

# OAK BAY COOLKIT

## *Mobilizing the Community on Climate Action*

### YEAR 3 EVALUATION REPORT

August 31, 2024

UBC Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning  
(CALP), in partnership with District of Oak Bay



**Study team:** Dr. Stephen Sheppard, Elisa Kwun, Dr. Sara Barron, Alina Ziyun Zeng, Chanel Yee, Noah Bettauer  
**District of Oak Bay staff:** Chris Hyde-Lay, Manager of Parks Services



# Executive Summary

The Oak Bay Coolkit program is a joint initiative between the District of Oak Bay (led by Parks, Recreation & Culture) and the Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning (CALP) at UBC, with the **goal of supporting and mobilizing individual and neighbourhood climate action**. The current Coolkit program is a three-year initiative from September 2021 to August 2024. The [Oak Bay Coolkit](#) is a **free, visual, DIY guide** to climate action at the local block scale, customised to Oak Bay. The Coolkit program uses this guide as a framework for in-depth training of climate champions and regular citizens, through workshops, climate walks and events, supported by District staff and UBC. The focus is to develop **local climate action plans** on both mitigation and adaptation, supporting District policies and targets addressing the climate emergency, and addressing both private and public land. Key policy goals for Oak Bay include reaching 40% canopy cover by 2045, CRD's goal of reducing GHG emissions by approximately 50% by 2030, and Oak Bay's Community Climate Action Working Group (CCAWG) recommendations on climate action. This Evaluation Report documents results and effectiveness of the Oak Bay Coolkit program so far, with new mapping of climate action and recommendations for moving forward to build on the program.

## Results Summary

The Oak Bay Coolkit program has succeeded in meeting many of the goals laid out in the original proposed program and recommendations in the [Year 1 Evaluation Report](#). Success stories include:

- **Elevating the profile of local climate action** in the community and among District staff.
- Carrying out **a successful program of tree-planting and celebration events** which have helped recruit many residents and provided a potential entry-point to broader climate action.
- Establishing **a network of trained Oak Bay Coolkit champions**, drawing on existing volunteer groups and skilled organizers, but also getting beyond 'the choir.' There are now over 60 trained champions who attended Year 1-2 workshops, with 12 collective action groups and approximately 50 additional households with Coolkit participants, representing all of Oak Bay's official neighbourhoods and about 20% of Oak Bay's blocks.

## What we heard from Coolkit participants:

- *The Coolkit program "brought together people who wouldn't otherwise find each other"*
- *"the most energizing process I've seen"*

The Coolkit program has been well received and appears now to be embedded as a grassroots movement in the community, providing an appealing framework for community-based climate action. Groups have developed creative strategies to engage other residents, and provided pivotal support for District climate policies. With District staff support, evening Coolkit educational sessions on key topics are held monthly and a neighbourhood signage program to showcase local climate action has begun. Coolkit participants have **improved their awareness** of their carbon footprints and climate vulnerabilities, and familiarity with CCAWG recommendations. Survey results show that workshop participants have **gained confidence** in how to engage others on climate action. This has **increased their sense of agency** and motivation to make changes in their own backyard, and to work with the District on climate solutions on the public/private land interface. Coolkit champions have developed **multiple climate action plans**, some of which have already been implemented. These address both adaptation and mitigation solutions (eg. tree-planting, raingardens, local food, converting lawns to pollinators, white roofs, wood stove, bike racks, traffic calming, reducing air travel). In addition, several participants have taken household level action, eg. rooftop solar, electric garden equipment, switching to electric vehicles, installing EV chargers, etc. Several participants have also taken leadership roles in managing invasive species, protecting eel grass beds, and local climate advocacy.

Supported by co-funded UBC interns with expertise in urban forestry & communications, staff conducted a leafletting campaign and door-to-door visits to raise wider awareness on the need for urban forest canopy on their street, get input, and provide free trees. Overall, **183 Coolkit trees have been planted so far**, including 66 of the iconic native Garry Oak (35%) and 39 trees on private lots (21%).

**Program challenges** encountered include: tracking reductions in participants' carbon footprints; resistance or apathy within certain neighbourhood groups; engaging schools and youth more broadly; conflicts between some local climate action plans that interact with other District plans or priorities on public land; limited staff involvement from other District departments in Years 2-3; and limited staff capacity in Parks. **Future challenges** are expected in: maintaining momentum of the Coolkit program without a formal UBC role; scaling the Coolkit program to the other 80% of blocks in Oak Bay; and shifting community attitudes & behaviours to help meet key adaptation and mitigation policy goals, including the 40% tree canopy target (requiring retention and more planting of larger trees on private land) and halving carbon emissions by 2030.

## Priority recommendations to expand successes and overcome challenges

### 1. Follow-through: supporting existing champions

- **Follow-up** with Year 3 Coolkit tree recipients on tree stewardship and further Coolkit activities
- Hold an **annual Coolkit workshop** to bring together champions from previous years and train new members in Coolkit techniques

### 2. Scaling up: recruiting new champions

- **Expand the free tree program** in low-canopy neighbourhoods (with public & private tree discussions), with tree celebration events, door-to-door outreach with sign-up sheets, & incentives for medium-large trees.
- Host neighbourhood Coolkit meetings, as follow up to tree-planting outreach, co-hosted with local organisations
- Target **schools/youth engagement** through UVIC, Oak Bay schools, etc.

### 3. Shifting Oak Bay's culture on climate action

- **Strong, clear and sustained messaging** on climate action from Council, with a clear ask of residents in helping to meet critical short-term climate targets, including:
  - o Establishing 1600 medium/large trees on residential private land by 2030 (280/year)
  - o Cutting community carbon footprints 50% by 2030
- Create a **Registry of Climate Actions** in the community, to track and map community-led climate solutions that reduce carbon footprints &/or reduce climate threats.
- Establish **Demonstration Projects** - make climate action/solutions more visible on the ground

### 4. Strategic Organisation: strengthening the Oak Bay Coolkit program:

- Develop collaborative partnerships with key community organizations, coordinated through a **Climate Action Forum or advisory working group** including representatives from Council & staff
- **Increase District staff capacity and proactive cross-departmental coordination on climate action**, leveraging the Coolkit program & network when community engagement is needed, and developing an ongoing co-funded internship program with UBC and UVIC to supplement staff time and support new initiatives
- Develop a **new community grant plan** and resources to support/incentivize community-led action.

# 1. Introduction

The Oak Bay Coolkit program is a joint initiative between the District of Oak Bay and the Collaborative for Advanced Landscape Planning (CALP) at the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Faculty of Forestry. It uses the [Oak Bay Coolkit](#) as a guide and framework for **supporting and mobilizing individual and neighbourhood climate action**, in collaboration with the District’s Parks, Recreation & Culture Department (with support from staff in Communications and Planning). The goal of the Oak Bay Coolkit program is to engage residents on climate-change solutions in their community.

The purpose of this Evaluation Report is to summarize results and assess the effectiveness of the Oak Bay Coolkit Program. This report also provides recommendations for the continuing Coolkit Program, with contributions from District Staff and several Coolkit champions. The report is organized in the following subsections:

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## 1.1 Background on Oak Bay Climate Action

Oak Bay is a small municipality located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, adjacent to Victoria, the capital city of British Columbia, Canada. Known for its stunning coastal scenery and ecosystems, iconic oak trees, charming residential neighborhoods, and vibrant local culture, Oak Bay offers a unique combination of natural beauty and urban convenience. Oak Bay is known for its serene environment, strong community spirit, and high quality of life, making it a sought-after destination for both residents and tourists. However, the community is threatened by climate impacts such as heat waves, flooding, sea level rise, drought, forest fires and smoke, and resultant health effects, while the Capital Regional District (CRD) has set a carbon emissions reduction target of 61% by 2038.



Oak Bay’s 2019 declaration of the Climate Emergency has led to searches for solutions through climate action. The Community Climate Action Working Group (CCAWG) was created to make recommendations to address these climate issues, including community engagement through the Coolkit program. This reflected the sense of urgency in building community preparedness and resilience to climate extremes. With an aging tree population of Oak Bay’s distinctive Garry oaks and other trees, one of Oak Bay’s challenges is to maintain and renew tree cover in the District. While the District currently has tree canopy of 33%, there are substantial areas with much lower canopy levels, as in many North American suburbs. The District’s Urban Forest Strategy aims to achieve 40% tree canopy by 2045.<sup>1</sup> The environmental benefit of large trees is critical to reducing community vulnerability to climate threats, by cooling neighbourhoods, reducing stormwater flooding, reducing air pollution, fostering active transportation, and reducing health impacts for seniors.

1. Diamondhead, (2017), District of Oak Bay Urban Forest Management Strategy.



**Critical targets achievable in the short-term on climate solutions for Oak Bay**, that can be easily understood and memorized, are important in catalyzing community action. This can be summarized as:

- **50% cut in carbon footprints by 2030**
- **40% canopy cover by 2045**
- **1600 medium/large trees on residential private land by 2030 (280/year)**

The **5 “Big Moves”** laid out in the Oak Bay Coolkit are climate action solutions or action menus to address these issues, invoking prime motivators including health, and applying to both private and public land:

1. Creating and supporting healthy ecosystems and resilient green infrastructure
2. Energy-efficient low carbon homes
3. Low-Carbon, safe, healthy transportation
4. Healthy, sustainable gardening
5. Sustainable lifestyle changes

## 1.2 Objectives of the Oak Bay Coolkit Program

Oak Bay’s Coolkit Program is designed to engage residents in helping to deliver these Big Moves on climate action in their community. The program is geared towards micro-neighbourhoods where residents care the most, can take practical action, and can work collectively to achieve the greatest impact. The goal is to reduce carbon footprints and help create climate-proof, resilient neighbourhoods in Oak Bay, by:

- **Engaging and informing the Oak Bay community** on local climate change impacts and the role that urban forests, local food, renewable energy, active transportation, and other actions by residents can play in mitigating and adapting to climate change in their own neighbourhoods
- **Empowering local climate champions** in developing community-led climate action plans for implementation on private and public land, working closely with District staff and aligned with CCAWG recommendations, local policies and 2030 climate targets
- **Building a self-supporting grassroots activation program** reaching across the community, coordinated by the District and community organisations,
- **Raising the media profile and visibility** of local climate action in Oak Bay.

The scope of the Oak Bay Coolkit program includes encouraging dialogue, building awareness, motivating behaviour change, collective action, policy support, and culture change over time.

The Oak Bay Coolkit itself is a **visual, DIY, easy-to-use tool or guide that works at the hyper-local block scale**. It builds on a decade of community-based action research by UBC’s CALP group to develop the original [Citizen’s Coolkit](#), working with BC communities. Previous testing of the Citizens Coolkit with diverse demographics demonstrated broad enthusiasm from participants, local governments and NGOs, leading to significant increases in awareness and climate change planning activities among participants. It also demonstrated that a focus on trees and nature can draw people into broader aspects of climate change. The [Oak Bay Coolkit](#) is customized specifically for the District of Oak Bay’s community and policies. It includes fun and informative activities from the original Coolkit, as well as more guidance on climate solutions addressing Oak Bay’s 5 Big Moves. The Coolkit can be freely downloaded as a [PDF document](#) from the Oak Bay Connect website.

## 2. The Oak Bay Cookit Process

The current Coolkit program is a three-year initiative, beginning in September 2021 and completing in August 2024 (see Figure 1& Table 1). The strategy was to front-load budget and effort on Year 1 and Year 2, in order to set up and roll out the Coolkit program, with transition in Year 3 to more local control.



**Figure 1:** The Coolkit program process for Years 1-3: testing several engagement methods.

In Year 1 of the Coolkit program, residents and community groups across Oak Bay were invited to register online for in-depth training via three one-day workshops and ongoing one-on-one support from UBC and District staff. This culminated in the development of individual and neighbourhood Climate Action Plans (CAPS, see below). A celebration event was held on Tree Appreciation Day in November 2022, with Certificates (“Golden Acorn Awards”, Figure 2) presented to Coolkit champions by the Mayor and Council members, along with a District tree-planting demonstration and recruitment of new champions.

In Year 2, a similar but streamlined approach was used with a single one-day workshop and a shift towards signing-up interested participants through tree celebration events and word-of-mouth. Year 3 participants were recruited primarily through tree celebration events and on-the-ground outreach (through leaflets, posters, and door-to-door) by staff, some existing Coolkit champions, and UBC interns.



