



West Bay Residents Association

Community Update: April 2025

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WELCOME TO THE WBRA SPRING 2025 COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Our Spring 2025 edition is full and includes information about the WBRA's annual 2025 **Plant Sale and Meet your Neighbour event on May 4th**, updates on Esquimalt issues and policies including the Township's OCP, affordable housing, Development Capacity Review (and Development Cost Charges), an overview of Esquimalt's new Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing Bylaw, and a look at School Board #61 elections – would a Trustee Electoral Area system be more democratic? There are concept pieces to spark your interest and so much more.



WBRA CALL FOR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Are you passionate about West Bay? Do you want to get involved in local events and projects and have fun? Do you have skills that you want to put to work? Then consider joining other like-minded individuals on the West Bay Residents Association board of directors.



Left to Right -Carole Witter - Past Chair, Val Hostetler – Secretary, Hilary Strang – Treasurer, Rozlynn Mitchell – Chair.

The WBRA was founded in 1996 and is a registered Society constituted under the BC Societies Act. Our work promotes the interests of the beautiful West Bay neighbourhood. For more on who we are, what we do, and to view our Constitution and Bylaws and archived newsletters visit our webpage: westbayresidentsassociation.com.

We want to meet you. Just send us an email addressed to the Board Chair at westbayresidentsassoc@shaw.ca and tell us a little bit about yourself. The bylaws require that a director be a registered WBRA member. Membership is simple and free (on our webpage). Directors must be a resident of West Bay and must be 18 years of age or over. That's it! We will be in touch!

Join our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/westbayresidentsassociation>

MATSON LANDS CONSERVATION AREA

The Birds, The Bees, The Flowers, The Trees



In 1923, the first bird sanctuary in Pacific Canada was established to protect a busy wildlife corridor around the southern tip of Vancouver Island that includes Juan de Fuca Strait and the Salish Sea. The Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS) covers 30 km of Victoria's shoreline and includes West Bay.

This unique ecosystem covering the rocky slopes below Swallows Landing was



slated for a large development in the mid 1990's that would have covered much of the area. Due to the efforts of the citizens of West Bay, the municipality of Esquimalt and the developers of Swallows Landing, a compromise was reached. It is interesting to note that the

West Bay Residents Association (WBRA) evolved out of this process.

In 2004, the Matson Lands Conservation Area was established within the MBS. Owned and managed by Habitat Acquisition Trust (HAT), the Matson Conservation Area is situated above the WestBay Walkway and is Victoria Harbour's last remaining Garry oak ecosystem. Covering 2.4-acres along the West Bay shoreline, the property is home to countless wildlife species and provides an important habitat corridor for native



plants and animals. Birds such as purple Martin, raven, barred owl, Cooper's hawk, hummingbirds, and Great blue heron are often on display.

<https://hat.bc.ca/matson>

In springtime, the meadows of the Matson Lands are a-buzz with busy



pollinators drawn to the native wildflowers in bloom. Butterflies, dragonflies and all 5 families of bees (bumble, plasterer, cuckoo, sweat and mason) that are present in Canada are some of the pollinators represented in the Matson Lands. The ongoing control of invasive plants and the supplemental seeding or transplanting of native plants like camas, onion grass, chocolate and fawn lilies satin flower and sea blush help to support their important food sources.



Every spring a sea of blue camas flowers light up the rocky slopes of the Matson Lands, but they're not just a pretty flower. Camas was an important food source for indigenous people and continues to play a significant role in ceremonies and cultural practices. The remaining stand of



camas in the Matson Lands represent a living artifact to Lekwungen ancestors who for thousands of years before

European settlement, cultivated, cared for, and harvested camas in West Bay. Taking ownership of this special nature reserve is the ongoing work of volunteers



today to maintain this unique ecosystem.

