

Mount Tolmie "Good Neighbour" Program

The Mount Tolmie Community Association encourages our residents to support a "Good Neighbour" philosophy.

Mount Tolmie is a mature community that is happily situated near schools, shopping centres, UVic and transportation facilities. It features homes that are desirable to young marrieds, mature empty nesters and student accommodation. It is important that our community support approaches that emphasize building a better neighbourhood.

Three topics that can become major issues are:

- a) Rowdiness - loud music, partying;
- b) Untidy property - long grass and weeds, overflowing garbage bins; and
- c) Parking - parking in front of others' property, blocked driveways.

While no one is advocating unreasonable responses to problems, it is useful for neighbours to understand the municipal regulations governing the management of residential properties. Problems are usually resolved easier sooner than later - after matters are truly out of hand.

The District of Saanich has bylaws and other regulations that are viewable on the District website. For the precise legal language, please refer to:

- a) Minimum Property Maintenance Bylaw, No. 4050;
- b) Noise Suppression Bylaw, No. 7059;
- c) Noxious Weed Bylaw, No. 8080;
- d) Nuisance Bylaw, No. 7622;
- e) Streets and Traffic Bylaw, No. 8382;
- f) Unsightly Premises Bylaw, No. 8417;
- g) Zoning Bylaw, No. 8200;
- h) Residential Tenancy Policy Guidelines.

With the exception of noise and vicious animal complaints which are Police matters, complaints can be referred to the Saanich Bylaw Enforcement Office. Their telephone number and e-mail are 250 475-5456 and bylaw@saanich.ca. Staff is very helpful with answering questions and providing process advice. The Police line is 250 475-4321 or 911 for serious emergencies.

Listed below is some helpful information.

Noise Control:

Everyone is entitled to the "quiet enjoyment" of their home. If enjoyment extends to loud music, rowdiness, yelling or partying that disturbs the neighbourhood, a complaint can be called in to Saanich Police at 250 475-4321. The preconditions are that there must be at least two complainants. Technically, they should be living within 100 meters of the problem property. However, anyone in the community can call. Calling early is encouraged.

If the Police attend a property twice within 24 hours because of noise, Police will issue a fine of up to \$500. Subsequent fines for repeat offenses can be up to \$1000 and offenders can even face criminal charges such as "mischief".

Other noise complaints for equipment operation, barking dogs, construction noise, etc. can be referred to either to the Bylaw Office - during office hours - or the Police anytime. Again, two independent complainants are required.

Garbage and Trash:

Garbage must be properly disposed of in garbage bins or blue boxes. Overflowing garbage bins and improperly stored garbage bags encourage crows and rodents which result in messy and unhealthy situations. Both garbage bins and blue boxes should be put out only on pick-up days or the evening before.

A complaint can be made by telephone or e-mail to the Bylaw Office. Photographs are helpful. A single complaint is sufficient from a neighbour living within 100 yards of the offending property. Additional complainants will help to support the complaint.

An inspector will investigate a complaint by a visit followed by a letter to the owner. The letter will require garbage to be removed within five days. Failing that, the municipality will remove it and charge the homeowner.

Owners can purchase garbage tickets for extra garbage pickup.

Grass cutting and routine yard maintenance - while often assigned by owners to the occupants - remain the responsibility of the owner. Furthermore, the owner is responsible for the removal of unsightly bushes, weeds and vegetation.

Parking:

Except for larger vehicles over 4000 kg being parked overnight, on-street parking is unrestricted on municipal streets. At the same time, each property is required to provide two off-street spaces for their inhabitants. Homes with secondary suites should provide one additional off-street parking space. It is reasonable that residents use those spaces before parking on the street - particularly in front of others' properties.

On-street vehicles cannot be parked within 1.5 meters of a driveway to allow safe entry and exit by a homeowner.

Illegal Occupancy:

Realtors will sometimes advertise a home as having multiple bedrooms. Saanich bylaws permit rental for up to four unrelated persons in a single-family house. In this situation, a secondary suite is not permitted.

The bylaw also permits rental in a house with a secondary suite provided the owner lives in the property. This is frequently not the case.

The Bylaw Office will investigate a complaint concerning occupancy upon receipt of two independent complaints by individuals residing within 100 meters of the complained-of property.

An inspector will investigate a complaint by a visit followed by a letter. If more than four reside, the last to arrive must move out within a calendar month.

Filing a Complaint and Confidentiality:

Complaints can be made by e-mail or letter and must list the names and contact information for any complainant. More than one complainant will be helpful and can be either property owners or renters. They must meet any rules concerning proximity to the complained-of property.

Very importantly, complainant's names and other information are confidential and are never released by the Police or Bylaw Office.

Our Community:

Do remember that bylaw enforcement is complaint driven. Some properties are "good neighbours" even though they bend the rules. If there are no problems, consider "letting sleeping dogs lie".

To the extent possible, homeowners - if comfortable - should attempt to deal with the owner of an offending property. No one likes surprises and a low key, problem solving approach is the best bet. If it doesn't or likely won't work, there are other options that should be exercised.

At the end of the day, the goal is a pleasant and liveable community. Doing nothing about a problem works strongly against this objective.