

VICTORIA DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

APRIL 16, 2024, at theDock, 300-722 Cormorant Street, Victoria

Welcome and Introductions

DRA President Sandra Severs welcomed members and guests.

Establish Quorum and Approve the Agenda

Sandra confirmed quorum and the agenda as proposed was approved.

Guest Speaker Mayor Marianne Alto

Mayor Alto presented an update on the Community Safety and Wellbeing planning process which has been underway since August 2023. The committee meets monthly and is working on gathering data from a city-wide community engagement process which will conclude later this Spring. A report will be put together over the summer and will be presented to Council in the Fall of 2024 for approval and implementation.

The Mayor responded to questions from the audience providing information about the process and the hoped for outcomes.

Approval of the Minutes of the 2023 AGM

The minutes as posted on the DRA website in advance of the AGM were approved.

DRA 2023-in-Review and Looking Forward

Sandra reviewed the year, which highlights are found in the DRA Annual Report 2023.

Review of 2023 Financial Report & 2024 Budget

Treasurer Doug Boyd presented the 2023 Financial Report and the proposed budget for 2024, as posted on the DRA website in advance of the AGM. Moved by Don Collett, seconded by Neil McKinnon, the 2023 Financial Report and 2024 Budget be approved. By a show of hands: all in favour, none opposed. The 2023 Financial Report and 2024 Budget as presented were approved.

Executive and Committee Reports

The Executive and Committee Reports, posted on the DRA website in advance of the AGM for the members to review, were accepted. Members were encouraged to participate on committee activities.

Election of New Board Members

Two board members chose not to continue on the board and their contribution was acknowledged. Max Thomson will continue as a member of the Land Use Committee. Dianne Flood, who has been the Chair of the Community Engagement Committee and Chair of the Governance Committee leaves after 2 terms on the Board.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



VICTORIA
DOWNTOWN
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the 2023 Annual Report of the Victoria Downtown Residents Association (DRA). We are excited to share with you some of the accomplishments of this past year!

As the official community organization representing the people who live in Victoria's Downtown neighbourhood, the DRA envisions a sustainable, inclusive and diverse Downtown Victoria where all residents feel welcomed, valued and connected with their neighbours.

Our mission is to:

- foster a sense of community for residents of the Downtown neighbourhood
- represent Downtown neighbourhood residents' interests to the City of Victoria
- advocate for cultural and architectural heritage sites within the Downtown neighbourhood
- promote, facilitate, support or undertake activities to enhance the quality of life and environment of the Downtown neighbourhood
- encourage learning, understanding and proactive support of Indigenous culture and history within the Downtown neighbourhood
- support climate mitigation and adaptation strategies in line with the City of Victoria's Climate Leadership Plan

In 2023 the City approved, for the second time, one-time funding in the form of a \$58,020 grant. This funding, when added to the on-going \$20,000 Neighbourhood Association Coordinator Grant (first approved in 2021) and our base grant funding, has now brought the DRA's funding from the City more in line with those neighbourhoods that have community centres.

These grants have also made a huge difference in being able to gain a better understanding of our neighbourhood and its residents' needs and to scale up our engagement and community-building efforts. The DRA has requested the City approve this funding as permanent operational funding, putting to rest the uncertainty that one-time funding creates, and establishing a solid footing for the continued growth of our organization.

Through the work of a volunteer board and committee members, and with the support of our Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator, City Council Liaison and staff from the Neighbourhood Team, we are working to build a strong sense of community in our neighbourhood. The following pages tell the story of our work this year.

As we look towards the future, we continue to build on and expand our capacity to provide resources and activities to make the Downtown neighbourhood a vibrant and unique community in which we can all thrive together.

Community Building

We will continue to host events and provide programming to bring residents together, such as movie nights, outdoor concerts, and welcome to the neighbourhood events.

Diversity

We will continue to create a safer space for queer performers at the monthly Queer Open Stage. We will once again collaborate with the Yates Street Community Garden to host Blossom Your Pride and we will invite residents to march with us in the Pride Parade. We will build the knowledge base of residents by stocking little free libraries.

Equity

In collaboration with Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours, we have launched a project to bring Downtown residents together in the kitchen of the Victoria Cool Aid Society's Downtown Community Centre to make breakfast and deliver it to our unhoused neighbours, creating opportunities for connection. We held a free training to increase awareness of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face in the community, and we will look for additional ways to address this issue.

Making a Difference

We will continue to focus on the new community garden being located in our neighbourhood and will work with City staff and Council to make this happen. We will also carry on with our work to implement the Victoria Coolkit.

In addition, to ensure a strong, representative neighbourhood association we will continue to build organizational capacity. This is especially critical given more than 50 percent of the anticipated new growth in Victoria is projected to be located within our neighbourhood. To achieve this goal, we will continue in our efforts to obtain secure funding from the City of Victoria and other sources. We will also work with Council to pursue the opportunity for a permanent community centre for the neighbourhood's residents to meet and engage with each other.

As part of our ongoing efforts to represent the views of Downtown residents at City Hall, we have gathered input through a survey and public event and will present a report to Mayor and Council for consideration as the City reviews the Official Community Plan.

Our thanks to the City of Victoria for their financial support of our neighbourhood. Thanks also goes to Councillor Dave Thompson, former staff liaison Mike Hill and staff liaison Kimberley Stratford who keep us connected to City Hall and provide valuable advice to us as we seek to ensure the voices of residents are heard.


SANDRA SEVERS
BOARD PRESIDENT

www.victoriadra.ca

2023 IN REVIEW

Our 2023 activities focused on achieving our vision of a sustainable, inclusive and diverse Downtown Victoria, where all residents feel welcomed, valued and connected with their neighbours. Those activities reflected our core values of Community, Diversity, Equity and Making a Difference.

Building Community

Fostering a Sense of Belonging



We hosted a variety of community events to bring our neighbours together and build community. Highlights included:

- Hosting our second season of outdoor summer concerts in Pandora Green Park, Reeson Park, and Cridge Park
- Marking International Women’s Day with a movie night featuring documentaries about women, made by women
- Walking tours of our Downtown neighbourhood, highlighting some of its unique architectural features and why it’s a great place to live

Welcoming Newcomers

We created a welcome brochure, identifying helpful neighbourhood resources and information for newcomers, which is being distributed to residents of new housing developments within our neighbourhood as those developments come on stream. When possible, in-person welcome events are being hosted for those new residents, with the first — a trivia and pizza night — held at the newly occupied Hudson House.

Downtown Victoria is located on the homelands of the **Lekwungen (lakw'agan)** People, known today as the **Songhees and Esquimalt Nations**.

Learn more about the people whose lands you are living on by visiting www.songheesnation.ca and www.esquimaltnation.ca.

You can also take part in a Cultural Tour hosted by Explore Songhees. To learn more about the walking and canoe tours offered, visit www.exploresonghees.com.

In 2013, Songhees Nation produced a beautiful book, entitled *Songhees*, about the culture and history of the Lekwungen People. It is available for purchase at the Explore Songhees kiosk at Ship Point (#6 on the map inside) and can also be borrowed from the public library.

GET INVOLVED!

Your involvement and ideas help make Downtown Victoria a vibrant and unique community where we can all thrive together. Here are some ways to participate in the Victoria Downtown Residents Association:

SIGN UP FOR OUR NEWSLETTER
Have our monthly newsletter sent directly to your inbox and receive information about local events.

COME TO OUR EVENTS
Attend free community events including outdoor concerts, film screenings, open stages, workshops and more.

