

Gorge Tillicum Walkability 2012

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Introduction

In May, 2012 the Gorge Tillicum Community Association sponsored a 'Jane's Walk' to assess the walkability of our neighbourhood. This assessment was stimulated by two things: a similar exercise carried out by a citizen group in the Shelbourne valley (www.saanich.ca/living/community/action/WalkabilityReportMay2011.pdf) and the opportunity to introduce the Jane's Walk concept to the community. (www.janeswalk.net).



Why assess ‘walkability’?

Of all respondents of a citizen survey, 91 percent of Saanich residents reported they frequently walked.

Saanich residents are active walkers. Walking is a frequent recreational mode of travel as reported on a 2011 citizen survey in the “Working Paper of the Saanich Parks and Recreation Plan.”

There is much evidence to suggest that more walkable communities are desirable:

- Walking is good for us, and its free and accessible to almost all.
- For youth, seniors and young parents with children walking is often the primary mode of getting around.
- We feel a connectedness to our community if we walk; it provides opportunities to meet our neighbours, increasing our sense of belonging and community.
- We observe our natural environment more closely on foot, resulting in a deeper sense of caring and stewardship.
- People are increasingly drawn to the concept of conducting their lives closer to home if possible, and accessing services, shopping and recreation on foot makes this an even more attractive option.



So, when we step out of our homes, is the walking environment one that feels safe and attractive as a primary source of getting around our neighbourhood? And how well serviced and connected are the pedestrian facilities in Gorge Tillicum?

Who better to assess the walkability than those of us who live here?!



Event Outline—May 2012



Jane's Walks are held in honour of Jane Jacobs, a well known urbanist who believed that local people should be active advocates for the place they live. Each year Jane's Walks are held across Canada, during which citizens

observe and interact on issues in their community.

Jane's Walk, Sunday, May 6, 2012

The event was publicized to the members of the Gorge Tillicum Community Association (GTCA), and public invitations were posted at the local library, recreation centre and in the neighbourhood. Approximately 25 people met at Pearkes Recreation centre at 9:30 am for a brief orientation before heading out on one of three walking

'tours' led by local volunteers.

The three walks focused on the Tillicum, Gorge and the Tillicum Centre areas. We regrouped at 11:30 am for refreshments, discussion and debriefing about what we had seen on our reconnaissance. The fourth walk in the Burnside neighbourhood took place a week later.

It is worthwhile to recognize some of the positive pedestrian environments that we enjoy, and to pinpoint pedestrian improvements that have been made in recent years.

Background Information

Parks

We are blessed with three major parks attractive for walking in our neighbourhood, Gorge Waterway, Gorge, and Cuthbert Holmes. Gorge Park was the

focus of a GTCA report in 2011 that focused some of its attention on the trails and park access.

(www.gorgetillicum.ca/site/images/stories/files/gorgeparkreport.pdf)

Cuthbert Holmes is the

midst of a planning process being conducted by Saanich Parks that will also address pedestrian access and trails.

(www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/projects/current/cuthbert.html)

Cuthbert Holmes also connects to the Colquitz River Trail and the Saanich Centennial Trail network (www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/trails/centennial.html), and the regional Galloping Goose trail. So, we are really quite fortunate to have such a variety of park and regional trails to enjoy close at hand.



Background Information - continued

Recent Pedestrian Improvements

Over the past decade a number of pedestrian improvements have been made by the District of Saanich to the roadways in our area.

- Sidewalk on Obed, both east and west of Tillicum
- Sidewalk on Maddock leading to Tillicum School
- Sidewalk on Bodega from Tillicum mall to Obed.
- Sidewalk from Tillicum along Arena Way.

- Pedestrian initiated crosswalks on Gorge Rd W at Dysart, at Colquitz, and at Orillia.
- Pedestrian initiated crosswalk on Burnside Rd W at Seaton
- Traffic calming measures on Obed, Maddock, Vincent, Walter, Ker.

As a result of the Saanich Pedestrian Priorities Implementation Plan 2006, the following were identified in our community:

High Priority

Dysart Rd, collector with no sidewalks, (half completed in 2011, remaining to be completed 2013).

