



January 6, 2022

To Mayor Helps and Council

RE: Proposed re-alignment of the boundary between the Downtown and the Burnside-Gorge Neighbourhoods

Council has requested the Downtown Residents Association (DRA) consult with the Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Association (BGNA) and provide further input into the proposed re-alignment of the boundary between the Downtown and the Burnside-Gorge Neighbourhoods. The DRA made two requests to the BGNA during the Fall of 2021 to discuss a possible shift in the boundary and the requests to meet were graciously declined. The following comments are the opinion of the DRA alone.

Within its limited resources, the DRA has re-assessed the proposed re-alignment, principally based on the current and reasonably foreseeable future uses of the lands that would be subject to the amended boundaries and the anticipated changes in residential population within that area. Based on that assessment, the DRA is of the opinion that the northern boundary of the Downtown Neighbourhood should be re-aligned to include those lands that are now referred to as the Arts and Innovation District. That District has been identified by the City as ripe for re-development for multi-unit residential and commercial uses, much like the uses and density in the immediately adjacent Downtown Neighbourhood.

The DRA believes the interests and needs of the anticipated residents of this soon-to-be-developed District will be substantially similar to those of Downtown residents, which supports their inclusion in the Downtown Neighbourhood. Further, this District is clearly geographically aligned with the Downtown, so that its inclusion in the Downtown Neighbourhood will promote and provide a greater sense of community for its residents with other nearby and similarly situated Downtown residents. For these reasons, it makes good sense to include this District within the Downtown Neighbourhood.

The DRA's initial input (to include the area up to the south side of Bay Street) was based on what it understood was agreement by the Burnside-Gorge Neighbourhood Association (BGNA) to Council's proposal. The DRA now understands BGNA may have concerns about the impact of a boundary change on the proposed creation of a Business Improvement Area. The DRA is of the opinion that the needs of residents and businesses are not necessarily the same and the boundaries of civically recognized neighbourhoods and business improvement areas do not necessarily need to align. At the same time, it does appear that there is interest in expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Neighbourhood among members of the business community.

The letter sent to Council by the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA) on October 12, 2021, and the presentation to Council on December 2, 2021, indicates not only that there is interest by the DVBA to expand north to Bay Street but also that there is support among the Burnside-Gorge BIA organizers for an expanded DVBA. It is the opinion of the DRA that should the DVBA's request for an expanded boundary be successful, it would also make sense that the boundary for the Downtown Neighbourhood be similarly expanded.

Given the significant amount of re-development proposed for the Arts and Innovation District and its current low population, the DRA would request council also give consideration to providing additional financial resources to support the additional demands that will be made on the DRA's CALUC process.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to hearing Council's decision on this matter.

Sandra Severs  
President  
Downtown Victoria Residents Association