



ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

VICTORIA WEST COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



VICWEST COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION

Introduction

In preparation for the Association's Annual General Meeting (AGM), held this year in February, board members and Committee Chairs of the VWCA reflect on the past year's activities with the purpose of summarizing our challenges, achievements, and successes. The VWCA Annual Report stands as a record of our collective efforts.

The 2019-20 Annual Report documents actions that the VWCA board of directors has taken to further our organizational goals and to deliver on our vision of making Vic West a strong, vibrant, and resilient community. We recognize that our community is undergoing change and that adapting to new change is also about capturing opportunities.

We pride ourselves on results. At the same time, we remain committed to maintaining momentum, bridging differences, and being responsive to the diverse needs of those who choose to live, work, and play in Vic West. Community stewardship is about encouraging participation, strengthening capacity, and reinforcing our collective identity.

On behalf of everyone who has helped us achieve success: our committed volunteers, passionate project leads, and dedicated program and administrative staff, we invite you to review this report and celebrate the accomplishments made over the past year.

Respectfully,

VWCA Board of Directors

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About the Victoria West Community Association

The VWCA is a non-profit community group that promotes the interests of the residents of the Victoria West neighbourhood. This is accomplished mainly through the many hours of volunteer work by its membership, the community and funding support from the City of Victoria. Events like Vic West Fest, the annual corn roast and monthly meetings to discuss concerns of residents are just a few examples of community building.

Our Vision

Victoria West community is a diverse, healthy and vital place to live, work and play.

Our Mission

The Victoria West Community Association is a not for profit organization whose mission is to engage residents in community stewardship, to impact decisions that affect the community, to raise awareness, to foster a sense of spirit and pride and to encourage participation in community issues, solutions, projects and events.

Victoria West Community Centre is the heart of the neighbourhood, offering diverse and relevant activities for all. It is a place where neighbours meet, learn and volunteer. The Centre provides physical, intellectual, social and cultural services and programs that contribute to individual and community health and development.

Presidents Report & Nomination Committee Report

Dear Neighbours, Friends, and Colleagues,

This has been a year of unprecedented challenges that have tested our endurance. We grieve together over the isolation, the financial hardship, the missing celebrations and rituals that marked our pre-pandemic lives, and the fear we sometimes feel for our loved ones and for the uncertainties of the future. We have remained resilient. From the joyful clanging of pots and pans every evening in the spring to show our gratitude to healthcare and other essential workers and crocheting hearts to hang from trees or crafting hearts from paper to hang in our windows, to establishing online networks of support to help our struggling neighbour, our community has responded with compassion and has found new ways to come together, while staying apart. We will get through this together.

I would like to thank the board of directors for their perseverance and hard work this year as we adapted to the challenges of the year. Your collegiality and your commitment to volunteerism and community is a constant source of inspiration and strength for me and your other colleagues.

- **Andrew Gow, Laura Floyd, Supriya Crocker, Sean Dance, John Mullane, and Nihad McBride** have retired from the board. You provided invaluable service to our organization. Thank you for your gift of time, talent, and expertise
- In 2020, the board nominated **Patti Parkhouse, Laura Tate, and Kent Verge** as directors. The nominating committee is putting their names forward for election by the general membership to the 2021 board of directors.
- In addition, the nominating committee is putting forward **Amanda Allan** for re-election to the board of directors.
- **Dar Purewall, Mike Medland, Véronique Plante**, and I will continue to serve out our current elected terms.
- My thanks to fellow **nomination committee** members **Amanda Allan** and **Julie Bull**.

I wish to extend my profound thanks and deep respect to our executive director, **Johanne Thompson** who has piloted our ship through a series of ongoing storms that might have represented existential challenges to our organization without the benefit of her inspiring and truly indefatigable leadership and the team of dedicated and staff she has assembled around her. I would also like to extend my thanks to **Julie Bull**, our volunteer coordinator, for her ongoing encouragement, creativity, and support, to **Asha Willis** and **Beth Hume** and their childcare teams for keeping our children happy and safe, and to **Chris Bryson** for his ability to pivot centre programming several times during this roller coaster of a year.

Be well, take care, be safe.

