SPRING 2026

GORGE TILLICUM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

GORGE TILLICUM Neighbourhood NEWS

Development coming to Tillicum/Obed/Albina - view from Tillcum and Obed

# DEVELOPMENT REALITY CHECK

It has been well over a year since the District of Saanich announced that our community would be the next subject of the Corridors, Centres and Villages (CCV) planning process. Many of you participated in the Burnside Tillicum CCV planning events last spring and summer and heard firsthand the district's ideas about adding housing while improving transportation and overall liveability. These sessions made it seem like anything was possible - let's blue sky it. No discussion about budget, tradeoffs or the economy.

Those who have followed the process closely, however, know that this is not the moment to expect rapid change. There are solid reasons for everyone to take a breath.

Saanich plans are typically aspirational. Once completed, the CCV plan will guide development rather than produce it. A good example is the Gorge Tillicum Local Area Plan, which has existed for two decades and has largely waited for private developers to decide when and how to act. Saanich does not cost out its plans or assign clear implementation responsibilities. It outlines a preferred vision and then waits for the market to respond. As a result, timing depends far more on economic conditions and developer interest than on the publication of a policy document. Heron's Landing at the corner of Tillicum and Burnside was the only significant project to result from that entire process.

The broader economic context also matters. We have come through a period of strong building activity and are now facing higher interest rates, global uncertainty and ongoing trade tensions with our largest trading partner, the United States. Recent immigration policy changes have also eased some of the demographic pressures that drove housing demand over the past decade. In that environment it is difficult to see what would encourage developers to launch major new projects, especially if Saanich continues to be regarded as one of the more challenging municipalities in the region in which to build.

Although it may appear that there is a great deal of construction underway, particularly with several high profile buildings along Tillicum Road, most of these



*continued on pg. 6*

GORGE TILLICUM

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

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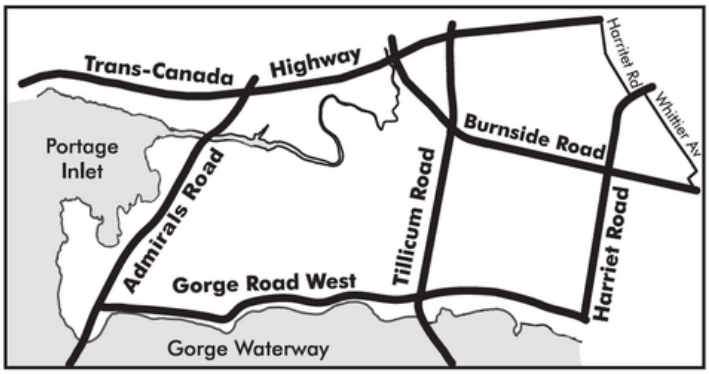
# GORGE TILLICUM COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

## GTCA BOUNDARIES

**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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## How to Stay in Touch

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@gorgetillicum
info@gorgetillicum.ca
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P.O. Box 44152, VICTORIA, BC, V9A 7K1

# GTCA UPDATE

Dear Community Members,

The Gorge Tillicum Community Association continues to bring neighbours together and champion the issues that matter most in our community. As a volunteer-driven organization, we work year-round to create opportunities for connection, celebrate local creativity, and ensure residents have a voice in shaping the future of our neighbourhood.

This spring we will once again host the fun, whimsical Fairy Door Festival and Fairy Picnic - see the details on page 4.

This summer, we are hoping to install another community mural. These projects have become a meaningful way to showcase local talent while adding colour and character to our shared spaces. At the same time, volunteers are developing a refreshed community identity and brand that will better reflect who we are and help strengthen connections between residents, businesses, and community partners.

