



Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Dedicated to Protecting Victoria's Living Artifact

Dec 03, 2025

Attn: Times Colonist Letters

Uplands Heritage Is Ecological, Not Cosmetic

Re: "Oak Bay narrowly rejects plan for six-home Uplands development," Nov. 27.

A recent letter suggested that concern about the Lansdowne Road proposal was selective "heritage preservation." In reality, the issues at stake are ecological, cultural, and federally recognized.

In 1907–08 Charles Olmsted designed the subdivision to preserve natural features, laying out curving roads and irregular lots around ancient Garry oak trees and the existing topography. Ecological protection—not aesthetics—has always been central to Uplands' character.

Uplands is part of a Canadian National Historic Site because of its Garry oak ecosystems, Indigenous kwetlal (camas) food systems, and the concentration of at-risk species found almost nowhere else in the country. The surrounding residential landscape is included because it acts as a critical ecological buffer for Uplands Park.

The proposal would have removed about 30 mature native trees, including Garry oaks that take 150–200 years to reach full maturity and often live to 500 years. Their ecosystem services—cooling, stormwater absorption, habitat, drought resilience—cannot be replaced within human timescales.

Oak Bay contains six of the CRD's ten Key Biodiversity Areas, with Uplands Park and Cattle Point supporting the highest concentration of rare species in Canada. This positions Uplands as a model for ecosystem-based planning, Indigenous partnership, and climate-focused innovation.

Under its National Historic Site designation, Oak Bay has a responsibility to uphold place-based environmental leadership and relational stewardship, ensuring land-use decisions protect these irreplaceable ecosystems.

Council's decision was not about excluding neighbours—it was about safeguarding one of Canada's most threatened ecological landscapes for the benefit of the entire region and for future generations.

Director, Carollyne Yardley
Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

Cc: President, Ryan Senechal