

# *Growing with the City*

An Ecosystem of Initiatives for Allan Gardens

November 2023

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

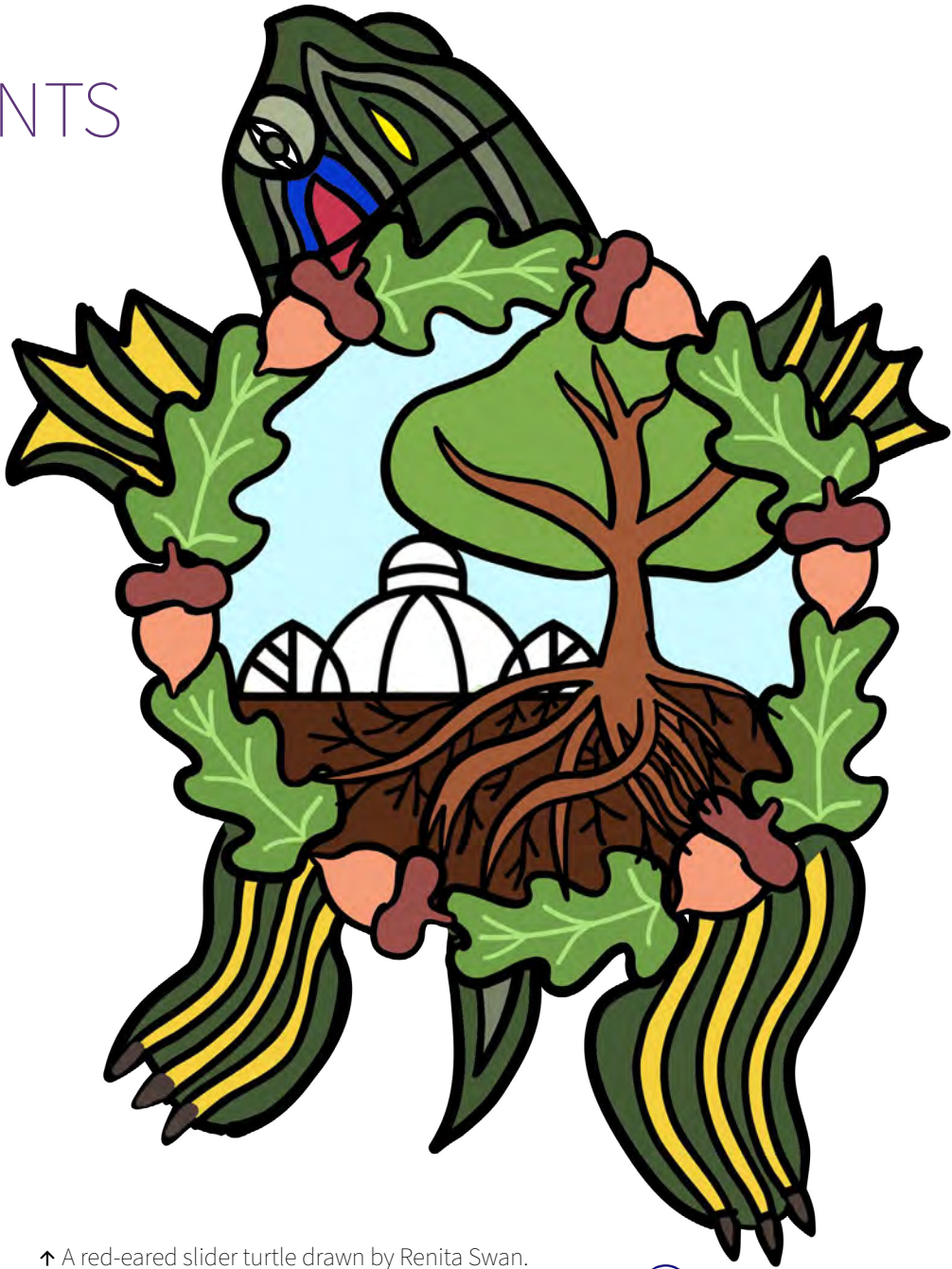
Allan Gardens is located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as well as the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Huron-Wendat peoples. Today, Allan Gardens is a sacred gathering place for Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island.

We, the Friends of Allan Gardens, are grateful to work on this land. As we reflect on our role in the park, we are guided by the Dish with One Spoon treaty that asks us to not take more than our share, and commit to sharing resources with Indigenous organizations and peoples with treaty, traditional, and present-day ties to the park.