Planning is also underway for our Canada Day celebration. This annual event is a highlight for many families and a wonderful chance to gather, celebrate, and enjoy time together close to home. Last year, after a last minute change to insurance requirements, the GTCA became alarmed about the long term sustainability of the event due to new Saanich requirements and the skyrocketing cost of insurance. We embarked on a series of meetings with Saanich staff and Mayor and Council to request additional support. We were very relieved when Council approved funding for insurance costs up to $12,000. We are also working with staff to explore other improvements, including practical low cost solutions such as access to power for the main stage, which would eliminate the need to rent loud and polluting gas generators.

In April, we will host our Annual General Meeting — a great opportunity to connect with neighbours, hear updates on local initiatives, and help shape priorities for the year ahead. We will also be electing board members and warmly encourage anyone interested in getting more involved in the community to consider putting their name forward. The GTCA is entirely volunteer-run, and our work is only possible because residents step up to share their time, ideas, and energy. Whether you're interested in joining the board or helping out with events and projects, the AGM is the perfect place to learn more and get involved.

If you are interested in joining the board email info@gorgetillicum.ca

We hope to see you at our AGM!

**Vera Wynn-Williams**
**President, GTCA**

## GTCA Annual General Meeting

**Date: Wednesday, April 15, 2026**
**Time: 7:00 - 9:00 pm - Doors open at 6:30 pm**
**Place: Pearkes - Lam Room**
**Guest Speaker: Brent Reems, District of Saanich CAO**

Please join us for the following:

- Board Presentation & Board Elections
- Guest Speaker
- Refreshments & opportunity to meet your neighbours

Scan the QR code to apply for your membership online.

**gorgetillicum.ca/membership-with-form**

Presented by
GORGE TILLICUM
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
Fairy Door Festival
MAY 1 - 31
PUT A FAIRY DOOR ANYWHERE
THAT'S VISIBLE FROM THE STREET!
gorgetillicum.ca

# Fairy Picnic

## Sunday, May 24

**Visit our website or socials for more details**

Scenes from the 2025 Fairy Picnic
Photos: Reb Stevenson

# GORGE
## COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE

**Saturday, June 13, 2026**

Registration details to come - check GTCA website & social media.

## DEVELOPMENT REALITY CHECK CONT'D

developments have been in the pipeline for nearly ten years. What we are seeing today reflects decisions made during the previous development cycle rather than the start of a new surge. Several applications in our area have stalled, there has been only one significant new application recently, and the burst of proposals that characterized the past few years has largely dried up.

Saanich Planning has also encountered strong resistance to its Quadra McKenzie Plan. So much of the original concept had to be reconsidered that the current version looks very different from what was first presented. Early indications suggest that similar concerns could arise here if the CCV plan includes ambitious density proposals or taller buildings edging into established residential areas. Even if higher densities are approved on paper, builders may hesitate to pursue projects that require expensive excavation to reach bedrock, which is where much of the proposed Burnside Tillicum density would be located.

Taking all of this into account, this seems like a time for patience rather than concern. Significant new development is unlikely in the near term. Until economic conditions improve or a future council articulates a clear and workable vision that aligns with market realities, we can expect more discussion and planning documents than cranes on the skyline.

**Vera Wynn-Williams & Phil Lancaster**

**Want to see more about projects in Saanich?**

**Check out Saanich's Development Tracker**

## PROJECTS IN GORGE TILLICUM

***NEARING COMPLETION***

**Il Greco Development (Gorge & Tillicum)**
53 Units - Rental
Occupancy - June 2026

**Tillicum Corner - 3400 Tillicum Road**
242 Units - Rental
Occupancy - Nov/Dec 2026

**Brooke - 630 Gorge Road West**
25, 3&4 Bedroom Strata Townhomes
Sales to begin this spring

***STARTING CONSTRUCTION***

**Points West (Tillicum/Obed/Albina)**
214 Units - Rental
Construction to start March/April 2026

***APPROVED***

**2921 Earl Grey (at Gorge Road)**
Six storey - 47 Unit
Construction TBD

***IN APPLICATION PROCESS***

**992 Gorge Road West (at Rockwell)**
58, 3 & 4 Bedroom Strata Townhomes

**3468 Tillicum Road (strip mall by the Shell Station)**
18 Storey with 311 units &
104 hotel units & commercial at grade.