Justine Semmens | President and Chair, Executive Committee



Vice President Report

As I head into my sixth year of service as a member of the VWCA Board of Directors and my third year as a member of the Executive committee, I continue to be mindful of the dedication, professionalism, and commitment demonstrated by my fellow board members.

For me, society governance is a critical function where our success is defined as much by the reconciliation of diverse viewpoints as by shared perspectives. I find myself extremely proud to participate on a motivated team that welcomes diversity and draws on unique skill sets and experience to further the interests of our broader community. While our success stems from collective efforts, the ingredients that feed into that success stems from the passion of those driving the results.

I wish to acknowledge the many contributions and accomplishments achieved by my respected colleagues over the past year – in particular those of **Andrew Gow, Nihad McBride, and Laura Floyd**, without whom our achievements would not have been possible. With deep regard, thank you all so very much! Thank you also to our tireless President, **Justine Semmens**, for her strong leadership, skillful facilitation, and gift of patience in keeping us on track through challenging times! In reflecting on the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the impacts this relentless virus has imposed on our community. I wish to recognize the agility, creativity, and innovation of our Centre staff. In establishing priorities, and re-directing critical resources, our Executive Director, **Johanne Thompson** and her team have been extremely responsive in meeting Provincial Health Officer protocol and supporting program delivery to our community during trying times. At the same time, and under the leadership of Johanne, our Centre operations team continues to advance our advocacy on community interests by playing an instrumental role in supporting a response to the region-wide childcare crisis. Thank you, Johanne, for pulling out all stops, burning the midnight oil, and working with the City of Victoria and School District 61 to make our organization a key player in meeting the ever-growing demand for childcare in the region.

The past year has also enhanced our organization's visibility in other areas. The board has endorsed several City of Victoria My Great Neighborhood grant applications, furthering our advocacy role on meaningful initiatives that include placemaking, food security, and urban forest renewal. These initiatives would not otherwise be possible without the efforts of our volunteer coordinator, **Julie Bull, and Patti Parkhouse** – VWFSC Committee Chair. I am encouraged by how much has been accomplished – thank you both!

Finally, I wish to thank the VWCA as a whole for the honour of allowing me to support an organization that does remarkable work. The past year has demonstrated how community associations matter and that, together, we can accomplish great things!

Sincerely,

Dar Purewall | Vice-President

Secretary Report

With respect to VWCA current membership status, I am pleased to report the following:

	2018-2019 Total	2019-2020 Total	Increase
Regular Membership	315	331	16
Business & Organizations	13	13	0
Friends of VWCA	18	19	1

Respectfully submitted,

Dar Purewall | Secretary

Treasurer & Finance Committee Report

Members: **Mike Medland (Chair), James Aitken, Kamel Evci, Leila Salarpour Goodarzi, Justine Semmens**

The Finance Committee during 2019-20, had a pandemic reduced year holding 4 meetings. The committee's primary mandate is to assist the Treasurer and the board regarding the financial management of the association. To that end the committee regularly assists the board with the following activities:

- The review and recommendation of the content of the annual financial statements.
- The review and recommendation of approval of the monthly financial statements.
- The review and regular update, where needed, of the association financial policies
- The review and to make recommendations on the association annual budget.
- The committee also has one in-active projects to assist the board:
 - The development of an annual calendar for the Treasurer and the financial operation of the association,

2020-21 the Finance Committee will return to more regular activities to assist in the management of the financial affairs of the VWCA.

Mike Medland | Treasurer

Executive Director Report

The Victoria West Community Association operates the Victoria West Community Centre and offers a variety of programs and services designed to meet the diverse needs of the Community. Victoria West Community Association provides recreation and leisure programs, youth outreach programming, special events, and facility rentals. VWCA also operates childcare services, including preschool, daycare, and out-of-school care.

The past year presented our organization with significant challenges and opportunities.

The COVID-19 Pandemic in March 2020 sidelined our operations and meant the cancellation of all Centre programs and rentals and the layoff of four of our Centre Operations Assistant staff.

Childcare operations continued to operate as an essential service from March-September 2020 thanks to Emergency Grants through Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) provided by the Province of British Columbia. This funding source allowed for the retention of staff and childcare spaces for families temporarily withdrawing from care.

