

2016 AGM Minutes

Annual General Meeting

of the

Victoria Downtown Residents' Association

7 January 2016

755 Pandora Avenue Victoria, BC

Present:

DRA Board Members: Ruth Annis, Wendy Bowkett, Doug Boyd, Cathy Brankston, Don Elliott, Robert Florida, Nicholas Harrington, Erika Luebbe, Eric Ney, Ian Sutherland

Guests: Suzanne Bradbury (Chair, Downtown Victoria Business Association), Charlayne Thornton-Joe (Councillor, City of Victoria), Michael Hill (Community Development Coordinator for Downtown), Kathy Stinson (Executive Director, Victoria Cool Aid Society)

DRA members: Karen Coverett, Janice Florida, Erin Glazier, Ellen Henry, Sharon Jayatunge, Martha Menzies, Brenda Montgomery, Heather Parsons, David & Sandra Rifat, David Rittenhouse, Mario & Janet Strauss, Oliver Tennant, Pat Vickers, Andy Wachtel, Mathew Yee

Regrets:

DRA Board Members: Karen Gallagher, Kaela Schramm

Meeting called to order at 5:35 pm

Wendy B. thanked all for attending, and gave a brief introduction to our guest speaker Suzanne Bradbury, Chair of the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA).

Guest Speaker: Suzanne Bradbury

Suzanne explained that she has returned to live in Victoria, after being away for a decade. She is a third-generation Victorian, and very pleased to be back on home ground. In her opinion, a highly committed, active, and organized group of residents are a key component of a successful city. Suzanne is involved, with her sister, in commercial/residential real estate. They are concerned with fostering a strong relationships with others, and building a happy, healthy community. Suzanne spoke on the reasons she got involved, the role of DVBA in the city, and what will be done in 2016.

What makes our City uniquely special is a product of the talent, creativity and hard work by business people. I want the City to be a great place for now and for my children's future. Lots to do in the service of city building and promoting human wellness. Many discussions have been centred around the differences—tourism versus local, homelessness versus business, and businesses versus residents—which creates many artificial boundaries. There are many areas of alignment that we could work on. Great cities make efforts to avoid looking like every

other city. The DVBA is a great vehicle to advocate for downtown. The Illumination Grant program (e.g. Trounce Alley and Dragon Alley), helps to celebrate spaces, highlight our architecture and provide a safer environment. The Clean Team consists of 7 members who compliment the work done by the City to keep our downtown clean and graffiti free. The team are considered to be 'ambassadors' for the city. The DVBA arranged for essential insurance to cover the The Fort Street Parklet, as many small initiatives are unable to meet the criteria for insurance coverage. Car Free Day resulted in a huge turnout, with many attendees from all areas of the CRD. The Douglas Street Charrette is a continuing program, with input from major stakeholders and city staff.

For 2016, a significant change at the DVBA will be Ken Kelly's retirement after 12 years as general manager. A search is currently underway to hire a replacement for Ken, who will be greatly missed as a tireless champion of our downtown. The choice of a new director will have a far reaching effect on the future direction of downtown. An executive search firm has been hired, and a board member from DRA has been invited to provide input. At the recent San Francisco conference, our City and Ken were widely recognized as innovators. The DVBA has paid staff and the board is comprised of volunteers. The DRA has been asked to take a seat on one of the board committees. Current projects will continue, and new initiatives will be planned later in the year. DVBA looks forward to working closely with the DRA as we are natural allies. A planning session was held last January, and the DVBA now has a 5 year strategic plan in place. The DVBA website is www.downtownvictoria.ca

Guest Speaker Q & A Session:

Q1: Ken Kelly has been a great point of contact. What is planned for the future?

A: The DVBA is very flexible and willing to partner to improve communication and collaboration.

Q2: Who funds the Clean Team?

A: The DVBA receives a percentage of the City tax base and the City also provides dollars. DVBA's yearly budget is approximately one million dollars. DVBA would love to expand this program and add more.

Q3: How are the DVBA area boundaries set?