**Figure 2:** Example of Golden Acorn Award presented to an Oak Bay Coolkit Climate Champion.

**Table 1:** Key activities and events over the three years.

Sept, 2021	Customization and distribution of <b>Oak Bay Coolkit</b> , communication plan, resident recruitment
Sept 28, 2021	Staff Training Workshop: a full day <b>staff workshop</b> facilitated by UBC on the Coolkit and proposed engagement process
May 14, 2022, June 4, 2022, June 25, 2022	Three <b>Community Workshops</b> : co-facilitated in-person by UBC and Oak Bay staff, where participants received training to act as community champions through the Oak Bay Coolkit process and activities , with input from local experts
July, 2022	Summer check-in on progress with District staff and UBC team in each neighbourhood
Nov 6, 2022	<b>Tree Appreciation Day</b> and <b>Coolkit Celebration Event</b> at Midland Park to acknowledge Coolkit Champions'
Jul 17, 2023	Coolkit Year 2 co-facilitated <b>workshop</b> for new community champions
Nov 5, 2023	<b>Tree Appreciation Day</b> to recruit Year 3 residents - Cattle Point
Dec - Mar, 2024	Various site visits with interns for continuing citizen recruitment
Mar 5, 2024	Camas Day public event

Throughout Years 1-3, Oak Bay Connect (the District website) has been used to provide access to the Coolkit and other resources and information, including updates on champions' Climate Action Plans. At the Champions' request, the District has co-ordinated regular evening Coolkit sessions on special climate-related topics.

The workshop process used to train local climate champions in Year 1-2 employed and adapted the Coolkit's **five-step process** of fun and interactive engagement activities:

1. Chatting - neighbourhood conversations, including eye-opening local climate walks
2. Mapping – climate vulnerability & asset mapping of local blocks, carbon footprint calculators
3. Rating – scoring climate-friendliness at the household and block level
4. Visioning - visualizing practical climate solutions on photos of local streets
5. Acting - developing initial local climate action plans.

For reasons of time, Step 3 (rating champions' homes and blocks) was not emphasized, and Step 2 became an optional homework assignment in Year 2. Over the three years, the team developed a layered approach for coordinating across each year's cohort of Coolkit participants, to provide continued support for Cohorts 1 and 2 while recruiting more participants in Year 3. Over the years, the methods used to engage the community evolved in response to team capacity, budget constraints, champion feedback, and new strategies developed to respond to shifting priorities (as discussed below).



## 3. Results (Learnings, Plans, and Outcomes)

### 3.1 Overview of Outcomes

The impact of the 2021 heat dome and other climate extremes in BC has elevated both the conversation among residents and media attention around climate change anxiety and preparedness in Oak Bay, making it timely for the Oak Bay Coolkit program. Notable **program achievements** over the last 3 years include:

- Providing an accessible and attractive **Coolkit package** customised to Oak Bay, available as a DIY resource free to all residents on the Oak Bay website.
- **Elevating the profile of local climate action** among both the community and District staff from across departments, who received training in the Coolkit process in Year 1 and served as co-facilitators in community workshops and as advisors to champions.
- Carrying out a **successful program of tree-planting and celebration events**, attended by Council members, staff, Coolkit champions, and many residents. Tree planting initiatives have attracted and recruited many other residents, providing an **entry-point to broader climate action**.
- Establishing a **network of trained Oak Bay Coolkit champions**, building on existing volunteer groups and skilled organizers, but also getting beyond 'the choir.' There are now over 60 trained champions (who attended Year 1-2 workshops), with 12 collective action groups across Oak Bay's neighbourhoods.
- Developing multiple citizen-led local climate action plans, some of which have already been **successfully installed**.

The cumulative effect has been to build a movement among Oak Bay residents, providing a new and ongoing framework for community-based climate action that resonates with the public. The Coolkit program has been generally well received and appears to now to be embedded in the community as a viable grassroots network. More detailed results are provided as follows:

- **Section 3.2** focuses on participant in **Cohorts 1 and 2**, since Year 1 and 2 programs used similar methods to train local climate champions through Coolkit workshops
- **Section 3.3** focuses on **Cohort 3** (Year 3 participants) with a stronger focus on tree planting and
  - Sections 3.2 and 3.3 address:
    - **Reach: who participated?** - addressing number and backgrounds of participants, their geographic locations, etc.
    - **What did participants learn?** - including awareness, shifting perceptions, motivations, acquired skills and capacity, etc.
    - **Climate action plans** – proposed actions or projects
    - **Outcomes and behavioral changes** – both physical projects implemented on-the-ground and steps taken by participants to mitigate carbon footprints or adapt to climate change, as reported or observed.
- **Section 3.4** focuses on **tree-planting results** across cohorts and Years 1-3.



*“The Coolkit program brought together people who wouldn’t otherwise find each other.”*

*“The most energizing process I’ve seen.”*

*“Over 90% of the trees planted at Harling Point wouldn’t have happened without the Coolkit”*

*----Year 1 champions*

*“The Coolkit makes it easier to have the climate conversation”*

*----Oak Bay staff*

## 3.2 Results for Cohort 1 and 2 over the three years

### 3.2.1 Reach: Who participated?

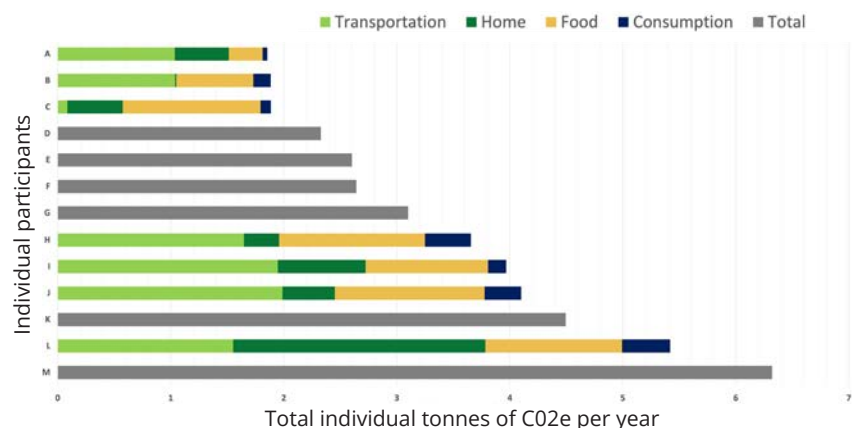
In Year 1, a total of 46 participants registered for the Oak Bay Coolkit program, representing most Oak Bay neighbourhoods, with 23-25 participants attending each of the 3 Coolkit training workshops (plus District staff, Council members, and other observers). In Year 2, 26 people attended a one-day training workshop that included a mix of new and previous participants.

A range of participants took the program, including:

- Several skilled community leaders/organizers, some of which had prior experience in volunteer natural area restoration programs, climate activism, or environmental design
- Several who were volunteers in other community programs/initiatives
- Many who were predisposed towards greener lifestyles
- Neighbours and family members of other participants
- Members of community organisations (eg. Girl Guides, Climate Force, Emergency Response volunteers)

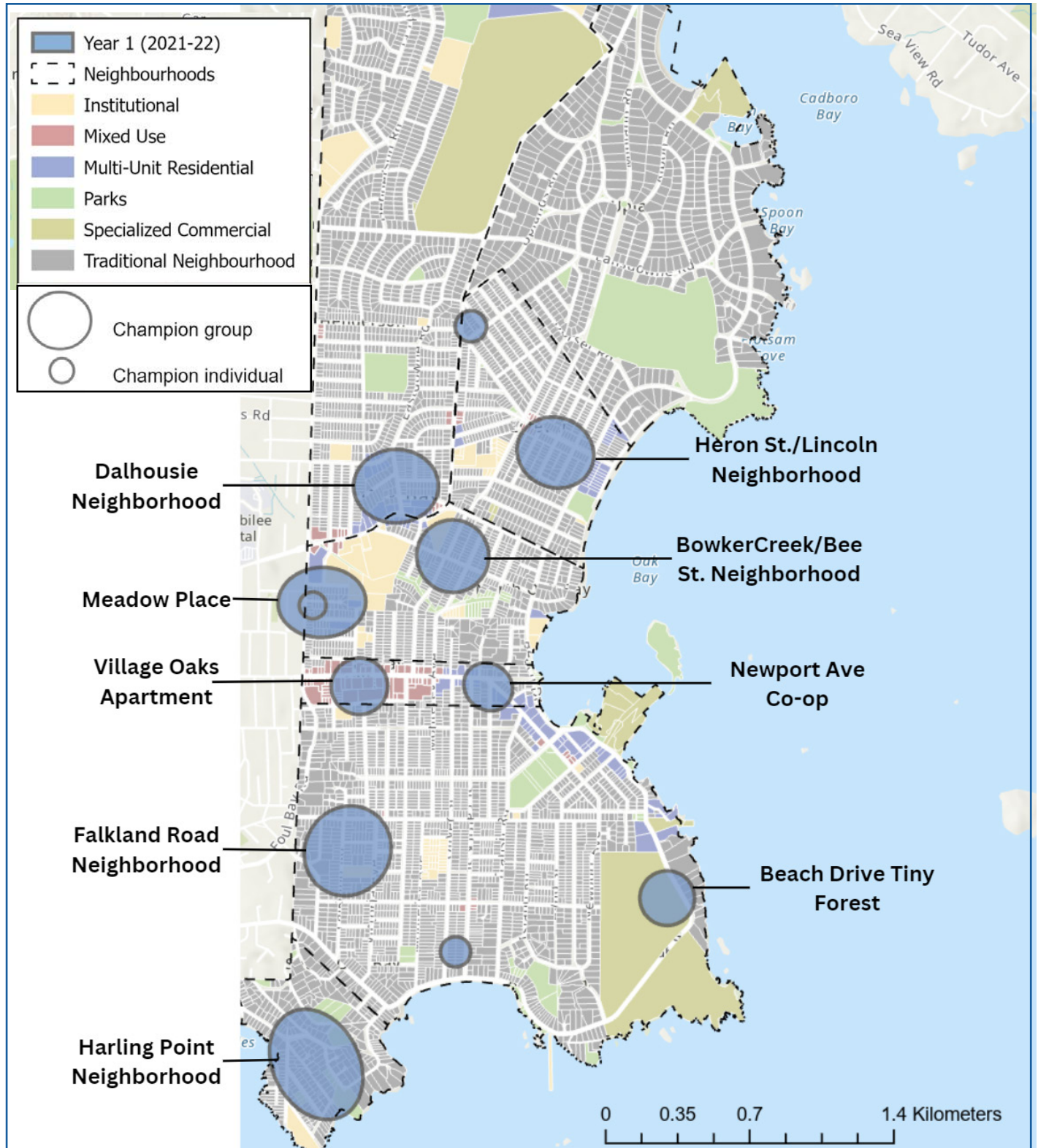
There were significantly more female participants than male, and relatively few young people (below age 30), with a significant number of retired people, reflecting the Oak Bay community at large.

Thirteen Year 1 participants completed the [Saanich Carbon Calculator](#) to measure their carbon footprints, many for their first time. The sample’s average individual emissions were 3.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year (Figure 3). This is low in comparison to averages from Saanich (6.7 tCO<sub>2</sub>e) and Canada (14.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e), suggesting the champion network includes several potential role models for low-carbon lifestyles. It is possible that those keen enough to calculate their carbon footprints have lower carbon emissions than other participants.



