

- Sebastian’s board membership to be revisited during 2025 AGM.

Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael ([link to report](#))
 - Sidewalk talk (Jan 11)- Humans of Victoria was inspired by ideas to build community and getting to know the neighbours including the unhoused
- **Climate Solutions Committee:** Dawn (report attached)
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug (report attached)
- **Governance Committee:** Jeremy (no report)
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Jordan (report attached)
 - Report format changed to prioritize updates, reducing historical context information on projects.
 - CALUC for 1520 Blanshard St (currently gov building) upcoming. Developer has proposed high density build as condition for adding amenities. Possible money for local non-profit.
- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James (report attached)
 - Board approved proposal to submit application to the “My Great Neighbourhood Grant” in support of Connect & Preparedness programming.

External Meeting Reports – Q and A

- **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN):** Sandra (no report)
- **900 Pandora Good Neighbour Group:** Sandra (no report)

Other Business

- Renewal of membership in Volunteer Victoria
 - Board agreed to discontinue renewal of membership until DRA has more programing requiring volunteer recruitment
- Review of 2024 financial reports
 - Per updated financial policy, committees to submit budget proposal ahead of implementation
 - To begin reviewing budgets for committees for Feb meeting.
- **Motion: That the Board approve the hiring of James Davis as Executive Director effective February 2, 2025 with terms negotiated.**
 - **Moved:** Jeremy **Seconded:** Michael **CARRIED**
- Social media presence on Meta (Facebook and Instagram) and potential relocation to Bluesky. Board member (Dawn) raised concern hat Meta policy updates has resulted in the loss of fact-checking and the termination its diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) programs
 - Based on discussion, DRA will pilot engagement activity on Bluesky while maintaining Meta presence, including event updates.
 - There will be a member survey (through email) after initial pilot to seek member opinion.

- Board will also investigate membership training on the use of Bluesky.
- Notification of insurance re. Climate Solutions Committee and Victoria Coolkit cohort as additional committees (Dawn) – resolved offline

Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 5:30pm

**Urban Livability Committee
and
Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee
Reports**

Victoria Downtown Residents Association

January 25, 2025

Introduction

The Urban Livability Committee and the Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee are committed to enhancing the quality of life for residents in Victoria for the Year 2025. These committees strive to foster a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable urban environment through various initiatives, events, and projects. This report highlights the recent activities, updates, and future plans that aim to strengthen community bonds and promote ecological well-being in our city. By collaborating with local residents, businesses, and organizations, we strive to create a thriving and resilient community that values both human connections and environmental stewardship.

Urban Livability Committee

Committee Updates

Pandora Breakfast Event

Saturday, December 21, 2024: Event Overview

The Urban Livability Committee successfully resumed its breakfast event on Saturday, December 21, 2024. This initiative aims to support our unhoused community members, especially in the wake of recent challenges caused by the installation of fences, which have dispersed individuals from the Pandora area.

Despite the dispersal, several neighbours had the opportunity to benefit from the breakfast event. A dedicated team of volunteers played a crucial role in delivering meals to those who had to relocate from Pandora. The distribution route included Vancouver Street down to Quadra St. and along Johnson Street from Cook St. to Quadra St., ensuring that we maximize our reach to those who had to move due to the installed fences.

In addition to providing meals, the event facilitated the distribution of clothing. Donations from donation bins at Yates Street Community Garden and contributions from a donation bin at the Zero Waste Emporium on Douglas were made available. Furthermore, committee members Michael and his partner Kris made additional purchases from Women in Need to expand the clothing options, ensuring a variety of bags and warm garments were available to help our community stay warm during the colder months ahead.

Upcoming Event: Saturday, February 01, 2025

Recognizing the ongoing need to assist our neighbours in the Pandora area, the committee has scheduled another Breakfast Event for Saturday, February 01, 2025, from 9 AM to 11

AM. This event will focus on the distribution of food, with an emphasis on community involvement and support.

In preparation for the February event, one of our volunteers is organizing a baking activity the day before. One of our committee members will also contribute by baking and delivering muffins for distribution during the event.

Summary

The Urban Livability Committee remains committed to supporting our community, particularly the unhoused individuals around Pandora. We strive to maintain and strengthen community ties through ongoing events and collaborative efforts. The upcoming event in February presents another opportunity to extend our outreach and assistance to those in need.

