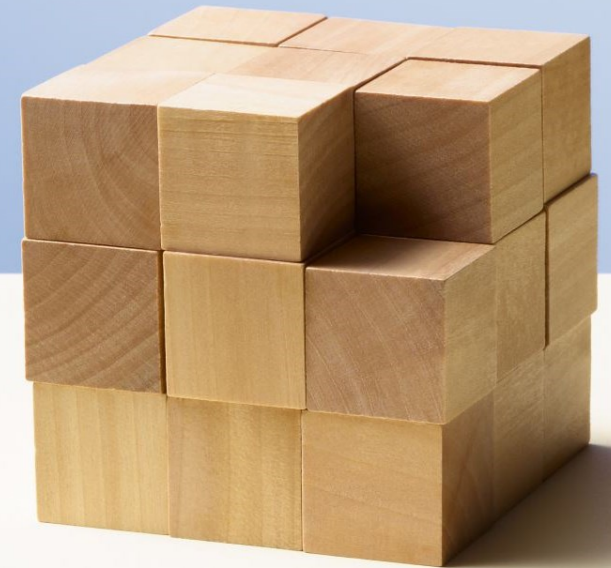


# **SSOCC Community Engagement Report**

**December 12, 2021, 1-3 P.M. (CST)**

**Riverview Community Centre**



# THE TOWNHALL

**Sixteen** individuals including the board members of SSOCC and other members of the community, including neighbours and volunteers, gathered at the Riverview Community Centre on December 12, 2021. The board posed **four questions** to participants and discussed **key opportunities and challenges** for SSOCC to move forward.

# Q1. WHAT WENT WELL LAST YEAR?

Overall, participants felt that the 2021 season was a success. **Volunteer participation** was up and consistent, **relationships** were built with neighbours and operational **efficiencies** were improved. SSOCC met its **food security mandate**.

- SSOCC saw a consistent core volunteer base in the 2021 season; volunteers expressed they were learning valuable skillsets from participating in the organization
- SSOCC met our goal of mitigating food security by donating 1/3 of our harvest to external organizations
- Operations were made more efficient through the implementation of new infrastructure
- We successfully fundraised monies to put on a few virtual events that engaged the community
- The Lord Roberts Garden has built relationships with surrounding neighbours; this has decreased vandalism and created a culture of community

## Q2. WHAT CHANGES AND OR IMPROVEMENTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE TO OUR OPERATIONS?

Participants felt **channels of communication** to the public could be improved. Channels include on-site signage, email, social media, and through WhatsApp for operational/delegation purposes. The improvement of communication was thought to be a solution for volunteer confusion, community engagement and driving interest in the organization.

- Signage and the regions of the garden need to be better articulated to volunteers; replacing the fading maps in the garden kiosks was presented as a possible solution
- The Riverview Garden has an opportunity to build relationships with the surrounding neighbours and Riverview community
- Some participants felt that email and social media communications about garden activities could be clearer and/or prominent
- Find ways to articulate and delegate roles and tasks on volunteer nights better; some participants felt that having an orientation manual developed for new volunteers was a good solution
- A participant recommended including further communications through the website or email to provide guidance on how to use produce harvested from the garden

# Q3. WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN TO GET MORE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY INVOLVED?

Participants had several ideas on how to engage more with the community; ideas emphasized the **power of personal connections** and highlighted the **range of skills** SSOCC needs to thrive. Participants felt like SSOCC was doing incredible things, but there were **barriers to access** to become a part of the organization. Participants recognized **alternative ways** they could help and wanted to know how they could do this. There was significant positive feedback on **enhancing beautification** of the space through art projects and installations, which could foster **collaboration with community organizations and local businesses**. Overall, participants felt like SSOCC had a lot to offer and that if we **highlighted the ranges of experiences** volunteers could gain, it would lead to more interest and active participation.

- More prominent outreach to internal membership, other garden societies, and the public
- Tap into the power of personal connections, a key driver in retaining SSOCC's volunteer base
- Provide clearer instructions on how to join the coop and become a volunteer; orientation for new volunteers; 'social time' before each volunteer shift
- Increased transparency, from board to volunteers and community, on activities
- Increase accessibility to organization by offering a range of activities for individuals to contribute to
- Enhance beautification of the space
- More organized volunteer manual that outlines expectations, benefits and information about the space and organization

# Q4. WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO HAPPEN FOR YOU TO SEE THIS COOPERATIVE AS A SUCCESS?

Participants prioritized activities that ensured SSOCC's **longevity**. Internally, SSOCC board members need a refresh and to **revisit the constitution and by-laws**. It is critical that SSOCC **maintains community interest and support**, and continually works to **build connections** with local organizations and businesses. **Financial security** was noted as critical; SSOCC needs to **diversify funding channels** and establish more **secure, consistent avenues for funding** to plan longer-term initiatives, like hiring a **paid Head Steward**. Participants wanted to see **SSOCC grow**. Including maintenance of existing infrastructure, while working to expand on what is already there.

- Strategizing short- and long-term goals; clarity on what the SSOCC board describes as 'success'
- Increased community support and engagement; to have a solid, and growing, volunteer base
- Find more avenues for consistent financial security (i.e., events, fundraisers, sponsors, selling at farmer's markets, grants, etc.)
- Guaranteed continued maintenance in garden spaces; work to increase amenities available (i.e., washrooms, seating, etc.)
- Sustainable succession planning; hire a paid Head Steward

## Q5. OTHER COMMENTS

Individuals included final commentary on ways that SSOCC could **increase communications, financial security, and build relationships.**

- Engaging high-profile individuals to garner support
- Access to government funding
- Connections with Winnipeg Food Council
- Engaging in the provincial water strategy
- Creation of a regular SSOCC newsletter

See full report for more details.