



West Bay Residents Association

Community Update: May 2023

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WELCOME TO THE WBRA SPRING 2023 COMMUNITY UPDATE

West Bay is a thriving harbour-front community with a neighbourly small-town character and well-earned sense of place. It is strategically located on the south-east perimeter of the Township of Esquimalt. It is a community under significant pressure to provide more and more homes to a growing population.

In this edition of the **West Bay Residents Association (WBRA) Spring 2023 Newsletter**, see how and where densification and growth will occur. Take a look at some important Township policies under development concerning growth. Get updates on the developments currently underway within West Bay's borders, and read about what is needed to plan appropriately for growth.

Finally, announcing **WBRA's first ever PLANT AND THINGS SALE**, scheduled for **Sunday, May 21st at Captain Jacobson's Park from 10 to 2**. You won't want to miss it!

MORE HOMES FOR MORE PEOPLE

Whichever direction you look these days you will find multiple cranes gracing the sky, large, excavated properties, and noisy construction projects underway throughout West Bay. Take a look at the adjacent map on this page for information on the twelve major housing developments currently in progress with many more expected in the future. As well, initiatives such as the Premier's promised housing agenda will have a significant impact on how our community and others across B.C. will grow to accommodate more homes for more people in the future.

These new housing initiatives include the province legislating a framework for housing targets to be established for specified municipalities, and for the minister or Lieutenant Governor in Council to take certain actions if those targets are not met. Other changes which come into effect in the fall will allow up to four units on what are currently single-family designated properties, with more possibly permitted in areas well served by transit. Current single-family zoned areas of West Bay include all of Wollaston, Dunsmuir and Paradise properties coloured yellow on the map.

Esquimalt's current Official Community Plan, which was approved in 2018, allows for significant densification with its change from what are currently 'Single-Family' designated properties in a large portion of West Bay to

'Townhouse Residential' (TR) designated properties. The TR designation applies to all the areas of Wollaston, Dunsmuir, Paradise and Gore which are coloured orange on the map.

If we use the recent proposal for 958 Wollaston as an example of what could be built on TR zoned lots in the future, we could see up to four stacked townhouses per lot. Add to that the changes coming from government to upzone all single-family lots and West Bay's population could expand significantly within a short period of time.

DADUs, which are self-contained dwelling units detached from a single-family residential dwelling, are now permitted throughout much of the single-family zoned areas. Other names for DADUs include garden suite, granny flat or laneway house.

It is now more important than ever that planning is done to review how, what and where growth can sustainably occur. As well we need to know what the carrying capacity of our area is when it comes to development and growth, what social amenities and additional green space will be required to support an increased population, how we protect our trees and wildlife as buildings come down and new ones go up, and what supports are needed for our residents who will face displacement.



Click [HERE](#) for more information on developments in West Bay.

ESQUIMALT NEEDS A HOUSING PLAN

The Township of Esquimalt's Housing Needs Assessment can be viewed on the link below. It was completed in 2020 as part of a joint Housing Needs Report for eleven CRD communities to fulfill the Housing Needs Report requirements of B.C.'s *Local Government Act* legislation of 2019. This legislation required local governments to collect data, analyze trends and present reports that describe current and predicted housing needs in B.C. New reports are to be developed every five years.

The intention of a needs assessment is to help communities better understand their current and future housing needs by identifying existing and projected gaps in housing supply. The assessment is based on the collection of information about local demographics, economics, housing stock, types of housing stock, etc. This information is vital to a municipality developing a housing strategy or action plan and is used for changes to Official Community Plans (OCP) as well.

Unfortunately, this 2020 report is based on 2016 census data as that is what was available at the time. The most current Canadian census is a detailed enumeration with a reference date of May 2021. So, while the report is considered when amending the OCP and other Township action plans there have been significant changes in housing needs since the data was collected seven years ago.

Our community, and most B.C. communities,



are under extreme pressure to develop and grow. A growing municipality needs to ensure that it has up-to-date information on which to base its decision-making and to ensure that its growth does not place an impossible demand on its infrastructure, services, green space, amenities, and environmental and social systems, etc.

Esquimalt Council will be having a housing workshop with the date as yet to be determined. Let's hope that the ensuing discussion results in laying the foundation for undertaking a more current needs assessment and ultimately the development of a made-in-Esquimalt housing plan.