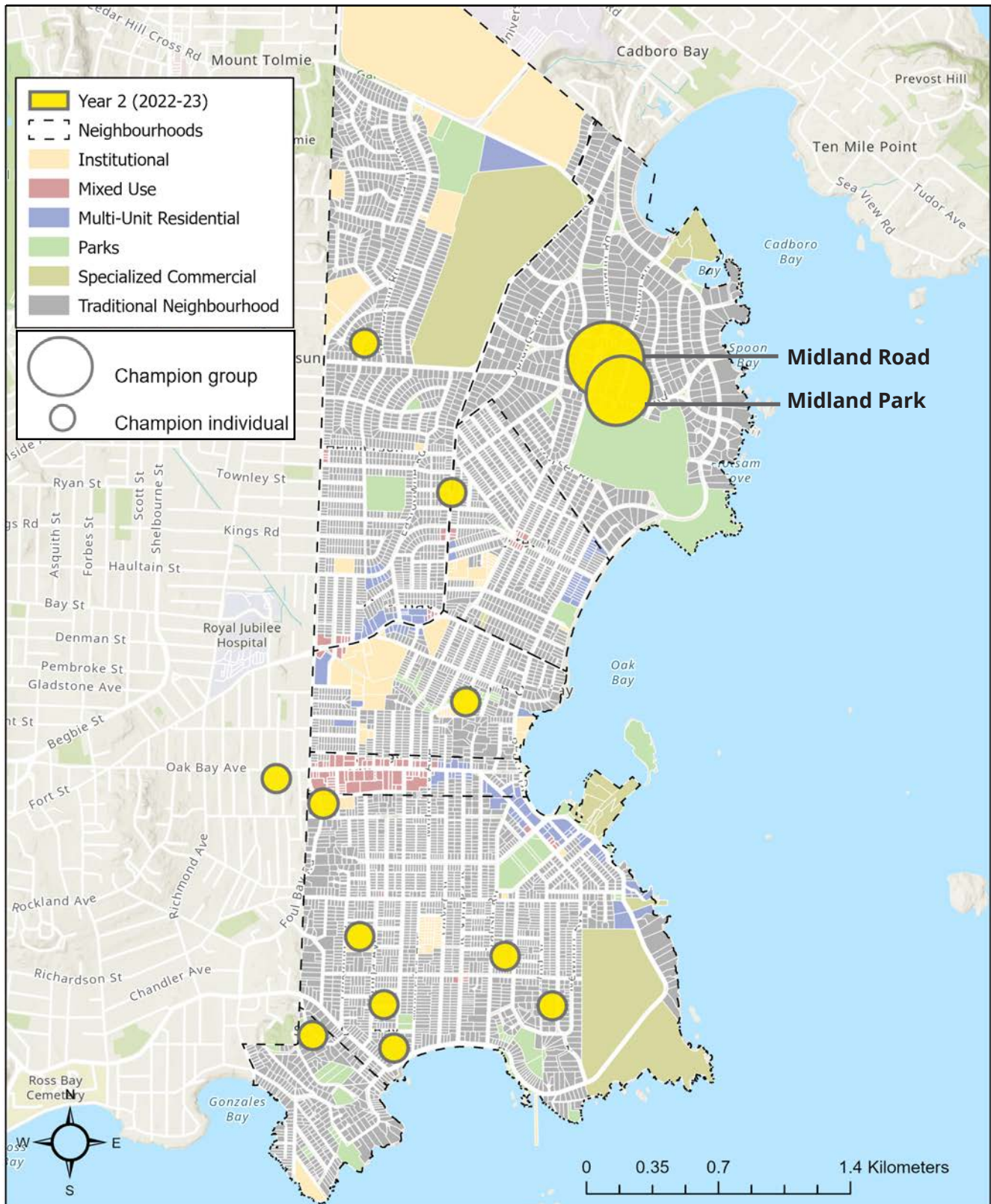
**Figure 3.** Oak Bay Champions Carbon Emissions (May 2022)

The Year 1 Coolkit champions self-organized into nine neighborhood groups in addition to four individual champions in other neighborhoods. Figure 4 shows that collectively this represented all Oak Bay's official neighborhoods except Uplands, but were clustered mostly in the central and south parts of the District. Two groups represented multi-family housing, and six represented residential blocks with mostly single-family homes, ranging in scale from one to several blocks. In many of these groups, the trained champions interacted with or influenced other nearby households and residents: eg. 110 households were actively engaged in Harling Point in Year 1.



**Figure 4.** Map of Year 1 Oak Bay Champion groups and individuals

In Year 2, 14 individuals signed up as interested in the Coolkit program at the Tree Appreciation Day event (Figure 5). Of the 26 participants at the Year 2 one-day workshop, 13 of them became new champions. From Year 2, two groups were formed in the Uplands neighbourhood (at Midland Park and on Midland Road), along with individual champions or households that were scattered throughout Oak Bay (Figure 5). Other attendees at the Workshop included four volunteer members of the Oak Bay Emergency Response team along with the Deputy Fire Chief.



**Figure 5.** Map of Year 2 Oak Bay Champion groups and individuals

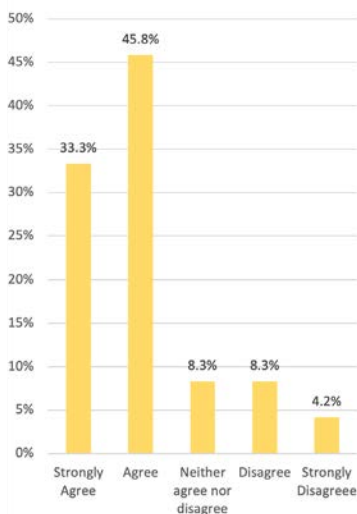
### 3.2.2 What did participants learn?

The following learnings and shifts in perception among participants have been observed.

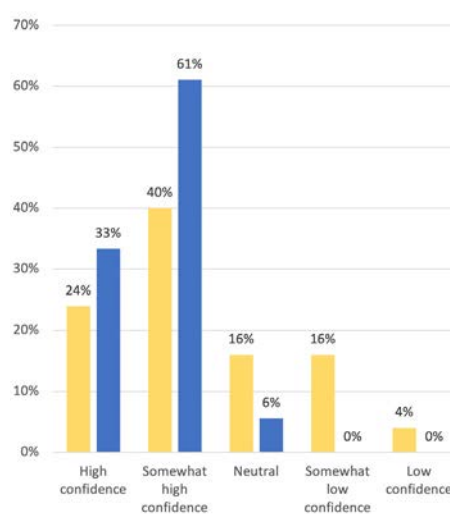
- Improved awareness of their individual carbon footprints and key activities contributing to them
- Recognition of the value of collective climate action at the local scale
- Capacity-building skills gained in understanding local climate impacts and how to engage others: several groups organized innovative events and workshops using visual learning tools like mapping and visualizing solutions to stimulate & record residents' ideas.
- Bonding with neighbours and community through fun, social, hands-on activities
- Increased agency and motivation to make changes and collaborate with the Oak Bay District on climate issues and solutions addressing both private and public land.
- Champions acquired improved insights on other residents' perceptions (pros and cons) of climate action.

A pre-post survey was conducted with Cohort 1 participants to assess shifts in their awareness (Figures 6-8):

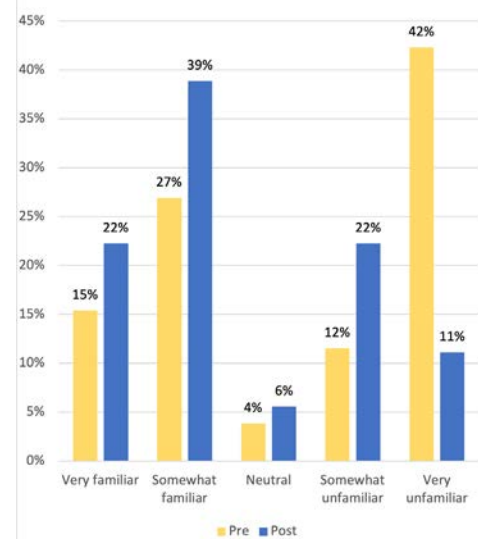
- Participants' confidence in talking about climate change to their community increased from 64% to 94% with high/somewhat high confidence level.
- Participants' familiarity with climate action recommendations from Oak Bay's Community Climate Action Working Group (CCAAG) increased from 42% to 61% of participants reporting they were very/somewhat familiar.



**Figure 6.** Pre-Survey, Have you experienced climate anxiety?



**Figure 7.** Pre vs. Post Survey, How confident do you feel talking to your community about climate change?



**Figure 8.** Pre vs. Post Survey, How familiar are you with Oak Bay's CCAAG's climate recommendations?

### 3.2.3 Climate action plans

All individual champions in Cohort 1 and groups in Cohorts 1-2 developed local climate action plans (CAPs) as outcomes of the training workshops, as summarized in Table 2. Several champions also submitted individual goals or pledges for their own carbon footprints and behaviours, and longer-term ideas for continuing climate action beyond their immediate climate action plans. Key aspects proposed by Oak Bay champions in their climate action plans included:

- Priority actions covering a range of adaptation and mitigation solutions, addressing all five Big Moves promoted in the Oak Bay Coolkit, drawing on Council priorities.
- Diverse physical and behavioural solutions, such as raingardens, meadow-scapes, reducing air travel, traffic calming, wood stove, white roofs, etc.

**Table 2.** Local Climate Action Plans by action groups.

ACTION MENU OF BIG MOVES							
	1	2	3	4	5		
	1	Healthy ecosystems & resilient green infrastructure					
	2	Energy-efficient, low-carbon, healthy homes					
	3	Low-carbon, safe, healthy transportation					
	4	Healthy, sustainable gardening & local food					
	5	Sustainable lifestyle changes					
	1	2	3	4	5	GOALS/CLIMATE ACTION PLANS	
<b>INDIVIDUAL CHAMPIONS</b>							
	●	◐				Climate conversations, protect existing tree canopy, energy-efficient home retrofit	
	●					Meadowscaping at Windsor Park, lobby for municipal/building code changes	
	●	○	○	○	○	Maintain low-carbon lifestyle; Oak Bay's first Tiny Forest, on Beach Drive	
	●					Engage with local neighbors in new North Henderson location	
<b>MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING</b>							
		●	○		○	Engage building residents, plant trees, green carport roofs, collect rainwater, switch to pale roof	
	●					Low-carbon lifestyle, promote community walks, lobby for cool roofing for condo	
<b>COLLECTIVE ACTION</b>	<b>RESIDENTIAL BLOCK</b>						
	○		◐			'Ice-cream social' to engage w/ community and vision future for creek restoration, shading parking area	
	●			◐		Plant trees, install traffic calming structures, engage others in annual block party	
	◐					Boulevard & private trees, car share, raingardens, bike racks, market pavillion/walkability, chickens, etc.	
	◐			◐		Plant trees, adaptive ground cover, install rain garden & barrels, pollinator garden	
	●		○		○	Tree planting (one per lot in gardens), public tree stewardship, traffic calming, engage with local school	
	◐					Greening cul-de sac	
	◐					Meadowscape and Garry oak planting (with District support)	
	◐			◐		Pollinator corridor and Garry Oaks (with District support)	

● Mitigation   ○ Adaptation   ◐ Mitigation + Adaptation

Since the Climate Action Plans (CAPs) were developed in Years 1 and 2, some of them have evolved and some have actually been implemented (see Section 3.2.4 below). For example:

- One of the Year 1 individual plans for a meadow-scape on public and private land at Beach Drive evolved into a Tiny Forest (Oak Bay's first!), involving invasives clearing and planting of mixed native trees and understorey plants, in collaboration with District staff, volunteers, and the Victoria Golf Course.
- The champions' plans at the Newport Avenue Co-op for planting Garry oaks and a "no-mow May meadow" ran into some resistance from other Co-op members and is now being revamped with wider input from a Co-op 'climate committee'
- The Bee Street/Bowker Creek group plan for depaving and cooling the unshaded parking areas ("hot spot" near the Oak Bay Community Centre) have been downscaled and revised to focus more on creek enhancement and tree planting, though long-term planning is still underway.

### 3.2.4 Outcomes and behavioral changes to date

Several actions or outcomes linked directly (or in some cases indirectly) to the Oak Bay Coolkit program have already happened since the program launch in 2021, as listed below.

#### Engaging with others (within and outside the champion network), through:

- **Creative engagement strategies** already taken to inform, consult, recruit and motivate additional community members through social gatherings and linking to existing organisations, such as two 'Ice-cream social' events, an Electric Avenue show & tell on EVs, block parties, a Block Watch meeting, Strata Council meetings, walkability audits, an open-air planning charette, and an Oak Bay tree-list and tree-planting leaflet (in collaboration with Oak Bay Parks staff).
- **Support for District policies** and community action through letter writing, petition signing, presentations to Council, etc., addressing for example a ban on fossil fuel gardening equipment (adopted by Council in May 2022), including 'no mow May' practices, promoting active transportation, lobbying for bulge-outs for trees & traffic calming on residential streets. tree planting, and heritage tree inventory.
- **Networking and collaboration:** The program fosters a sense of community, as participants collaborate with neighbors, engage in workshops, and share their enthusiasm for climate action. Many are keen to spread the word and help expand the program's impact
- **Participant-managed Facebook Group** (supported by the pre-existing Climate Force) for Oak Bay Coolkit Champions and friends where people can post relevant topics or events to promote Coolkit activities.
- **Monthly evening Coolkit sessions** (suggested by Coolkit champions, coordinated by District staff) on relevant topics of interest proposed by Coolkit participants, which have been well attended (eg. Brian Minter's talk attracting over 180 people).
- A **neighbourhood signage program** is underway to make climate actions more visible to the public, with initial testing by the District in the Harling Point area.



Oak Bay Coolkit promotion leaflet



Neighborhood signage program



Regular evening Coolkit sessions

### Decision-making and Commitments made on Climate Action Plans & Projects:

- Organizing/delivering many hours of volunteer time, eg. in distributing posters, organizing events, media interviews, etc. As a point of reference, volunteer time for invasives removal and clean-up on Oak Bay & Bowker Creek projects from 2021 – 2024 amounted to 1391 hours of group time, with an estimated value of \$464,522, over and above most of the Coolkit Champions' time. <sup>2</sup>
- Champion donations towards cost of trees on public land
- Decisions made in the community on collective climate actions: eg. agreements in multi-family residential groups to use cool roof options when re-roofing.

