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June 22, 2017

Mayor and Council  
City of Victoria  
1 Centennial Square  
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

Dear Mayor and Council:

RE: Arbutus Park / Burnside Gorge OCP Amendments

In reviewing the proposed changes to the Official Community Plan for the Burnside-Gorge Neighbourhood, I am strongly recommending that priority be given to future planning for Arbutus Park, in addition to the priority that is being given to Cecelia Ravine Park. Arbutus Park is one of the best kept secrets and greatest assets that exist in the Burnside-Gorge neighbourhood. While it offers much potential with stunning views and excellent access to the waterfront, it also poses a major risk to the neighbourhood if action is not taken to address its existing state.

The park has been underutilized for several years due to lack of amenities and minimal landscaping efforts. The overgrown shrubs and trees have created many dark areas in the park that are ideal for privacy and concealment. Unfortunately, this has attracted illicit activities into the park and the neighbourhood. These activities have attracted individuals that pose a risk to the safety of residents, workers, and tourists in the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, the poor lighting in the park and surrounding area creates an open invitation for crime, particularly vehicle break-ins and narcotics transactions.

Of greatest concern is the occasional overnight guest that chooses to set up a tent in the park. This leaves open the possibility that another "tent city" may be formed. Naturally, the presence of these activities and individuals deter families, individuals, and tourists from using the park to its full potential. While I understand that improving a park is a major investment, I would ask that at the very minimum, priority be given to trimming the shrubbery to reduce areas of concealment and that additional lighting be installed to improve safety at night.

The ability to use this beautiful waterfront park would improve the health and well-being of neighbourhood residents, visitors, and workers. In addition, it has the potential to provide better access to the waterfront for the entire community. Arbutus Park is currently included as a rest area on the Victoria Waterways Loop for kayakers. However, it lacks access to the water. The construction of a dock would provide a vital water link between the community and downtown.

As the existing waterfront is under-utilized and it remains one of the key assets in the Burnside-Gorge neighbourhood, please give Arbutus Park priority as it will increase accessibility and enable residents to connect with the waterfront. I have no doubt that Arbutus Park will evolve as a highly used waterfront park. It would be greatly appreciated if Arbutus Park was included in upcoming online surveys to initiate the planning process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "D. Wilson".

Darryl Wilson  
General Manager  
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