We successfully obtained a Canada Summer Jobs grant in the amount of \$3735.00, which provided a wage subsidy for VWCA Summer Camp staff. Our internal Summer Camp program supported 106 school-age children in 2020.

VWCA also continued to work towards the opening of two new (3-5 years) daycare centres on Sherk Street. These centres are made possible by an \$850,000 grant from the Provincial Childcare New Spaces Fund and will open in the Spring of 2021, providing 32 new daycare spaces for the Victoria West community.

VWCA staff also provided support for the 2020 Get Growing Program operated by the City of Victoria. This program allowed for the distribution of approximately 5000 seedlings to 300 members of the community, enabling individuals the opportunity to grow their own food during this time of economic uncertainty.

Victoria West Community Association is proud to be able to provide support and to serve the community during this challenging time. I would especially like to thank the VWCA Board of Directors and Staff for their steadfast dedication and resilience.

I would also like to extend a Special Thank you to:

- City of Victoria
- Victoria West Community Association Staff
- Victoria West Community Association Board of Directors
- Program providers and instructors
- VWCA Volunteers

Johanne Thompson | Executive Director

Food Security Collective Committee Report

The Vic West Food Security Collective was first created as an action project from the 2003 Victoria West Community Association Vision Project. Over the past 17 years, the FSC has worked on various projects and events to strengthen production, consumption and access to food that is safe, nutritious, affordable, locally produced and environmentally sustainable. One of the main objectives of the FSC is providing opportunities for Vic West to build a resilient neighbourhood.

Our guiding principle is...cultivating community by growing and sharing food!

In September 2020 the FSC transitioned to a committee to align with the VWCA governance model. The new committee has seven members; new members are always welcome. If you can assist in any of the projects, events or have ideas on how we can grow a sustainable Vic West food system, please contact Patti foodsecurity@victoriawest.ca

A big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who gave their time to help with the projects.

63 volunteers, 29 work parties for a total of 386 hours.

The volunteer work would not have happened without the leadership of **Louise**, the Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator – Great job! The FSC would also like to thank the VWCA staff for their support throughout 2020.

This past year was one of change. No volunteer events were scheduled in March as events were cancelled. COVID best practices from the City and province were implemented starting in April to ensure social distancing and facilitate post-event tracking if required. COVID forced an adaptation in our volunteer coordination process. The regular open public invitation to help in the gardens transitioned to formal volunteer registration and an online scheduling system to build/schedule one team of five for each weekly event and two teams of five for the weekend events. This new system limited the potential number of volunteers and the opportunity for casual drop-ins resulting in less work achieved. However, the new team structure provided an environment for a deeper connection between volunteers and greater familiarity with the garden maintenance tasks, therefore reducing the need to supervise the volunteers. Also, a broader volunteer outreach resulted in more volunteers from outside the community. People were thankful for the opportunity to help.

Grants

The City of Victoria's Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator \$10000 grant supports the VWCA part-time staff position for coordinating volunteers to assist with maintenance of Banfield Park Community Orchard, Banfield Commons and VW Tea Garden, and doing community outreach to support Vic West in growing their own food. In April we said good-bye to **Solara Goldwynn** as the Coordinator and welcomed **Louise Kelaher** in May. These Vic West public food assets would not be possible without the support of the grant – thank you City of Victoria!

A City of Victoria \$500 Micro Grant was received to fund the purchase of hospitality equipment to support volunteers.

New projects/events

Free Seeds in Free Library Boxes

The FSC partnered with Victoria Seed Share to distribute 500 packages of free vegetable seeds in Vic West's eight Free Little Library boxes. COVID created a big demand for vegetable seeds for

many people growing their own food. Seed supplies from retail stores and online suppliers were scarce so the FSC jumped into action to support Vic West food growers. A special THANK YOU to **Kristy** for her help with this project.

Free Leaf Mulch Distribution

The FSC partnered with the City of Victoria to provide free mulch for pickup in Banfield Park on May 10 & 11 and October 15. Thank you to **Kristy, Tara, Lorna** and **Amy** for helping with the May distribution, Louise for the October distribution and to the City of Victoria for supplying the mulch. Mulch will be available again in 2021. Follow VWCA and FSC on Facebook to receive news of the mulch distribution days.