A housing plan is important as it will ensure a more proactive approach to community housing by setting out clear goals and strategies for addressing its housing needs. This will help to guide future development and decision making in a way that is more in line with the community's priorities and values as decisions are based on a thoughtfully defined plan rather than simply reacting to proposals from the development community.

Esquimalt's Housing Needs Report:

https://www.esquimalt.ca/sites/default/files/docs/business-development/Appendix_A_Esquimalt_Draft_Housing_Needs_Report_With_Summary_Form.pdf



Esquimalt Policies and Initiatives Under Development

The following policies and initiatives are under development by the Township to help deal with some of the impacts of community growth: The Development Capacity Assessment Report – an assessment of the community’s carrying capacity in terms of development; The Development Protocol – expectations for construction site project owners and managers; The Displaced Renters Policy – expectations for supports for our residents who are displaced due to development; and a heads up regarding a ‘tweaking’ coming to the Official Community Plan.



Esquimalt Development Capacity Assessment Report

The process of undertaking a **Development Capacity Assessment** is underway. The aim of the Township’s assessment is to determine a process and tools to identify the carrying capacity of our community’s systems and structures based on future growth and development. The initiative’s draft terms of reference are slated to go to Council for feedback and eventual approval. It is anticipated that the review will include an overview of how future costs can be mitigated.

Many communities utilize Development Cost Charges (DCCs) which is a levy on new development to pay for new or expanded infrastructure services. (See an earlier WBRA article on DCC’s in this newsletter.)

The WBRA supports the Township undertaking this capacity review. It is important to fully understand the pressures on community resources, infrastructure, amenities and services within the context of sustainable

development and population growth.

Esquimalt Development Protocol

Esquimalt is in the process of updating its **Development Protocol**. The Protocol provides for health and safety requirements for workers and the community and allows site preparation and construction activities to occur while keeping any disruption to neighbouring residents and businesses to a minimum. Residents need to know what standard a contractor/ developer is to be held to regarding how they manage their site and how they as citizens can engage when they observe a failure of that standard. The Protocol will help to strengthen this accountability. We

will post the updated Protocol to the WBRA Facebook page and website when it is released.

Esquimalt Displaced Renters Policy

The expected Esquimalt **Displaced Renters Policy** is intended to mitigate the impacts on tenants displaced from their homes because of redevelopment.

Bill Brown, Esquimalt’s Director of Development Services, informed WBRA that Council will be having a **housing workshop** at which time they likely will discuss housing initiatives such as the Displaced Renters Policy. The timing of the workshop has not yet been determined.

The WBRA board has learned that the Esquimalt policy may be based on the [Victoria Tenant Assistance Policy](#). The City of Victoria’s policy acknowledges that

Lack of affordable housing, especially affordable rental stock, is a significant factor that contributes to relatively high levels of homelessness in the city, with

Esquimalt Policies and Initiatives Under Development (continued)

significant social and economic costs and impacts. Any loss of rental stock and displacement of existing tenants, especially tenants with additional assistance needs, is a serious challenge.

Highlights of Victoria's policy (see the above link) include:

1. Information about the Province's Residential Tenancy Act legislation on "[renovictions](#)"
2. Applicable Housing types (Market and Social Housing)
3. Tenant eligibility
4. Tenant Assistance Plan (administered and funded by the developer)
 - a. Early communication with the tenants
 - b. Appropriate compensation
 - c. Relocation assistance
 - d. Moving costs and assistance
 - e. Right of First Refusal
5. Information package for tenants
6. Information package for developers.

Esquimalt Official Community Plan (OCP)

Indications suggest that **Council is considering alterations to the OCP**, termed 'tweaking' rather than a full redo. Details are not available yet, but the Director of Development Services stated, "the OCP recalibration is on hold and is expected to resume in the summer."



WHERE DID ALL THE BIRDS GO?

By Eric Pittman

I have filmed hummingbirds very closely in Esquimalt for 15 years. I have worked on many wildlife documentaries, and I observe the natural world with more interest than most. And what I am seeing in and around Esquimalt is alarming.

When the Township of Esquimalt grants license for a property to be developed, the developers often clearcut the property and excavate to the hardpack soil or go further by blasting.

Dunsmuir Road, for example, has two developments with the construction of four townhouses and a 6-story apartment building. Together they involved a significant loss of urban forest.

More projects on Lampson Street at the Old English Inn site, at Head and Esquimalt, and at Lampson and Esquimalt involve the almost complete destruction of the animal and bird habitat. Within the last few years, many critical acres of aged urban forest have been destroyed in our area and we can't get that back.

