



GONZALES NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION

www.gonzalesna.ca

August 15, 2025

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8V 2G7

Dear Mayor and Council,

Re: Gonzales Neighbourhood Association submission - Official Community Plan Amendments

On behalf of the Gonzales Neighbourhood Association (GNA) we wish to provide input on the proposed amendments to the Official Community Plan. We set out our views under the headings: Heritage Conservation, Affordable and Inclusive Housing, Context-Sensitive Density, Infrastructure, and the Urban Forest and Green Space.

Heritage Conservation

The neighbourhood of Gonzales is home to many architecturally significant residential buildings as well as heritage sites (Gonzales Observatory) and landmarks of other kinds (Abkhazi Garden). Crescent Road and Hollywood Crescent (from Foul Bay Road to St. Charles street) is an essential link of our scenic marine drive and is **a frequent corridor for Victoria's tourism events such as marathons, bike rides and parades**. Some individual properties are protected through the heritage registry, but the overall streetscape and context remain vulnerable due to the absence of any designated Heritage Conservation Areas in the proposed OCP.

Furthermore, **the proposed Heritage Conservation Area found in Queen Anne Heights that was approved in the 2002 Neighbourhood Plan was never enacted** and this has allowed for the continual destruction of stately mansions and mature trees, not to mention likely threatened and endangered species found on these large lots.

Lastly, recognition of the beautiful houses found elsewhere in Gonzales and deserve protection are those found in the Gonzales Walking Tour. People come from around the world to walk this tour: https://victoriaheritagefoundation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/GonzWTB.web_.Oct20.pdf

To protect cohesive areas of heritage residential architecture and historic commercial areas -such as Montague Court and Gonzales Pharmacy - **it is necessary to increase the heritage protections that are stated in the current OCP**, and recognize the unique character of Gonzales, aligning with existing heritage conservation areas in Victoria such as Old Town and nearby Rockland. Several unique areas/buildings have been removed from previous heritage protection in the proposed OCP.

As of this date there is no protection for heritage in all of Victoria except downtown and in Vic West, which is of grave concern as it **reflects council's lack of priority for what makes Victoria unique. As a provincial capital and tourist destination, it is doubly important to retain heritage buildings and streetscapes, which is what many tourists come here to see.**

Affordable & Inclusive Housing

Gonzales has a strong community of renters, in existing apartment buildings, and suites in houses. Protection for tenants should be put in place, especially when removal of existing affordable suites will be the result of a new development. **New suites, unless subsidized, will not replace the existing affordable ones.**

The housing that is projected in the new version of the OCP is denser, but realistically, more expensive. It's not clear whether any rental or co-op housing is mandated. Inclusive housing would mean all levels of ability, income and family types/sizes would be accommodated. Accessibility should be prioritized in new developments, strengthening it from the new OCP's accessibility guidelines which require structural conversion for full accessibility; after the unit is built.

Context-Sensitive Density

The desirable quality of our Gonzales neighbourhood is a combination of favourable geography within our native Garry Oak ecosystem and years of strong community activity. Larger scale buildings introduced to the streetscape in the middle of blocks should have visual cohesiveness and integration with their context, which is the buildings, rooflines, materials and green spaces nearby. They should not place their neighbours into shade. **A design program should be developed with quantifiable codes, rather than vague guidelines that can be interpreted in a subjective way.** The buildings should also be reviewed for attention to factors such as quality of materials, design and scale and retention of protected trees. Designs referencing historic styles should be relevant (ie. from our regional past- like Indigenous, West Coast Modern or Arts & Crafts, not Mediterranean or Cape Cod) and well-executed, rather than pastiche elements grafted onto a generic box.

Infrastructure

An immediate and crucial concern is the necessity of upgrading infrastructure to accommodate more households and vehicles. There will be a huge need for all systems (sewer, water mains, power) to be upgraded. ... the costs of which are borne by taxpayers. The maintenance of parks, capacities of schools and transit services will need to be increased. We currently need upgrades to existing traffic control especially near Gonzales Beach. If a commercial hub is planned for that area, stoplights, parking regulations and enforcement will be a necessity. **This cost should be anticipated by the City of Victoria and addressed in the OCP**, so that it will be a cost borne by the developers who profit from building new developments, rather than taxpayers who are expected to be heavily taxed for many years going forward. Developer Cost Charges (DCCs) are not currently guaranteed to fully cover these costs.

Urban Forest and Green Space

There is not adequate environmental protection in the proposed OCP. Gonzales' green spaces and Garry Oak forests will be lost because of infill development. **The removal of Garry Oak trees should be a last resort.** We need a stronger tree preservation plan—and the City should demonstrate their willingness to steward this important species. Our proposed migration corridor located on the Gonzales Community map released in July 2025 will be compromised when large areas of trees are removed. Established large trees are not replaceable, and linear parks proposed in the OCP are only capable of addressing human needs—they do not replace vital ecosystems.

The parks of Gonzales will be vulnerable to over-use, as has happened in other cities like Toronto. In response to a growing population and climate change, existing parks, green spaces and street trees should be highly valued, retained and increased in number.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Gonzales Neighbourhood Association Board

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