Children's Garden in the Orchard

A new garden bed was planted in Banfield Park Orchard to support VWCA child care programs. VWCA staff work hard to enrich the lives of the children in an outdoor environment to create new land stewards and food growers. Thank you to **Agnes Sillem** for her leadership and food growing passion, and Hatchet and Seed for their gift of garden edging.

Ongoing projects/events

Banfield Park Community Orchard and Banfield Commons

The Orchard was maintained through weekly volunteer days and two-weekend work parties led by **Louise** from May to October. See attached Community Garden Volunteer Report for full details.

People braved the winter conditions (cold temperatures with snow and MUD on the ground but no rain) to toast the trees at the 2020 Wassail on January 18th. The Wassail is a popular event with approximately 100 people attending each year. The apple cider served is harvested from Vic West trees.

Rayn or Shine Community Garden (behind Spiral Cafe)

The garden continues to provide growing space for 9 gardeners and a community harvest garden along the fence – everyone loves the blackberries! The garden was closed to visitors due to COVID restrictions. The garden waitlist is at 15, and that is sure to grow.

Evans Street Orchard

Special thanks to **Stewart, Jack & Lori** for the continued support in the orchard. The Orchard contains apple, plum, fig and pear trees along with raspberries, strawberries, black currants and hazelnut shrubs.

Vic West Corn Roast

The 2020 Corn Roast was cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Vic West Tea Garden – at the Community Centre

The Tea Garden includes herbs and fruit open for public harvest for making tea. The strawberry patch was replenished thanks to a generous donation of 30 plants from **Pat McGuire**...Thank you, Pat!

Dormant projects/events – Require a Project Lead to grow again!

Vic West Urban Farmers (VWUF)

VWUF is a network of people who support each other in growing food by sharing knowledge, seeds, and plants. Activities include Growing meetings/workshops and seed/plant exchange.

Tour de Coop

The annual Tour de Coop showcasing Vic West chicken coops was not held in 2020.

Patti Parkhouse | Chair, Vic West Food Security Committee

vicwestfoodsecurity.org | www.facebook.com/vwfsc/ | <https://www.instagram.com/vicwestfoodgardens/>

Community Garden Coordinator Report

2020 was a busy year. We hosted two Facebook live events in April & August, in line with the City's "Get Growing" program. These events garnered 760 and 1200 views, respectively and are still available as a resource online, giving us a reach far greater than a one-off seminar for ten people.

Thirty-six individuals over 29 work parties donated 386 hours to the maintenance and improvement of the commons. Fifteen individuals volunteered more than two times, and we now have a core Monday Maintenance crew of 5-8 people who attended at least once a month.

A new list of currently 86 individuals is looking forward to volunteering with us in future. Due to PHO, we were unable to host groups larger than five or support community events as is in the past. However, hopefully, we will be able to reintroduce these in 2021.

In the gardens this year, we accomplished:

- The rejuvenation of the Tea garden which had become overrun with lemon balm.
- Sheet mulching of commons to continue the improvement of the soil and suppress weeds.
- Each week along with the maintenance work, Patti provided some educational aspects pertaining to the garden, for example, tree pruning, fence weaving, harvesting fennel seed and pollen and transplanting.

Louise Kelaher | Community Garden Coordinator



Harbour & Parks Committee Report

The Victoria West Community Association (VWCA) Harbour Committee (HC) represents the constituents of Victoria West on harbour related and waterfront issues and initiatives. The HC fosters and supports Harbour related initiatives and services that enhance our community and add to the quality of life. The HC hears community concerns, raises awareness, and encourages and supports the community in taking ownership of our waterfront community. A key objective is to ensure the community makes the best use of the harbour to foster the economic and environmental well-being of the community.

The HC participates in the Gorge Waterway Initiative. The GWI is a collaborative, community-driven group of organizations concerned with protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural features of the Gorge Waterway, Portage Inlet, and the surrounding watersheds.

The entire Victoria Harbour was declared a Migratory Bird Sanctuary in 1923. The Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary are preparing with others to celebrate the 100 year anniversary in 2023.