A: The boundaries, board composition, and bylaws were set 12 years ago. Change is very necessary. The City has expanded in the last decade, and there are many businesses that are outside of the boundaries, and therefore not included in certain programs. Not an accurate reflection of today's downtown core. Harris Green and parts of Fort Street are not included. Expansion and change will reflect community requests.

Q4: How successful was the Government Street closure to vehicles?

A: Wicked Victoria, which closed part of the street for an afternoon, was well attended, with positive feedback. An economic study was done. A full closure of Government Street [to traffic] is not what businesses want at this time. Government Street could lend itself well to multiple uses, e.g. bike marathons and festival events.

Q5: Europe has many outdoor places and also bollards to stop traffic, what can Victoria do?

A: Many [North American] cities were designed around car use, whereas in Europe outdoor areas were designed around large plazas. Victoria does have streets that have the potential of increased walkability and sidewalk animation. The City currently has a patio program that is in the process of being expanded. Car Free Day, held this past June 21st, was very successful and thousands of people attended. As people travel [the world] and see such uses [of public space] they are realizing what a great experience it is. Kelowna is aggressively pursuing outdoor seating. The DVBA is ready to respond to such initiatives from local area businesses.

Q6: Public seating, outdoor spaces are missing. How will Victoria improve that situation?

A: [Michael Hill, the City's Community Development Coordinator for Downtown responded]: Spaces need to have animation nearby to work well. Many people see successful locations in their travels. Requests are being made to regulatory bodies to implement and improve our outdoor spaces.

The question period was closed at 6:05 pm. Wendy thanked Suzanne for her talk and stated that the DRA looks forward to continuing to work closely with the DVBA. A brief refreshment break was held, after which the meeting continued with Nicholas Harrington chairing the business portion of the meeting.

Approval of Agenda:

Approval moved by Janice Florida. Seconded by Mathew Yee. Approved by consensus of members present.

Approval of Minutes of the AGM held January 8, 2015:

Approval moved by Mathew Yee. Seconded by Andy Wachtel. Approved by consensus of members present.

Chair's Report:

Presented by Nicholas Harrington (DRA Co-Chair). Approval moved by Janet Strauss. Seconded by Janice Florida. Approved by consensus of members present.

Treasurer's Report:

Presented by Doug Boyd (DRA Treasurer). Approval moved by Doug Boyd. Seconded by Robert Florida. Approved by consensus of members present.

Land Use Committee Report:

Presented by Ian Sutherland (DRA LUC Chair). Approval moved by Ian Sutherland. Seconded by Andy Wachtel. Approved by consensus of members present.

Community Development Committee Report:

Presented by Don Elliott (DRA CDC Co-Chair). Approval moved by Heather Parsons. Seconded by Mathew Yee. Approved by consensus of members present.

Urban Livability Committee Report:

Presented by Eric Ney (DRA ULC Chair). Approval moved by Nicholas Harrington. Seconded by Wendy Bowkett. Approved by consensus of members present.

Communications Team Report:

Presented by Nicholas Harrington (DRA Co-Chair). Approval moved by Wendy Bowkett. Seconded by Robert Florida. Approved by consensus of members present.

Election of Directors:

Introduced by Nicholas Harrington (DRA Co-Chair): Presently we have 12 board members [including Robert Florida], our bylaws allow for up to 13. Robert Florida's first term has just expired at the end of 2015. Robert has agreed to stand for a second, 3-year-term. Nicholas moved for a vote in favour of Robert's re-election. Seconded by Ian Sutherland. Robert's re-election was approved by acclamation. Nicholas called for nominations from all members present for the remaining Director position. There were no nominations or interested members. The vacant board position can be filled anytime in this year. Nicholas encouraged all to consider a position on the board or to join our existing committees.

2016 DRA Board of Directors: Ruth Annis, Wendy Bowkett, Doug Boyd, Cathy Brankston, Don Elliott, Robert Florida, Karen Gallagher, Nicholas Harrington, Erika Luebbe, Eric Ney, Kaela Schramm, Ian Sutherland.

