



Reserve your place

Please send an email to coolkit@victoriadra.ca to receive the link for the February 6th zoom meeting.

There is limited space available at the Downtown Victoria Coolkit cohort's March 16 meeting with guest speaker Ryan Senechal. If you're not a downtown member but would like to attend, drop an email to coolkit@victoriadra.ca to check availability.

1

FEBRUARY 6

5:00 pm Zoom
Strata Slidedecks &
Electrical Planning
Reports

2

FEBRUARY 17

Downtown Victoria
Coolkit Meeting at the
Dock 10:00 am

3

MARCH 16

Downtown Victoria
Coolkit Meeting with
guest speaker Ryan
Senechal



Applications
opening for
Victoria Local
Champions -
page 4

Express your
opinion on

1. Road Closures
Page 2 & 3

2. Biodiversity
Page 7

3. Cost of Heat
Pumps -
transparency
Page 7

Oak Bay & South Jubilee Coolkit

**ENERGY
ALTERNATIVES
GET THE GREEN
LIGHT!**

Join us for a free presentation on reducing energy
in your home and in your driving.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

What we'll cover
Tap into the latest information on government
grants and loans available for home energy
retrofits and for electric car purchases. Learn
about the advantages of car share.

Who you'll hear from

- Glenn Garry, Victoria EV Association
- Dave Wharf, Evic Car Share
- Christy Love, RDH Building Science Inc.
- Kylic Symons, Netzero Solar

Incentives to take advantage of

- Up to \$40,000 of retrofits for up to 10 years, interest free
- Up to \$9,000 for a new electric car

250-592-7275
chyd-lay@oakbay.ca



7:00 PM
31
January
Windsor Park
Pavilion
2481 Windsor Road
Victoria, BC V8S 2R2



Let Councillors know your suggestions soon!



**Council Member Motion
For the Committee of the Whole Meeting of 18 January 2024**

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** 18 January 2024
From: Councillor Jeremy Caradonna and Councillor Matt Dell
Subject: Accelerating the network of greener, quieter, low-traffic streets

BACKGROUND

Victoria has a long history of increasing the supply of safe and accessible community space via innovative street usage and selected road closures. Some of the more well-known low-traffic locations and pocket parks include the intersections of Blackwood and Kings, North Dairy and Doncaster, Cedar Hill and Lang, Pandora and Chambers, McClure Plaza, and Gladstone Mall (Fernwood Square), amongst many other examples.

It is important to spotlight Fernwood Square. Once upon a time, traffic flowed through the area that is now a car-free zone. In the mid-1970s, the Square was created, despite vocal pushback from many community members. In the end, a pedestrianized zone was created that runs only 60 metres from Fernwood Road to the western edge of the Square. This relatively small road closure has had a transformative effect on the culture and vibrancy of Fernwood. Today, the Square is a highly valued gathering place, a site of connection, lounging, active play, and patio seating. Every year, in June, Fernfest activates the Square with music, dancing, and food. Fernwood is not Fernwood without Fernwood Square, and a simple road closure is what made it possible.

The City has the potential to create new “Fernwood Squares” by closing down underutilized roads to install placemaking features and public amenities, add new green space, and expand the urban forest. Moreover, strategic road closures can create safer public spaces for increased liveability, especially for kids, families, seniors, and those with mobility challenges.

Partial road closures would align broadly with many of the official policies adopted by the city, including the Climate Leadership Plan, the Official Community Plan, and Go Victoria, all of which champion active living, public space, and low-impact modes of transportation. Further, street closures align with many aspects of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, including a Guiding Value (“embrace urban evolution, innovation, and adaptation”), a Transportation priority (“install new amenities and improve the ‘moving experience’ of pedestrians, mobility device users, and the public generally”), two Parks, Recreation, and Gathering Spaces priorities (“create more public gathering spaces with experiential features” and “accelerate policies and practices to realize the Urban Forest Master Plan”), an Economic Health and Community Vitality priority (“activate streets, sidewalks, patios, and public space, and support business initiatives and ideas”), and an Arts, Culture, Music, Sport, and Entertainment priority (“enhance supports and amenities for recreational, youth, and professional sports in the city”).

