unused or expired chemicals can be dropped off at Hartland Landfill for free, keeping them out of the landfill and away from potential fire sources.

If you have an item that you are unsure of, simply bring it to the Hartland public drop-off where staff have experience safely identifying and dealing with potentially hazardous items.

To learn where you can drop off these items and many others, visit www.myrecyclopedia.ca. To learn more about household hazardous waste visit crd.bc.ca/hhw.

–CRD Environmental Services

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Farm Gate Sales in Saanich

I'm sure many of you will have followed the flurry of media generated by our own Foxgloves Flowers stand, on Heath Drive. In some ways, it was a relief to have something to read about other than COVID 19 so perhaps the issue got more attention than it would have under normal circumstances. In a nutshell, Colleen O'Farrel, the owner of Foxgloves Flowers, was blindsided by COVID 19 restrictions. She had been running a licensed cut-flower business catering to special events, like weddings. When the events were cancelled, she was faced with choosing between the compost bin or direct sales. So, she set up a flower stand at the end of her driveway that blossomed well beyond her expectations. Predictably, someone complained to Saanich, which led to a visit from our beloved bylaw officers.



Photo: Saanich News

Colleen O'Farrel Owner of Foxglove Flowers

In the ensuing scramble to save her business, Colleen eventually managed to bring considerable pressure on Saanich Council to reconsider their bylaws. At present, Foxgloves Flowers is operating under an ad hoc arrangement under which Council has directed Saanich Staff to not enforce the existing bylaw pending a full review of the potential risks and benefits of changing the bylaw pertaining to 'farm gate' sales permanently. A record of the Council direction may be found on the Saanich website.

While there are good arguments and valid concerns, mostly having to do with increased traffic on residential streets, on both sides of this issue, it is worth considering how a potential relaxation of existing restrictions might help improve our neighbourhood. First, as long as we have an ongoing pandemic to deal with, reducing the need to shop indoors and

enabling more very local retail options seems wise when most other options entail more virus exposure. Second, having the possibility for gardeners to set up little garden stalls to sell excess produce could encourage more local fruit and vegetable production while at the same time making it possible to buy fresh, organic, local produce; hopefully without needing to drive. Third, the existing separation of residential and retail zoning structures forces all of us to use automobiles when we might not have to if we had other choices. If one of our agreed long-term objectives is to reduce our community carbon footprint by making our communities more walkable then we need also to rearrange the way we currently live and shop. Opening up more local options for both local production and shopping could help. Of course, the

devil will be in the details pertaining to the types of activities that are permitted. Are present, Saanich stresses that all such stalls must offer 'value added' or home made/grown items.

Given that there are many people in our neighbourhood who like the way things are now and are reluctant to see changes that might bring more traffic or undesirable businesses, it is not clear at the moment that anything will actually change. However, I am encouraged to think that more flexibility in the bylaws governing residential use might bring more colour and life to our suburban roads. In the meantime, congratulations to Colleen at Foxgloves Flowers for bring more beauty to our streets.

-Phil Lancaster

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The Gorge Park Community Gardens, Eight Years On

Every community garden is unique in its genesis, but taking time for many conversations helps

it take root and flourish as a vibrant and resilient neighbourhood space. Way back when our garden in Gorge Park was barely a thought, its designers and planners started chatting with people, asking for dreams, ideas, and feedback...and the conversations have never really stopped. All the friendships, connections, cooperation, and the goodwill these interactions built were delightfully evident back in May at the Community Gardens' annual Plant Sale. Held this year in a yard perfectly designed for social distancing, the sale allowed many to sooth the strange new experience of staying apart by happily interacted, from a distance, with friends, neighbours, and Gardens' folk who we hadn't seen for a while. We indulged in familiar talk of gardens and gardening, gratefully returning to the more familiar territory of tomato varieties, sharing plants and knowledge with others, and planning our garden. We had no idea how the sale would unfold this strange year, but once again neighbours from Gorge Tillicum and beyond generously donated and bought plants for a sale that raised over \$2,000 for the Gardens. A special thank you once again to the Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers (GTUF) for donations of pots, seeds and plant starts and to everyone who came out. It was lovely to see everyone smiling and chatting. As you read this, may there have been much gardening bounty grown and shared...and many good conversations between neighbours.

-Laurie Jones



Scenes From GPCG's Annual Plant Sale



The Green

The Colquitz River – For the Sake of Wildlife, Please Stay Out

With its attractive setting and variety of wildlife, the Colquitz River is tempting to explore from the water. However, many of the features that support its diversity are fragile and easily damaged.

The river estuary, where fresh water meets sea water, is shallow with mud flats and eel grass beds that provide important nursery habitat for fish, including salmon, and a variety of invertebrates. This area is influenced by the tides and the river is frequently too shallow for boats to enter without disturbing this important feature.