Adjournment:

A motion to adjourn was called for by Ian Sutherland at 6:50 pm. Seconded by Mathew Yee. Approved by consensus of members present.

Wendy thanked all for their attendance, and the Board members for all their efforts during the past year. Nicholas gave special thanks to Kathy Stinson and the Cool Aid Society for their support throughout the year, and for the use of the Downtown Community Centre's auditorium for our AGM at no cost to the DRA.

Chair's Report

Downtown Residents' Association Annual General Meeting

7 January 2016

Downtown Community Centre

The DRA continues its work representing the interests of the people that call Downtown and Harris Green home. As our residential community grows, our membership continues to build and we now have over 244 members, with 33 new members in 2015. In 2015, we saw the organizational structure of the DRA continue to fill with an expanded Board of twelve individuals (in comparison to 5 in 2013 and 9 in 2014) and new members who expressed an interest and got involved with our committees and groups. Our three Committees plus our Communications team remain strong and active, with the same great leaders their helm.

The Land Use Committee is our longest-running committee and has the most members involved. The LUC provided valuable input on several exciting projects this year. Ian Sutherland continues to Chair of the LUC and will give an overview of some of the projects reviewed in 2015.

The Community Development Committee continues to operate as a key point of contact, recruitment and growth with the community at large, neighbours, residents and members. Kaela Schramm and Don Elliott co-chaired the committee this year and Don Elliott will review the activities of 2015 and plans for 2016.

The Healthy Living Committee had several new initiatives this year. Eric Ney, the Chair of the HLC, will update us on the activities of the committee activities in 2015 and plans for 2016.

Our Communications team includes Erika Luebbe, Nicholas Harrington and Wendy Bowkett, with regular contributions from our former editor, Robert Florida. Our website and monthly newsletters are updated regularly and improve communication between residents, members, and the broader community. If anyone wants an update on any of our events and activities, as well as minutes to our board meetings, they are now all posted to our website. Additionally, communication channels for the DRA include Facebook and Twitter. Our Facebook 'Likes' grew to over 220 in 2015 and our posts frequently reach over 400 people. Our Twitter following grew by over 32% to 675 and our posts often reach 2,000 people. Additionally, we continue to use online tools such as PayPal, Eventbrite and Mail Chimp.

The DRA represents members in a variety of civic matters and collaborates with a variety of partners in the community, including Our Place, the Downtown Victoria Business Association, The Greater Victoria Public Library, the Victoria Downtown Public Market Society, the Downtown Service Providers committee and the Victoria Police Board, while building networks with executive members of other community associations in Victoria on a one-on-one basis and through the newly formed Victoria Community Association Network.

As new Co-Chair this year (along with Kaela Schramm) we have had the pleasure of working with a great group of motivated and compassionate residents who are concerned about their community. We were able to continue much of the work we did in

2015 and worked to expand our presence at street fairs/closure events on Douglas and Government Streets. I know the Board looks forward to serving you in 2016 and we thank you, our members, for bringing your energy, ideas and time to the community. I would also like to thank my fellow board members and Charlayne Thornton-Joe, our Council Liaison this past year, for all the time, effort and enthusiasm they dedicate to the community throughout the year.

Nicholas Harrington and Kaela Schramm
Co-Chairs
Victoria Downtown Residents' Association

**Victoria Downtown Residents' Association
Treasurer's Report
1st January to 31st December 2015**

**Prepared and Presented by
Doug Boyd, Treasurer**

**Presented at AGM
07 January 2016**

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 DRA Board and Membership. The charts are attached following the report. Note that the DRA is not required to have an audit completed.

This is the 11th reporting year for the DRA since the Society became a financial entity on 1st Nov 2004. Our fiscal year end is 31st December.