BECOME A MEMBER
Provide input into the direction of the organization, attend board meetings, and vote in our annual general meeting.

VOLUNTEER WITH US
Help out at events put on by the DRA and our partners, and support community engagement and urban livability Downtown.

Visit us at the Dock - 309-722 Cormorant St.
www.victoriadra.ca
info@victoriadra.ca
[@victoriadowntowresidents](https://twitter.com/victoriadowntowresidents)

VICTORIA DOWNTOWN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

A Guide to Downtown Living

The Victoria Downtown Residents Association (DRA) is the official community organization representing people living in Victoria's Downtown neighbourhood.

VictoriaDRA.ca

Strengthening Community Partnerships

We continued to strengthen relationships with other stakeholders with an interest in the Downtown neighbourhood and participated in various events put on by partner organizations, including Go By Bike Week, Upper Fort StreetFest, and Wicked Victoria. We delivered unique activities including bicycle-powered smoothies, a Dogs of Downtown photobooth, and a giant Scrabble game, all in support of identifying the Downtown neighbourhood as a great place to live.



Championing Diversity

We acknowledged and championed diversity in our neighbourhood. Efforts included:

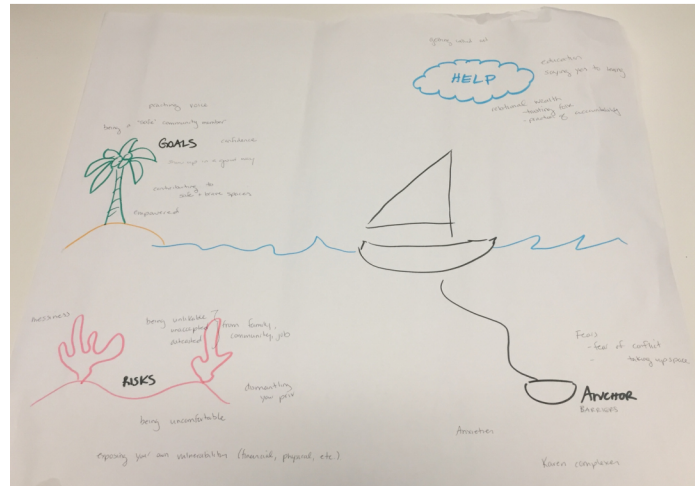
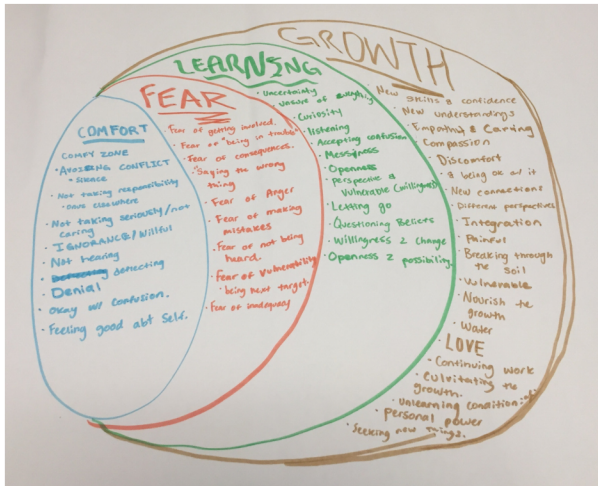
- Creating a safer space for queer performers to share their art and build community by sponsoring the monthly Queer Open Stage, hosted by queer musician Sara Rose
- Collaborating with the Yates Street Community Garden during the Victoria Pride Festival to host our annual joint Blossom Your Pride event
- Marching in the Pride Parade as an organization for the first time
- Recognizing the importance of events like Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month, and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in supporting a safe and welcoming community by stocking Little Free Libraries located in our neighbourhood with books reflecting those themes



A More Equitable Society

Helping Others

We hosted several free workshops to provide residents with tools and skills related to issues encountered living Downtown. Those include a Bystander Intervention Training, facilitated by the Inter-Cultural Association, and several Naloxone training workshops, highlighting some of the misconceptions related to the toxic overdose crisis and stigma surrounding the issue.



Reconciliation with Indigenous Communities

We looked for opportunities to work respectfully with local Indigenous communities. As a first step, board members participated in the Cultural Perspectives workshop “Understanding History” facilitated by the Indigenous Perspectives Society, which provided an important overview of the history of colonization in Canada from first contact to the historic and ongoing impacts of Residential Schools on the lives of Indigenous peoples.

Making a Difference

Supporting the Yates Street Community Garden

We supported the Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG), which provides gardening space for 90 members and hosts community events. Those events included marking Pollinator Week, natural dyeing and watercolour painting workshops, and learning experiences for local daycare groups. With support from the DRA, members of the YSCG successfully applied for a My Great Neighbourhood Grant to install a new Little Free Library on the boulevard outside the garden.



Locating a New Community Garden

We started work on establishing a new community garden to be located in our neighbourhood. The lack of appropriate and available spaces has been a challenge, but extensive exploration identified the top floor of the View Street Parkade as a prime candidate. City staff have raised some concerns about that location and we are determining how to best address those concerns. In the meantime, we have recently received a Community Garden Start-Up Grant to begin the design process for a garden.

Action on Climate Change

Our members launched the Victoria Coolkit, a program to support residents in taking action on the urban forest and climate change. Consisting of three in-person sessions and five steps that help participants get from conversation to action, and adapted for Victoria by one of our members, the first cohort completed the program and a second cohort based in the South Jubilee neighbourhood has started the program.



Other Work

Building Organizational Capacity

We engaged in a facilitated strategic planning process, re-visiting our identity as an organization, and creatively re-imaged our role in representing the interests and needs of our residents. To better support our activities, we converted our Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator to a part-time employee and retained a bookkeeper to improve our financial record-keeping. We also actively sought new sources of funding, including applying for a Community Gaming Grant.

Meeting our CALUC Responsibilities

As required by the City, our Community Association Land Use Community (CALUC) held several public meetings to provide Council with the comments and views of Downtown residents and others about various developments in the Downtown neighbourhood and their compliance with the current land use documents.

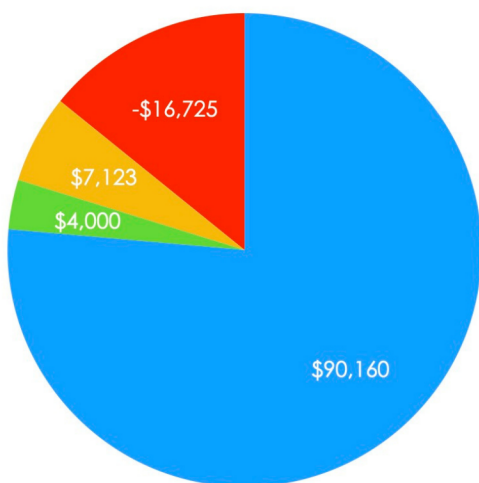
Input into Future Land Use Planning

We initiated a consultation process to provide City Council with the views of Downtown residents in the City's review of the Official Community Plan. This information will be important in establishing the land use plans for the future of our neighbourhood, especially given our neighbourhood is currently experiencing unprecedented growth with even more expected in the future growth, and the need for public amenities to support those new residents.