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# Fish Fence UPDATE

## 2025 SPAWNING SEASON RECAP

**Peninsula Streams & Shorelines (PSS)** is proud to continue the long-standing work of monitoring the Colquitz fish fence, building on the legacy of Salmon in the City and the World Fisheries Trust. With another spawning season complete, we're excited to share highlights from this year's monitoring, restoration, and community education efforts.

During the 2025 coho spawning season, PSS partnered with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to trial an in-stream camera system at the fish fence. While the passive monitoring approach captured valuable footage, technical challenges mean this year's spawner count will be an estimate rather than a final total. Staff and volunteers are still reviewing the recordings, and a full summary will be shared soon.

Heavy December rainfall damaged the pedestrian platform and outdoor classroom area, and repairs led by the District of Saanich are underway. Temporary access restrictions may remain in place while this work continues.

Beyond the fish fence, PSS expanded watershed-wide monitoring. Streamside walking surveys documented spawning activity and redd locations, helping guide future habitat restoration. Smolt monitoring will continue this spring, alongside coastal cutthroat trout surveys in the Gorge Waterway and Victoria Harbour. Education remains a key focus. Local students participated in hands-on learning at the fish fence and in restoration activities throughout the watershed. Meanwhile, restoration work in Gabo Creek added new pools, spawning gravel, and woody habitat, with early surveys showing encouraging increases in juvenile salmon.

Looking ahead, restoration planning will focus on the Colquitz reach between Tillicum Road and the Galloping Goose Trail.

Thank you to our volunteers and partners who make this work possible — more updates to come soon!

To learn more about PSS, become a member, sign up as a volunteer or to donate go to peninsulastreams.ca or scan the QR code.

Green SPACE

# WALTER PARK - CELEBRATING NATIVE SPECIES

Colour is returning to Walter Park with a fresh mix of native plantings. As the seasons unfold, keep an eye out for columbine, camas, woolly sunflower, goldenrod, shooting star, and sea blush, bringing the beds to life.

Walter Park (at Dysart) is natural area park on a single lot that was donated to the the District of Saanich by the homeowner.

Thank you to all who visit the park and help keep it clean and enjoyable for everyone.

**Anne Genuist**
**Walter Park Volunteer Park Steward**

WOOLY SUNFLOWER

CAMAS

## FUN FACT

Planting native species in your yard in Victoria supports local wildlife like pollinators and birds by providing the food and habitat they evolved to depend on.

SEA BLUSH

GOLDEN ROD

SHOOTING STAR

COLUMBINE

# Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group

Hello to our friends and neighbours,

I am pleased beyond belief to be writing this particular bulletin from the Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group. Due to extraneous circumstances, the application with Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada has been in limbo for a number of years. First, it was COVID-19 and years-long office closures, and then we had to pursue legal support to regularize some documents.

It's not easy getting out of a refugee camp after over 30 years, but Carfoon and her family have never given up since fleeing Somalia in 1992, and our little group of neighbours has not given up since we committed to supporting them in 2018.

Recently, some positive movement has happened with the application, and our lawyer is now hopeful that we may be able to greet the family at the Victoria airport with signs and flowers one day in the not-too-distant future.

With this incredible news comes the reality that since the application has now come out of purgatory, our fundraising efforts will have to do the same. Our amazing donors, many monthly contributors, many neighbours here in Gorge Tillicum, have largely kept us afloat, and group members have continued to work diligently collecting bottles, selling used items, and doing whatever they can to keep some money coming in. But, it is now time for us to redouble our efforts to welcome this family in the best way possible. As of writing, we are still about $20,000 short of our initial goal.

Our main focus is completing our initial fundraising target so that we can confidently support the family's first year here: covering housing, food, transportation, school readiness, and other essential settlement costs. Costs have risen significantly since we first started this project, and while we've made great strides, we still need help to reach the total amount required.