Each year, the primary source of revenue for the DRA is the base funding provided by the City of Victoria. The funding amount is derived through a calculation based on per-capita amounts, using 2011 Census data, which show a downtown population of 4,605. This resulted in a base grant of \$3464. Revenues were supplemented by contributions to Membership Fees and Bank Interest. Revenue from voluntary Membership Fees increased from \$250 in 2014 to \$365 in 2015. The DRA did not earn any revenues through Committee Activities & Events in 2015 as the Board continued its practice of supporting and encouraging membership involvement without charging fees. Instead of charging for participation, the DRA covered the expenses and for some activities asked members to bring donations for Our Place Society in lieu of paying admission.

In 2015, expenses were less than for the previous year, largely due to the fact that we did not have any major community forums such as the Victoria Matters events and Livability Forum that we held in 2014. New events in 2015 were the Car Free Day on Douglas Street in June and the Wicked Victoria event on Government Street in October, where we had a DRA booth. Expenses from these events totalled \$714. Committee events and activities accounted for the largest portion of expenses (59%). Our second largest expense (31%) is associated with General & Administration expenses, primarily our Dropbox account and AGM expenses. The remainder of our expenses were associated with Communications; primarily the cost of webhosting.

A review of the budget for 2015 shows that our revenues were higher (19%) than budgeted and our expenses were substantially lower (by 64%). We had budgeted for a substantial increase in Committee expenses, which were not realized, as discussed above. Additionally, there were no External expenses.

For the 2016 Budget, revenue consists of Base Funding from the City of Victoria, and voluntary Membership Fees, with no income anticipated from Committee Events & Activities. We expect an increase in membership fees as we are doing more to encourage memberships in the DRA. Expenses include regular General and Admin costs and Communications (ongoing costs for webhosting). External Events expenses have been budgeted for \$200 to cover the costs associated with DRA Board Member attendance at relevant community events held by other associations and societies. We have increased the Committee expenses budget to \$2800 (from a budget of \$2000 in 2015), since we hope to be able to reinstate our program of organizing community events such as the Victoria Matters events in 2016 as well as continuing to participate in any street festivals as we did in 2015.

The balance in our bank account as of January 1, 2016 was \$10,416.42. As of January 1, 2015, it was \$8527.01.

**Victoria Downtown Residents' Association
Statement of Income
January 1 to December 31, 2015**

	2014	2015
	(\$)	(\$)
Revenues		
Annual base funding	3,464.00	3,464.00
Membership fees	235.00	365.00
Interest	1.80	3.31
Committees (Activities & Events)	0.00	0.00
Total Revenues	<u>3,700.80</u>	<u>3,832.31</u>
 Operating Expenses		
General and Administration	400.21	544.90
Communications – Website	174.09	174.12
External Events	77.00	0.00
Committees (Activities & Events)		
Victoria Matters	932.69	0.00
Roving Refinery	535.00	285.00
Street Events		713.72
Livability Forum	230.10	0.00
Other	40.00	20.00
Total Committees	<u>1,737.79</u>	<u>1,018.72</u>
Total Operating Expenses	<u>2,389.09</u>	<u>1,737.74</u>
Net Income	<u>1,311.71</u>	<u>2,094.57</u>

**Victoria Downtown Residents' Association
Budget for Fiscal Year 2016**

	Actual 2015 (\$)	Budget 2016 (\$)
Revenues		
Annual base funding	3,464.00	3,464.00
Membership fees	365.00	400.00
Interest	3.31	3.50
Committees (Activities & Events)	0.00	0.00
Total Revenues	<u>3,832.31</u>	<u>3,867.50</u>
 Operating Expenses		
General and Administration	544.90	600.00
Communications	174.12	200.00
External Events	0.00	200.00
Committees (Activities & Events)	1,018.72	2,800.00
Total Operating Expenses	<u>1,737.74</u>	<u>3,800.00</u>
 Net Income	 <u><u>2,094.57</u></u>	 <u><u>67.50</u></u>

**Downtown Residents' Association
Land Use Committee Report
January 7th, 2016**

The DRA Land Use Committee continued to meet throughout 2015 and offered input into various rezoning and variance applications in the Downtown core.