### Physical changes and behavioural actions taken by participants, often in collaboration with the District:

- Over 183 Coolkit trees (including 66 Garry Oaks) have been planted so far on public and private land (see Section 3.3).
- Group climate actions implemented to date include Co-op no-mow May meadow, Midland Park meadow, private tree planting in several groups, local food production, EV uptake, heat-pump uptake, site clearance for the Tiny Forest, several pollinator corridors.
- Individual/household actions by champions, eg. rooftop solar panels, electric garden equipment, EV switch and EV chargers, increasing active transportation, etc.
- Similar actions by local neighbours (some independent of or pre-dating the Coolkit program), eg. solar panels in Falkland, heat pumps, EV chargers/EVs, permeable driveways in Harling Point.
- Community leadership: several participants have taken on leadership roles such as managing invasive species and ecological restoration projects, eelgrass protection, and advocating for the Coolkit initiative. Their ongoing efforts indicate a deep commitment to long-term environmental stewardship.

## 3.3 Results for Cohort 3, Year 3

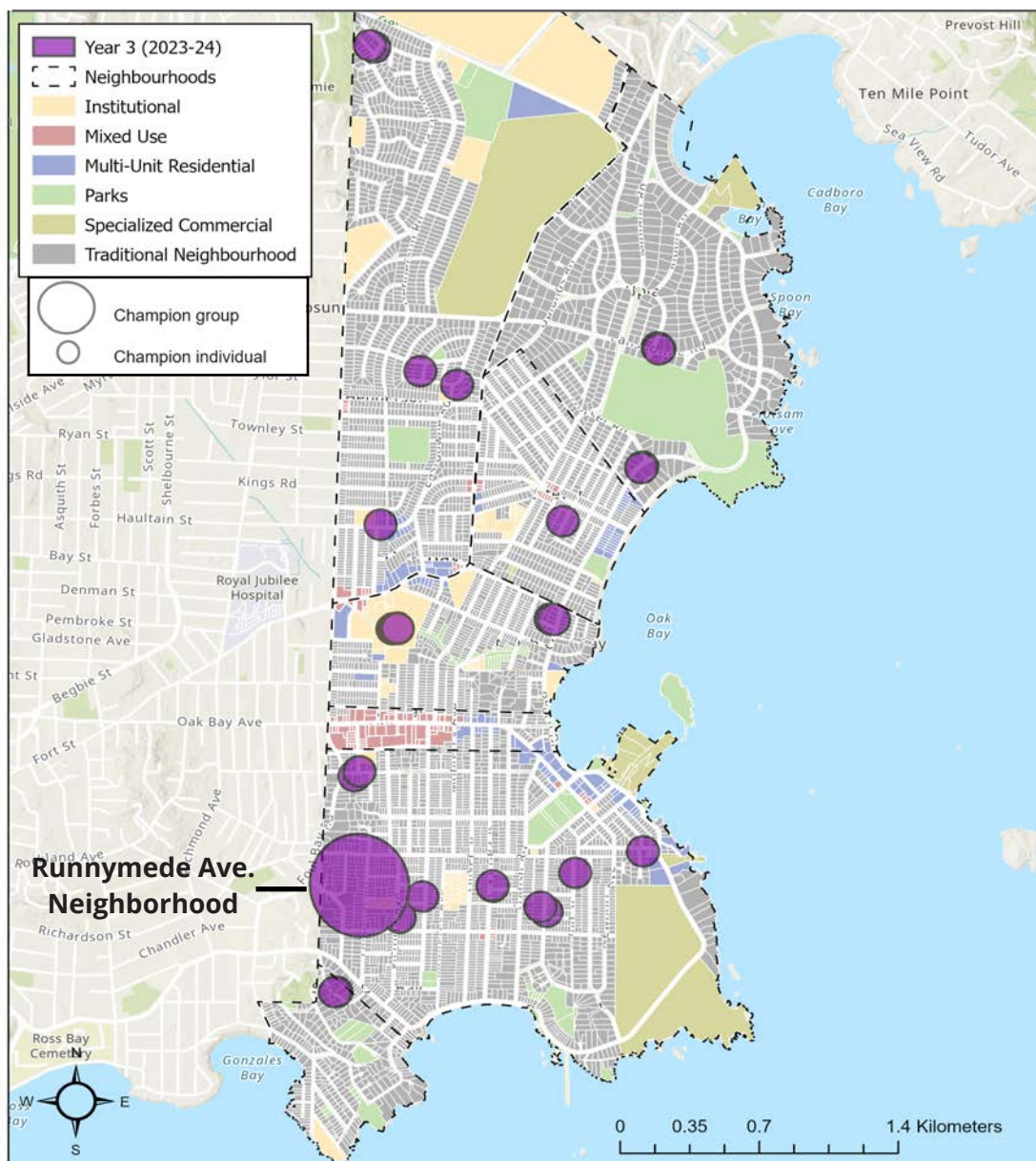
### 3.3.1 Reach: who participated?

In Year 3 of the Oak Bay Coolkit program, several new outreach methods were introduced to enhance community engagement and participation. The intent was both to reach people interested in tree-planting and recruit potential Coolkit champions. However, the primary focus of the Parks Department was to encourage neighborhood engagement through tree planting, and specifically to encourage more planting on private land (front and backyards) across Oak Bay, through the **Coolkit free tree program**.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Jacquie Bird's volunteer time tabulations, 2024

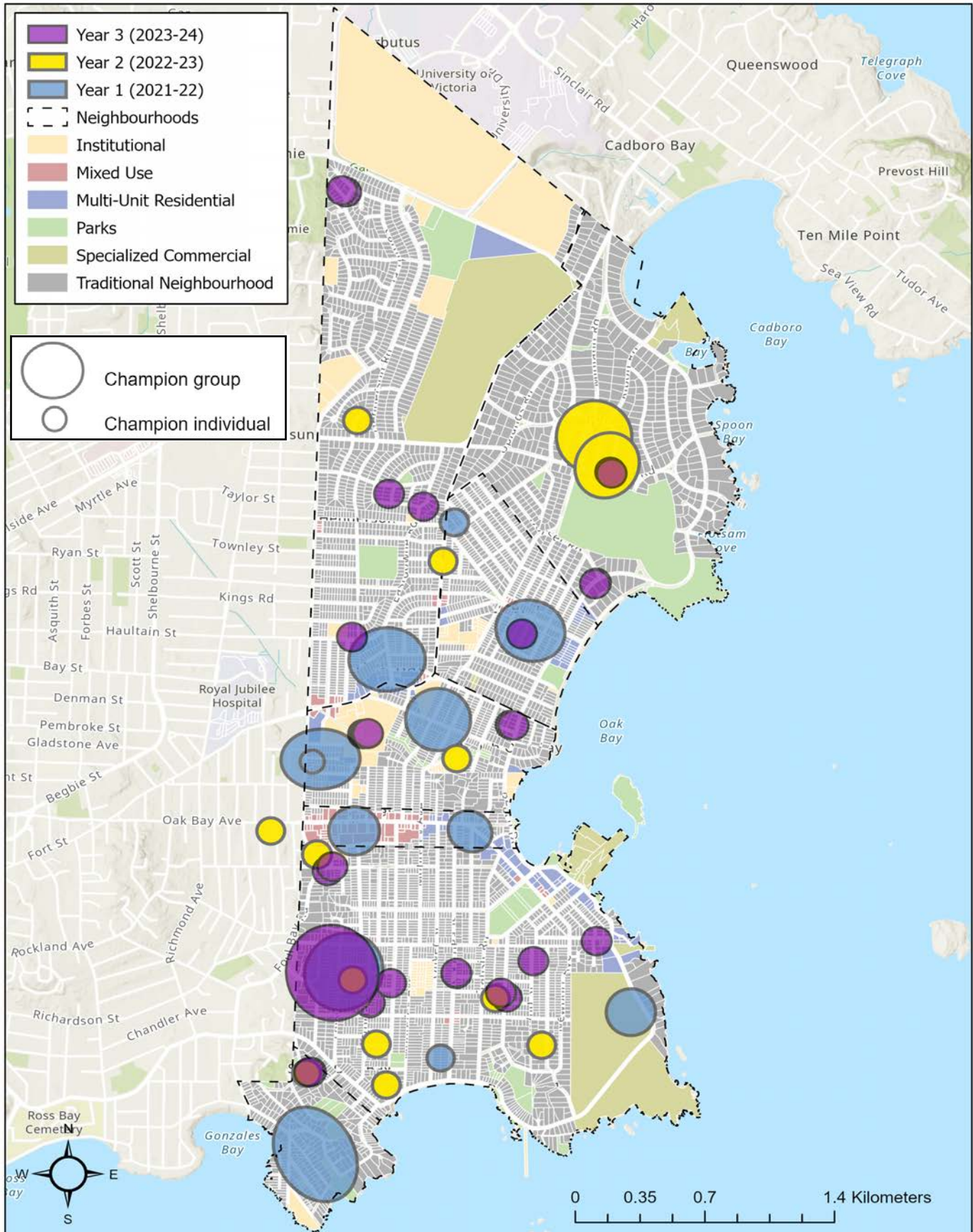
There were approximately 40 participants who attended the Year 3 Tree Appreciation Day and signed up as interested in free trees and/or the Coolkit program. With the support of UBC interns and Year 1 champions, staff also conducted leafletting campaigns, distributing informative tree leaflets to raise awareness about the benefits of urban forestry. Additionally, door-to-door visits were carried out (between October 2023 and February 2024) in lower-canopy neighbourhoods, mostly on the north and west side of Oak Bay, to promote tree-planting. Conversations were held with residents on tree selection for adjoining public boulevards, as well as selection and siting of trees on their own property, while also providing education on trees and awareness of the wider Coolkit climate action program. It is estimated that approximately 35 households have been engaged through these methods in Year 3, representing primarily single-family homeowners who are not necessarily proactive climate action “keepers”. Residents in south Oak Bay were also engaged through collaboration between the Year 1 Falkland Coolkit group champion and District staff, with a new cluster of homeowners in the Runnymede Avenue area (see Figure 9).

These efforts supplemented ongoing engagement strategies from Years 1 and 2, including educational materials, media interviews, and other community planting/public events, providing a comprehensive and sustained approach to promoting urban canopy enhancement and other climate solutions. This led to a range of individuals, including some tree or climate enthusiasts, joining the program through personal contacts of staff, word-of-mouth, and incoming calls (see Figure 9).



**Figure 9:** Map of Year 3 Oak Bay Champion group and individuals

In terms of overall geographic spread over Years 1-3 (see Figure 10), we estimate that collectively, the current network of over 60 trained Coolkit champions and participants represents about 20% of all residential blocks in the District, with 12 collective action groups and over 50 additional households.



**Figure 10:** Cumulative map of champion individuals and groups over the three years, covering most areas in Oak Bay.

### 3.3.2 Learning, Planning, and Outcomes for Cohort 3 to date

While it is still too soon to see many substantive results for the Coolkit Program's third cohort of participants, (beyond tree-planting already coordinated by the District - see Section 3.4), an ongoing process is underway to build on these methods and contacts (see Recommendations below). Outcomes observed by the study team and UBC interns are summarized below.

#### What did Year 3 participants learn?

- **Reponsiveness to the Coolkit program:** Most residents contacted are interested in free trees and when informed, are understanding and supportive of the purpose behind the Coolkit initiative. Many retired people are looking to reduce their carbon footprint and often have the resources to do so.
- **Commitment to climate action:** Some Year 3 participants are highly motivated to take action on climate change, as demonstrated by previous efforts to install solar panels, own electric vehicles, and convert lawns to native plant gardens or pollinator meadows. They have a strong interest in enhancing their contributions through further tree planting and other environmental initiatives.
- **Challenges and concerns:** Some participants expressed concerns about the size and messiness of trees, potential view obstruction, and maintenance requirements. These issues highlight the need for careful planning and clear communication to explain practical win-win solutions, increasing climate risks, the benefits of the tree-planting program, and how to get/stay more engaged.

#### Climate action plans and implementation

The Year 3 program took a different approach to Year 1 and 2, with a more limited focus for action plans around tree-planting (see section 3.4). However, in collaboration with the District and existing champions, some new participants and informal groups have planned and begun to carry out local climate action plans:

- Several residents on Runnymede Ave have collaborated with a Year 1 Falkland Coolkit champion and District staff to establish public and private tree planting (including Garry Oaks), a new pervious driveway, pollinators etc.
- A Girl Guide group led by a Year 1 Coolkit Champion are planning an invasives-clearing/tree planting project near the Firehall.
- Residents and helpers on Brighton Road near Foul Bay Road have begun invasives removal and pollinator corridor planting, with a current proposal for Brighton to become recognized municipal park/active transportation corridor planting, with potential for becoming a Coolkit climate action project.