2023 Financial Breakdown

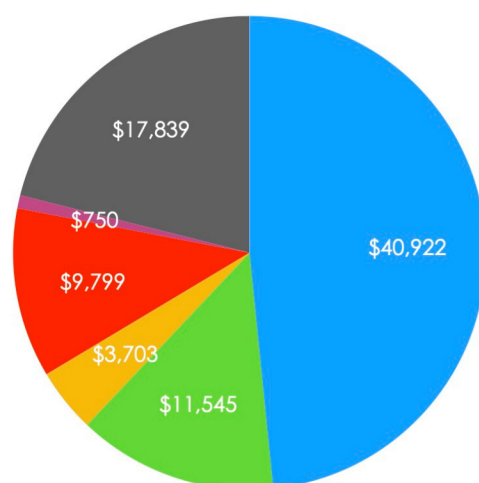
Revenue (\$84,558)

- City of Victoria Grants
- Deferred Funding
- Other Grants
- Other Revenue



Expenses (\$84,558)

- Staffing
- Events
- Admin
- CALUC
- Board/Staff Expenses
- Special Projects



Three declared candidates, Mano Majumdar, Furkhan Kucukdurmaz, and Sebastian Calderone, were introduced. Neil McKinnon came forward as a fourth candidates from the floor, and provided introduction. By a show of hands: all in favour, none opposed. Mano Majumdar, Furkhan Kucukdurmaz, Sebastian Calderone, and Neil McKinnon were each elected to the Board for a three-year term.

Two Board members, Sandra Severs and Michael Demakiling, agreed to stand for election for an additional three-year term. By a show of hands: all in favour, none opposed. Sandra Severs and Michael Demakiling were each re-elected to the Board for a three-year term.

New Business

No new business was identified. Sandra thanked James Davis for his work in preparing

Meeting Concludes

The meeting concluded at 8:30pm.



TREASURER'S REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR END DECEMBER 31, 2023

Prepared by Doug Boyd, Treasurer
Presented at the AGM on April 16, 2024

In accordance with the Victoria Downtown Residents' Association (DRA) Constitution, the following Report, Financial Statement and Budget have been prepared for the Annual General Meeting for the review of the Membership. The details are attached following the report.

This is the 19th reporting year for the DRA since the Society became a financial entity on November 1, 2004. Our fiscal year end is December 31.

Total revenues and total expenses in 2023 were \$84,558, after adjusting for deferred revenue. See the following table and chart for details.

The items funded by the Community Outreach grant were the largest category and included staffing expenses for the Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator and the Land Use Planning Advisor, the Welcome Package, office space rent and funding for various events.

For the 2024 Budget, forecasted revenue and forecasted expenses are \$115,678 after adjusting for deferred revenue. See the following table and chart for details.

The balance in our main bank account as of January 1, 2024 was \$ 80,699.99.

Yates Street Community Garden

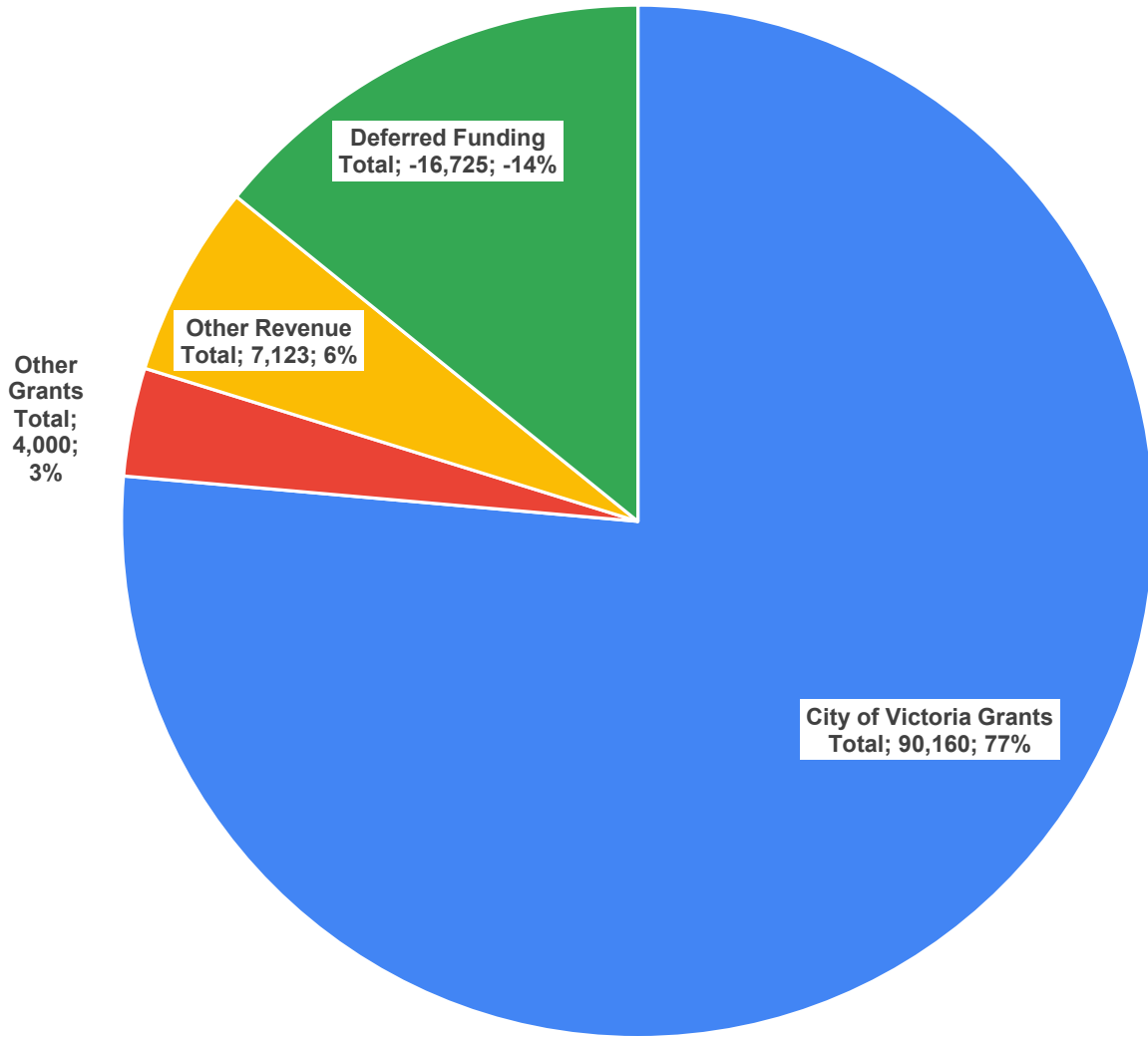
The Yates Street Community Garden is a project of the DRA. It is operated by a governing committee with the assistance of the Garden Volunteer Coordinator, funded through a Garden Volunteer Grant from the City of \$9,700 and a Get Growing Program grant of \$1,058.67. Other garden project revenues included membership fees of \$2,890.

Primary expenses were for garden projects of \$1,983.58, garden materials of \$1,431.66, , garden maintenance expenses of \$689.42, and miscellaneous expenses of \$296.