RECOMMENDATION

That Council direct staff to identify, accelerate, and pilot partial or complete road closures to create or enable new boulevards, community spaces, placemaking initiatives, and green spaces; and that staff use some or all of the following criteria to guide and prioritize pilot projects:

- identify areas in which overall impacts to traffic flow are marginal;
- enhance safety for children, pedestrians, seniors, and those with mobility challenges, as well as pilots that enhance liveability and community vibrancy;
- consider ways of activating streets and supporting small businesses via new pedestrianized zones;
- choose projects that connect green spaces bifurcated by roads and/or connect school grounds to green spaces;
- ensure prioritization for greenspace, pollinator corridors, biodiverse native plants, shade trees, and, where possible, food-producing plants;
- where possible, implement bioswales, rainwater gardens, and other green stormwater

strategies

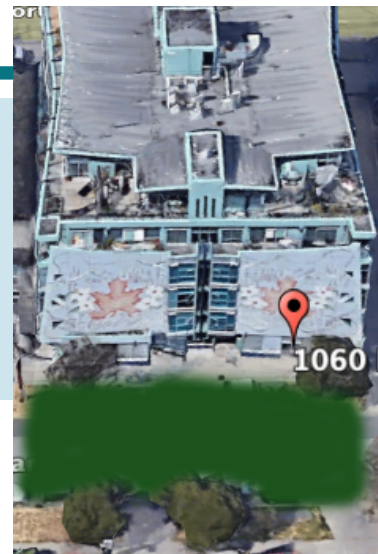
Respectfully submitted,

_____ Coun. Jeremy Caradonna

----- Coun. Matt Dell

One suggestion -

A car-free pocket park on Meares Street between the proposed Jawl building and the Mosaic...



Local Champions

Local Champions is a community-based leadership development program for Victoria residents to gain foundational skills, confidence and relationships to become more active and engaged in their neighbourhood or community. Through developing collaborative grassroots leadership skills, local champions can apply their learnings to initiate community-building activities or projects and become “connectors” in their neighbourhoods.

Passionate about addressing the climate crisis?

This year, the City's Climate Action Program will sponsor five Neighbourhood Champions to participate in the program and undertake a project focused on reducing community greenhouse gas emissions through home energy retrofits. There has never been a better time to learn the skills needed to mobilize community climate action!

The City of Victoria's Neighbourhood Team has partnered with Building Resilient Neighbourhoods and other guest presenters to deliver this six-part training series that runs from March to September and will support residents to become active civic leaders in our community.

Local Champions come from all different backgrounds. We welcome any Victoria resident with energy, passion and an interest in collaborating with others to make their community a better place.

Local Champions could be a great fit if you want to:

- become more involved in your community
- apply for any type of community grant
- become more involved in decisions that impact your neighbourhood
- facilitate a community project
- become a better facilitator and communicator

- develop new, employable skills.

Participants will gain on-the-ground experience in community organizing and facilitation. The sessions will focus on building practical skills, confidence and relationships so that participants can act as project leaders for a variety of community-based initiatives. After they graduate, Local Champions will be able to engage more fully in civic life through participation in local projects or associations.

The program consists of six sessions starting on March 15, 2024. All session dates are available at victoria.ca/neighbourhoods.

Cost:

- The program fee is \$250.
- If cost is a barrier, a limited number of sponsored spaces are available, as well as transportation subsidies.
- If you are excited about working on a climate related project, apply for one of five sponsored climate spaces.

Upon completion, participants will be recognized as Local Champions by the City of Victoria and will have a strong knowledge of local governance and community development.

Residents of Victoria can apply for one of 24 seats in this program. The deadline for applications is March 1, 2024.

For more information and to apply, please visit victoria.ca/neighbourhoods.



Comment: Use caution when considering the urban tree canopy **[Thank you to Rachel for bringing this op-ed to our attention]**

Decision to produce a statement on tree canopy gains in 2013-2019 has backed city staff into a corner.
Ryan Senechal Jan 13, 2024 12:40 AM Jan 13, 2024 3:58 AM TIMES COLONIST

A commentary by a professional urban forester who works frequently around trees and development in Victoria.

