

DRA Board Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2024

Present: Sandra Severs (President), Jeremy Zhao (Vice President), Michael Demakiling, Dawn Moorhead, Jordan Royer, Mano Majumdar, Neil McKinnon, Sherry Lee (Secretary)

DRA Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator: James Davis

5:30 p.m. Call to Order, Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Approval of Agenda

5:35 p.m. Councillor Update:

Update was deferred due to Councillor Dave Thompson attending UBCM.

5:40 p.m. Executive Report: Sandra (report attached)

Discussion deferred to end of meeting.

5:40 p.m. Standing Committee Reports – Q and A

- **Urban Livability Committee (ULC) and Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee (UEC):** Michael/Colby (report attached)
 - DRA is continuing effort to seek city approval of a second community garden space.
 - **ACTION:** James will reach out to Mayor & Council inviting them to Park(ing) Day event which highlights the alternate uses of land dedicated to car parks
- **Climate Solutions Committee:** Dawn (Report attached)
 - Committee is providing feedback to city's request for input on 5 areas of city climate plan. Dawn, Neil, Mano and Sandra will provide input for the report.
- **Communications and Membership Committee (CMC):** Doug (no report)
- **Governance Committee:** Jeremy (no meeting until November; no report)
- **Land Use Committee (LUC):** Ian/Jordan (no report)
 - New development application to add 2 stories to the new Chard hotel downtown (Broad street). **CALUC is Oct 9.**
 - **ACTION:** information regarding CALUC meeting to be included in Community Engagement newsletter.
- **Community Engagement Committee (CEC):** James (report attached)

6:25 p.m. External Meeting Reports – Q and A

- **Victoria Community Association Network (VCAN):** Sandra/Dawn (no report)
- **900 Pandora Good Neighbour Group:** Sandra (verbal report)
- **Greater Victoria Harbour Authority Community Liaison Committee:** Doug (no report)

6:30 p.m. Other Business

- Co-hosting provincial election forum: Fairfield Gonzales Neighbourhood Association has invited NA's to share leadership of an election forum. Will likely need volunteers.
 - **Decision:** Board agreed to express interest in participating but is cautious about capacity to engage in extensive planning.
- VDRA letter of support for Downtown Lawn Bowling Club's New Horizons grant to help with upgrading their facility washrooms has been sent.
- OCP report-back: discussion on how report-back should take place.
 - **Decision:** In-person report-back to take place on Sept 24 at theDock.
- Wiser Report: discussion on how report should be presented ahead of staff presentation to council
 - **Decision:** Sandra will set up informal meetings with members of Council to have discussion of content.
- Quarterly meeting with Mayor Marianne Alto is scheduled for October 15.
 - **ACTION:** board members to propose agenda items.
 - Community Safety and Wellbeing plan will go before Council in November – possible topic of conversation

7:30 p.m. Meeting concludes

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at 5:30pm

Executive Committee Report – September 2024

OCP report-back - We have tentatively booked the Dock for Tuesday, September 24th to run a report-back session for members of the neighbourhood who provided their thoughts about the OCP review last winter. The agenda and content of the evening has not been set. **DECISION REQUIRED.**

Wiser Report - Sandra received a note from Karen Hoes, Director of Planning, that the report produced for the DRA by Wiser Projects has been circulated among staff. Public consultation on the OCP Review has now concluded. A report to Council is not expected until later in the Fall. A conversation on the timing and process for the circulation of the DRA report to members of Council is needed. **DECISION REQUIRED.**

900 Block of Pandora Design Charrette – Sandra participated in a design charrette run by Cascadia Architects on behalf of the Conservatory of Music and Our Place Society. The meeting which had service providers, Island Health, members of Council and city staff talking about the future of the 900 block once the goal of making housing available to folk currently living there have been reached. We talked about the connections between the 900 block and the green spaces on the 1000 and 1100 blocks and how there needs to be a smooth transition of use between the spaces.

Community Safety and Wellbeing Leaders Advisory Committee – Work is in its final stages for the development of a report which will go to Council toward the end of October. The committee is meeting every two weeks in September and October, reviewing the data gathered from the on-line general survey, in person consultations and targeted system change survey and working on recommendations that will go to Council for consideration and implementation.

Lawn Bowling Club- A letter on behalf of the DRA was sent to the Lawn Bowling Club supporting their New Horizons Grant application for money to upgrade their clubhouse washrooms. We have sent previous letters supporting other applications for facilities upgrades.