Thousands of displaced animals and creatures are forced to find new homes with the destruction of the urban forest. Animals don't get help from others and either thrive or die based on how much food and shelter they can find. But as their environment dwindles, so does their food and their populations. Animal populations reach critical numbers where they are no longer viable. We need to work towards keeping the resources that maintain the animals with which we share this environment.

In this process of urban forest destruction, I always come back to the same question: Why is it deemed acceptable to kill so many animals by destroying their homes? Is it because we can turn a blind eye if the promise of a profit is

present? Is it because we don't know about it?

I tend to think that most people don't know about it. When people are informed, I have seen them change their attitudes towards cutting trees down when they realize how many animals need that tree for life.

If we continue down this path of clear-cut development, it won't be too long before there is no room for animals and birds in our township. I

encourage our mayor and council to adapt a more ecofriendly way to plan our township, one that accommodates the needs of all the inhabitants and creatures of our area. I encourage them to take an active role in providing education about urban forests

and their necessity. Let's incorporate the existing green spaces and trees into the township and its developments. We can build around trees. We just need the will to do it and then, in the years to come, we will all benefit from this practice.

Eric Pittman is a long term resident of Esquimalt and lives in West Bay. He is called on by such organizations as the BBC, Netflix, ITV, CTV and others for his specialized knowledge and films on hummingbirds. See Eric's work at <https://www.hummingbirdsupclose.com>



The following article is reprinted from a 2021 WBRA newsletter.

Should Esquimalt consider implementing Development Cost Charges?

As a municipality develops and grows, new and or improved infrastructure and parks are needed to accommodate that growth. Under the **Local Government Act** municipalities and regional districts have the ability to levy Development Cost Charges (DCC's) on new development to pay for new or expanded infrastructure such as sewer, water, drainage, roads and parks. DCC's are intended to reflect the capital costs that are imposed by new development, ensuring the municipality is able to meet the demands of new development and accommodate the community's growth. In the case of parks, DCC's can be used to acquire and improve parklands, and the improvements may include the construction of trails, playgrounds, landscaping and restrooms.

The following excerpt is from the Province of BC's Development Cost Charge Best Practices Guide: *"Many cities and towns in British Columbia face significant development pressure, which requires the expansion of existing or the installation of new infrastructure systems, to support new development and its demand on utilities and services. However, the costs associated with these infrastructure requirements create significant public sector burdens. Increasingly all governments are facing significant constraints in the use of general*



purpose taxation and have placed greater emphasis on the "user pay", or "benefiter pay" principle. In response to these pressures, DCC's have been utilized by local governments as a cost recovery mechanism for apportioning infrastructure project costs amongst developers of land".

Land developers applying to subdivide a property and or to construct or alter a multi-family residential, commercial, institutional, or industrial development are responsible for paying DCC's.

Ninety-two municipalities throughout the province have chosen to utilize DCC's including 23 municipalities on Vancouver Island. These include Campbell River, Central Saanich, Colwood, Comox, Courtenay, Duncan, Ladysmith, Lake Cowichan, Langford, Lantzville, Nanaimo, North Cowichan, Parksville, Port Alberni, Powell River, Qualicum Beach, Saanich, Sidney, Sooke, Tofino, Ucluelet, Victoria and View Royal.

DCC's are established by municipal bylaw with the approval of the Inspector of Municipalities. They are calculated separately for each category of infrastructure e.g. water, sewer, drainage, roads and parks, and can vary for different areas, type of land use, density, etc. Once levied and collected, DCC's are deposited into separate reserve funds within the municipality. These reserve funds may only be used for capital costs relating to the approved municipal DCC bylaw.



Should Esquimalt consider implementing Development Cost Charges? (continued)

In February 2011 Esquimalt Council commissioned consulting firm Urban Systems to review the feasibility of utilizing DCC's. Their recommendation was that the Township should not establish a DCC capital program and DCC bylaw at that time.

Their rationale was: *“For Esquimalt, DCC's are not considered to be the most suitable tool at this time because the community has relatively limited growth potential, limited availability of required infrastructure plans, and limited staff resources to administer a DCC program. Esquimalt has a well developed and extensive engineering infrastructure and parkland inventory available to service future growth. Works and services requirements and negotiated agreements, are considered to be suitable tools the Township should continue to use to fund growth related infrastructure.”*

Over the ensuing years, Esquimalt has experienced exponential growth and development. In August 2021 Council approved a motion to construct a Development Capacity Assessment Report with the objective of determining a process and tool(s) to identify the carrying capacity of our community's systems and infrastructure and the implications of densification on those systems.

