



GARRY OAK MEADOW PRESERVATION SOCIETY

May 10, 2025

Dear Mayor and Council,

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society would like to express our collective support of a motion brought forward by Councillor Chambers at the March 24th Council meeting: “That Council formally adopt the Urban Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Strategies into the Official Community Plan (OCP) at an upcoming meeting in the near term”. We believe this motion will have important implications for residents of Saanich, particularly for vulnerable people that have an increased risk of injury and death resulting from high heat events in highly built-up areas underserved by canopy cover.

Presently, Natural Environment Policies in the Official Community Plan reflect the developmental stages of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) and Urban Forest Strategy (UFS). Both strategies have now been completed and include goals, and strategies that are highly relevant to update in the OCP. We believe the completed status of the BCS and UFS requires explicit acknowledgement in the OCP.

Incorporating UFS canopy goals for Future Land Use Designations in an updated OCP would demonstrate greater commitment to OCP 6.22 “working towards the 3:30:300 principle” in development decisions. We propose an OCP Policy adoption of Table 4 “Target Canopy Cover 2064” (Figure 1), which includes actionable and achievable canopy cover by Land Use Designation.

Table 4. Land uses and target canopy cover				
Land Use	Land Area (ha)	Canopy Cover (2019)	Projected (2064) Canopy Cover without UFS	Target Canopy Cover (2064)
Industrial Lands	177	31%	31%	31% ↔
Institutional	687	47%	47%	47% ↔
Knowledge Centre	158	30%	30%	30% ↔
Neighbourhood	2,983	31%	26%	35% ↑
Neighbourhood Hub	16	28%	24%	30% ↑
Park	1,468	70%	70%	72% ↑
Primary Growth Area	934	24%	13%	20% ↓
Rural Areas	4,225	46%	46%	46% ↔
Rural Village	18	48%	48%	48% ↔

Figure 1 - UFS 2024 Table 4 - Land uses and target canopy cover

We would like to see similar clarity that is provided in OCP Part 8 (Housing) reflected in OCP Natural Environment Policies: presently there are no specific, measurable, achievable and time-bound Policies in Biodiversity and Urban Forest parts of the OCP. The present language adopted in OCP 6.2.2 “working towards the 3:30:300 principle” could be improved by adding time-bound specificity referencing the UFS 2064 canopy goals. How the UFS is implemented in Primary Growth Areas can produce a status-quo canopy cover scenario falling 17% short of the 3:30:300 principle or a more favourable 10% less of the recommended 30% canopy by 2064. This difference will matter to vulnerable populations in Saanich who are most at risk in future heat dome events. The OCP should make abundantly clear which scenario is preferred to guide development in a manner so that 2064 canopy cover goals will be realized.

Sincerely,
Ryan Senechal
President, Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society