### 3.4 Tree-Planting Results over Years 1-3

Over the past three years, Coolkit trees have been increasingly planted across the District of Oak Bay (Figure 11). In Year 1, five trees were planted as the program rolled out, followed by a significant expansion in the Year 2 with 96 trees planted, and an additional 82 trees in Year 3, covering various neighborhoods and enhancing the overall green spaces within Oak Bay.

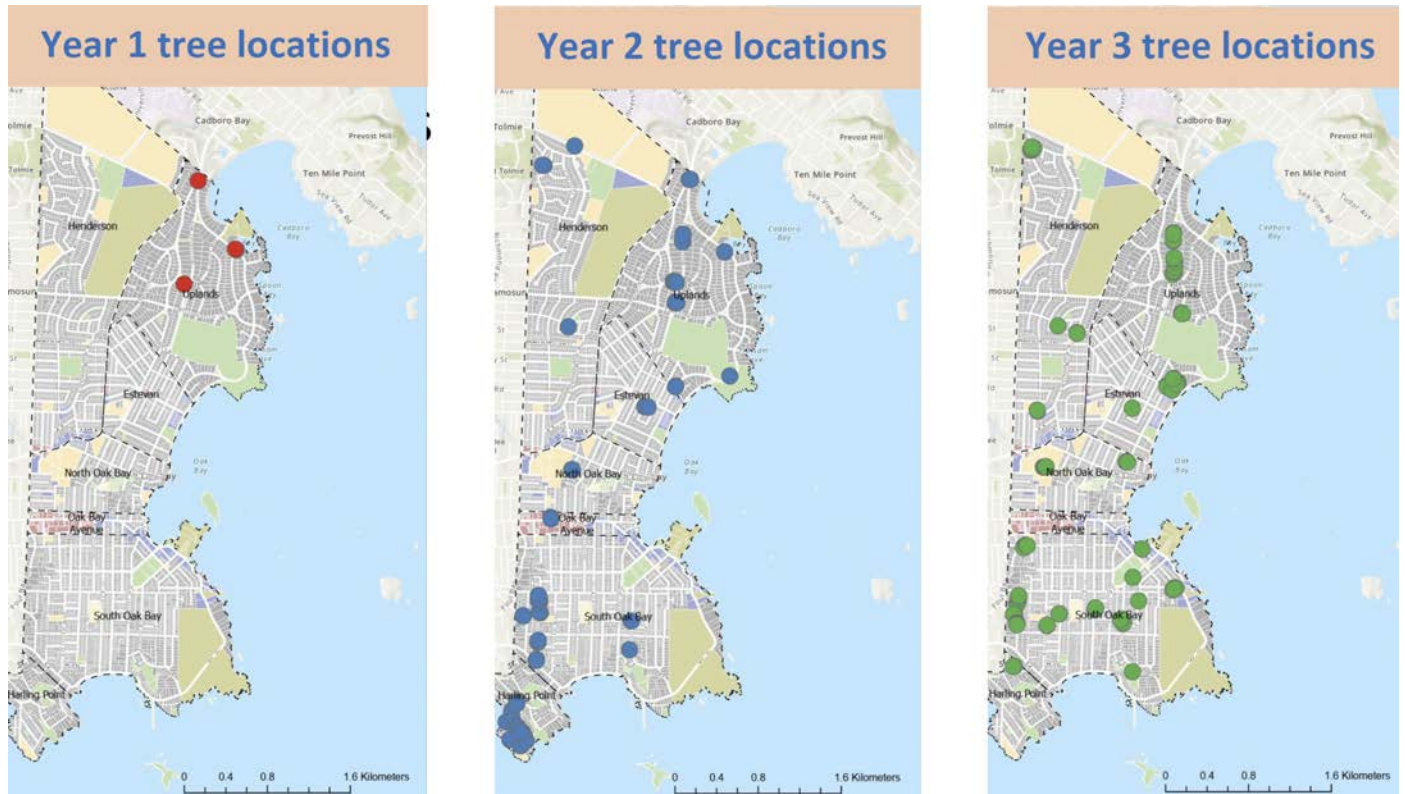
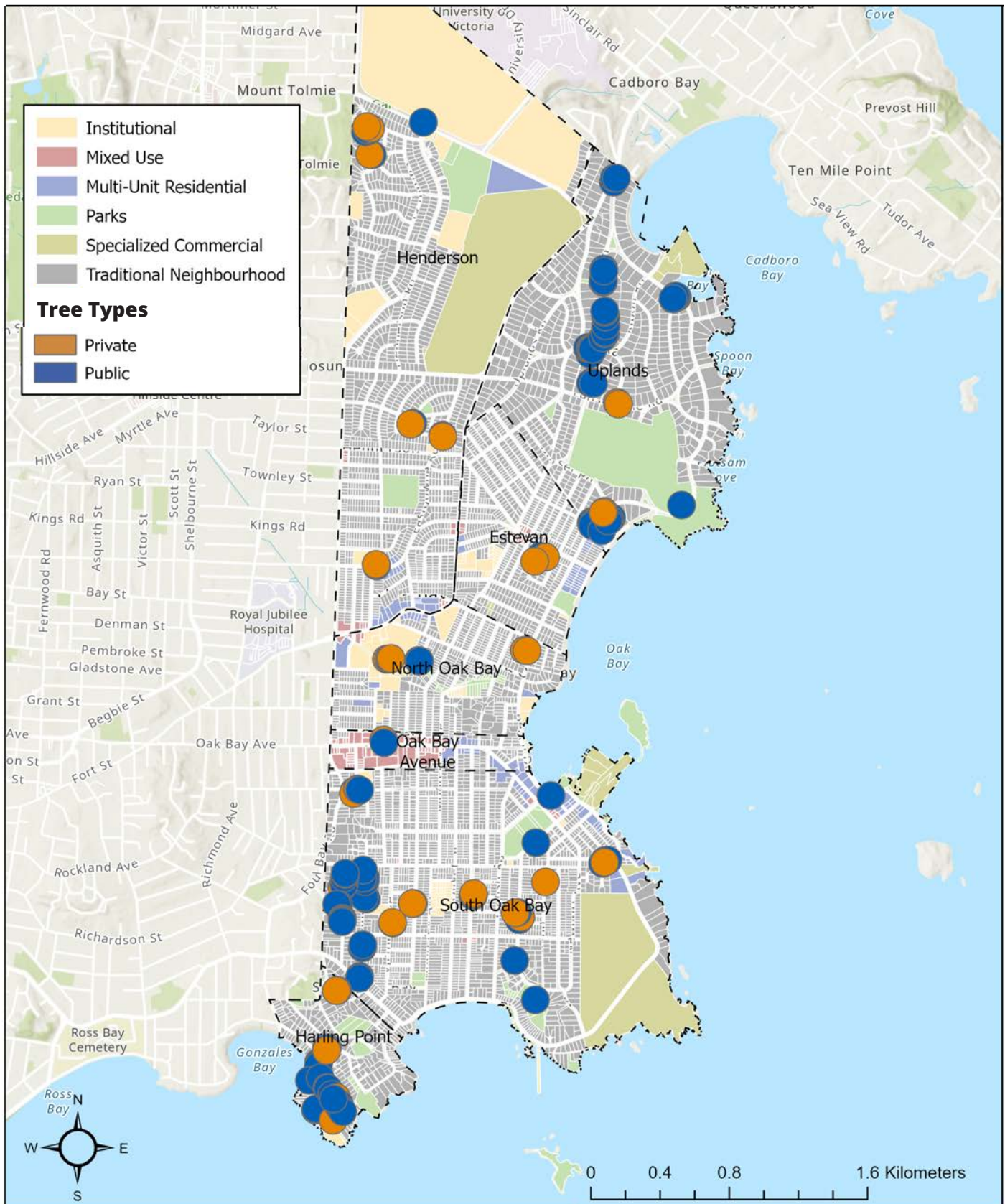


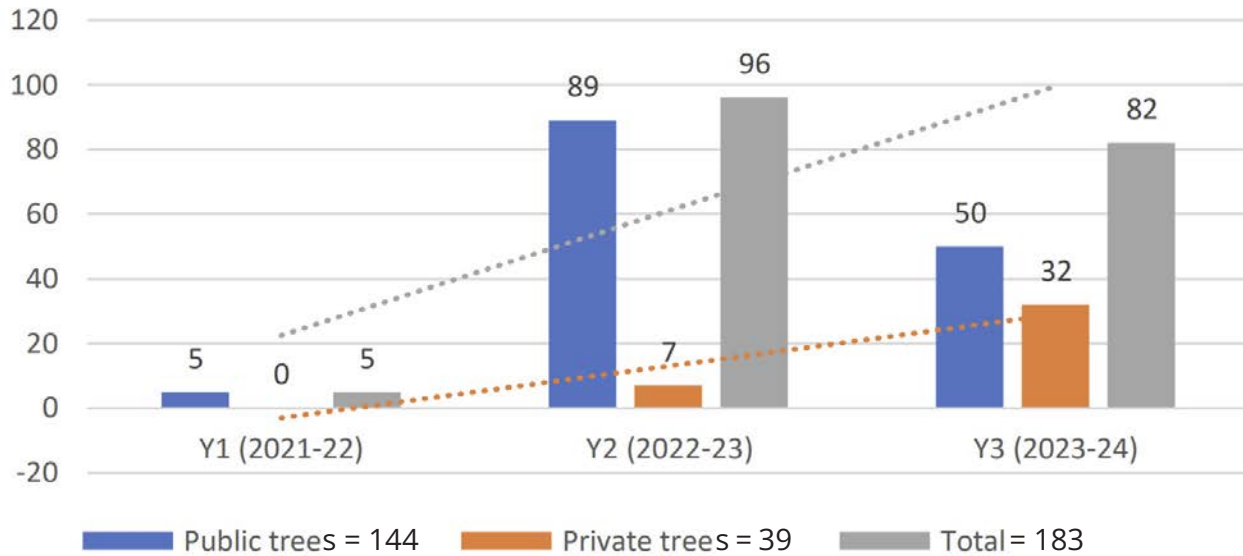
Figure 11. Locations of Coolkit trees planted from 2022 to 2024.

Figure 12 shows the overall distribution of trees over the last 3 years, and the locations of both public (mostly boulevard) trees and private trees (mostly free Coolkit trees to residents). Public trees form the majority (79%) of the 183 Coolkit trees, with 39 private trees (21%).



**Figure 12:** Oak Bay Coolkit tree locations: private vs. public.

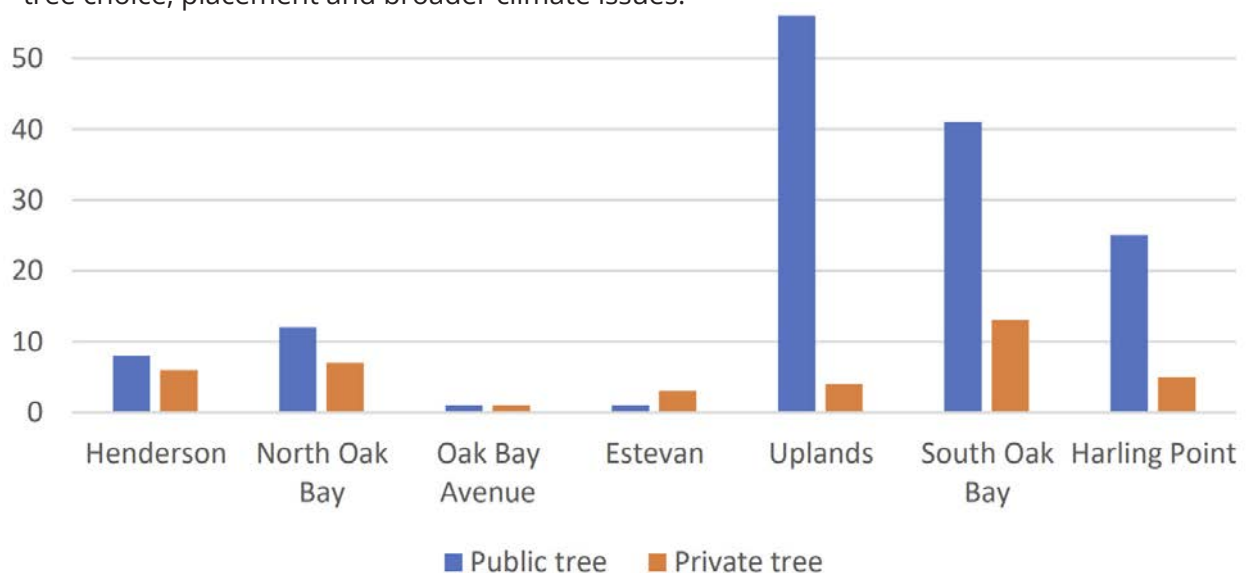
Figure 13 tracks the trend in public and private tree plantings in Oak Bay, over the 3 years of the Coolkit program from fall 2021 to summer 2024. In Year 1, there were only 5 public trees, and no private trees planted. Year 2 saw a significant increase reflecting the fall planting season and impact of the Year 1 Coolkit champion climate action plans, with 89 public trees and 7 private trees. Year 3 showed continued growth, with 50 public trees and 32 private trees, totaling 82 trees for the year and a significant increase in proportion of private trees (39%), reflecting Year 3 methods of recruitment.