The Matson Lands Conservation Area is an ecological gem, a community green



space with more than a hundred oak trees, and it constitutes an exemplary model of successful community-based conservation in an urban setting. A great example of the endangered Garry oak meadows that once dominated the surrounding landscape, this area has become an important node in a regional network of protected areas and greenways surrounding the Inner Harbour

and Gorge waterways. It is a wonderful demonstration site for urban ecosystem conservation. Its accessibility and volunteer opportunities allow us to learn practical ecological restoration skills for stewarding the natural areas in our own backyards...further supporting the birds,

and the bees and the flowers and the trees.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/migratory-bird-sanctuaries/locations/victoria-harbour.html#toc2>



Envisioning a Matson Conservation Area Viewing Platform and Pocket Park Concept

Members of the public can appreciate the Matson Lands as they walk along the West Bay Walkway and by climbing the



impressive 100 step metal staircase in front of Swallows Landing. Posted signs actively discourage the public from



wandering through the Conservation Area. An ecosystem this small and



delicate can easily be “loved to death.” There are two interpretive and

educational signs along the walkway. The land has been tended by a dedicated group of volunteers, the Matson



Mattocks, and the HAT Field Crew, who have wrested and removed significant amounts of invasive species.

The public staircase can also be accessed at the south end of Garrett Place, off Dunsmuir Road. At the end of Garrett Place is a couple of cement bollards and piles of grassed rubble which overlook a forested section of the



Matson Lands. West Bay Resident Association (WBRA) members and HAT personnel have discussed the development of a park platform at this site for a number of years. With the incredible increase in housing density here in West Bay, the WBRA suggests the time for this project has arrived. Public amenities that involve nature

- A weekly volunteer group called the Matson Maddocks, who help rid the Matson Conservation Area of invasive plants and maintain the area, is looking for volunteers. This group meets every Wednesday at 9:00 at the end Garrett Place. If you are interested, please contact Max Mitchell of HAT, his email is max@hat.bc.ca
- Migratory Bird Day is Sunday May 11, there are projected activities to take place at the Matson Conservation Area
- Last November the HAT restoration crew transplanted 24 Garry Oaks seedlings. These young trees were donated by Central Saanich and the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

appreciation are especially significant to people who are living in multi-unit developments.

This envisioned park platform would be easily walker and wheelchair accessible. (It's a flat two-block walk from the new Hythe Point senior development on Esquimalt Road.) The platform could provide a shaded picnic table, benches, space for historical and interpretive plaques, a bird observation vantage point and would be an entryway space for educational uses of the Matson Conservation Area.

A project of this nature will require the involvement of the Parks Department of

the Municipality of Esquimalt as well as that of HAT and the WBRA.

UPDATES – TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT ISSUES AND POLICIES

The Township's Council and Staff have been busy. Following is a sampling of issues and policies that are underway. The Township's webpage is a valuable resource and can be accessed at <https://www.esquimalt.ca>

Esquimalt's Official Community Plan Recalibration

This year, the Township will undertake a 'recalibration,' or update, of its Official Community Plan (OCP). This recalibration involves a targeted update rather than a comprehensive review or overhaul typically required when creating a new OCP.

The primary goals of this update are to ensure compliance with new provincial legislation and address specific issues, such as the 12-storey height limit in the Commercial Mixed-Use section. It will also incorporate additional necessary updates that staff have been working on.

A more thorough and comprehensive review of the OCP will take place in the future, likely following the 2026 municipal election, as part of the development of a new OCP. In the meantime, the Township must amend the current OCP by December 31, 2025. This process will include a public consultation to gather community input.

Affordable Housing



Councillor Duncan Cavens

Housing affordability is a pressing issue for all communities, particularly in areas with high demand and limited supply.

Esquimalt is on track to meet its provincial government's market housing needs targets over the next 5–20

years. However, these targets include non-binding guidelines for affordable housing, which aim for 267 affordable rental units and 16 supportive housing units. Achieving these guidelines and addressing the community's growing need for affordable housing in the future presents significant challenges. To overcome these challenges, coordinated efforts among all levels of government, the development community, and the non-profit housing sector are crucial, alongside policy and legislative tools to encourage or require non-market housing.

In September 2024, Councillor Duncan Cavens proposed that Council review the Township's current affordable housing strategies and consider developing an Affordable Housing Plan to meet future needs. This led to a motion directing staff to prepare an Affordable Housing Impact Assessment.

Staff presented [their response](#) to the Special Committee of the Whole on December 9, 2025, outlining the project scope for an Affordable Housing Strategy, proposed timelines, and staff capacity implications.

The recommended timeline for developing the Strategy, if approved, is from the third quarter of 2025 to the second quarter of 2027 - extending beyond the term of the current Council.