The analysis mentioned in the Dec. 29 commentary “Density can mean more homes, more trees, more parks” highlights how simplistic urban forest measurements can lead us all astray.

Conclusions that urban forest canopy growth and increasing building density are proven to be harmonious are to be expected, as those same conclusions were originally produced in a 2021 City of Victoria media release.

For the 60 soccer field (111 acre) urban forest canopy area increase referenced to illustrate the sustainability of development in Victoria, the devil is in the details.

City of Victoria requested and received third-party technical reports that measured urban forest canopy change over two sample periods.

In 2007-2013 and again in 2013-2019, high accuracy aerial remote sensing imagery was analyzed to produce an urban forest canopy baseline for managers to understand tree density at the neighbourhood and city scale. This also enabled managers to interpret how new building development was changing tree canopy density over the sample period. The detailed measurements and methods used in those two canopy analysis reports have not been made public by the city.

Those details revealed in a freedom of information request include numerous measurements which should give an urban forest manager reason to pause pending the analysis of future sample periods.

The decision to produce a statement on the canopy gains in 2013-2019 in what can only be described as a mission-accomplished media release has now backed city staff into a corner.

Distant early warning indicators of deteriorating distributional access to urban trees (and the benefits derived from those trees) are illustrated in the technical report. For example, downtown and Harris Green saw their plantable space area reduced by 15 and 21 per cent respectively. These are areas that are already disproportionately characterized by heat-absorbing concrete, which is a matter of concern for public health as severe heat days are increasingly likely in the region.

This is not to suggest that building density be avoided, but that we build intentionally with long-term public health outcomes in a changing climate as a guiding principle.

The author of the technical report provides a more cautious outlook on the city-wide canopy growth: “It will be of importance to monitor the continual changes in the city’s vegetation canopy to assess whether the fill in growth of existing and new plantings will continue to outstrip the vegetation loss.”

A commitment to fund ongoing canopy analysis using similar methods from the baseline study, and making the full scope of measurements publicly accessible could be valuable gestures on the city’s part recognizing canopy measurement is not a single event but an ongoing pulse check.

Local-level health and wellness issues for people systemically and chronically exposed to severe heat, noise, pollution, and feeling unsafe being outdoors near their home are problems that carbon storage and greenhouse gas reduction equations are not equipped to solve.

Efficiency and cost savings in the production of new housing come through decisions to innovate and by practising and refining those innovations. The same way innovations might benefit the safety of workers on the jobsite and produce fewer injuries combined with windfalls of savings, we might also learn that housing affordability is directly tied to urban forest enhancement.

Those innovations require early adopters and ongoing patience and have the possibility to provide enormous community benefit at a relatively low cost.

The ongoing appetite to capitalize and politicize low-hanging urban forest fruit is a missed opportunity to move the needle on housing shortages and costs, and for the overall sustainability of Victoria's urban forest.

The complex systems at work in housing and urban forests are not ones that benefit from simplified measurements and rushed interpretations.

What gets measured in 20 years from today by City of Victoria in terms of urban forest canopy will have a distinct relationship with how the whole of the community, developers, and urban foresters collaborate, innovate, and plan in the months ahead.

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health By January 31st

From Organizing for Change (OfC): B.C.'s Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Draft Framework is an important step towards the provincial government's commitment to prioritize the conservation and management of ecosystem health and biodiversity. The new Framework will align all existing related initiatives, and set the path for co-development, and the implementation of new policies, legislation, and strategies. This is your time to wade in! OfC has done a Technical Briefing, which you can find [here](#). Our slides are [here](#). And we are offering a Zoom session on January 17th [here](#). When you are ready, make your submission [here](#), and send a copy to us [here](#). Reach out if you need anything, and we will try to help. [Read more](#)

From Nanaimo Climate Action Hub:

Heat pumps are a key tool in the fight against climate change, but even with the rebates, many British Columbians can't afford one. Transparent estimates that show the price of a heat pump separate from the cost of labour have, in our experience, reduced a consumer's cost by as much as \$20,000. But most companies refuse to provide such an estimate. Please help bring down the cost of heat pump installation by [adding your name](#) to our Heat Pump Affordability Petition to Josie Osborne, Minister of Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation.

Sign [here](#)