Medium Priority

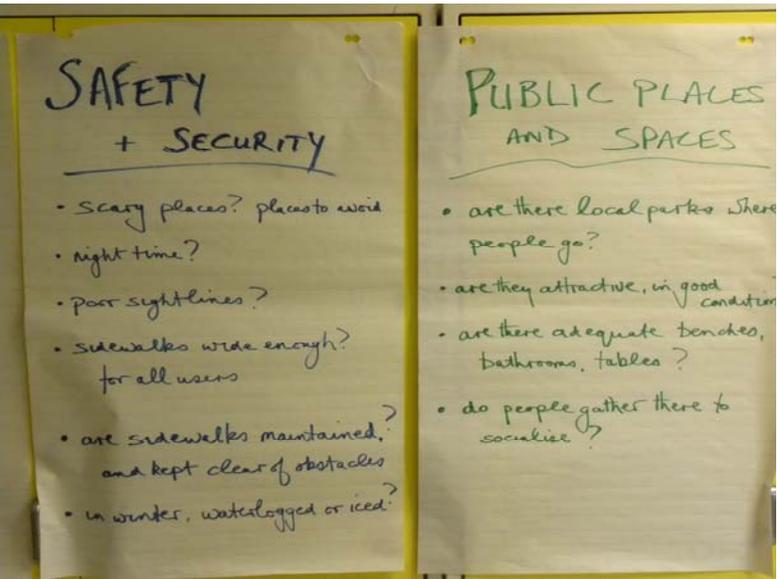
Admirals Rd – major road with one sidewalk.

Harriet Rd – major road with one sidewalk.



For more details on the Saanich PPIP

www.civicinfo.bc.ca/practices_innovations/saanich_pedestrian_priority.pdf



Walkability Assessment

1. Neighbourhoods

A. Tillicum

(area bounded by Burnside, Harriet, Gorge and Tillicum)

Major Observations

Harriet Rd

This major road lacks a sidewalk on the Saanich side. A Harriet Rd streetscape plan was developed in 2003/4, and the road is noted as ‘medium priority’ in the PPIP, so it should be an immediate priority

Gorge Park Access

This park is isolated due to the lack of crosswalks on Gorge Rd West and the speed/volume of traffic noted above. Better and safer pedestrian access to this splendid waterfront park is needed.

Other Notes

Traffic volume and speed

All four major roads in the area are very busy at times of the day, with traffic sometimes at speeds in excess of posted limits (eg recent analysis on Gorge Rd show average speeds above 60km/hr.) 'With narrow sidewalks, and so close to busy traffic, these major roads make the pedestrian environment unattractive. Consideration should be given to providing a buffer for pedestrians where and when possible, and to road dieting.



See also streetscaping in Tillicum Action Plan (2005) www.saanich.ca/business/actionplan/pdf/tillicum.pdf

Location	Improvement needed
Maddock from Albina to Tillicum	Sidewalk needed/ needs improvement.
Harriet Rd	Sidewalk needed on Saanich side.
Obed at Tillicum	Crosswalks need to be repainted.
Albina at Gorge	Crosswalks need to be restriped.
Gorge Rd W	More crosswalks needed across this busy road.
Gorge at Tillicum	Rounded corners increase vehicle speed.
Maddock, from Albina to Orillia	Good lighting required for safer pedestrian environment.
	Bus shelter required.
Albina at Tillicum school Orillia at Tillicum school	Improved access areas at school entrances needed.
Burnside at Orillia	Crosswalk required; safe pedestrian access to Hampton Park, Les Passmore Centre.
Burnside Rd/Gorge Rd	Telephone poles obstruct sidewalks; with mobility devices increasingly common, this issue needs addressing.
Albina at Tillicum	Poor pedestrian environment.

Major observations

Tillicum Rd

This major road has narrow, pedestrian unfriendly sidewalks set right beside speedy traffic lanes. Consideration should be given to providing a buffer for pedestrians where and when possible, and to road dieting.

Gorge Shopping Plaza has no direct pedestrian crosswalk access from the west side of Tillicum.

The number of lanes to be crossed by pedestrians at the Tillicum- Burnside intersection make it very unattractive for walkers.

Cowper

This is a collector street with a very narrow, poor sidewalk.



Other Notes

Location	Improvement needed
Cuthbert Holmes Park	Lighting on paths to improve safety for evening use.
Gorge Waterway Park	Lighting on paths to improve safety for evening use.
Cowper from Dysart to Colquitz	Sidewalk in very poor condition; narrow and tilting!
Admirals Rd from Inlet to Rockwell	Poor sidewalk by busy road.
Gorge Rd – north side	Narrow sidewalk on major road.
Tillicum Rd	Utility poles impinge on sidewalk, issue for those with mobility devices or strollers.
Obed at Bodega	Mailbox is in the sidewalk!
Bodega from Obed to Vincent	Complete sidewalk as Bodega is major walking route to Tillicum Centre/library/ Pearkes Rec centre
Gorge Waterway Park	Washrooms required as it is such a popular walking destination.
Admirals Rd	While new sidewalks have been added, more greenery is needed to improve pedestrian environment.
Gorge Rd	a further pedestrian initiated crosswalk needed at Gorge View.
Tillicum at Arena and at Gorge	Bus shelters needed.
Gorge at Admirals	Cars often speed off Admirals onto Gorge – danger spot for walkers/ school kids.
Gorge Rd – Gorge Waterway Park	Sidewalk link between Gorge Waterway Park and VCKC needs widening.