Esquimalt's Director of Planning, Bill Brown, advises that in early 2022, following the release of census data in February, staff will be recommending to Council that a consultant be contracted to undertake a comprehensive urban capacity study that will include a review of all of the many variables impacted by growth and development in Esquimalt.

If approved, this would also be a good time to evaluate the costs associated with our community's growth and development, how those costs are apportioned, and to assess what the most appropriate financial tools, including DCC's, are available to meet those costs.



Kayak Dock in West Bay

When looking out over the harbour from the West Bay Walkway or Captain Jacobson Park, it's clear that the West Bay neighbourhood is a distinct place with its own local vibe.

“You will see ancient shorelines, intriguing trails, Garry oak forests, incredible glimpses into our maritime and military past, heritage homes designed by renowned architects, and coastal and upland parks that are the envy of the region.” (Township of Esquimalt Walking Tour #1 West Bay.)

West Bay is Esquimalt's gateway to the Victoria Harbour and is a unique natural destination in an urban setting. This makes it a popular destination not just for residents of Esquimalt, but also for visitors from the Capital Region and beyond. In addition to the Victoria Harbour Ferry and the E&N Rail Trail, the West Bay Walkway provides an excellent way to enter and leave West Bay. With any luck, there will soon be another option to choose from.

Currently, the WBRA is in discussion with the Township of Esquimalt regarding the

potential for a small water craft dock to be located at the entrance of the walkway. As part of a development permit for 899 Esquimalt Road, \$150,000 was given to the Township for the construction of a kayak dock in West Bay. In addition to these funds, \$130,000 was recently budgeted to complete a condition assessment of the West Bay Walkway structure, in order to determine necessary repairs and potential improvements.

As we see intense densification come to the West Bay neighbourhood, it is important that our natural public spaces are bolstered and protected to ensure that the access to, and enjoyment of, the area is not diminished, but enhanced.

It appears that a public dock in West Bay will have support from Council members, and planning staff have committed to engaging with the WBRA when the dock project moves forward. Please see our letter to Council in support of this initiative. <http://westbayresidentsassociation.com/kayak-letter/>





Garden Sale



Captain Jacobson Park

Sunday, May 21 from 10am to 2pm
(rain or shine)

West Bay Residents Association Spring Fundraiser

lots of plants and other stuff
cash and e-transfer

WestBayResidentsAssoc@shaw.ca

go to westbayresidents.com for more details



Go to westbayresidentsassociation.com for more details

WBRA Welcomes Your Support

The WBRA is an ambassador and dedicated advocate for the West Bay community including its people, lands, habitats and ecosystems. We continually strive to be a resource of credible information on which residents, local government and others can rely.

Our mandate is *“to promote the physical, environmental, economic, social, historic and aesthetic interests of the West Bay neighbourhood, including land use and development within the West Bay borders”*. The West Bay community extends to Vic West and the harbour to the east, the north side of Esquimalt Road to the north, Lampson Street to the west and Lyle Street to the south. In addition to being a specific community of Esquimalt, it is defined by Development Permit Area (DPA) No. 11, West Bay, in Esquimalt’s Official Community Plan (OCP). DPAs are defined in the OCP as follows: *“DPAs are designated in order to promote appropriate development through the use of guidelines”*.

The WBRA was founded in 1996 and became a registered Society under the BC Societies Act in 2002. Over the years we have advocated for and played a leadership role in initiatives such as, but not limited to, the protection of the Matson Lands, the Lantern Festival initiative, the development of the Triangle Lands and the development and implementation of the West Bay Neighbourhood Design Guidelines.

As a volunteer-run non-profit residents association, we rely on the support of people like you to financially support our efforts. Your memberships, generous donations and ongoing support pay the costs of running the organization beyond the work done by volunteers. This includes expenses such as operating costs, equipment, meeting room rentals, zoom meetings, photocopying, societal registrations and permits, etc.

Below you will find an invitation to our first ever **WBRA PLANT SALE FUNDRAISER** scheduled for **Captain Jacobson’s Park on Sunday, May 21st**. Please ensure you attend, meet the WBRA Board and other members and pick up some plants and other items to support our work. We are counting on you!

If you are not already a member, sign on here and become a member today:

<https://www.westbayresidents.com/become-a-member>

and or by contacting us by email at:

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Make sure you join our Facebook page at:

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