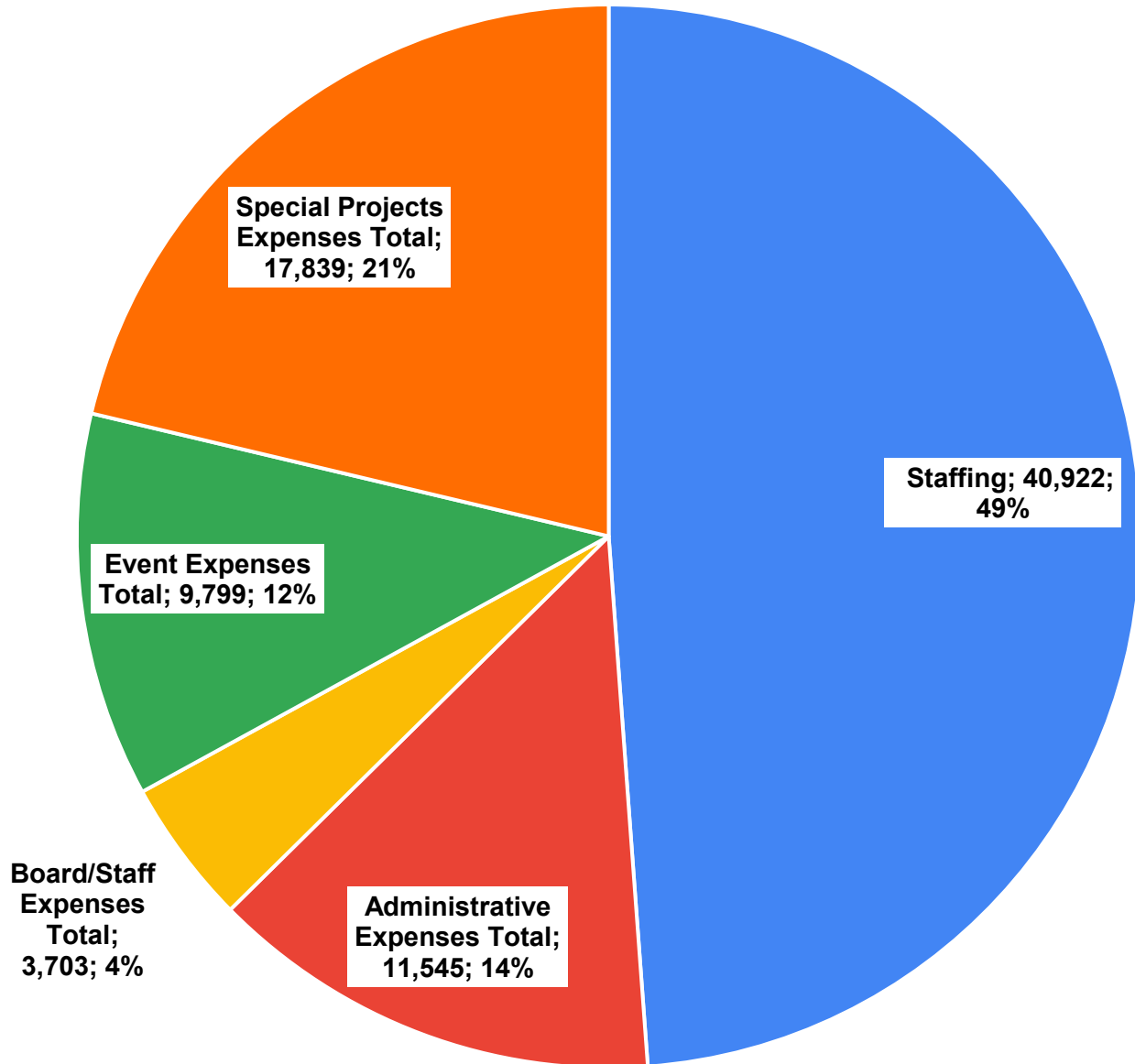
The balance in the Yates Street Community Garden bank account as of January 1, 2024, was \$ 9,095.90.

Revenues	2023 (Actuals)	2024 (Budget)
City of Victoria Grants		
City of Victoria - Base Grant	10,640	10,640
City of Victoria - Coordinator Grant	78,020	80,000
City of Victoria - My Great Neighbourhood Grant	1,500	7,500
City of Victoria - Community Garden Start-Up Grant	0	5,265
City of Victoria Grants Total	90,160	103,405
Other Grants		
Coastal Community Credit Union - Community Grant	500	1,000
Vancity Credit Union - Community Branch Partnership Gra	500	300
Capital Regional District - IDEA Grant	3,000	3,000
DVBA - Enhance Downtown Victoria Grant	0	2,500
Other Grants Total	4,000	6,800
Grant Revenue Total	94,160	110,205
Other Revenue		
Membership Fees	348	350
Insurance Reimbursement from City of Victoria	1,425	1,425
CALUC Funding from City of Victoria	750	750
Coolkit Victoria Donation	4,600	0
Other Revenue Total	7,123	2,525
Deferred Revenue *		
Deferred Funds from Previous Year	30,542	47,267
Funds to Defer to Following Year	-47,267	-44,319
Deferred Funding Total	-16,725	2,948
Total Revenue	\$84,558	\$115,678
Expenses		
Staffing	40,922	65,000
Administrative Expenses		
Miscellaneous Operational Expenses	537	350
Office Space Rent	6,452	6,791
General Office Expenses	720	500
Subscriptions and Memberships	1,267	1,893
Miscellaneous Administrative Expenses	70	70
Bank Fees	185	200
Insurance	1,715	1,868
Accounting	599	1,000
Administrative Expenses Total	11,545	12,672
Board/Staff Expenses		
Social Events	1,461	1,500
Training	2,242	500
Board/Staff Expenses Total	3,703	2,000
Event Expenses		
Food	854	939
Supplies	679	747
Honoraria	1,850	2,035
Rent	589	648
Artist Fees	2,475	2,723
Equipment rental	1,559	1,715
Advertising	263	290
Facilitation Fees	1,250	1,375
Miscellaneous Event Expenses	280	308
Event Expenses Total	9,799	10,779
CALUC Expenses	750	750
Special Projects Expenses		
OCP Project Expenses	8,233	7,212
Strategic Planning	5,040	0
Coolkit Program Expenses	4,566	0
Yates Street Mural Project Expenses	0	12,000
Garden Design Expenses	0	5,265
Special Projects Expenses Total	17,839	24,477
Total Expenses	\$84,558	\$115,678
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$0	\$0
* Note: Deferred Revenue, a Liability on the Balance Sheet, represents the Excess of Revenues over Expenses for the current year. Deferred Revenue is recognized as Revenue in the future period in which related Expenses are incurred.		