In all, 13 projects were either presented to the public at meetings hosted by the DRA or (those not requiring public meetings) were reviewed by the Land Use Committee. The DRA incorporated the comments and concerns of residents regarding these projects in our reports to City Hall. In some cases, the proponents took immediate steps to incorporate the public's concerns into their development plans.

The development projects we've been asked to participate in in 2015 include:

Continued from previous years:

- **595 Pandora:** Service Canada Office Building: Cielo Properties - Conversion to Retail/Residential.
- **613 Herald St:** Kunju: Developer Conrad Nyren and Hillel Architecture - Low-rise residential and retail building.
- **816 Government St:** Custom House Federal Building: Cielo Properties and Studio One Architecture - Conversion to Retail/Residential.
- **819 Yates:** Chard Development – 15 storey 209 unit Residential rental tower on surface parking lot.
- **840 Fort St:** The Sawyer Residences: Three Point Properties and No 10 Architecture - Residential rental micro unit low-rise.
- **960 Yates:** Alpha Project Developments and de Hoog & Kierulf Architects – 17 storey Residential Condominium Tower with ground floor commercial.
- **1515 Douglas St:** Jawl Properties and D'ambrosio Architecture - Two office towers in two phases

New projects in 2015:

- **727 Johnson:** Michael Alston – Conversion to Retail/Residential adding two storeys.
- **755 Caledonia:** Townline – Phase 2: 15 storey residential tower with ground floor commercial.
- **838 Fort St:** Minor changes to building requiring Development Permit.
- **951/989 Johnson:** McCall parking lot site: 989 Johnson Properties/CEI Architecture. Two tower 15 and 17 storey 205 unit residential with ground floor commercial.
- **Hudson District:** Townline – Zoning Amendment to allow operations of Brewery/Distillery/Brew Pubs within district.

- **Northern Junk:** Reliance Holdings – Residential with retail including preservation and rehabilitation of two heritage buildings onsite.

In addition to the review of proposed development projects, there were additional issues relevant to land use in which the LUC was involved, including:

- **845 Yates:** The Wave – Development Permit regarding tile mosaic.
- **Burnside Gorge Neighbourhood Plan:** UDI & City Discussion with community & industry. Includes Rock Bay & portion of Douglas St.
- **Government Street Charette**
- **Local Area Planning Process**
- **Removal of Trees:** trees removed but not replaced in district.
- **City of Victoria Development Summit:** Panelist

The DRA Land Use Committee and members participated in the review of one Liquor Licensing change and change to hours of service in 2015.

- **1724 Douglas:** Northern Quarter

The DRA LUC also followed up on ongoing one specific planning issue.

JSB Bridge Approaches: LUC members attended a design charette for the JSB approaches and are pleased with the recommendations brought forward for the eastern approaches public realm. The recommended design includes many of the components we have been proposing for several years; including adding much needed and desired functional green space in the downtown core. Final designs are expected from the City's landscape consultant in the near future.

Ian Sutherland
Chair, Land Use Committee

**Community Development Committee
Victoria Downtown Residents Association
2015 Committee Report
Kaela Schramm and Don Elliott, Co-Chairs**

This year the Community Development Committee expanded its small, but committed membership from four to six, with some occasional assistance/attendance from other community members throughout the year, and together we continued to run community and membership activities and events. Our committee consists of Wendy Bowkett, Doug Boyd, Graham Briggs, Kaela Schramm (Co-Chair), Nicholas Harrington and myself – Don Elliott. We look forward to recruiting more members to our fun and diverse committee in 2016.

Roving Refinery

In 2015, we continued on the great tradition of the Roving Refinery.

The Roving Refinery is the DRA's longest running Community Development Committee initiative. It is a recurring series of fun social events. Each Roving Refinery event is an opportunity for all of us to get to know each other better, and partake in the hospitality of the local business hosting the event. Roving Refinery events are free for DRA members, and for non-members who register for DRA membership at the event.