Major observations

The Seaton underpass from the neighbourhood to the Galloping Goose trail is in urgent need of upgrading; signage is also required to make people aware that this link even exists ie it's a well kept secret!



Possibilities should be explored to connect pedestrian paths from the east end of this neighbourhood to the Galloping Goose and the Uptown development.

Burnside Rd W is not a friendly pedestrian precinct; narrow sidewalks, fast moving traffic, and high volumes at certain times of the day, make it generally unattractive.

See also streetscaping in Tillicum Action Plan (2005) www.saanich.ca/business/actionplan/pdf/burnside.pdf

Hampton Park, the Victoria First Nations Friendship Centre and Saanich Silver Threads are three major destinations in this area, and there should be good pedestrian connections to, and between, them.

With a concentration of seniors attending Silver Threads more attention should be paid to the needs of pedestrians with restricted mobility and/ or those using mobility assistance.



Other Notes

Location	Improvement needed
Orillia from Burnside to Hampton	Sidewalk required to link to Hampton Park and Silver Threads
Regina Ave intersection with Galloping Goose	Existing trail needs clean-up, safety and visible signage.
Burnside alongside Tillicum Elementary.	Needs 30km/hour signage and enforcement.
Regina Ave intersection with Galloping Goose	Existing trail needs clean-up, safety and visible signage.



D. Tillicum Centre

(including Pearkes Rec Centre, Saanich Centennial Library, Silver City Cineplex and adjacent Cuthbert Holmes Park trails)

Major observations

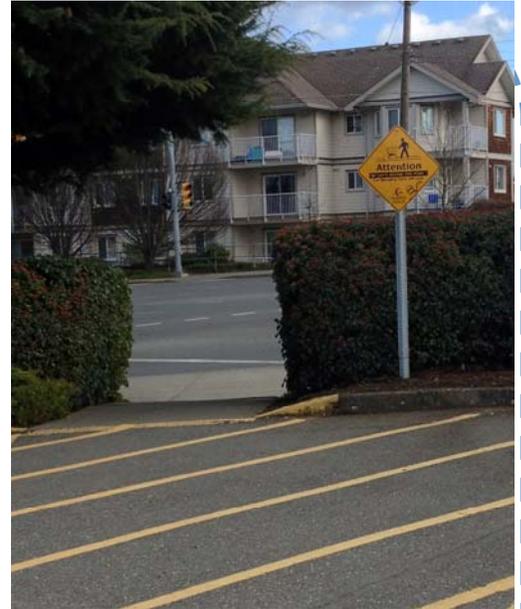
Tillicum Centre is the ‘town centre’ of the neighbourhood, and should have good pedestrian facilities leading to it, and within the site itself.

As a town centre, streets and sidewalks should be considered to emphasize and improve walkability, especially linking the recreation centre / library, theatre, restaurants and shopping complex.

This emphasis on walkability will be especially attractive when the proposed residential component is added to the site.

It is also a public transit transportation hub and should have excellent pedestrian linkage.

See streetscaping in Tillicum Action Plan (2005) www.saanich.ca/business/actionplan/pdf/tillicum.pdf



Other Notes

Location	Improvement needed
From Tillicum and Burnside Rds	Poor connections from transit stops on these roads into the Tillicum Centre.
Tillicum Centre	As a transportation hub, it would be a good location for neighbourhood collector buses.
Tillicum Centre	Create ‘streets’ within the town centre – transform the parking lot atmosphere to a more pedestrian friendly one.
Tillicum Centre	Cuthbert Holmes Park trails adjacent to Tillicum Centre property gather a lot of garbage, and tend to look unkempt, making them unattractive.
Tillicum Rd at Tillicum Centre	Tillicum Rd in front of the Centre is 6 lanes wide—a daunting stretch of asphalt; road dieting should be a priority.
Tillicum Centre	As the ‘town centre’ it would be nice to have an attractive outdoor community space where people could gather for events walkable from the neighbourhood.



1. Themes

Another way to examine walkability is to use a thematic approach, and these findings are presented here.

A. Seniors

The Gorge Waterway draws numbers of seniors as it is scenic and flat. The numbers will increase dramatically when the new seniors residence at Gorge/ Admirals is operative within a year or two.

More washroom facilities are often mentioned as a priority for seniors along this popular walkway.

Saanich Silver Threads also draws numbers of seniors to the Hampton Pk area. But for seniors to link with other services

close by on foot poses serious obstacles. For example, access to Tillicum Centre/library requires crossing the daunting Tillicum/ Burnside intersection, and then dealing with the mall parking lots!

With the increased use of mobility devices by seniors and others, our current inventory of sidewalks poses challenges. For example, numerous examples of power poles obstructing/ limiting sidewalk movement.



B. Children



Craigflower School will see improved pedestrian access with the new Craigflower Bridge being constructed along with re-vamping of the Gorge Admirals intersection.