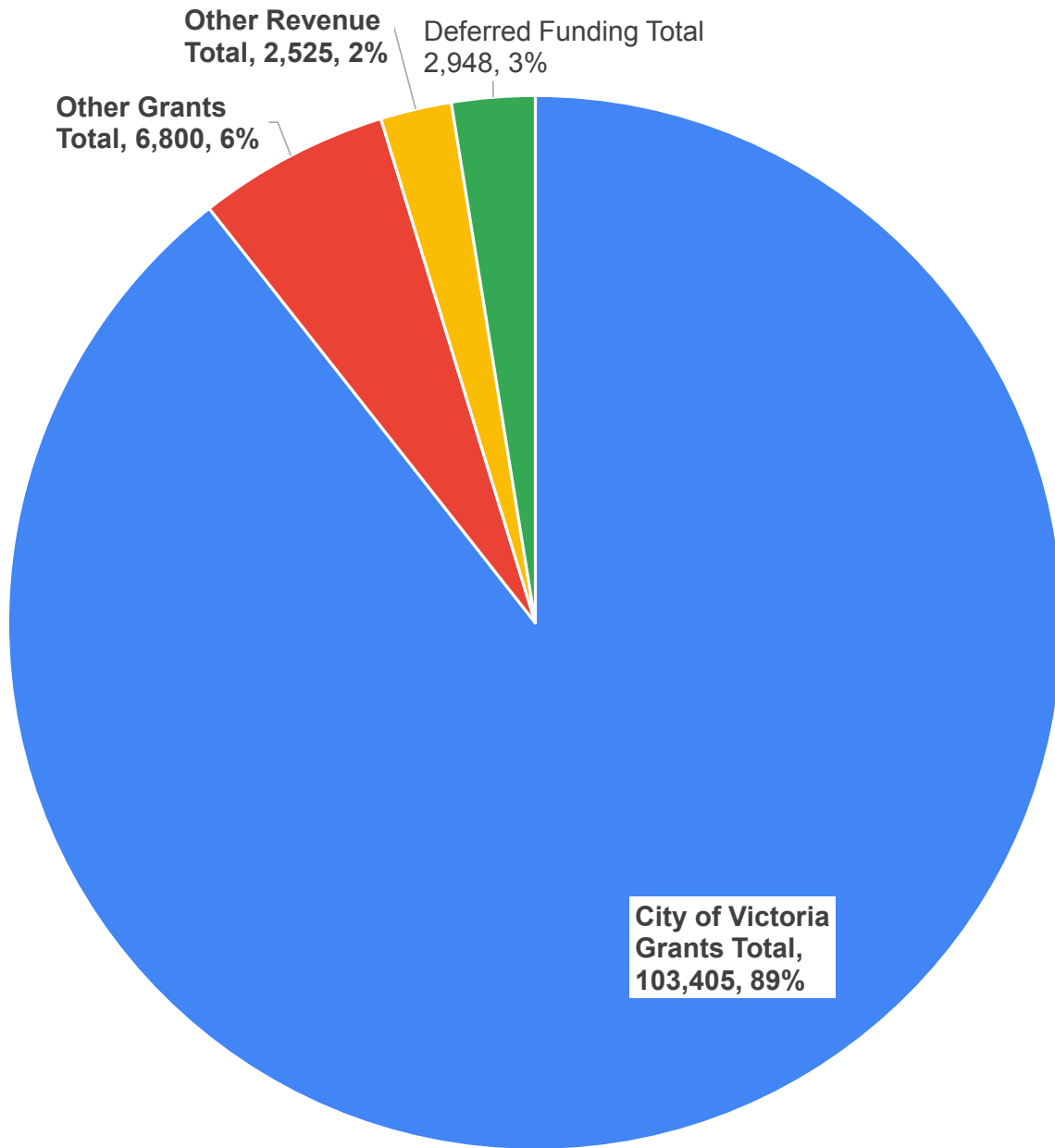
2023 Actual - Revenues



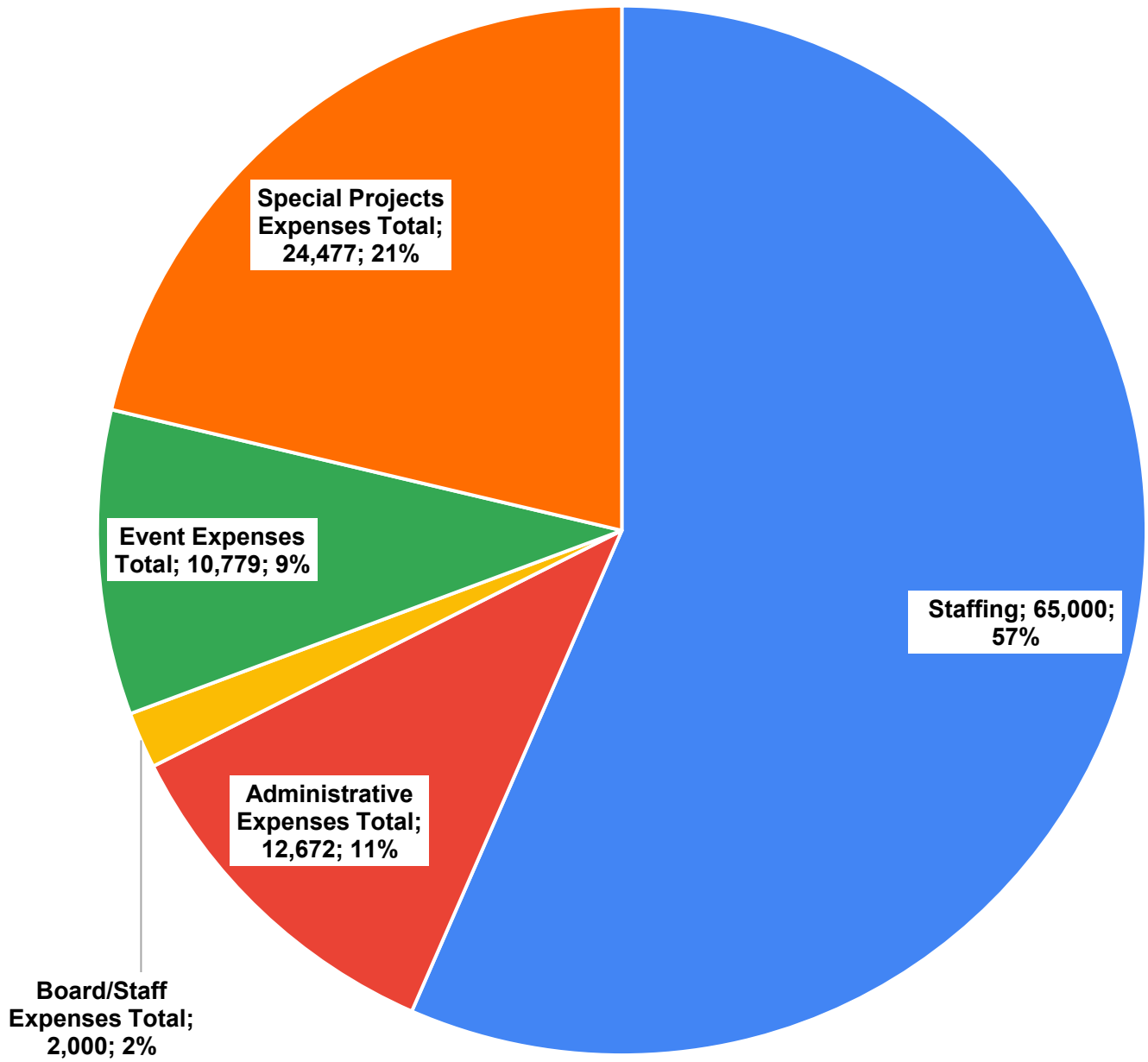
2023 Actual - Expenses



2024 Budget - Revenues



2024 Budget - Expenses



DRA Board membership 2024

Returning Board members –

Doug Boyd
Colby Young
Sherry Lee
Jeremy Zhao
Ian Sutherland
Jordan Royer
Dawn Moorhead

Second Term renewal –

Sandra Severs
Michael Demakiling

Bios of these Board members can be read on the DRA website:

<https://www.victoriadra.ca/board-members>

Election of new Board members –

Mano Majumdar

Mano is a change management consultant at a major professional services firm and the co-founder of an independent espresso café in Ontario. Mano moved to Victoria in 2023 to escape the winter and share life with his girlfriend and their indoor cat in a stunning setting. Mano is an outspoken enthusiast for urbanism and the urban form, and Victoria was their first choice for its combination of its pleasant climate, its walkable downtown, and its arts and culture scene. Mano believes cities are an unmatched engine for economic, social, and creative progress, and that our future as a country and a planet is deeply predicated on the good management of our great cities.

Furkan Kucukdurmaz

Furkan is a lawyer and has been a resident of the Harris Green neighborhood since 2023. He grew up in Turkey and then graduated from law school at Istanbul University. After graduating, he practiced law for more than 8 years in Istanbul as a registered lawyer at the Istanbul Bar. He specialized in corporate and business law in various aspects. He then moved to Victoria, BC, to change his career path significantly.