All Candidates Meeting – We have received a request from Vanya McDonell, Co-Executive Director of Fairfield Gonzales Community Association, about whether we are interested in being part of organizing an All Candidates Meeting prior to the provincial election. **DECISION REQUIRED.**

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

Victoria Downtown Residents Association

September 17, 2024

Urban Livability Committee

Introduction

In August, the Urban Livability Committee collaborated with the Greater Victoria Placemaking Network and the Invisible Water/Ways project to plan and take part in Park(ing) Day. The event involved animating seven parking spaces on Broad Street. More details can be found below:

Updates

Park(ing) Day - Friday, September 20, 2024, from 12 PM - 5 PM

Park(ing) Day is a global, public, participatory project in which people worldwide temporarily repurpose curbside parking spaces into public parks and social spaces. The event aims to advocate for safer, greener, and more equitable streets for people.

Key Points:

- Global Event: Park(ing) Day is celebrated worldwide, with participants transforming parking spaces into temporary public parks.
- Origins: It started as a guerrilla art installation in a single metered parking space in downtown San Francisco in 2005.
- Annual Celebration: The event takes place annually, typically on the third Friday in September.
- Advocacy: The event aims to demonstrate and advocate for safer, greener, and more playful streets for people.

Park(ing) Day is part of the broader movement of tactical urbanism, which uses quick, short-term interventions to pilot longer-term strategic changes in the built environment.

There is widespread support for creating more green space and promoting natural restoration in downtown areas. We hope participating in Park(ing) Day will promote conversation about establishing a new community garden, seed libraries, and more parks and focusing on Johnson Creek.

Park(ing) Day is important because it promotes the temporary transformation of parking spaces into public parks and social spaces, advocating for safer, greener, and more playful streets for people. It also aligns with the broader movement of tactical urbanism, which aims

to make quick, short-term changes in the built environment to pilot longer-term strategic changes. Additionally, it supports the creation of more green spaces and initiatives for natural restoration in downtown areas, contributing to a more sustainable and enjoyable urban environment.

Urban Ecology and Agriculture Committee

Introduction

The Yates Street Community Garden has been a hub of activity throughout the summer, hosting numerous work parties, potlucks, and workshops. As we transition into fall, it's important to reflect on the value of these events in fostering a sense of community and enhancing our connection to nature. The upcoming fall gatherings will not only contribute to the maintenance of the garden but also provide an opportunity for neighbours to come together, share skills, and strengthen our bonds.

Updates

Yates Street Community Garden

Waitlist Count: 253

Work parties and Potlucks

The garden has been bustling with activity in August, and the Yates Street Community Garden hosted work parties and potlucks throughout August. It's been a wonderful way for everyone to come together, share delicious food, and work on the garden. As we transition into fall, it's essential to continue these gatherings as they play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community and maintaining the garden. Fall work parties and potlucks not only help with the upkeep of the garden but also provide an opportunity for neighbors to connect, exchange ideas, and strengthen our bonds.

Workshops

Community Garden Workshops such as the Calendula Workshop, Tatakizome Workshops, and watercolouring play a crucial role in the life of the Community Garden. These workshops in August offer valuable opportunities for garden members to learn new skills, deepen their connection to nature, and foster a sense of creativity. The Calendula Workshop, for instance, educates participants on the many uses of this versatile plant, from its medicinal properties to its role in natural dyes. Tatakizome Workshops provide a hands-on experience in traditional Japanese dyeing techniques, while watercolouring sessions allow members to express their artistic talents inspired by the garden's beauty. These workshops not only enrich our knowledge but also contribute to the vibrant and diverse makeup of our downtown community.

Climate Solutions Committee September 2024

The committee was off to a rousing start with the inaugural August meeting. Three projects were discussed:

1 **White roofs** Project lead: Manosij Majumdar

Mano has extensively researched the benefits, ramifications, and practicalities of this project. A downtown building housing a non-profit organization has been identified as a likely starting point for this project and conversations are ongoing.

White roofs, often called “cool roofs”, reflect sunlight back into space rather than absorbing it, lowering building temperatures and reducing the need for energy-intensive air conditioning. Cool roofs don’t just reduce indoor temperatures and save people money on their electricity bills. When deployed across a neighborhood, they can also reduce the ambient temperature on the street, combatting the heat island effect that plagues concrete-filled cities and causes heat-related illness and deaths.