C. Transit

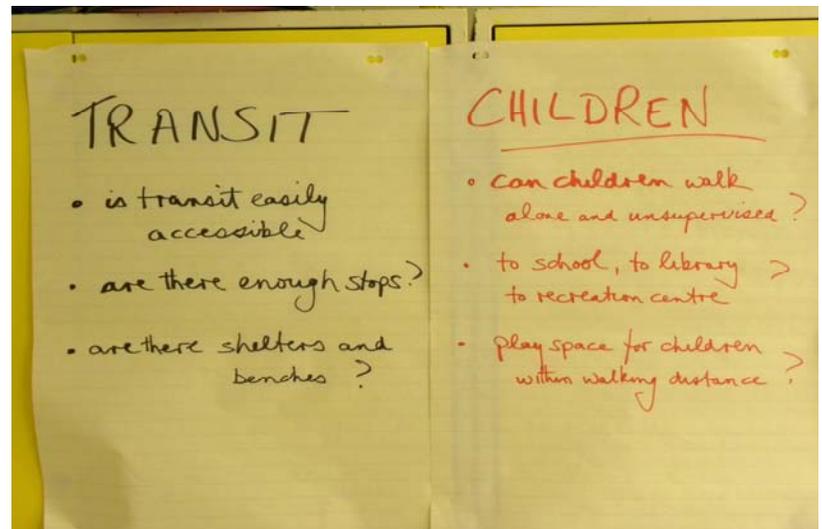
Routes 8, 11, 22, 26 currently serve the Gorge Tillicum area.

Tillicum centre is a bus hub, but currently services either enter the centre or pass by on street – is there a case for a more centralized hub?

Pedestrian links from the mall to the on street stops need upgrading.

Consider relocating the bus stop opposite Fairway Market as it

encourages dangerous pedestrian crossing. Shelters/ benches/ stops needed.



D. Safety and Security

Gorge Waterway Park walkway is so popular that lighting should be considered

Cuthbert Holmes should also be considered for lighting.

Curb cut outs for strollers and mobility devices are sometimes angled toward traffic.

E. Public Places and Spaces



Linkages between parks could be strengthened (e.g., Gorge Park to Gorge Waterway Park; Cuthbert Holmes/ Colquitz River Park to Galloping Goose and Centennial Trail System).

Washrooms facilities as mentioned in seniors section.

The new sections of Admirals are in need of plantings to soften the hard edges of this thoroughfare. The same can be said for Tillicum and Burnside Rds. Any boulevard spaces should be considered for shrubs, trees and rain garden installations

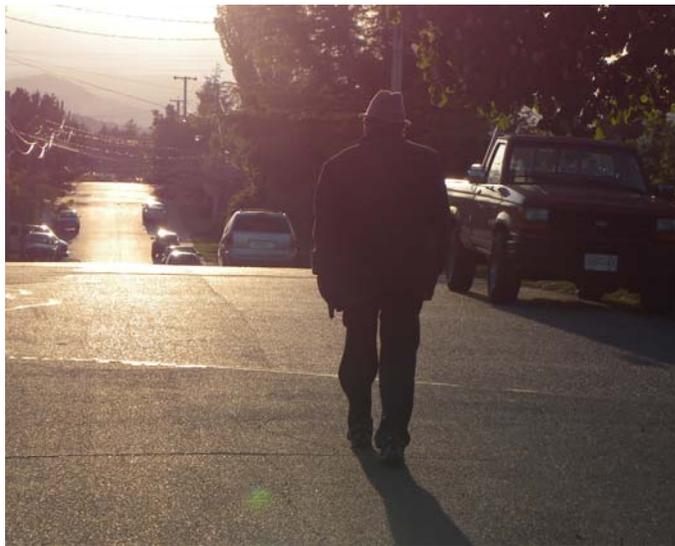
In Cuthbert Holmes Park, the trail by the creek is in the floodplain and should be relocated to higher ground.

F. Traffic

Traffic speed and proximity to pedestrians on major roads makes for unpleasant walking experiences (e.g., Burnside, Tillicum and Gorge Rd W from Harriet to Tillicum).

The absence of bicycle lanes on these roads also adds to the feel that the car is the most valued mode of transportation. Road dieting measures are recommended.

Traffic calming introduced on neighbourhood streets has served to bring down speeds, but has taken some time to achieve.



While we acknowledge that the Gorge / Tillicum/ Burnside neighbourhoods do have some wonderful walking opportunities, this report seeks to highlight areas where improvements should be considered.

The goal is for all residents to feel safe, confident and comfortable to leave their homes on foot, and know that, whether for recreation or access to services, walking is a viable and supported means of getting around the neighbourhood.

We look forward to working toward this goal with local residents and with Saanich.

- Harry Lewis, February 2013