If you've been thinking about giving — now is a great time. Every dollar helps, and all contributions are tax-deductible. Whether it's a one-time gift or a small monthly pledge, your support will make a real difference in bringing this family across the bridge to a safe, hopeful future.
https://my.charitableimpact.com/groups/gorge-tillicum-refugee-sponsorship-group

Thank you to everyone who has donated, shared our story, or offered encouragement. We truly couldn't do this without you. Stay tuned for upcoming events and more ways to get involved!

*Warmly,*

*Elise Cote and the Gorge Tillicum Refugee Sponsorship Group*

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# GORGE TILLICUM EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In October and November of 2025 and January 2026 a small group of Gorge Tillicum neighbours gathered to talk about emergency preparedness.

Who knows what might happen in our world, of course, but the more of us who can look after ourselves to some degree in the event of a wind storm, earthquake, or heat or big flood event, the less stress we will put on those coming to help. And ideally if those who are able can gather a wee bit extra, we can look after not only our own needs but be generous and share with neighbours.

We started our first meeting in October by getting to know each other, talked about why we'd come, and named the task each of us wanted to tackle. The topics chosen included:

- exploring options for a safe supply of water
- how to have extra food on hand
- figuring out where to physically locate, secure and rotate our supplies (weather, rodents, expiry dates)
- exploring options for light and heat in a long term power outage
- preparing an emergency car kit
- how to maximize our gardens to grow and then store more food

There's no shortage of information out there and after choosing a task, folks went off to do some research and slowly gather materials to put things in place.

We also talked about how to prepare incrementally when budgets are tight.

The group was intended as a short-term accountability group to nudge us toward the goals we set for ourselves. Everyone was at different stages of what they'd already accomplished, had different time, storage, and budget constraints, and each one of us had knowledge and experience to share.

The fabulous thing is that we all made progress. Our second meeting in November included a hands-on petting zoo of different preparedness gadgets and camping supplies - wind up radios, solar lights, candle

options, a car kit sample, and a grab and go bag that will hang by the door on a coat rack, just in case. We showed each other how they worked. It's all *just in case,* of course, and if it's never needed, wonderful, but we're doing it anyway because it could help and it can't hurt.

As people were leaving our November meeting, I noticed I felt calmer, connected, and in that small moment happier and I'm grateful for those wins. There's no shortage of dark things in the world but getting together to laugh, consider small solutions, and build community is something I think more of us need.

The accountability model seems to work. At the last meeting in January everyone had made some progress and I definitely needed the push to begin and follow through.

I'd love to see more people involved, to make Gorge Tillicum more prepared. Perhaps organize something similar for your own street or a group of neighbours? Beginning to think now about how our neighbourhood can react in an emergency builds a muscle and is something we all can do.

**Thanks to everyone who joined in!**

Saanich runs some sessions online and at Pearkes as well. Check out:
https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/community/emergency-program/presentations-programs.html