The Committee of the Whole has requested staff to provide options for expediting the project and is awaiting further information. In the meantime, the proposal remains part of the draft budget, with an estimated cost of \$75,000. The budget is set to be finalized at the end of April.

Councillor Cavens commented, “The affordability issue is not going to improve on its own, and Esquimalt’s approach cannot be ‘business as usual.’ There are various initiatives underway across the province worth exploring. We need to take stock and then develop a plan for Esquimalt.”

One initiative highlighted by Cavens is a project in New Westminster, supported by a grant from CMHC’s Housing Accelerator Fund. This initiative involves pre-zoning sites to enable the construction of six-storey, wood-framed apartment buildings, allowing affordable rental housing projects to bypass the rezoning process if they meet specific conditions. These conditions ensure that the sites are used for affordable housing projects delivered by non-profit housing providers and co-ops. Pre-zoning is the initial phase of a multi-phased initiative.

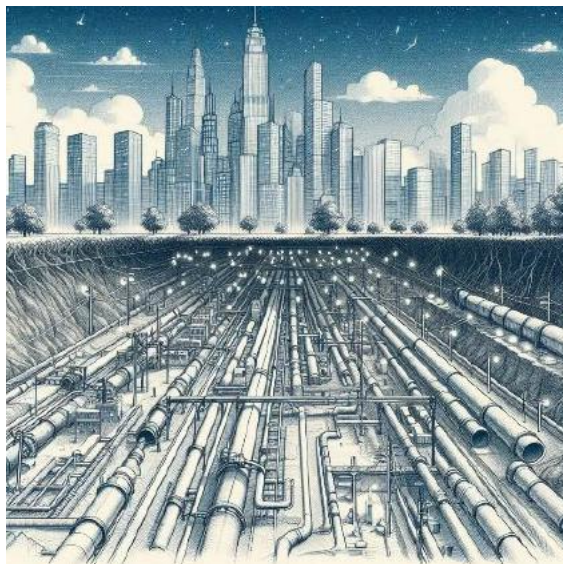
The rationale behind pre-zoning stems from New Westminster's Official Community Plan (OCP), which envisions land use and densities requiring most properties to be rezoned. The time, cost, and uncertainties associated with rezoning pose risks to affordable housing

projects. The areas identified for pre-zoning are already designated for higher densities in the OCP, making this approach a way to fast-track affordable housing proposals. Other municipalities are also exploring pre-zoning as one of several tools to support affordable housing projects.

For further details, refer to the [January 21, 2025, overview of the initiative](#). The zoning amendment bylaw was approved at New Westminster's Council meeting on January 27, 2025.

Development Capacity Review

Due to its geographic and boundary constraints, Esquimalt's future growth will be accommodated through the densification of its built environment. Densification can be achieved through increased site coverage, greater building height, or a combination of both.



Currently, Esquimalt's services are primarily designed for lower-density development. As density increases, the carrying capacity of these services may be reached or exceeded. To determine the extent to which future development can be supported by existing services, the

Township will undertake a development capacity assessment.

This assessment will include:

- Which services are currently or may soon be at capacity;
- The timeframe for when these capacities may be reached;
- Constraints that could impact future development; and
- Resources and projects necessary to upgrade services over the next 20 years.

The scope of the assessment will focus on constraints within the Township's jurisdiction. A consultant will be contracted to carry out the assessment, which is scheduled to take place this year

Should Esquimalt consider implementing Development Cost Charges?

In a 2021 edition of the WBRA Newsletter we undertook a review of what Development Cost Charges (DCC's) are, the Local Government Act requirements on how they can be used, which municipalities have chosen to use DCC's, and an overview of the discussion in 2011 when Esquimalt chose to not incorporate DCC's and the reasons why. It is interesting to note that at the time the article was written, ninety-two municipalities throughout the province had chosen to utilize DCC's including 23 municipalities on Vancouver Island.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Esquimalt Road Active Transportation Improvements and Underground Utility Renewals Project (ERATIUURP)



The ERATIUURP is intended to better connect Esquimalt Road with other critical areas including the City of Victoria, DND, our business area, recreation centre and other local and regional destinations.