He joins the DRA with a desire to contribute to the community and be part of the society he lives in. He enjoys outdoor activities such as hiking and camping, having coffee, and experiencing new tastes in local food.

Sebastian Calderone

Sebastian is a Strata Property Manager and a resident of Downtown Victoria, having lived in Harris Green since 2020 and in Victoria since 2016. Originally moving to Victoria to complete his undergraduate degrees in Political Science and Public Administration at the University of

Victoria, he then met his future wife and decided to make Victoria his forever home. Sebastian began a career in Strata Management in 2020 and works with a range of properties throughout the Capital Regional District.

Sebastian has a passion for local development, community planning, governance, and community development and engagement, and wishes to work with those living in Downtown Victoria to develop and enhance the sense of community within our neighbourhoods. Specifically, he is hoping to find new ways to bring together the many new residents of Downtown Victoria and to envelop the myriad of new developments within the existing and established community.

In his spare time, he is an avid soccer fan and spends most of his free time enjoying Downtown Victoria with his wife and their three cats, including walks to Beacon Hill Park and Dallas Road, and trying baked goods at any and every coffee shop downtown.

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2023 REPORT AND 2024 PLANS

The Governance Committee is comprised of the Committee Chair Dianne Flood, DRA President Sandra Severs and DRA Vice President and Treasurer, Doug Boyd. For the most part, the year was a quiet one for the Committee. Activities included:

Board Orientation: With only one “brand new” member elected at the 2023 AGM, the Board orientation was informally delivered. With a number of new Board members anticipated to be elected at the 2024 AGM, a more formal orientation will be scheduled in May or June.

Charitable status: The Board has directed the Committee to pursue charitable status. That work will be ongoing throughout 2024.

Respectfully submitted,
Dianne Flood,
Governance Committee Chair

Executive Committee report – 2023 - for 2024 AGM

Much of the work of 2023 consisted of strengthening our organization to work more effectively on behalf of residents in our Downtown neighbourhood. This work was realized in a number of ways:

Funding:

Confirmation of our expanded funding (\$58,020) together with our base grant and engagement coordinator funding enabled the organization to plan more effectively for the future. We were able to transition the Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator role from a contract to staff position. We maintained its office base at theDock which has given us a place to host music and educational events, to store equipment and to hold meetings like the 2023 AGM. As our capacity has increased, we have also been able to support Queer Open Mic through providing a small contract to a coordinator and to secure the services of a bookkeeper to provide expanded financial oversight.

Board Structure:

Following last year's AGM, restructuring of the Board took place with the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee becoming a sub-committee of the Urban Livability Committee. This enabled the chairing position to be shared by Michael Demakiling and Colby Young. The addition of Dawn Moorhead to the Board allowed us to expand the work of the Urban Livability Committee through the development of the Coolkit project which has since been embraced by other neighbourhood associations. Information about Coolkit can be found:

<https://victoriacoolkit.info>

Strategic Planning:

Strategic planning was a priority in 2023 and the Board engaged in a day-long process facilitated by Scale Collaborative to update its vision and mission. The focused session also gave Board members an opportunity to set broad direction for the next three years of work. The updated vision of the organization is as follows:

The VDRA envisions a sustainable, inclusive and diverse Downtown Victoria where all residents feel welcomed, valued and connected with their neighbours.

The revised mission statement reads as follows:

The purpose of the VDRA is to:

- *foster a sense of community for residents of the Downtown neighbourhood*
- *represent Downtown neighbourhood residents' interests to the City of Victoria*
- *advocate for cultural and architectural heritage sites within the Downtown neighbourhood*
- *promote, facilitate, support or undertake activities to enhance the quality of life and environment of the Downtown neighbourhood*
- *encourage learning, understanding and proactive support of Indigenous culture and history within the Downtown neighbourhood*
- *support climate mitigation and adaptation strategies in line with the City of Victoria's Climate Leadership Plan*

Board and Committee Education on Indigenous/Settler relationships:

In response to the Board's commitment to deepen its support of Indigenous culture, the Board engaged in a three hour education event called "Understanding History" led by The Indigenous Perspectives Society, a Victoria-based, Indigenous-run charitable non-profit.

Communication with City Council:

Conversations with Mayor and members of Council continued through the year as issues affecting the livability of the Downtown neighbourhood were raised. Letters were written on behalf of the neighbourhood and public comment was made when needed.

OCP Review:

In preparation for the City-wide Official Community Plan (OCP) review, Wisser Projects was contracted to provide a professional assessment of the current OCP and to conduct a public engagement process and survey to gather the dreams and concerns of Downtown residents about their neighbourhood's future. An evening gathering at the Victoria Event Centre was held with approximately 60 attendees. On-line survey results were gathered from almost three hundred additional participants. A report is being prepared by Wisser Projects for the DRA to be presented to Mayor and Council in April/May.

Advocacy on behalf of Unhoused Neighbours:

In addition to the work of the Urban Livability Committee, Sandra participates monthly in the 900 Block of Pandora Good Neighbour group which discusses issues of concern on the 900 block of Pandora. A key component of the committee's work in 2023 was to advocate for a washroom that was accessible to unhoused residents of the block. Sandra also participated in the coordinating meeting for the rollout of the Extreme Weather Response shelters and the opening of winter warming centres.

Sandra has also been a part of the Mayor's leaders' advisory group on Community Safety and Wellbeing which will be meeting for fifteen months and will produce an action plan to be presented to Council in October 2024.

Community Engagement Committee - 2023 Report

Committee Events

Queer Open Stage - January to May and September to December

We continue to provide a safer place for 2SLGBTQIA+ performers to showcase their talent, find community, and network with other queer artists through this monthly event coordinated and hosted by Downtown resident and musician Sara Rose.

Pop-Up Bike Repairs - February

To mark Winter Go By Bike Week, we offered free minor bicycle repairs to fellow members at theDock.

International Women's Day Movie Night - March

To celebrate International Women's Day, we hosted a free movie night at theDock featuring two documentary films made by women and about women.

Neighbourhood Walking Tours - March and May

Board member Dianne Floor led two free walking tours of the Downtown neighbourhood, including one as part of the Jane's Walk Festival in May.

Music in the Park Concert Series - June to August

For the second summer in a row, we hosted a series of free concerts in the three small public parks in the Downtown neighbourhood. The June concert took place in Cridge Park and featured performers who had previously taken part in the Queer Open Stage. In July we hosted a concert in Reeson Park, which featured two music groups with members who had lived experience of homelessness and/or addiction. The final concert featured a lineup of BIPOC performers and took place on Pandora Green in August.

Welcome Event at Hudson House - September

We hosted a pizza and trivia night in the common space of this new rental building at Blanshard and Fisgard to welcome its residents to the neighbourhood.

Partner Events

Go By Bike Week Celebration Station - June

We set up a bicycle-powered smoothie station at this event put on by Capital Bike outside the Centre Branch of the Greater Victoria Public Library.

Upper Fort StreetFest - June

We ran a “Dogs of Downtown” photo booth and set up our new giant Scrabble game for attendees to play at this street party put on by the Downtown Victoria Business Association.

Wicked Victoria - October

We ran our “Dogs of Downtown” photo booth at this Halloween/harvest-themed street festival put on by the Greater Victoria Festivals Society.

Other Activities

Books for Little Free Libraries

In recognition of the Black History Month, Asian Heritage Month and National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we purchased books on corresponding themes and distributed them to the little free libraries in the Downtown neighbourhood.