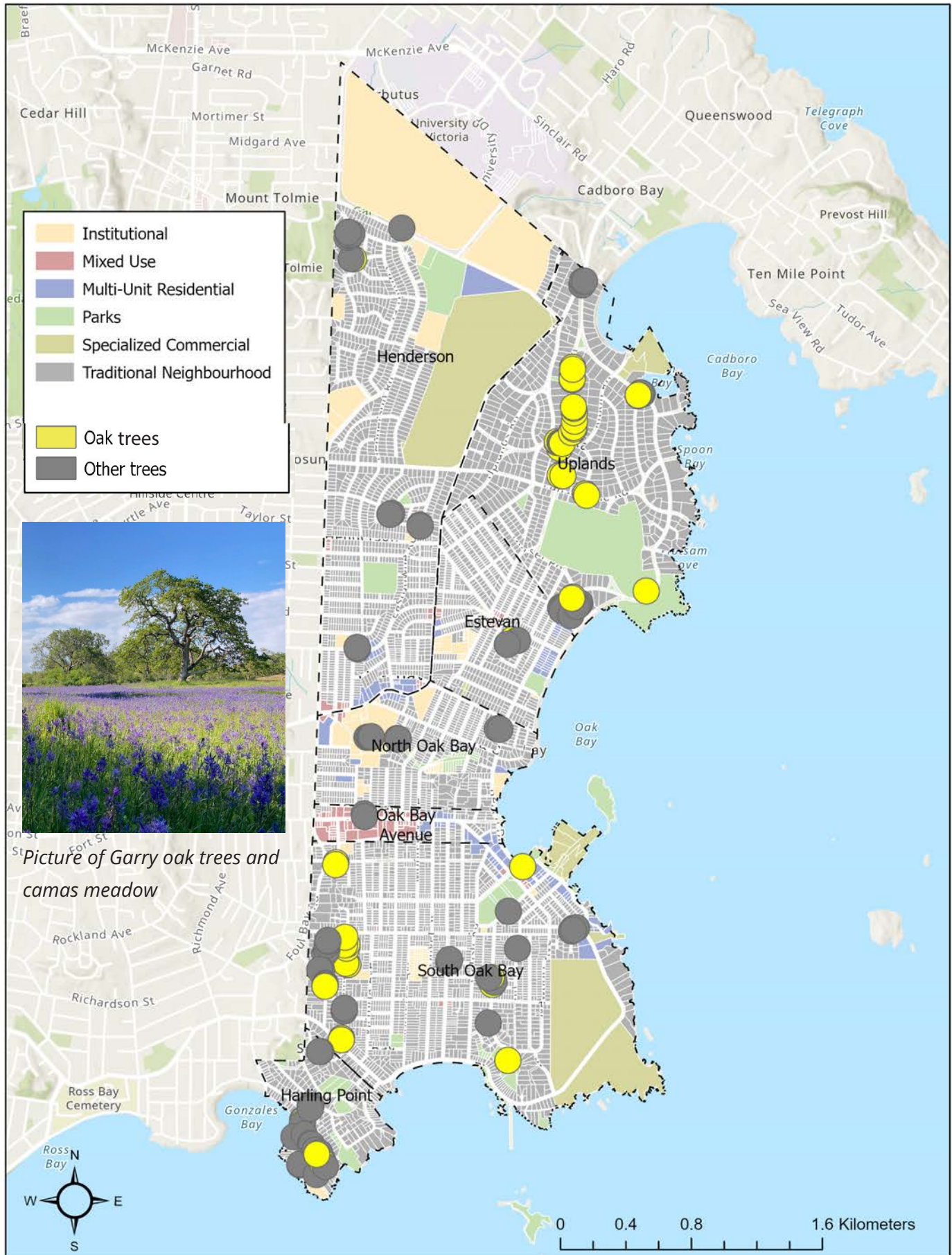
**Figure 13:** The number of public and private Coolkit Trees planted in Years 1-3.

Key insights on neighbourhood response (Figure 14) include:

- The Uplands, South Oak Bay, and Harling Point have seen the largest additions of public trees.
- Overall, private tree plantings are much fewer than public tree additions (largely controlled by the District) across all neighborhoods, with the most substantial increments noted in South Oak Bay, perhaps reflecting the influence of the Falkand Coolkit champion who is an experienced arborist.
- Despite the disparity between the numbers of public and private trees across neighborhoods, emphasizing primarily public boulevards), it should be noted that even the the public boulevard tree-planting enabled substantial engagement, conversation, and input from adjacent residents on tree choice, placement and broader climate issues.



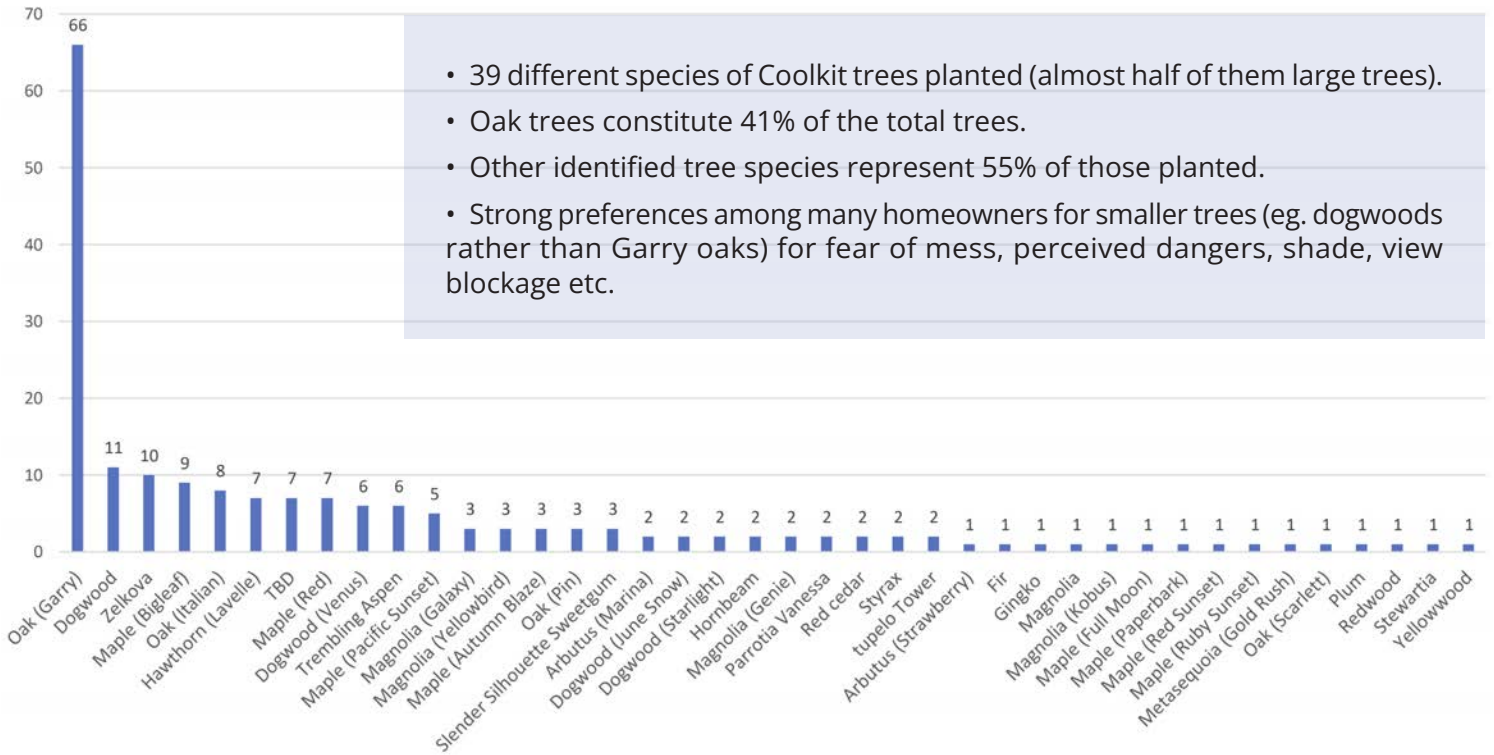
**Figure 14:** The number of public and private Coolkit Trees planted in various neighbourhoods within Oak Bay.



**Figure 15:** The number of oaks versus other Coolkit tree types planted in various neighborhoods within Oak Bay.

Key insights from analysis of tree types planted (Figures 15 and 16) include:

- Successful prioritization of the iconic native Garry oak forest which is in urgent need of renewal in Oak Bay but resilient to climate change; Garry oaks make up 35% of the Coolkit trees and 85% of the oaks planted.
- The wide variety of other tree species, which addresses the diversity needed to test and achieve adaptation to climate impacts, as well as reflecting public preferences for tree types:



- 39 different species of Coolkit trees planted (almost half of them large trees).
- Oak trees constitute 41% of the total trees.
- Other identified tree species represent 55% of those planted.
- Strong preferences among many homeowners for smaller trees (eg. dogwoods rather than Garry oaks) for fear of mess, perceived dangers, shade, view blockage etc.

**Figure 16:** Coolkit trees planted to date represent 39 different species.

## 4. Overall Effectiveness of Methods

This section summarizes what worked with the Oak Bay Coolkit program, what didn't and why, as advice for future organisers in Oak Bay and beyond. It considers challenges and barriers encountered to date, and those expected in the future, as grounding for Section 5 Recommendations on moving forward.

**Overview:** The Oak Bay Coolkit program has been generally successful, meeting many of the goals laid out in the original contract and discussions between the District and UBC CALP (see Section 1) and recommended in the Year 1 Evaluation Report.

**Core elements of success** in launching, building and maintaining the program over time were:

- Strong Council endorsement in Year 1 and commitment to 3-year program and budget.
- A catchy idea and name ("Coolkit"), with simple fun activities set in people's own neighbourhoods, and backed by a structured organisational program.
- Strong support and collaborative leadership from senior staff in Parks Dept, who have been consistently approachable, enthusiastic, informative, and motivational to local residents.
- Energetic volunteers and some skilled organisers already active in the community, including many passionate people (some of them retired) who are willing to volunteer their time.
- A proven team of 3rd party researchers acting as early organisers, facilitators, advisors, and documenters. with credibility from UBC's award-winning Faculty of Forestry team at CALP.
- Regular ongoing evening Coolkit sessions.
- In Year 3, a series of interns (recently graduated students with training and research experience in urban forestry, conservation & communications) to supplement District staff capacity. This was co-funded with UBC and a private donor, demonstrating external support for the Coolkit program.

The program has benefited from broad interest and enthusiasm from the public and local media, achieved reasonably high attendance levels from across the Oak Bay community, received support from community organizations, and seen strong cohesion among Coolkit champions in Cohorts 1-2.

Many other pilot programs on climate engagement in Canada have not been as successful and/or sustained. The program has been recognized and selected for presentations and workshops at national and international conferences across North America, as of interest to organisations such as ICLEI, Tree Canada, Arbor Day Foundation, and the Urban and Community Forestry Society. The program's wider influence and the District's leadership are also demonstrated by: the subsequent growth of other Coolkit programs in BC (eg. three Victoria Coolkit groups, and the [Tri-Cities Cool 'Hood Champs program](#)), its inclusion in a [Micro-certificate course](#) on Climate Action and Community Engagement (CACE) and publication in the Cengage national Education Guide on Health (Tunks & Lauzon, 2024).

The following sections describe **initiatives and techniques** that have worked well or encountered challenges for the Coolkit program to-date, addressing three main areas:

- **Supporting existing champions**
- **Recruiting new champions**
- **Strengthening the Oak Bay Coolkit program**



Solar energy home



Garry oak meadow restoration



Urban farming

## 4.1 Supporting existing champions (Cohorts 1-2)

### A) What worked?

- **Coolkit training workshops:** in the Year 1 survey of post-workshop champions, most said the workshops met their expectations in learning how to address local climate change impacts, network with others interested in climate action, and talk to others in the community about climate change. Week-end workshops and climate walks were well-attended and enthusiastically received.
- **Support for Cohort 1 after the workshops** has been carried out in multiple ways, much as recommended in the Year 1 Evaluation Report: with **signage** to showcase local Climate Action Plans in the Harling Point pilot; **regular meetings** (with expert talks etc.); **Facebook group and email lists** developed by champions; frequent **media attention and Connect Coolkit web-page updates**; and considerable ongoing **collaboration** between several champion groups and with District staff.
- **Implementing collective climate action plans on public and private land involving trees and pollinators** has been strongly supported and coordinated by District staff (see Section 3).
- **Expanding neighbour participation in climate action** within and around existing neighbourhood groups has occurred in some areas (eg. Brighton Road pollinator corridor, Runnymede Road area), though less so in some other neighbourhoods despite champion efforts.