The project's Phase 1 focused on the section of Esquimalt Road from Dominion Road to Joffre Street. The community provided feedback on the design which included a protected bike lane and new multi-use crossings to improve safety and comfort for all types of road users. A \$500,000 grant has been received from Active Transportation BC. Final designs are underway, and the project is expected to go to tender in the later Spring with the project start in the summer.

Phase 2 focus is on the section of Esquimalt Road from Joffre Street to Canteen Road. The community was asked to provide feedback on several bike route options. The project's Phase 2 report including recommendations and

next steps is tentatively set for the April 7th Council meeting.

Both phases will include underground utilities upgrades.

Public Dock Project

Esquimalt will be installing a new public dock soon. Where that dock should be located is currently not yet public information. Last fall/winter Township Staff asked residents to weigh in to review the various site options identified by the project team and through a priority scoring system identify where they thought the best site would be.

Esquimalt residents responded in mass to both the survey and the open house. The consultants are currently compiling the results, reviewing the feasibility of the various options and preparing a report with recommendations to the Committee of the Whole. This is expected to go forward in May 2025.

Update: West Bay Developments

There are currently ten development projects approved and or underway in



West Bay that can be viewed on the WBRA website. Over the last year two developments have been completed – The Adelaide, a rental building on Dunsmuir at West Bay Terrace and the

West Bay Crest, a seven-townhouse development on Dunsmuir at Wollaston.

The Surf building at 526 Head Street and Gore is up for sale. It consists of one commercial space and 13 residential units.

On a smaller scale, a single-family home on Dunsmuir has been sold to local developer Lapis Homes. Lapis is planning a development under the Municipality's new Small-Scale Multi-family Housing Zone with a four to six unit development.

Esquimalt's New Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing Bylaw



In 2023 the provincial government adopted Bill 44 – Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing (SSMUH), Bill 46 – Development Financing, and Bill 47 – Transit Oriented areas, in its effort to increase housing supply, provide more housing choices and to contribute to more affordable housing options. On June 24th, 2024, Esquimalt adopted its Zoning Bylaw No. 3142 SSMFH which amends its previous Zoning Bylaw and introduces SSMFH. The

bylaw allows up to 3 and or 4 dwelling units dependent on the location and property size, without a rezoning application, on most properties which previously permitted single-family and two-family homes. These changes include secondary suites and or garden suites. The provincial legislation will permit up to six units of SSMFH near frequent bus service as defined within the legislation for lots in excess of 280 sq m and in communities with a minimum population of 5,000.

Esquimalt's Tenant Assistance Policy

Esquimalt does not have surplus land on which to grow and develop and unfortunately with redevelopment comes tenant displacement. Municipal tenant assistance policies have been developed to help mitigate some of the impacts of forced displacement on tenants, and to ensure tenants receive support and compensation. These policies do not replace tenant rights and obligations set out in BC's Residential Tenancy Act (RTA) but provide guidelines for developers and property owners to provide additional supports for tenants who are displaced as a result of major renovations or developments. Esquimalt's Tenant's Assistance Policy was established in October 2023 and can be viewed [here](#).

[Click here](#) to contact the BC Residential Tenancy Branch.

Esquimalt Development Protocol

Living near a construction site can often be noisy and disruptive. While construction is a necessary part of community development, adopting best

practices can help make the process less disruptive for neighbours and smoother for developers.

In the next WBRA newsletter, we will explore what constitutes best development practices from a neighborhood perspective and highlight projects that have successfully established good practices.

In the meantime, Esquimalt has created its [Development Protocol](#). This document is designed to inform Developers and Prime Contractors of the Township's expectations for conduct at construction sites. It also serves as a valuable resource for the community.

School District 61 Board of Education Electoral Reform



Deciding which candidates to vote for in the Greater Victoria School District (SD61) elections can be a daunting task. SD61 has nine Trustee seats, elected from

the school district's geographic area, which includes six municipalities (such as Esquimalt) and two First Nations. In the 2022 election, 30 candidates competed for these nine positions.

School Trustees can be elected either 'at large' or through a Trustee Electoral Area, often referred to as a 'ward system.' In at-large elections, all residents within the school authority's geographic area vote for all Trustee positions on the board. In a ward system, local communities elect their own School Trustee representative(s), which is considered

more democratic and ensures fair and equitable representation among municipalities. Once elected, all nine Trustees form the Board of Trustees, tasked with overseeing substantial taxpayer-funded investments in public education.