The river also becomes very narrow, making it virtually impossible to travel on the water without disturbing the variety of birds, including the blue-listed Great Blue Heron, and other animals, including minks, otters,

raccoons, and seals, that use the river. Some animals find food and shelter here, for others the river is an important wildlife corridor, allowing them to travel to and from the resources they need to survive in an urban setting.

Help to provide refuge for the wildlife in our city. Please - Refrain from boating on the Colquitz Estuary and River at all times. Keep your dog out of the river and vegetation, and stay on the trails in Cuthbert Holmes Park.

Here is the sign, and there are also CCTV cameras posted along the river.



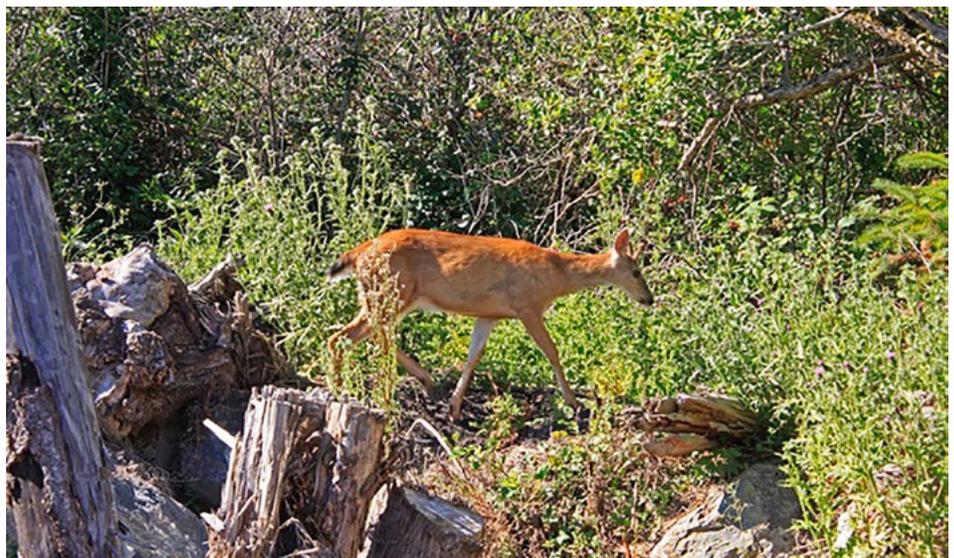
Photo: Courtesy Saanich

Sign Under the Admiral's Bridge

-Saanich Parks



Photos: Angella Wyatt



Some of the Wildlife Observed in Cuthbert Holmes Park



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Space

Cuthbert Holmes Park Bullfrogs



Photo: Karac Lindsay

The American Bullfrog has often been termed “the most successful amphibian on the planet”, however this title is not one of celebration, instead a warning. Historically native to the Eastern United States, a demand for bullfrog meat in the early 20th century allowed the species to gain a foothold throughout the world and these bullfrogs been spreading throughout Southern BC for decades. Relentless predators, they eat everything from native amphibians and fish to small ducklings and turtles. Bullfrogs also carry chytrid fungus, a pathogen responsible for extremely high mortality rates in numerous amphibian populations.

Cuthbert Holmes Park in Victoria has been the site of a multifaceted

wetland restoration project, leading to a successful rise in biodiversity in the area. In late May, one other volunteer and I were invited by Joachim Carolsfeld (Yogi), director of World Fisheries Trust, and Dorothy Chambers, environmental champion and long-time volunteer with Salmon in the City, to assist in the removal of “numerous bullfrogs” discovered in one of the area’s main stormwater runoff ponds. With the frogs’ breeding season around the corner, the recent increase in diversity was under threat.

Under the cover of darkness, armed with nets, fishing waders, and a few LED flashlights, we found and removed five bullfrogs in total. Only

one of the frogs was female, but with egg clutches containing 1,000 -20,000 eggs, we were able to stop a potential outbreak. The increase in bullfrog populations throughout Vancouver Island puts hundreds of species at risk, and volunteerism has never been more important in stopping their spread. The hours spent tripping through the dark enduring numerous mosquito bites, bumps and scrapes probably sounds quite frivolous. But in a natural world plagued by habitat loss, fragmentation, and overconsumption, small victories like this are vital for the creatures that depend on these spaces.

-Karac Lindsay



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GTUF - Come Grow With Us

Back in 2008, Julia Menard, Kate Rubin and Lia Tocher had started worrying about the food system, and they used to talk about this on their walks along the Gorge Waterway. Maybe you've also heard that our island-bound population has but 3 days' supply of food in our supermarkets, which can be quickly depleted by panic buying in times of emergency. Since COVID lockdowns began worldwide, we've all come to understand the truth in those words. Julia, Kate and Lia thought some community-building might help: a group of neighbours who could work towards greater food self-sufficiency, and ultimately better local food security.