In 2015 we attended events at:

- Cenote Restaurant and Lounge
- Perro Negro
- The Reef
- Fishhook
- The Mint Lunch
- Northern Quarter
- Year End Get Together at Peacock Billiards

The entry “fee” for each event is a donation (cash or items) for Our Place. In 2015, we collectively raised a total of \$280 along with almost 40 pounds of canned food, and socks, toques, mittens and other items.

VicMatters

We put VicMatters on hold in 2015, however, the team has already met in December to plan another VicMatters event in early 2016, please stay tuned for an announcement soon.

Outdoor Street Closure Festivals

The CDC also took an active role in organizing a DRA presence at two key street closure festivals.

In May, Douglas Street closed down for a Car Free Celebration. We organized a booth and were in attendance for the entire day, reaching out to new and potential members and getting our name out to attendees.

In October, Government Street closed for the first of a few pilot project closures, and again, the DRA was there with a clever “mini pumpkin” game and treats for kids. Again, a sign up sheet and information on getting involved was made available, and we had a presence for the entire day, reaching out and getting the DRA name recognizable to more of the greater public in attendance.

We look forward to continuing our involvement in reaching out during future government street closures, when they happen, as well as Car Free Day 2016!

That wraps up 2015, we are looking forward to a great 2016!!

Thank you!

Kaela Schramm and Don Elliott
CDC Co-Chairs

**Downtown Residents' Association Annual General Meeting
Urban Livability Committee Report
Downtown Community Centre
January 7, 2016**

The Healthy Living Community Committee received a name change in 2015 to better reflect how we live in a downtown community; we are now the Urban Livability Committee.

Although a very small group indeed, the Committee was able to develop two outstanding programs; the Victoria Dog Watch Programs, and 'Pipe Down' an educational awareness campaign to reduce unnecessary noise produced by motorcycles, and support the work of the Community Garden Initiative. Committee Executive met with the City of Victoria to further discuss Noise Reduction Strategy's and the improvements to the Late Night Great Night program.

The Downtown Victoria Dog Watch Program: A Block Watch for Dog Owners

This program was brought to life by two of the ULC members, Ellen Henry and David Rittenhouse. Similar to the successful Block Watch programs, the Downtown Victoria Dog Watch program is designed to educate dog owners to be the eyes and ears of the community where they walk and socialize their dogs.

The program was launched May 27th. Jordan Roberts, the owner at Bosley's on Yates donated his space and hosted the event. The Victoria Police Departments Block Watch Coordinator provided an overview of how the concepts of Block Watch could be employed for the Dog Watch Program. Dan O'Connor, the Victoria Police Department's Community Resource Officer, as well as the DRA's City Councillor liaison, Charlayne Thornton-Joe were in attendance to offer support and answer questions.

The Downtown Victoria Dog Watch Program has its own Facebook page.

'Pipe Down': An Educational Awareness Campaign

This campaign is part of the continuing efforts on the part of the Committee to work with the Victoria Police Department to create educational material for distribution to those that drive excessively loud motorcyclists. The campaign material has been drafted and discussions have been held with Victoria Police on when and how best to distribute the material.

Community Gardens Initiative: Growing in the City

The Committee provided a letter of support to the City of Victoria's "Growing in the City" initiative. The Committee encouraged the City not to overlook the downtown in their initiative as a viable option even though there is limited access to both public and private lands. Our letter of support was at the urging of downtown resident and a member of the DRA, Janet Strauss, who sits as a member of the City Support for Local Food Systems Committee, and is an enthusiastic supporter and advocate for urban food production, and is leading the DRA's vision to ensure that community gardens become a reality in downtown Victoria.

Noise Reduction Strategy Presentation: Changes to Late Night Great Night

The City of Victoria presented proposed changes to the Late Night Great Night program that are targeted to help reduce the noise created during closing times on lower Douglas. In attendance was Gary Olson from the Strathcona Hotel. The City set out each of the proposed changes and solicited feedback from the Committee Executive and DRA board members in attendance.

Eric Ney
Co-Chair
Urban Livability Committee



Downtown Victoria Dog Watch Program



Do you walk a dog in the downtown area? You can help improve the safety of our community!