The Capital Regional District (CRD) has four school districts, but SD61 is the only one that elects Trustees at large. Sooke SD62, Saanich SD63, and Gulf Islands SD64 have adopted ward-based systems. Across British Columbia, school districts serving multiple municipalities have almost exclusively implemented the Trustee Electoral Area system, as it is widely regarded as more equitable.

Esquimalt Councillor Tim Morrison advocates for a ward system election model for SD61. He explains, "More commonly referred to as a ward system for school boards, Trustee Electoral Areas already exist throughout B.C. and basically ensure that no matter where you live or whichever family of schools you belong to, you will have a much better chance of guaranteed representation elected from your community, by your community, and for your community." He adds, "It is hoped that such a change will finally resolve the significant disconnect that has existed between school trustees and the communities they are supposed to serve."

On March 19, 2025, Esquimalt Council unanimously passed a motion requesting the Minister of Education and Child Care, Lisa Beare, to direct SD61 to establish a task force to consider a Trustee Electoral Area election model. The goal is to implement this model in time for the 2026 Local Government/Board of Education

elections. Letters have also been sent to SD61 municipalities and First Nations, with favorable responses received. The Minister has since thanked the Township and stated that she will consider any

proposal that aligns with policies and guidelines for modifying Trustee Electoral Areas.

Thought for the Day

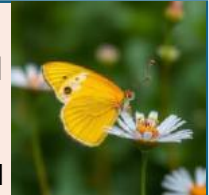
Are you the kind that rails at the wind? If so, our thought for the day will help you find sanity in a world that often seems insane.

~"You can say, ""What a terrible day,"" without realizing that the cold, wind and rain or any other condition you react to are not terrible." They are the way they are. What is terrible is your reaction, your internal resistance to it, and the emotion created by that resistance. "

Eckhart Tolle

~"As soon as the mind says something shouldn't have happened, we are in an argument with reality. Reality is simply what it is. As soon as we have anything in us that judges it, that condemns it, that says it shouldn't be, we will feel division. There isn't a justified reason to argue with reality, because we'll never win the fight. Arguing with reality is a perfect prescription for suffering..."

~Adyashanti



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MLA



Congratulations to Darlene Rotchford, Esquimalt Colwood MLA, and new daughter Josephine Catherine Ellen Rotchford – the first newborn baby to vote in the legislature in what is being referred to as “the most badass working mom moment”. MLA Rotchford came through for a budget related confidence vote after

giving birth and received a standing ovation from both sides of the house. Way to go Darlene!

ELECTIONS

Esquimalt's 2025 By-Election

The WBRA wishes to wholeheartedly thank all of the candidates that have thrown their hats in the ring and run for Esquimalt's 2025 By-Election for the Office of Councillor. Congratulations to Meagan Brame who will be filling the missing seat.

Thank you to candidates - Ed Avery, Cornelis Bouman, Holly Courtright, Marcus McCullough, James Myers, Shawn Steward, Kody Thomson.

Canada's 2025 Federal Election



The 2025 Canadian federal election will be held on Monday, April 28th to elect members of the House of Commons.

Stephanie McLean, lawyer, is the Liberal candidate. Maja Tait, Sooke Mayor, is the NDP candidate. Grant Cool, business owner and aerospace engineer, is the Conservative candidate. Ben Homer-Dixon is the Green Candidate. Nikita Heurtier, kinesiologist, is the People's Party candidate. Pam Bhatti, engineer studying for an MBA at UVic, is an Independent candidate.

Please get out there and vote – It is one of the more important rights and obligations you have. Make it count!

WEST BAY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL PLANT SALE AND MEET YOUR NEIGHBOUR EVENT

Sunday, May 4th – Save the Date -11am to 1pm. Captain Jacobson's Park.

Bring the family. Lots to do. West Bay's Muse will be offering yoga sessions in the park. There will be music, and lots more so stay tuned. Check back on the WBRA webpage and Facebook page for updates on event participants and information on what plants will be available this year – as well as the regular offerings there will be many added varieties to choose from! See you there!