The movement was born. Meetings in the early days were held in living

rooms and gardens, but we quickly outgrew those spaces, and moved to a more regular meeting point in the Pearkes Community Centre. We named ourselves the Gorge Tillicum Urban Farmers, or GTUF, set up a planning group, and came up with our catchy slogan, posted proudly on window signs: Neighbours Growing Organically. Monthly meetings began: a food topic – mushroom growing, seed-saving, understanding soil, attracting pollinators – followed by discussions about food security. Oh yes, and always punctuated midway by a convivial break around home-made snacks and plants donated from local gardens.

We added an annual seed swap, a plant start swap, a community seed bank and a series of summer garden

tours. Eventually some of our planners moved on to start the Gorge Tillicum Community Gardens, and the momentum slowed.

2020. We're still here, and still passionate about food security, growing awesome food, and sharing our concerns, our skills and our seeds with around 150 like-minded households in our community. Think you'd care to get involved? We're looking for people who'd like to help plan meetings and garden tours and keep our neighbourhood growing organically.

If you live in the Gorge Tillicum area and would like to join us, contact the GTUF Coordinating team at gturbanfarmers@gmail.com.

-Rhona McAdam



Lorrie Lancaster Leads a Tour of Her Garden (2017)



GTUF Members at our Seedy Sunday Seed Swap (2017)



Michael Winkel, Celtic Tree Service, Leads a Pruning Workshop (2011)



A GTUF Garden Tour (2010)

Photos: GTUF

Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group Update

How do you fundraise in a global pandemic? You get creative and remember that every contribution will help change someone's life. Over the summer we held a bottle drive to add another \$1500 to our total and as this is written, an online book sale is in the works. Our refugee sponsorship group has worked hard and is over halfway to achieving our financial goal. Thank you to everyone who has given generously to help make this happen.

Today, over 20 million people find themselves trapped, hiding, living in camps, not knowing what further suffering lies waiting around the corner for them and their families. And of those millions, there is an extended family of 8 in a refugee camp, waiting

to come to Victoria and be reunited with the family members who are already here.

The logo for our sponsorship group is a bridge, a crossing between worlds. The magnitude of suffering, and the number of refugees, is so great that we know we cannot help them all. We can, however, help one family to cross that bridge to safety and freedom. Check out our progress or make a donation at <https://gtrsg.wordpress.com> or reach out to help at gorgetillicumrefugee@gmail.com

-Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group



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Membership Application

Beginning on January 1, 2018, membership is valid from the time of payment of membership fees to the end of the month of the anniversary date of payment. Join or renew by mail or online on our website!

- New Membership(s) or
 Renewing Membership(s)

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 or older, living within the Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood as well as person engaged in business in the neighbourhood.

If membership is not renewed you will remain on our email distribution list for one more year before being deleted. Memberships are available in three categories; individual, couple or organization.

Major Neighbourhood Developments

1. Proposals approved by Saanich:

- 2933, 2941 and 2949 Albina Street – a 39 unit 5-storey multi-family rental apartment building. (Project has been delayed due to the Albina sink hole)
- 2931 and 2947 Qu'Appelle St – one four-storey and one three-storey multi-family rental building with a combined total of 44 units.

2. Proposals submitted to Saanich:

- 300 Gorge Rd West and 2900 Tillicum Rd – a 53 unit, 5-storey multi-family residential building (condos and rental units) with commercial space on the ground floor.
- 1 and 21 Obed Avenue at Harriet – 3 storey multi-family rental building with 26 units.
- 3400 Tillicum Rd., the former bingo hall site – a multi-family residential rental building with commercial space included. The proposal is for two, 6-storey buildings with 242 units.
- 630 Gorge Road West - 26, 3-bedroom, family-sized strata townhomes.
- 992 Gorge Road West at Rockwell Ave. - 6 story building multi-family residential with 148 units and 18 townhouse units. All units would be strata.

3. Potential proposals:

- 2921 Earl Grey St at Gorge Road West. Site has recently changed hands. The new developer's plans are currently unknown.
- 2969 Earl Grey St. - Daycare Expansion - See page 4 for more information.

For more information about active development applications check the Saanich website at <https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/development-applications/active-development-applications/tillicum.html>

As a member of the community you can always comment on developments by writing or emailing Saanich Planning at the following:

- 770 Vernon Avenue, Victoria, B.C. V8X 2W7
- planning@saanich.ca

Once a public hearing date is set, the GTCA will make every effort to promote the date through our communications channels. We have also added development information on our website gorgetillicum.ca.

ROLE OF THE GTCA IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The GTCA will meet with developers at various stages of the process with two main purposes: 1. To encourage development in line with the Design Charrette and the Tillicum Burnside Action Plan; and 2. To encourage developers to thoroughly consult with the community through open houses and meetings with directly affected neighbours. **Note: Saanich recommends, but does not require, public open houses or meetings with affected neighbours**

Saanich formally asks the GTCA to respond in writing to all development applications within our boundaries. The GTCA is asked whether it:

- Has no objection to the project;
- Generally has no objection with suggested changes or concerns; and
- Does not support the project (please provide reason).

It is the policy of the GTCA to only provide comments on proposals. The GTCA comments reflect what we heard from the community, both pros and cons.