Welcome Package

Our “Welcome to the Neighbourhood” brochure, with a DRA fridge magnet attached, was distributed to residents of two new residential buildings (Hudson House and The Dalmation) and arrangements were made for distribution at two other new buildings (MOD and The Pearl Residences).

2024 Activities

We will continue to host our monthly Queer Open Stage and we also have plans to run our third annual summer concert series starting in June. We will take part in various events put on by partner organizations over the course of the year, and plan to again distribute books to Downtown little free libraries to mark various significant days/months.

We love to hear from members of the community about the types of events you would like to see us host. We also invite you to propose any projects that you are interested in leading and that you think would benefit the community. Grant funding may be available for this. We welcome interested residents to join the committee and help us deliver our own events and support us in participating in partner organization events.

Contact us at engage@victoriadra.ca to share your event ideas, to find out more about joining the Community Engagement Committee, or to volunteer for an event.

URBAN LIVABILITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Introduction

The Urban Livability Committee (ULC) had a successful year in 2023. It organized and participated in various community events throughout the year, which were planned by various committees and organizations in the area. These events included workshops that focused on self-care, drug overdose prevention, and bystander training. There were also events that celebrated diversity and inclusivity while supporting our unhoused neighbours. Our community came together to make a positive impact, and here are some of the main highlights from 2023.

Urban Livability Committee Main Highlights

Self-Care Throughout the Cycle - January 2023

In January 2023, the Community Engagement Committee (CEC) and the Urban Livability Committee (ULC) organized a workshop called "Self-Care Throughout the Cycle." This workshop was aimed at menstruating individuals and focused on caring for the mind and body throughout the menstrual cycle.

The workshop was conducted by Kate Giesbrecht, an herbal therapist and menstrual educator at Birchavenue.co. Kate demystified and explained the different phases of the menstrual cycle and how fluctuating hormones can impact day-to-day life. Participants learned about the cyclical changes in brain chemistry, energy levels, and nutritional needs and how to optimize their well-being through cycle tracking and syncing.

Kate also shared her favourite herbal allies, nutritional tips, and lifestyle advice for smooth cycling, and she even offered participants a chance to taste some of these herbs.

Naloxone Training

The Urban Livability Committee organized four Naloxone training workshops in 2023. The primary objective of these workshops was to provide information to residents on how to respond if they encounter someone experiencing a toxic drug poisoning.

The workshops covered various topics, including common misconceptions related to the toxic overdose crisis and the stigma surrounding the issue. Colby Young, the committee's co-chair, hosted the workshop and demonstrated the steps involved in administering Naloxone. Attendees were also given the opportunity to practice administering the drug.

Bystander Prevention Training

During the months of April and May in the year 2023, the ULC organized and hosted a Bystander Prevention training program. The main objective of the training was to equip the participants with the necessary tools and skills to effectively respond when they witness acts of racism. The program was divided into two sessions, which were conducted on different days. The workshops were facilitated by Tariro Muwira of the Inter-Cultural Association, well-known for her expertise in this field. The training

covered a wide range of topics, including recognizing different forms of racism, understanding the impact of bystander intervention, and developing effective communication strategies. The participants were also given practical exercises and role-playing scenarios to help them better understand and apply the concepts discussed in the training. Overall, the Bystander Prevention training program was a great success, and the participants left with a better understanding of how they can make a positive difference in their communities.

Pride Parade

On July 9th, 2023, the Victoria Downtown Residents Association (DRA) showed their support for the queer community by participating in the Victoria Pride Parade. The participation was to promote acceptance and support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The Victoria Pride Parade was a joyous celebration of diversity and inclusivity. It reminded everyone that they have the right to love and be loved, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. People from all walks of life attended the parade to show their support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The ULC hopes that in the future, more people will join in and show their support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community by participating in events like the Victoria Pride Parade. We believe that it is essential to continue raising awareness and promoting acceptance of diversity and inclusivity in our society.

NSUN Backpack Project

In December 2023, the ULC joined the Neighbourhood Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbours (NSUN) to support and participate in the Back Pack project, organized by Niki Ottosen. This event was held on December 21st, which is the longest night of the year and also commemorates National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day. The project aimed to provide aid to the unhoused neighbours in the area. A pop-up donation center was set up, where the neighbours on Pandora could receive warm clothing donated by the community. NSUN also hosted an art table where the neighbours could come in and write messages that were meaningful to them. The event was complete with pizza and refreshments, which were also provided to the attendees. The event was a remarkable success and demonstrated the power of community when we all come together to support those who need it the most.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the various events and initiatives organized by the Urban Livability Committee in 2023 aimed to promote inclusivity, raise awareness, and support the community. These events successfully brought together people from different walks of life to work towards a common goal. From the self-care workshop to the Naloxone training and the Pride Parade, these initiatives have made a positive impact on the community. The NSUN Backpack Project was a heartwarming example of how a community can unite to support those in need. It is essential to continue organizing events like these and promote acceptance and inclusivity in our society.

URBAN ECOLOGY AND AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Introduction

In 2023, the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee had some exciting initiatives and developments in the Downtown Victoria neighbourhood, from the thriving Yates Street Community Garden to the Victoria Coolkit group's ongoing efforts to promote awareness of climate action. Here are some of the notable highlights.

Urban Ecology and Agriculture Main Highlights

Victoria Coolkit

In the summer of 2023, four-session workshops were hosted by Dawn Moorehead, a DRA board member. The workshop was facilitated by Michael Demakiling (Co-Chair of the Urban Livability Committee) and Naomi Lyons (a member of the ULC). The Victoria Coolkit group meets on a monthly basis and continuously works on initiatives to promote community development. Some initiatives include support for a Second Community Garden, a retrofit pilot project, and prioritizing group climate action. The group has decided to continue their work by meeting monthly and brainstorming their next project, which will focus on lobbying for retrofitting existing buildings to move away from fossil fuels and enhance the urban green canopy.

Yates Street Community Garden

The Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG) is an important and thriving part of the Downtown Victoria neighbourhood. It offers gardeners a valuable space to grow their own fresh produce while also providing a much-needed green oasis in the midst of the busy downtown area. In the past year, the YSCG has continued to support and participate in the City of Victoria's "Get Growing, Victoria!" Seedling Distribution program, which has been very successful. Additionally, the garden has hosted several open houses in 2023, allowing community members to explore and appreciate its beauty. Working with the Urban Livability Committee, the YSCG also hosted "Blossom Your Pride" in July, where participants could create their own bouquet of Pride Flowers and enjoy a delicious Pride Donut. In September 2023, two gardeners from the YSCG, with the help of the "My Great Neighbourhood Grant" from the City of Victoria, built and installed a Free Little Library at the front of the garden. Since then, it has continued to be a popular place for residents to drop off and take a book to enjoy. The overwhelming popularity of the community garden is evidenced by a waitlist of 257 gardeners by the end of 2023. As we move into 2024, the Yates Street Community Garden remains committed to its mission of providing a unique space for all to enjoy while promoting food security initiatives through workshops and events.

Second Community Garden

The Urban Ecology and Agriculture and Urban Livability Committee submitted an Expression of Interest to the City of Victoria to build a second community garden on the rooftop of the View Street Parkade due to a waitlist of 250+ people and research on viable spots in Downtown Victoria. The City selected a committee of staff members to review the proposal for a rooftop allotment garden, and there was initial support for the project on the View Street Parkade. However, the project's viability depended on the results of a structural engineer's assessment. The report from the engineering consultants, coordinated

by the City's Facilities Team, concluded that the site is unsuitable for the proposed installation of an allotment garden.