Sidewalk Talk: Updates

On Friday, January 10, 2025, Bernice (project lead) hosted a training session. On Saturday, January 11, 2025, the group listened to 41 people. Overall, Sidewalk Talk has 26 active and trained volunteers and approximately 50 on the email list, some of whom have gone through training but are not engaging after their initial listening session in October. They were approved for the Neighbour Space and can book it once a month; however, the decision was made to offer the training at their house due to timing. The current intention is to listen on the second Saturday of the month at the library, though the library has not yet confirmed the ongoing booking.

Addressing Community Challenges: A Call for Support in the Downtown Core

One of our committee members, shared her experiences in the Downtown Core, where they were approached by the Clerk/Cashier at Circle K. He described ongoing challenges faced by the store, located on Douglas Street and open 24 hours, where individuals using drugs and living in nearby cubbies have been committing theft. The Clerk expressed frustration with the situation, noting that his limited English proficiency has made it difficult for him to effectively communicate with 911 dispatchers, and he has not received responses from the Non-Emergency Line of the Victoria Police Department.

He reached out to our committee member for support, emphasizing his understanding of the struggles faced by those in the community and framing the issue as a systemic failure.

He mentioned that many people who enter his store appear disconnected and are interfering with business operations, but he is reluctant to call emergency services to avoid getting them into trouble.

A suggestion of using community engagement methods, such as Sidewalk Talks or the Smoothie Blender Bicycle, to speak with individuals living in the cubbies and gather their perspectives. Our committee member noted that Our Place Society has restricted food service to only three times a day, which may have exacerbated the issue of theft from Circle K.

They believe a letter advocating for extended food service hours at Our Place Society could be a beneficial initial step. Additionally, they drafted a personal letter to Mayor Marianne Alto regarding Circle K's predicament, explaining that businesses are desperate for assistance as police no longer engage in theft incidents in the area.

They emphasized the importance of engaging with the affected individuals to understand their needs while acknowledging the need for housing and supportive services. Many people in the area have previously been housed but face barriers to accessing those options now. Our committee member brought this issue to the committee to explore potential solutions that will benefit both Circle K and the individuals residing on Douglas Street.

The Urban Livability Committee had a long discussion about this. We also considered our current resources and the best approach we could take as a community to make a meaningful impact on the various challenges we encounter. As a result, we came up with Humans of Downtown Victoria.

Humans of Downtown Victoria

The Urban Livability Committee is launching a new Humans of Downtown photo and story project featuring Downtown residents, local business owners and other community members.

The "Humans of Downtown" hopes that the project fosters community connections, particularly for unhoused individuals. By sharing Downtown residents' diverse stories and experiences, including those facing housing challenges, we can create a platform that promotes understanding, empathy, and solidarity among all community members.

This project provides an opportunity to highlight the resilience and strength of those who may often go unnoticed. By featuring the voices of unhoused individuals alongside local business owners and other residents, we foster a sense of inclusivity and demonstrate that everyone has a unique story to share. These stories can help humanize the experiences of those without stable housing, breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions that may exist within the community.

Moreover, we can create spaces for dialogue and support by bringing people together—whether through photography, storytelling, or community events. This initiative encourages interactions that may not typically occur, helping to bridge gaps between different community members. Participating in this project allows residents to engage with one another, leading to stronger relationships and a more cohesive neighbourhood.

In conclusion, the "Humans of Downtown" project is a vital opportunity for our community to unite and celebrate our shared humanity. By embracing all individuals' stories, particularly those often marginalized, we can cultivate a more inclusive and compassionate environment. Through dialogue and engagement, we have the power to dismantle barriers, foster understanding, and build lasting connections. We encourage everyone in the Downtown community to participate, share their stories, and help us create a vibrant tapestry that reflects our neighbourhood's true diversity and resilience. Together, we can make Downtown a place where every voice is heard and valued.

Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee

Updates

Yates Street Community Garden

Waitlist Count: 273

Yates Street Community Garden Prepares for a Thriving 2025 Growing

The Yates Street Community Garden (YSCG) is getting ready for the 2025 growing season, and it's an exciting time for the Downtown Victoria Community and other communities in Greater Victoria that have a plot at YSCG! The registration period for the upcoming gardening season will take place from February to early March, giving everyone a chance to secure their plots and get involved in this wonderful community initiative.

Community gardens play a vital role in enhancing food security, especially in light of the recent food price report, which anticipates a notable increase in food prices in 2025. According to the most recent Canada's Food Price Report 2025, food prices may increase by as much as 5%. As grocery costs rise, community gardens allow local residents to grow their own fresh produce, reducing dependence on store-bought food. This helps alleviate the financial burden on families, promotes sustainable practices and encourages healthier eating.

