

Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of December 3, 2020

To:Committee of the WholeDate:November 26, 2020From:Thomas Soulliere, Director, Parks, Recreation and Facilities

Subject: Report Back: Get Growing, Victoria!

RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive the following report for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, Council approved a new urban agriculture initiative to address food security challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In response staff utilized existing growing space and resources to launch the *Get Growing, Victoria!* vegetable distribution project. Staff worked with the Urban Food Table to develop a distribution model that focused on supporting communities facing barriers to food access.

In this first year, the City distributed over 80,000 seedlings to thousands of people through collaboration with over 40 community organizations that directly support communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

At the completion of this year's program, staff conducted an evaluation and impact review. An estimated 107,345 lbs of fresh, healthy produce were grown, and, in total, 5,000 households directly benefited from the initiative. Of the people that received seedlings, 78% were first time or novice growers. In addition, the City provided approximately 200 cubic yards of excess compost and leaf mulch to residential home gardeners. The initiative was positively received by the community and has been one of the most successful urban agriculture projects delivered by the City.

The Get Growing, Victoria! initiative has provided significant value to citizens, at a very challenging time and it is planned to continue in 2021. Based on feedback from stakeholders, staff intend to collaborate with community partners to complement next year's program with additional benefits, such as onsite workshops and educational programming opportunities.

The financial and human resource implications for this initiative have been included in the Draft 2021 Financial Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

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Nav Sidhu Assistant Director Parks and Recreation

Thomas Soulliere Director Parks, Recreation and Facilities

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date: November 26, 2020