Toronto has incentivized cool roofs for 15 years. <https://www.toronto.ca/services-payments/water-environment/environmental-grants-incentives/green-your-roof/>

Many U.S. cities have quietly adopted “cool roof” requirements into their building codes. Los Angeles, for example, adopted a cool roof mandate on all new buildings and some roof replacements in 2014. New York City started requiring reflective coatings on new low-slope roofs in 2009, began including roof replacements in 2012, and strengthened the reflectivity requirement in 2019. A city-sponsored program that launched in 2009 painted 10 million square feet of roofs white across New York City over the course of a decade. Austin, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Houston, Miami, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., have incorporated cool roofs into their building codes as well. (<https://grist.org/buildings/scientists-look-for-the-holy-grail-the-whitest-paint-ever/>)

Other benefits of cool roofs include reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and extending the lifespan of rooftops and HVAC equipment.

Source: New York City Panel on Climate Change 2015 Report, Chapter 6: Indicators and Monitoring.



2. Boulevard Climate Gardens Project lead: Jet Black



Jet has also extensively researched the requirements for her project. In addition to producing a replicable climate boulevard garden template, it is hoped the first boulevard will be on John son Street, by the new firehall. Who knows better about climate change in British Columbia than firefighters?

Planting perennial blooms in the public right-of-way, known as boulevard gardening, can have positive impacts on the environment, our communities, and on our physical and mental health. The average urban boulevard, consisting of sod and volunteer weed species, offers none of these benefits.



Sod removal from the boulevard right of way strip allows for more space for planting native species.

Benefits of perennial boulevard gardening:

- Perennial planting sequesters carbon. In fact, 100 square feet (about the area of an apartment bedroom) of perennial planting will sequester 355KG of CO₂ in 50 years.
- Perennial plants attract pollinator species such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.
- Deep-rooted perennial plants reduce erosion and stormwater runoff. (helping to delay negative impacts from our changing climate?)
- Perennial plants beautify a street with flowering plants and grasses that have multi-season interest.
- Boulevard gardening offers opportunities to connect with neighbours and passersby as you tend to your garden in the streetscape.
- Native species provide habitat for migratory birds and other urban wildlife.
- Gardening can improve physical and psychological wellbeing.
- Plants taller than sod provide a visual screen and reduce noise pollution.

This is a three part project to create: 1) a list of downtown contacts to further enable community engagement and participation; 2) data collection of facts related to existing building electrification; and 3) a published, interactive map showing downtown progress in building electrification which translates to greenhouse gas emission reductions.



1. Over the summer, the DRA, via Coolkit, sponsored a My Great Neighbourhood Grant for the city's first climate cohort of the Local Champions Program. The cohort, of which DRA board member Mano was one, focussed on retrofits and a public information booth at Moss Street Market. The grant sponsorship is wrapping up this month.
2. Coolkit had its own booth at the Moss Street Market over the month of August. This "tabling" was to encourage building retrofit discussion and action. The Climate Catastrophe Escape Room was utilized as a conversation starter and proof that this subject doesn't need to be boring, it can be interesting and fun. According to our debrief, this was a excellent event. The Escape Room is always available for use by DRA board members. The experience takes about 15 minutes and is suitable for just about any indoor or outdoor venue.
3. At the Moss Street Market on the last weekend in August, members spoke with shoppers and collected signatures on a petition opposing the removal of the three trees in Centennial Square. The impetus for this action was the shrinking mature urban forest canopy downtown, including recent and/or pending tree removal on Yates, Cook and Meares in Harris Green.

Neighbourhood Engagement Coordinator Report - July 2024

Updates since last board meeting:

Music by the Shore - Concert two in our series took place in Reeson Park on July 17th and was attended by approximately 150 people.

Naloxone Trainings - Colby led trainings on July 24th at the Dock and on September 16th at the Yates Street Community Garden, which were attended by 11 and 24 people respectively.

Music on the Green - The final concert of the summer happened on Pandora Green on August 8th. There were about 125 people in attendance.

Mural Celebration - Approximately 50 people gathered at the Yates Street Community Garden on September 10th to celebrate the completion of the mural designed and painted by Jesse Campbell.

Queer Open Stage - The monthly event returned on September 18th after a summer break with a total of 35 attendees, including 10 who performed. The open stage continues on the third Wednesday of each month.

Emergency Preparedness - James and Furkan met with staff from Building Resilient Neighbourhoods and Doug Clarke from the City of Victoria's Emergency Management division. We plan to test out a version of the Connect & Prepare program specially tailored for the Downtown neighbourhood with 2 or 3 residential buildings this fall.