



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Dedicated to Protecting Victoria's Heritage Landscape

November 6, 2020.
Municipality of Saanich,
Planning Department.

Attention: Liz Gudavicius, Subdivision Coordinator/Approving Officer.

This is a submission to you regarding the proposal to subdivide a property known as 931 Woodhall Drive.

The proposal will potentially have a serious effect on two important aspects of this property:

- The heritage value of the property. The very old Garry Oaks and Douglas Firs near the home were an environmental asset to it from its earliest days, and still are functioning as such. Thus they provide a setting that highlights the great age of the building and still buffers the building from wind and sun.
- The loss of ancient Garry Oaks. One of them is deemed well worth designating as a “Significant Tree” as defined by Saanich in their policy.

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society has specific concerns regarding the proposal:

- The loss of Garry Oaks is continuing at a rate faster than they are replaced. Keep in mind that replacing a large (old) tree with 3 small (young) ones cannot replace the loss of the tree cover, or active biomass for photosynthesis, until they have grown there for as long as the removed/fallen one has existed. Not all of the new ones, if any, will survive to that time.
- In an urban environment, where the human population growth may not soon slow or stop, increasing infrastructure will not allow for more space in which to plant trees. Therefore, the only way to maintain a stable urban forest is to stop removing the existing forest and habitat.
- As the greater Victoria area is close to the heart of the Garry Oak range, this is critical to the survival of the Garry Oaks as a meaningful and highly visible “flagship” species and habitat component for other endangered plants and animals. Garry Oak habitat is estimated to be reduced to about 5% of the original. Garry Oaks are better than other species at surviving climate change where drought is concerned.
- If the oaks are kept on this property, some appropriate flowering Meadow species could be reintroduced and add to the attractiveness and ecological value of the area.
- Tree #44 on the arborists report is the Garry Oak mentioned above as worthy of designation, with massive branching and a trunk estimated at 3 feet in diameter. Thinking of replacing it is ludicrous, as witnessed by the Saanich Archives photo of the house and trees that shows the oaks above the height of the roof in 1925. We feel this is moot to the above remark about the heritage “setting” of the building on the property.

In conclusion, The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society is opposed to the subdivision of this property in such a way that endangers or destroys the Garry Oaks, and the candidate Significant Tree candidate in particular. We are also sympathetic to the concerns of the Heritage Society about the role of the trees in helping to create the appropriate setting for the Heritage House.

Sincerely Yours,

Michael Croteau
President, GOMPS

cc: Saanich Heritage Foundation, North Quadra Community Association, Stuart Stark.