**Laurie Jones**

# Gorge Park Cleanup

## Saturday
## April 25, 2026
## 9 am - noon
**(rain or shine)**

## Free coffee and donuts.

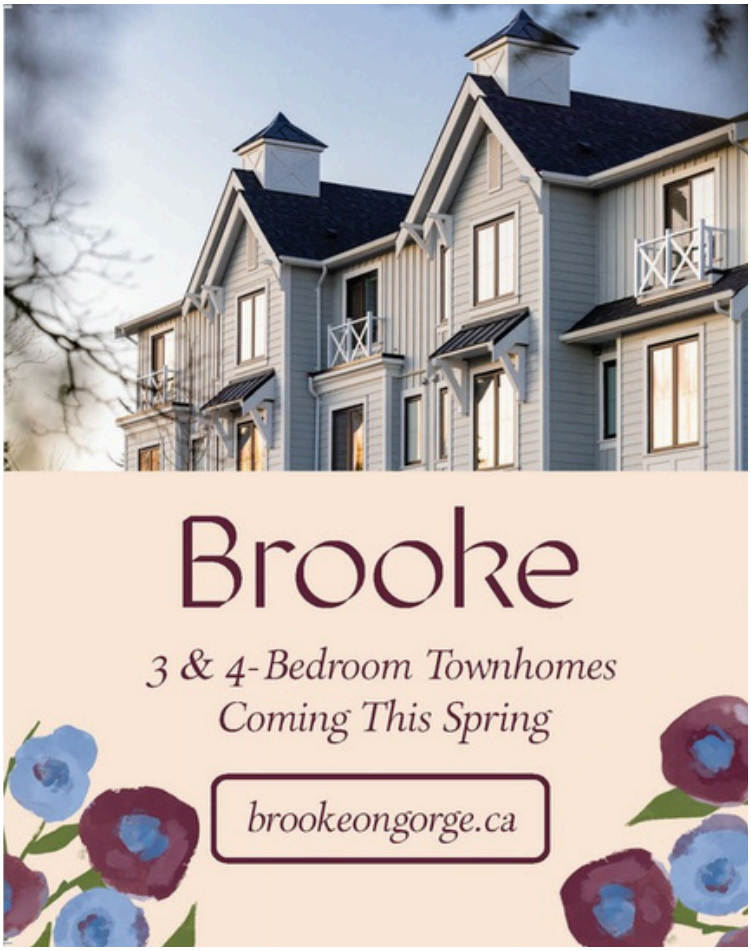
Join us in Gorge Park, across from Fairway. Look for the GTCA red tent.

Most supplies are provided but bring gardening gloves if you have them.

## FREE LITTLE LIBRARIES - MORE THAN JUST BOOKS

Did you know that some Free Little Libraries offer more than books, with some offering items like yarn and knitting supplies, little free pantries or fridges, household items, and even sticks and dog treats for visiting pups. In the Gorge Tillicum neighbourhood, there is a **puzzle library** where neighbours can swap jigsaw puzzles at **2950 Donald Street.**

Scan the QR code on the right to see the locations of Little Free Libraries across our neighbourhood and all of Greater Victoria.



GORGE TILLICUM
COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

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## Membership Application

DATE: _____

NAME: _____

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PHONE #: _____

EMAIL: _____

Our distribution list is for occasional member communications and is kept confidential and never shared with others. See our Privacy Policy at: https://www.gorgetillicum.ca/copy-of-terms-of-use.

If you are paying for other members of your household, please list their names:

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### PAYMENT:

Please enclose payment and mail to the P.O. Box address above.

**Individual Memberships:**
$5.00/person x_____members = $_____

**Couples Memberships:** $10/couple = $_____

**Business Memberships:**
$25/business x_____members = $_____

**Donation to Newsletter Fund:**
$5 offsets printing costs of your 3 issues each year
+ $ _____

**Donation to Arts & Culture Fund:** Thank you for any help towards events + $ _____

**Donation to GTCA:** Your extra support helps the GTCA operate. THANK YOU! + $ _____

**TOTAL PAYMENT ENCLOSED**
$ _____

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.

Membership is valid from the time of payment of membership fees to the end of the 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.

# CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

GORGE CANADA DAY PICNIC

So, you've been to the Gorge Canada Day Picnic, and now it's time you're thinking about helping out. This is great! We're looking for enthusiastic fun folks who are keen to give back to the community. We have a number of roles that you could help with, including:

- At the GTCA Information Tent
- Assisting at the Bike Valet
- As a Vendor Ambassador helping to coordinate placement of vendors for morning, and pack up at the end of the day
- At the Kids Zone tent giving out stick-on tattoos and Canada Flags
- With the logistics crew setting up the event space in the morning
- Or maybe something else you had in mind

Scan the QR code, or go to https://gorgecanadaday.ca/become-a-volunteer/ and tell us how you want to help. We would love to have you on board.

**Brandon Devnich,**
**Chair, Gorge Canada Day Picnic**