The Victoria Harbour Airport is the only defined water airport in Canada. While traffic volume is down this year, there is an ongoing concern among residents about the safety, health and noise hazards of floatplanes taking off and landing within close proximity to residential condo buildings. Harbour Air has committed to moving to all-electric planes which if followed through has the potential to reduce some of the current hazards.

Progress has been made by the City and the Federal Government in cleaning up the derelict and live-in boats on the Gorge. The focus of City Staff on the pandemic has delayed work to complete the removal of the few remaining boats.

The Federal Government has completed the remediation of the parking area at Laurel Point, now named Peter Pollen Park, and has handed the land over to the City to complete the park and its amenities. Again, this work has been postponed due to the pandemic.

There have been meetings with the City Parks Department on the plans for the completion of the park space at the Victoria West side of the Johnson Street Bridge.

The Community Association has been working with City Staff on plans for Banfield Park.

The harbour continues to evolve from an industrial only port to be a resource to be shared by the whole community. Transport Canada, NAV Canada, and the Coast Guard are government agencies that have a role in managing our harbour. While these organizations are receptive to community engagement, the pandemic has limited engagement. It is important that our Vic West Community, which shares a large part of the harbour shoreline, have a voice on harbour planning.

Harbour Committee Members: **John Mullane** (Chair), **Robert Drew**, and **Shellie Gudgeon**.

Respectfully submitted,

John Mullane | Chair, Harbour Committee

Land Use Committee

The Vic West Land Use Committee (LUC) is composed of individuals who are passionate about the built environment and spaces of the community that all residents and citizens can live in, play in and enjoy. As a committee, we are vested and interested in the spaces that we encounter around and near us, whether it is our neighbour's property, workspace, or stores and businesses we frequent. The LUC exists to assist with land use concerns, concepts and possibilities. We strive to bring the community together and to hear citizens' feedback regarding neighbourhood building projects, zoning, and permit applications.

As a committee, we look forward to speaking and assisting with residents and/or business owners regarding any Land-Use concerns, issues or scenarios in the community. As building by-laws, codes, and zoning needs change and progress; we also exist as a resource. The LUC is approachable regarding any Land-Use project, and we are happy to bring the community and input/feedback to the forefront. It is and has been a pleasure to be serving as the Vic-West Land-Use Committee chair.

Respectfully submitted,

Sean Dance | Chair, Land Use Committee

Projects & Events Committee Report

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Vic West Projects and Events Committee focused its collective energy on several projects rather than events in 2020. The committee organized a community survey and took initial steps in forming the Amenity Fund Project, in which allocated funds will be used on an amenity project in Vic West. The committee also brainstormed recognition ideas to celebrate the Vic West Community Association's 90th anniversary in the fall. This ultimately led to a project consisting of several elements, including posting historic photographs of Vic West online as well as posting interviews with community members reflecting on their experiences in Vic West and with the VWCA. We would like to thank the City of Victoria for their contributions to this project, as well as **Simon Trudeau** and **Justine Semmens** for their fantastic work on this project.

Thank you to **Paul Roots** and **Kris Olson** for their efforts this year on the committee and to Volunteer Coordinator **Julie Bull** for her tireless work with the Committee and the Association! We look forward to working on more projects in the next year.

Sincerely,

Veronique Plante | Chair, Projects & Events Committee



Transportation Committee Report

The transportation committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month. With its proximity to downtown and its beautiful trail infrastructure, the Victoria West neighbourhood offers exciting opportunities and challenges in the area of transportation. Thanks to **Adrian Mohareb** for his ongoing work on this file.

Although meetings and interactions with both the community and the city have slowed down somewhat this past year due to Covid, there have been significant developments in the Vic West neighbourhood's transportation infrastructure over the past year.

The city has been receptive to safety concerns and has made some significant upgrades, including installing lights at three crosswalks on Craigflower Road, increasing signage for the school zone in all directions around Vic West elementary (a priority item for the Transportation Committee last year), and introducing a protected pedestrian area on Langford St in the block closest to Skinner St.

If you are interested in issues relating to transportation in our beautiful neighbourhood, the Transportation Committee is actively recruiting members. Please email transportation@victoriawest.ca for a link to join us on the second Tuesday of March for our next meeting!

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Allan | Chair, Transportation Committee