

Montreal Street Community Garden Chair's Annual Report 2020-2021

To: James Bay Neighbourhood Association

As Co-Chairs of the Montreal Street Community Garden, we are pleased to present the annual report for 2020-2021.

As a sub-committee of the JBNA, our governance consists of a board of directors who are responsible for MSCG management, maintenance and membership. We also rely on volunteers to maintain the border and pollinator gardens.

We have 54 plots and our annual membership is \$50.00. At the 2021 AGM, modifications were made to Articles 1.9 and 1.10 of the Bylaws, removing the limit of 50 applicants on the waitlist and removing the ability of applicants to postpone accepting an available plot while still remaining on the waitlist. There are currently 89 applicants on the waitlist, which means it takes approximately 8-9 years before a plot becomes available. Last year we had 6 new members join. We currently receive on average 2-3 applicants per month.

Many of you will have visited the garden which is the oldest community garden in Victoria having been established in 1975. The land is owned by the City of Victoria and our lease is renewed every 5 years. We work closely with City Parks staff and in particular their Food Systems Coordinator. We also liaise with the JBNA and we are very fortunate in having Kathryn Pankowski as a gardening resource. Thank you, Kathryn, and also Wayne Shillington for all the help and advice you have given us over the past year.

In 2020-21 we focused on some key priorities: Improving our communications, building community relationships and improving the pathways.

We started a James Bay Community Garden Newsletter, *The Real Dirt*, which is published a few times a year. The Newsletter is published by our Communications officer and includes articles from a variety of members of the garden and notices of things happening in the garden. It is distributed by email to the garden membership.

Some of the pathways in the garden were of uneven widths, not level, and not easily accessible by people with mobility issues. During the 2020 summer, the Maintenance committee began the work of adjusting plot boundaries and installing cedar planks to mark plot boundaries, ensuring that pathways are sufficiently wide. This work will be completed in the coming months. Leaf mulch provided by the city was recently used to fill in some of the larger gaps in

the pathways. Next, we plan to apply a layer of wood chips to all pathways using material provided at no cost from the city; a load of wood chips has been tentatively ordered for mid-May. Following that, we would like to apply a layer of compacted crushed granite fines or other compacted crushed materials to all pathways, as recommended by our contact at the city. This last step would make our pathways more fully accessible and safe for all users. Completion of this step would be contingent on receiving funding from the city under its My Great Neighbourhood Grant program. The goal would be to complete this step during 2021 as well.

We have a very healthy bank balance which has been built up over the years and our major expenses in 2020 were the cedar boards purchased for the pathway alignment project, irrigation repairs and maintenance, a new picnic table and a new solar light for the garden shed. We have excellent financial oversight managed by our Treasurer.

Our garden members continue to enjoy planting a wide variety of plants, saving and sharing seeds, and sharing gardening knowledge with each other. Some of our members also contributed some of their saved seeds to the Wee Free Seed Box at the corner of Menzies and Michigan. In 2020, the garden received free seedlings from the City in the spring and the winter through the *Get Growing, Victoria!* program. Gardeners expressed thanks to the City for these plants.

Many residents and visitors express how beautiful our garden is and we know how important this oasis is to our neighbourhood. We want to continue to maintain this special neighbourhood asset. While the current COVID protocols request that only members of the garden enter the garden itself, many local residents continue to enjoy the wonderful flowers in our boarder gardens along Montreal Street Alley, Dobinson Street, and Montreal Street.

Brian Mason and Laura Hawkes
MSCG Co-Chairs

18 April 2021