Since the City of Victoria's response to the proposal, the committee has explored other potential sites, including the possibility of partnering up with a developer and revisiting the proposal to see if any changes can be made that would satisfy the engineering report's assessment. The Parks Sequencing Plan mandates a second community garden in Downtown Victoria, so the Urban Livability Committee and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee continue to work towards fulfilling this goal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, community gardens like the Yates Street Community Garden provide valuable space for community members to cultivate fresh produce while fostering a sense of community and promoting food security initiatives. Despite the challenges faced by the proposal for a second community garden in the downtown area, the Urban Livability Committee and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee remain committed to fulfilling this goal and providing more opportunities for community members to get involved in gardening and food production. As we move forward, let us continue to support and promote these initiatives that help to build stronger and more sustainable communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Colby Young, Co-Chair, ULC & UEA

&

Michael Demakiling, Co-Chair, ULC & UEA



**VICTORIA
DOWNTOWN
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION**

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT for 2023

- **Newsletter / Other Communications to Members and Subscribers:**
 - Newsletter were issued on a monthly basis. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that they were opened by an average of 42.6% of subscribers from January to December 2023. Mailchimp reports that the average open rate of organizations in our peer group is 44.5%.
 - We sent 20 communications, including event reminders, notices, and calls to action. These were opened by an average of 57.9% of subscribers.
 - We also sent communications with event posters to those who agreed to post in their residential building and to our casual volunteer list requesting volunteers for events
 - 172 new subscribers were added in 2023.
- **Membership:**
 - 23 new members joined in 2023.
- **Web site**
 - The CMC is responsible for adding new content on a monthly basis to our website. This includes letters to Mayor and Council, news releases, events, Board meeting minutes, and more.
- **Social Media**
 - We continue to actively post on social media and the number of followers on our accounts continues to increase.
 - The current number of followers for each account as of December 2023, are:
 - Facebook - 1040 followers, vs. 689 at the start of 2021
 - Instagram – 1004 followers, vs. 399 in April 2022
 - Twitter - 1159 followers, vs. 1024 at the start of 2021
 - You can help grow our social media presence by sharing our posts with your social media followers.

I wish to express thanks to James Davis, our Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator, who with his graphic and editing skills has created a more colourful and lively newsletter, made a substantial contribution to updating our website, and posting updates on our social media platforms.

Submitted by
Doug Boyd
Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Victoria Downtown Residents' Association

Land Use Committee Report for the 2024 AGM

2023-2024 was characterized by a period of little activity, then starting in the fall of 2023 through the spring of 2024, a period of significantly increased activity. The following projects advanced this year:

1. 1011 Fort St – Wild Coast

CALUC meeting to consider a rezoning application to amend Zoning Regulation Bylaw #80-159 which currently prohibits dwelling units on the first storey and also requires that retail uses occupy not less than 75% of both street frontages – in order to allow the conversion of two small commercial suites facing Meares Street into residential use. Commercial units on Fort St. will be maintained. CALUC meeting held in September, rezoning approved.

2. 1244 Wharf St – Salient Projects

Rezoning, Heritage Alteration Permit, Development Permit with variance to add two stories to the Guild building. CALUC meeting held December 11th, 2023

3. 603 and 607 Pandora Avenue – Hampton Inn

Rezoning/ OCP Amendment for 12 storey, 198 room hotel. FSR request is for 6.81:1, 123 stalls of underground parking in 4 levels. Significant increase over OCP height (5 storeys) and density (3:1). CALUC meeting held and letter is now being drafted.

4. 1885 Government Street – Pooni Group/ Nicola Wealth Real Estate

OCP designation is 5 storeys and an FSR of 3:1, development includes a six storey building with 5,504 sq.m of gross floor area and a density of 4.1:1. There will be 79 purpose built rental units with 11 vehicle parking spaces and 88 bicycle spaces. CALUC meeting to consider an OCP amendment, Rezoning and Heritage Alteration Application to the City for site at 1885 Government St. CALUC meeting held on February 13th, letter is now being drafted

5. 837 Broughton St – Fort Properties

Rezoning for 42 unit (including one live/work unit) rental, 6-storey building. Six storey building between future Concert development and existing Mellow building. No vehicle parking included. CALUC meeting held April 4th.

6. 851 Broughton St – Concert Properties

Rezoning for mixed use development for 150 rental units (including IHCAP units) and 220 strata units. 26 storey condo building and 11 storey rental building. CALUC meeting held April 2nd

7. 937 View St – Nelson Investments w/ de Hoog & Kierulf 1030 Fort – Jawl Properties w Cascadia Architecture

Development Permit with Variance to build an 19-storey (over the 10 storey permitted) 60.2 m (over the 30m permitted), 266 studio and 1 BR market rental units with 0 vehicle parking and 317 bikes spots on R48 land and located in Fort St Heritage Corridor (using pre-fabricated components). Proposed FSR 7.97. The applicant is not proposing to rezone away from the R48 zone but is requesting a height variance. Updated Status: **approved by Council**

8. 780 Blanshard/ BC Power Building – Reliance Properties

Rezoning to construct/add an 18-storey tower (proposed uses 17F residential + 1F amenity) above the existing 4- storey heritage registered building (proposed hotel use) with a total FSR 4.6. The heritage designation is proposed to be concurrent with the Rezoning and the Heritage Alteration Permit approvals. No on-site parking proposed but offered that they may have access to 25 off-site spots. The hybrid CALUC meeting with concurrent in-person and online attendance was held on 21 March 2022 with in-person at The Parkside Hotel. The CALUC letter was submitted 27 April 2022 reflecting the community's concerns regarding the poor quality of the in-person presentation (audio and visual deficiencies) with a request for a second properly planned and executed CALUC meeting. Status: **Revised Drawings Received by City started Feb 26, 2024**

9. 539-545 ½ Fisgard & 16-18 Fan Tan Alley - Temporary Use Permit – Salient Group

Temporary Use Permit for short term accommodation. **Approved at December meeting**

10. 825/827 Fort Street – Development Permit Variance – Salient Group

Previously Fairfield – now within downtown, currently under construction. Requesting an additional storey. Application closed to responses – skipped public input and approved at council.

11. 1050 Yates – Chard Properties

Development Permit with Variance application for a mixed use development which includes purpose-built rental housing and ground oriented retail and shared amenity spaces. The proponent is asking for a variance of 24.22m or eight storeys, reduction of setbacks throughout and a reduction of 173 parking stalls. Status: approved at council Jan 11.

12. 586 Johnson Street – Liquor License – Forged

Application received for permit application at 586 Johnson St for liquor license. Letter sent to the City Jan 8. Approved at City Council.

13. 727 Yates – Saint Franks

Liquor license application to change location from Broad Street to Yates Street received. Status: Letter sent to council July 20 and approved at council.

The DRA LUC also reviews Liquor License and Storefront Cannabis applications. To guide the response to all Liquor License applications, the committee applies the DRA LUC Late Night Food Primary and Liquor Primary Policy that was developed and ratified in February 2020. On this topic, the committee provided input on the following applications and initiatives:

- Forged – 586 Johnson Street
- Saint Franks – 727 Yates

The DRA LUC has continued to hold regular committee meetings. The DRA LUC appreciates the involvement of members and residents in the process during the past year, and we encourage all residents to attend the public consultations when possible and relay their concerns or support, as the feedback obtained really does find its way into the built form. Residents with an interest in urban planning are encouraged to learn more about the DRA's Land Use Committee.

Submitted by

Jordan Royer

Land Use Committee Co-Chair