### B) What worked less well (and why)?

- **Tracking reductions in residents' carbon footprints:** many of the known actions taken by champions prioritize adaptation over mitigation. There is little hard data to show significant reductions in residents' or champions' carbon footprints, despite some observable changes and anecdotal information suggesting a variety of positive changes underway in private infrastructure (homes and vehicles) across Oak Bay. There is good data now on tree planting, leading to expected increased carbon sequestration over time, but these will not greatly impact overall carbon footprints in the near future. Further use of a carbon calculator (as used in Year 1 workshops) was not pursued in Years 2-3, due mainly to limitations in team capacity (relative to the time and effort required in getting participants to collect and provide data).
- **Implementing collective climate action plans** has encountered resistance or apathy within some engaged citizen groups, due to disagreement or lack of acceptance over climate solutions, such as

“messy” no-Mow May meadows, fear of blocking light and views from tree planting, potential costs of new ‘cool’ roofs, etc.

- **Implementing certain collective climate action plans that include public land and infrastructure** has encountered friction with other District plans or priorities. Projects involving joint resident/District action on public/private (eg. street bulge-outs for traffic calming, depaving/restoration of parking areas, etc. ) have yet to make progress to date in the Bee Street/Bowker Creek, Dalhousie, and Falkland areas. This seems partly due to conflicts with timelines and contractual obligations on District planning/engineering projects, and missed opportunities for proactive consultation with local residents.
- **Lack of ongoing volunteer stewardship** of some recently established pollinator gardens on public land may also soon pose challenges for District maintenance budgets.
- We are not aware of any successful **grant applications** to support local climate action plans, except for tree-related grants given to the District by Tree Canada and BC Hydro (totalling \$20,000).

## 4.2 Recruiting new champions in Years 2-3

### A) What worked?

- **Targeting the North Henderson and Uplands areas** (under-represented in Year 1) for better geographic coverage has been effectively achieved through the Year 2 workshop and Year 2-3 tree-planting campaign (both co-facilitated or led by District staff). Recruiting potential champions in Year 2 was achieved primarily through the November 2022 Tree Celebration Event at Midland Park (Uplands), where people placed a yellow-dot representing their address on a large map of Oak Bay and signed-up on a contact sheet. Turn-out was relatively low due to rainy weather, but a high proportion of new attendees signed up.
- **Using a more direct, less registration-focused outreach** in Years 2 and 3 was successful, with door-to-door outreach and particularly with tree celebration events, attracting interested residents, increasing the number of private trees planted, and encouraging sign-ups for the Coolkit program. The importance of good weather and a well-known highly visible location like Cattle Point for such events was demonstrated with the increased numbers recruited in Year 3. In Year 3, a significant number of keen homeowners also came into the program through direct staff contacts and word-of-mouth from existing champions.

### B) What worked less well (and why)?

- Engaging schools/youth to expand and diversify participants with a younger age demographic has not been particularly successful, despite outreach to a University of Victoria climate action group, initiation of a new Coolkit project (now delayed) with the Girl Guides, and various contacts with Oak Bay schools. A more intensive effort beyond the bandwidth of the team to-date seems necessary.
- Engaging a range of community hubs & existing organisations to help support champions (e.g. through community centres, faith groups, local businesses, etc.) has not occurred, again requiring more intensive efforts. Several Emergency Response volunteers were invited and participated in the Year 2 Coolkit workshop, but no new Coolkit initiatives or groups emerged beyond distributing Coolkit materials at events. The program has however received consistent support and advice from the Oak Bay Neighbourhood Association, with promising recent discussions on coordination of various climate action groups, as well as some initial collaborations with Victoria Golf Course, Bowker Creek groups, North Henderson Neighbourhood Association, and Uplands Neighbourhood Association.
- **Follow-up from Year 3 participants** after door-to-door initial contacts has so far been slower than expected, despite their expressed interest, in terms of more commitments to free trees and attendance at Coolkit sessions.

## 4.3 Strengthening the Oak Bay Coolkit program

### A) What worked?

- There has been strong staff support from the Parks and Recreation Dept for existing Coolkit champions through the evening sessions and frequent meetings/discussions with Chris Hyde-Lay, Manager at Parks.
- The UBC intern program initiated with recent students from UBC's Forestry program as staff support in Year 3, has expanded the District's capacity for community engagement on tree planting and enabled Oak Bay's first GIS mapping of trees and champion locations (see Section 3 data above).

### B) What worked less well (and why)?

- Staff plans in Year 1 to develop a local grant process to support local climate action projects were not finalized due to staffing shortages.
- Perhaps for similar reasons, continuing staff involvement from other District departments in advising champions and helping resolve local issues on climate solutions has not been sustained since Year 1.
- A second celebration event or competition to award prizes for achievements by Year 1 and 2 champions has not been implemented, due to UBC and staff capacity limitations.

## 5. Program Challenges Moving Forward

Future challenges, concerns and vulnerabilities likely to affect the Oak Bay Coolkit program include both internal factors within the Coolkit champion network, and other trends and players in the community context for climate action.

Achieving the two key main targets of 40% tree canopy and halving carbon emissions by 2030 will require more than just planting some trees and pollinators. They will require:

- Greatly increased planting rates of medium and large trees on both public and private land, to renew the aging Garry oak forest of Oak Bay, well beyond planting rates so far achieved in Years 2-3.
- Rapidly increasing citizen capacity and mobilizing community-wide action on reducing carbon footprints, through changes in building energy, personal transportation, healthy food and lifestyle choices: ie. all 5 of the Big Moves (not just Resilient Green Infrastructure), across all neighbourhoods.

To meet these goals and based on learnings to date, major linked challenges which remain include:

- **Shifting cultures & behaviours** towards low-carbon resilience across the community
- **Scaling the Coolkit program** and grassroots climate action to the other 80% of blocks in Oak Bay

Specific future challenges **within** the Champion network include:

- **How to get follow-through from contacted residents and encourage Year 3 Coolkit tree recipients to become climate champions**, addressing broader climate actions. There is need of a pilot program to determine how to exploit the pathway of tree-planting leading to wider climate action.
- **How to make climate action/solutions more visible:** motivating others in the community
- **How to address future champion burn-out** and the current heavy reliance on seniors
- **How to track progress** and maintain motivation/effort

Specific future challenges **around** the Champion network include:

- **How to increase or supplement staff capacity issues with increasing challenges:** eg. choosing between spreading to new champions versus support of existing champions.
- **How to engage more diverse community groups,** eg. schools, youth groups, UVIC, other organizations
- **How to minimize and/or exploit impacts of Bill 44** and related densification policies on tree canopy, stormwater management, community resilience and Oak Bay's identity.
- **How to maintain momentum and compensate for the end of the UBC partnership** as a trusted 3rd party. While this phase of the Coolkit program may be ending, we are collectively just at the start of the journey.

## 6. Recommendations

In addressing the barriers and challenges to community climate action, we should recognize and tap the many strengths within the Oak Bay community to achieve rapid and lasting change. These include a Council with some leading climate policies, passionate volunteer organizers, well-educated retirees with time and resources, committed District staff with deep experience in community engagement, an existing climate champion network, increasing activity from Neighbourhood Associations, and a proven structured approach to the Coolkit program.

Reducing the carbon footprints of Oak Bay residents and climate-proofing neighbourhoods will require strong and sustained messaging on the critical targets, combined with effective support and collaboration among local government, local organisations, and community members. This needs to be at least partly community led. The continuing success of the Coolkit program also depends on better tracking of projects and increasing outreach to involve more stakeholders.

The following recommendations are provided to maintain the momentum, meet Coolkit program goals and help deliver on Oak Bay's urgent climate targets. These recommendations draw on input from District staff and members of the Oak Bay Coolkit champion network, as well as feedback from Council (at Coolkit presentations), the Oak Bay Neighbourhood Association, and CALP research on effective techniques from other jurisdictions and researchers. Recommendations are grouped in the following four categories or activity areas, with synergies and overlap/linkage between them. All categories require work /responsibilities/ roles to be assigned, among both the District and the community, if they are to be implemented.

- **Follow-through:** supporting existing champions
- **Scaling up:** recruiting new champions
- **Shifting Oak Bay's culture on climate action**
- **Strategic Organisation:** strengthening the Oak Bay Coolkit program

Certain recommendations considered more urgent or impactful are highlighted below as top priorities for early progress, given limited team capacity.

## Recommendation 1: Follow-through - Support existing Coolkit champion network *(collaboration between District staff & Coolkit champions)*

1.1 **PRIORITY** - Follow-up with Year 3 Coolkit tree recipients and other interested residents/contacts for further tree discussions; and invite to Coolkit sessions, events, neighbourhood meetings (see Recommendation 2.2 below) etc., to introduce Year 1-2 champions and the wider Coolkit program. We know that free trees and certain engagement efforts attract interested community members in considerable numbers as an entry point, but strong follow-up would help activate this pathway to wider climate action.

1.2 **PRIORITY** - Hold an **annual Coolkit workshop** (as in Year 2) to train new members in Coolkit techniques and bring together champions from previous years (1-3), to re-energize, re-bond, share experiences/success stories on CAPs (eg. Electric Avenue at Harling Point) and motivate/guide others.

1.3 Further develop and install attractive, **highly visible signage** to showcase specific Climate Action Plans/solutions and Coolkit neighbourhoods, and to inspire others

1.4 For trained champions, refocus on **implementing climate action plans (CAPs)**, recording carbon reductions, and drawing in more neighbours, with grant applications where possible, and involvement of other District Departments as subject matter experts or for future planning discussions (see Recommendation 4.1). One promising option would be to introduce a **raingarden theme** for adaptation and **electrification theme** for mitigation to CAPs, with a District information package.

1.5 Continue **regular (monthly) Coolkit meetings** (with both expert talks on topics of interest, and brief updates on selected champion's climate action plans). Meetings should be promoted to all Coolkit contacts through **social media and list serve**, to share progress. Occasional outdoor focused events (eg. Electric Avenue on EVs) or Coolkit fieldtrips could be sponsored by different groups for learning purposes.

## Recommendation 2: Scaling up - Recruit new champions

*(collaboration between District staff & Coolkit champion network)*

2.1 **PRIORITY** - **Expand free tree program in low-canopy neighbourhoods** (public & private tree discussions), through tree celebration events, posterage locally, and door-to-door outreach with sign-up sheets for future follow-up. Develop incentives for medium-large trees: eg. Toronto LEAF offers rebates for planting a tree on private property, and Victoria reduces stormwater utility taxes with permeable area expansion. Match tree costs with staff time commitment for engagement and coaching on ongoing private tree care, to get the right tree in the right place and encourage good stewardship.

- Develop and display a more accurate canopy map that can be used to motivate residents in low-canopy/vulnerable neighbourhoods (possible intern project with GIS).

2.2 **PRIORITY** - **Host neighbourhood level Coolkit meeting(s), as follow up to tree-planting outreach.** Host (or preferably co-host with local organisations/groups) local gatherings, using models like Harling Point meetings in central parks with kids' facilities, Dalhousie block parties, Ice Cream socials etc.

Bring in existing trained Coolkit champions or neighbours to talk and demonstrate actions/issues

- Offer short block climate walks
- Use sign-up sheets with contact details for better follow-up

- Provide advice on forming local groups (eg. 1-2 clear leaders, a support group of 3-5, regular meetings and initial Coolkit activities, maintain contacts with Parks Manager or other champion group, incorporate any existing local events or groups, etc.)<sup>3</sup>
- Hold perhaps 2-3 meetings per year in different neighbourhoods, so that people know others are doing similar things. One approach would be to suggest using a Coolkit display/booth or fun Coolkit exercise at every block party applying for street-closure permit.

2.3 **PRIORITY - Target specific schools, teachers/head-teachers, and youth group leaders for expanded youth engagement** (e.g. UVIC climate action group, Monterey School raingarden stewards, Girl Guide ecological restoration project, BCSEA Cool-it program) to diversify the champion network. This can be done through: meetings with key teachers, school heads and PACs; inviting teachers/others to the annual Coolkit workshop; and introducing them to powerful Coolkit techniques such as the popular Leaping Squirrel exercise on canopy cover, visioning etc..