The Victoria Downtown Residents Association introduces a new program empowering our community's dog owners. Whether you live downtown or bring your dog to work in the area, you likely find yourself out and about with your four legged friend at all hours of the day or night. Downtown Dog Watch aims to take advantage of this opportunity!

Modeled after the very successful Block Watch program, this initiative educates dog owners on how to be the eyes and ears (and noses and tails!) of downtown.

As you go about your normal dog walking activities, you can help by noting and reporting suspicious activity to VICPD. Let the trained professionals take it from there. For more information, join our Facebook page or email info@victoriadra.ca.

Dog Watch Program Orientation Session

Join other dog owners to learn from VICPD how you can help to improve safety in our community. Find out what suspicious activity might look like, when and how to contact VICPD, and what information will best inform their officers.

- What:**
Dog Watch Program Orientation Session
- When:**
May 27, 6:30-8:00 pm
- Where:**
Bosley's on Yates, 911 Yates St

Please RSVP on our Facebook event page or email info@victoriadra.ca



VICTORIA
DOWNTOWN
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION

Huge thanks to our orientation event hosts!

bosley's
PET FOOD PLUS
ON YATES



**Communications Team Report
Downtown Residents' Association
Annual General Meeting, 7 January 2016**

This past year, the DRA Communications Team consisted of four of us: Erika, Wendy, Robert, and myself. Together, the team maintains and updates our website, publishes our monthly newsletter, and is active on Facebook and Twitter, with the intention of fostering the sharing of information between residents, our membership, and the community at large.

Managing communications for our association takes a considerable effort, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team for the great work done in 2015. As always, we would love to hear from any DRA member who is interested in joining the team.

Our website, “victoriadra.ca”, is a great source for all things ‘DRA’. For those who may not be completely familiar with it, I’d like to highlight some of the content that you can find on our site:

- Upcoming DRA events, including Board and Committee meetings, social events (Roving Refinery), and public forums (Victoria Matters)
- Recent letters written to Mayor and Council on a variety of issues
- Historical records: minutes of past board meetings, back copies of our monthly e-newsletter, and documentation of past public forums (many of which include notes, analysis, photos and video)
- The DRA’s mission statement, constitution and by-laws
- Description of each of our committees, in case you’d like to join one. We’d be so happy if you did.
- Registering for, or renewing your membership, paying dues, and getting in contact with us.

Our monthly newsletter, “The DRA News” is compiled and edited to inform our membership about the affairs of the DRA, as well as issues and activities that we feel are of importance and/or of interest to the residents of our neighbourhood. We encourage all of our members to subscribe to, and read the newsletter, and we welcome your comments about the content—what you like and what you don’t.

We ‘Tweet’ to our followers, and post to our Facebook page daily. Whether we’re using these social media tools to provide our membership with up-to-the-minute information, announcing news from our neighbourhood, or drawing our attention to pertinent local issues, if you follow the DRA on social media, you know that we take it seriously, and that we do it well. If you’re not currently in touch with us through Facebook and/or Twitter, I’d strongly encourage you to have a look at what we’re sharing with the world.

And now for some statistics. In 2015, our Facebook page was ‘Liked’ by 221 new users, and the number of our Twitter “Followers” increased by 167 in 2015 (coincidentally also a 33% increase over 2014). Our top three Facebook posts this past year reached 221, 344, and 378 people respectively. The total number of Twitter ‘Impressions’ for the year was a whopping 69,600, and our top three Tweets reached +2000, 3,000, and +5000 people respectively. And finally, we experienced a net increase of 63 subscribers to our newsletter last year, a 40% increase.

In conclusion, we’re doing a great job of keeping our membership informed, but we could use some help with the task, so if you’re interested in joining our team, please let us know. As our communications serve as a tool for recruiting and growing our membership base, please help us spread the word—forward one of our newsletters to a friend, share a link to one of our web pages, comment on one of our Facebook posts, or Retweet one of our Tweets.

Nicholas Harrington
Co-Chair
Victoria Downtown Residents' Association