



August 3, 2021

Dear Mayor Helps and Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to the neighbourhood boundaries. Our comments are limited to the proposed changes to the boundaries of the Downtown and Harris Green neighbourhoods, which comprise the area and residents served by the Downtown Residents' Association (DRA) and are made on the express understanding that the other affected neighbourhoods are in agreement with our comments. Further, we believe that additional information would have been of assistance in assessing these proposed changes.

**Amalgamation of the Downtown and Harris Green neighbourhoods**

The DRA sees merit in consolidating the boundaries of the Downtown and Harris Green neighbourhoods into one neighbourhood, as that is the de facto neighbourhood area currently served by the DRA. The poll data indicates strong support for this proposed change. However, we request that the "new" Downtown neighbourhood identify Harris Green as the official name of the "sub-neighbourhood," similar to Humboldt Valley, Old Town, and Chinatown. This acknowledges the historical nature of this area, recognizes it has some unique characteristics and respects the wishes of some of the current residents of Harris Green to retain a special identity for the area.

**Extension of the northern Downtown neighbourhood boundary to Bay Street**

We support this proposed boundary change as an appropriate move forward given the nature of the development planned for this area in the next ten to fifteen years. These lands are located within the Downtown Core Area Plan boundaries, and therefore, it makes sense that this area is included in the Downtown neighbourhood. It would be a natural extension to the Downtown neighbourhood, both in "feel" and land use.

While the Downtown Residents' Association is willing to assume the responsibilities of the neighbourhood association in this expanded area, we are very concerned about the significant additional time and effort required of our

volunteer organization to properly reach out to and represent this new and larger area without additional funding. As Council is well-aware, this area will be the subject of substantial re-development in the very near future, which will mean significant time and effort for our already overburdened Land Use Committee. Given that this area does not contain a large population base, we are also very cognizant that a simple adjustment to our base grant funding will not be commensurate with the additional time and effort that will be required. On this basis, additional funding over and above adjustments to the base grant must be made available to the DRA, similar to the funding now being made available to the North Park Neighbourhood Association.

### **Boundary changes with the Fairfield Neighbourhood**

The DRA also sees merit in the proposed change to the boundary with the Fairfield neighbourhood, but only to the extent that the proposed changes align with the boundaries set by the DCAP. This is a natural urban/suburban divide, and it would make sense to us if the area under the DCAP currently within the Fairfield neighbourhood became part of the Downtown neighbourhood. We see the alignment of the DCAP and the neighbourhood boundaries as potentially promoting better and more comprehensive neighbourhood input into those land use planning decisions that are subject to and apply the DCAP.

### **Boundary changes with the Fernwood Neighbourhood**

We do not see any merit in or rationale for the proposed change to extend the boundaries of the Downtown and Harris Green neighbourhoods to include those lands currently within the Fernwood neighbourhood. The lands east of Cook Street are outside the DCAP boundaries and subject to different land use policies. Cook Street provides a clear demarcation for the eastern boundary of the Downtown neighbourhood. For these reasons, we can see no rationale or basis for including these lands, and the residents of these lands, within the Downtown neighbourhood. This proposed change is, therefore, not supported by the DRA.

We will be pleased to discuss the boundary changes and appropriate funding adjustments further with City staff.

Sincerely,

Sandra Severs

President

Victoria Downtown Residents' Association