## Recommendation 3: Shifting Oak Bay's culture on climate action

*(collaboration between Council, Coolkit champion network and other organisations)*

3.1 **PRIORITY - Stronger and sustained messaging from Council to promote critical short-term climate goals/targets for the Oak Bay community (including carbon emissions), consistent with the Climate Emergency declaration and other policies.** A clear ask of residents and simple ambitious short-term (2030) targets are needed to motivate and mobilize citizens, in what they perceive as a joint effort from the whole community with robust support from Council:

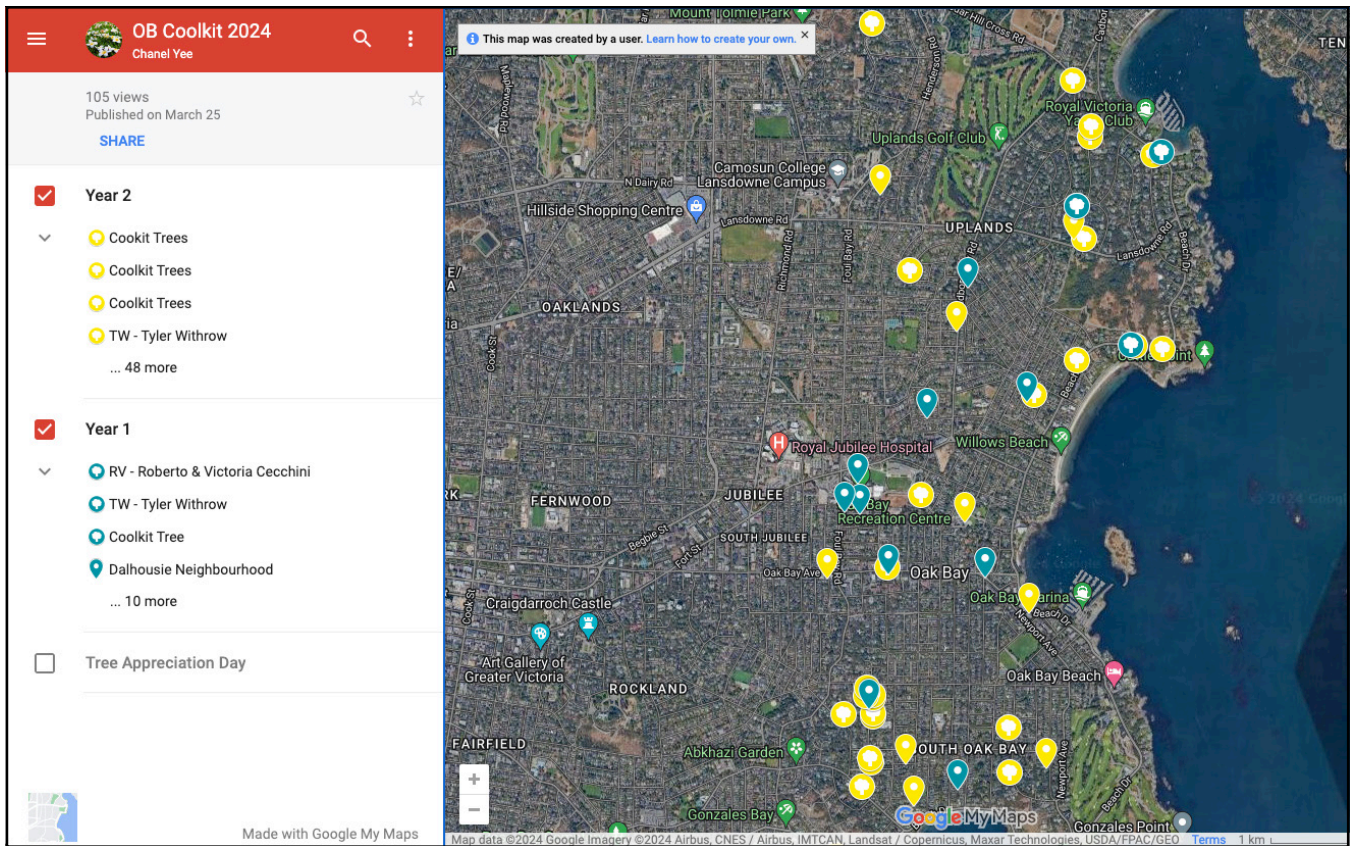
- 1600 medium/large trees established by 2030 (280/year) on residential private land, to help meet Oak Bay's 40% canopy cover target
- 50% reduction in carbon footprints by 2030, to meet CRD's GHG emission reduction target by 2038. Council's messaging on the urgency of reducing carbon footprints and climate-proofing the community is crucial to maintaining momentum and advancing program successes. This messaging can be channelled to Oak Bay residents through visible Council support for the Coolkit Program (as in Year 1), with monitoring and display of target achievements over time. This should be linked to an eye-catching display of media campaign, to maintain community-wide media attention with a steady stream of engaging outreach materials supported by Councillor's statements.
- Messaging can be underscored through initiatives such as a bulk-buy program for heat pumps (as achieved on Pender Island), electric replacements for gas appliances, etc.

3.2 **PRIORITY - Create a Registry of Climate Actions (mitigation and adaptation)** in the community, to monitor, tabulate, map in GIS and help make visible climate solutions that reduce carbon footprints and/or reduce climate threats in households & neighbourhoods. This should be promoted through an interactive map on the Oak Bay Connect website, preferably enabling citizen input, as in the Google Map prototype shown in Figure 17. The registry could also be promoted and expanded through a local Facebook survey or neighbourhood school project.

3.3 **PRIORITY - Establish Demonstration Projects** - make climate action/solutions more visible on the ground, with signage (Recommendation 1.3) and demo-project walking tours for awareness building, education etc., with media coverage linked to celebration events or awards.

3.4 **Plan & implement a program to track residents' carbon emission reductions over time,** build awareness of citizens' carbon footprints, and monitor shifts in attitudes. This could be done as a simple scorecard (see Oak Bay Coolkit p. 20) or questions in Oak Bay's annual survey questionnaire (as suggested by a Council member), employing the Saanich Carbon calculator as used in Year 1 of the Coolkit

<sup>3</sup> Source: Harling Point Group Champion



**Figure 17:** Prototype of an interactive Google map showing approximate locations of Coolkit trees and climate champion groups (created by intern Chanel Yee).

program. Results could be linked to the Registry of climate action (Recommendation 3.2) and regularly posted with eye-catching graphic icons often used to display progress towards a shared community campaign goal, such as a reverse thermometer (where temperatures go down with increasing climate actions).

**3.5 Develop a community-wide Competition** to incentivize and promote the Coolkit/climate action program, with **a celebration event to award prizes** for helping to reach targets, recruit local climate champions, etc. One possible idea is giving an award or grant to the most climate friendly block in each neighbourhood, or the most improved block, best demonstration project.

- Invite celebrities to help advertize the Coolkit program or competition.
- Provide an award or grant to the most climate friendly block in each neighbourhood, the most improved block, or best demonstration project.
- Use a simple scorecard to rate blocks or neighbourhoods, as provided in the Oak Bay Coolkit p. 21-22.

## Recommendation 4: Strategic Organisation - Strengthening the Oak Bay Coolkit program and involve community organizations

*(strategic actions by District and collaboration with other coordinating bodies)*

4.1 **PRIORITY - Increase District staff capacity and cross-departmental coordination** on climate action, leveraging the Coolkit program & network:

- Ensure close & regular staff **collaboration/communications** on the Coolkit program and wider climate action, between Parks Dept, Climate Coordinator (Planning), Engineering, and Communications staff, as in Year 1 of the Coolkit program: eg. linking top-down community-wide carbon emissions modelling to bottom-up registry of mitigation actions on the ground (Recommendations 3.2), and expanding staff involvement from other relevant departments as experts in Coolkit workshops, monthly Coolkit sessions, and meetings with stalemated community groups to help advance their climate action plans.
- Ensure **proactive integration across departments on key upcoming projects** on stormwater infrastructure, active transportation, housing etc., in order to flag opportunities for synergies with climate action (eg. support from Planning and Engineering on including green infrastructure solutions when designing for a street or multi-family project), improve neighbourhood support through inclusive engagement, and avoid implementation delays.
- **Allocate increased staff time and budget** to specific Coolkit program/climate action support, eg. new arborist duties to include follow-up with residents involved in private tree planting. The Oak Bay Urban Forest Strategy recommends budgeting for a "new District Engagement & Grants Coordinator to be shared across departments."
- Expand staff involvement from multiple departments as experts when relevant in Coolkit workshops, monthly Coolkit sessions, and meetings with stalemated community groups to help resolve internal resistance to their climate action plans.
- **Leverage the Coolkit champion network and allied community groups** for in-depth engagement, advice, and an entry point for upcoming District projects/initiatives.
- **Ensure proactive integration across departments** on key upcoming stormwater infrastructure projects, active transportation projects, housing projects etc., to identify opportunities for synergies with climate action, improve neighbourhood support through inclusive engagement, and avoid delays.
- **Continue the co-funded internship** or co-op student program with UBC and expand to UVIC, to supplement staff time (also recommended in the Urban Forest Strategy) and develop/test new initiatives such as building the climate action registry (Recommendation 3.2), tracking champion achievements/footprints, etc.

4.2 **PRIORITY - Develop collaborative partnerships with key community organizations**, coordinated through an advisory Climate Action Forum or working group including representatives from Council and staff:

- Develop a formal arrangement with Oak Bay's Neighbourhood Associations and other Associations, to help maintain and grow the Coolkit program, coordinate interactions (through a formal or semi-formal organisational structure) with other groups/community hubs interested in climate action, and share or allocate responsibilities while staying connected and informed.
- Develop stronger links/programs with schools (see Recommendation 2.3), youth groups, service clubs, faith groups, business groups etc. Also seek active partnerships with like-minded groups & NGOs such as Building Resilient Neighbourhoods' (conducting social vulnerability mapping), Emergency Response planning volunteers, etc.
- Continue staff collaboration and mutual sharing of methods/results with adjoining municipalities and CRD, with for example inclusion of their staff in ongoing workshops or activities in Oak Bay, where appropriate.

### 4.3 Build low-carbon resilience into Bill 44-related densification policies.

Council should integrate Climate Action as an essential element of all development approvals (e.g., canopy requirements). The Coolkit program and champion network may provide opportunities to soften the impact of these new requirements on Oak Bay's landscape, heritage, and climate resilience, while building in additional climate mitigation measures (eg. Step Code 4, solar energy, switching out of gas heating, heat pumps, pale roofs, energy conservation practices, EV chargers, etc.). These could be achieved by:

- Building public & champion support for Oak Bay's revised bylaws/policies on new/renovated buildings and strengthening tree protection bylaws
- Advocating gentle densification through favouring renovations over tear-downs, adding secondary/tertiary suites, and other measures that constrain new development to **existing building footprints** (saving mature trees, root space, cooling canopy cover, etc.)
- Instituting pervious area requirements wherever possible, requiring "live landscaping, through District requirements and educational/incentive programs (eg. Victoria's stormwater reduction incentives. See also Recommendation 1.4 on raingardens). Such approaches may strengthen Oak Bay's reputation as a leader on climate solutions and help reduce perceptions of NIMBYism. The District should also actively advocate and encourage a new landscaping standard for more sustainable ways to design and manage landscapes around homes and multi-unit complexes, including avoiding use of gas-powered equipment, retaining organic material onsite, switching to perennials and pollinators, etc.

### 4.4 Complete the draft grant plan for local communities

Prepare listing of funding opportunities for citizen-led local actions that address the key targets; eg. funding for awards, prizes etc. Develop a local grant process with District local business, or donor funding to stimulate climate action projects by or with residents.

## 7. Appendix

The evaluation approach used in the report is based on a variety of data sources, including:

- Workshop observation notes & recordings
- Pre-post surveys of champions' learning, capacity, and suggestions
- Carbon footprint calculations by Year 1 champions
- Workshop assignments and climate action plans submitted by champion groups
- Check-in discussions, interviews and email correspondence with champion groups
- Notes and observations from staff and UBC interns conducting engagement on the ground.
- Input and questions from Councillors at Council meetings
- Review of preliminary recommendations by Year 1-2 Coolkit champions and Parks staff.



## 8. Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge the generous support and advice received from across the Oak Bay community over the last 3 years.

The partnership between the District and UBC, and the constant collaboration and trust with Parks staff at every turn, has energized UBC's CALP team and enabled a remarkable program to be co-developed. We are very grateful for the support received from Council and from other District staff in various departments along the way.

The passion, intelligence and encouragement of the 'Coolkit champions' has been and continues to be inspiring.

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