With the growing awareness of food security issues, initiatives like the Yates Street Community Garden are more important than ever. They foster a sense of community, support biodiversity, and contribute to local resilience against food supply challenges.

For more information about the 2025 Canada Food Price Report, click [here](#).

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS COMMITTEE JANUARY 2025 REPORT

A friendly hand extended to new downtown neighbours at Xexe Pahlatsis Lelum, Sacred Cradle House.



Greeting cards by local artist Rachel Monckton

Gift totes were created for the residents of new downtown housing - Xexe Pahlatsis Lelum, Sacred Cradle House. Contributors include the DRA, Soap for Hope, London Drugs, Janet Strauss, Rachel Monckton, Dawn Moorhead, Laurel Collins' office and Grace Lore's office. The totes were delivered January 21, 2025



Gift Tote and Contents

Coolkit donation of \$2,500 deposited with DRA for “Electrify Victoria!” projects

Retrofitting downtown apartment and strata buildings to lower municipal green house gas emissions



Application submitted to CRD's Rethink Waste Grant Program

The Coolkit serve/share project will launch February 1, 2025 at the DRA's free breakfast on Pandora.

Zero Waste Emporium has agreed to partner on this initiative by setting aside a space for the project inventory and permitting use of their dishwasher to wash and sanitize the place settings.

A grant has been applied for to cover the costs of shelving and reimburse ZWE for increased utilities and dish detergent for one year.

Coolkit funds purchased the storage crates and hand cart.



Communications and Membership Committee Report – January 2025

Update on Committee activities since the December 2024 report:

- **Newsletter / Other Communications to Members:**
 - The December newsletter was issued on December 17. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 40.7% of subscribers.
 - The January newsletter was issued on January 9. Statistics from Mail Chimp indicate that it was opened by 37.1% of subscribers.
 - The most viewed items were the Land Use Development Tracker, the article on the new Neighbourhood Community Profile, and the article on Community Emergency Preparedness.
- **Web site**
 - We continue to add posts to the News page and add events to the Events page of our website.
 - 216 site sessions for December (down 25% from the previous month). The most viewed posts were the Sidewalk Talks page, and the Queer Open Stage post.
- **Social Media**
 - The number of posts over the past month, and the current number of followers are:
 - Facebook - 2 posts, 1072 followers
 - Instagram - 0 posts, 1176 followers
- **Other**
 - 4 new members since the last report. As a note, we send welcome letters to all new members inviting them to become involved with DRA activities, and, where applicable, to become an ambassador for posting notices of our events in the buildings where they live.
 - 21 new newsletter subscribers since the last report

Submitted by

Doug Boyd

Chair, Communications and Membership Committee

Downtown Residents Associate Land Use Committee (DRA LUC)

Monthly Board Report: January 2025

Development Tracker: <https://tender.victoria.ca/WebApps/OurCity/Prospero/Search.aspx>

Upcoming CALUCs				
Project	Description	Developer	Location	Time
1520 Blanshard st	Density: 7.8 Height: 30 storey	Reliance	Hotel Rialto	Feb 10, 6pm-8pm
Letters being drafted				
Project	Description	Developer	Date meeting held	Target for Letter
Duck building	Add two storeys to hotel	Chard	October 9 th	Jan 31
Liquor Licence Application Under Review				
Property/Business	Description/Ask	Preliminary feedback		Target for Letter
Axe and Grind 910 Government	Add liquor licence to axe throwing (60 to 110 load)			Jan 31
Downbeat event centre 1325 Government	210 persons 9am to 2am Monday to Sunday			Jan 31

Miscellaneous:

- (Jeremy) Book Club for March 2025 Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time

Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator Report - January 2025

Updates since last board meeting:

Queer Open Stage - The December edition took place on December 18th and was attended by approximately 30 people. The January edition took place on January 15th and was attended by approximately 20 people.

Emergency Preparedness - The pilot with two Downtown stratas (Regents Park and Yates on Yates/Vivid at the Yates) continues to go well, with participating residents working together in 7 different neighbour action groups to carry out projects that will increase resilience in their strata communities. The formal workshops have come to a close, but we will be hosting one additional coaching session for each strata in the coming weeks and will continue to be available to support residents. We intend to apply for a My Great Neighbourhood Grant from the City in support of offering the program to additional buildings later this year.

OUR DWTN Ideas Fund - We were recently notified that we will be receiving funding for our Open Air Film Nights proposal and will be hosting the first event before the end of April.

Upcoming events:

Queer Open Stage - The February event is happening on Wednesday, February 19th.