Friends of Allan Gardens recognizes the donation by George Allan to the citizens of Toronto of the five acres that became Allan Gardens, an early example of Canadian Park philanthropy.

We recognize the strong support given to the Friends of Allan Gardens by Toronto Metropolitan University and its Centre for Social Innovation.

This report is dedicated to the many volunteers who have given their time to aid Allan Gardens, to the municipal employees who work in Allan Gardens, and to all of the Torontonians whose heart belongs to Allan Gardens.



↑ A red-eared slider turtle drawn by Renita Swan. Renita served as a Community Facilitator with the Friends of Allan Gardens in 2022 and 2023.

Renita Swan

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**Cover Images**  
Front: Dragonfruit, or Queen-of-the-Night, *Selenicereus undatus*. Photographed at Allan Gardens in June 2023.  
Back: "Horticultural Grounds" by Octavius Thompson, excerpted from *Toronto in the Camera*, (1868).



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- Dana Alexandrescu
- Laura Dean
- Ionela Florescu
- Adele Freeman
- Robert McKaye
- Brendan Stewart

## PRESENT & PAST FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS STAFF

- Derek Barber
- Matt Canaran
- Sarah Halonen
- Charles Leonard
- Sarah Munro
- Tiana Osborne
- Renita Swan
- Diana Teal

## CITY OF TORONTO PARKS, FORESTRY, & RECREATION LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Doug Bennet
- Tara Coley
- Melissa Ense
- Suzanne Hajdu
- John Keen
- Michelle Reid
- Heidi Weidelich

## THIS DOCUMENT BENEFITED FROM CONTRIBUTIONS BY:

- ERA Architects Staff: Stuart Chan, Rui Felix, Julie Fish, Thea Freer, Daniel Rotsztain, Steven Shuttle, Alessandro Tersigni
- Mark Bonham, Veritas Foundation
- Graham Boyce, Governance Advisor
- Rina Fraticelli and Melanie Panitch, Office of Social Innovation, Toronto Metropolitan University
- Peter Hayblom and Stacey Zonneveld, thinc design
- Seana Irvine, Community Advisor
- Rev. Jim Keenan, St. Luke's United Church
- Derek Kwan, Common Boots Theatre
- Alun Lloyd, BA Consulting
- Vaughn Miller, BNKC Architecture + Urban Design
- Raylah Moonias, Two-spirit Anishinaabe Artist
- Jon Neuert, BSN Architects
- Michael Ormston-Holloway, The Planning Partnership
- Donna Powless, Cayuga, Six Nations of the Grand River
- David Reycraft, Dixon Hall
- John Shisko, Photographer
- Brent Wagler, Photographer





## GROWING WITH THE CITY

### 1.0 About the Friends of Allan Gardens

The Friends of Allan Gardens is a volunteer-based, registered charitable organization that is working to imagine and lead the revitalization of Allan Gardens: a significant, complex, and dynamic cultural landscape in downtown Toronto. Friends of Allan Gardens' charitable status is based on the following purposes:

- To benefit the public by maintaining, developing and revitalizing Allan Gardens Park, a public amenity in the City of Toronto.
- To educate the public by conducting tours of the Allan Gardens Park, and providing public outreach activities, lectures, and workshops on topics such as horticulture, urban farming, and the natural environment of the Allan Gardens Park.

Since 2017, the Friends of Allan Gardens and Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation have been meeting collaboratively on a monthly basis, as a Leadership Team, to further the stewardship goals for Allan Gardens and they have developed Management and Fundraising agreements for the Children's Conservatory and Teaching Garden. During that time, Friends of Allan Gardens has nurtured many valuable working relationships with community, social service, Indigenous, neighbourhood and institutional organizations around the park.





## GROWING WITH THE CITY

### 1.1 The Purpose of Growing with the City

As a park that is now over one hundred and sixty years old, Allan Gardens faces many opportunities and challenges and must adapt to meet the needs of a 21st-century city. This document has been prepared as a foundation for focussed consultation and fundraising to seize those opportunities and address those challenges by developing and implementing the following projects:

#### CAPITAL INITIATIVES

- **Expand the historic greenhouse conservatory.** The proposed expansion has been called the Greenhouse Link Building as it would link together the currently disconnected ends of the greenhouses. This expansion would increase exhibition and programming space and unlock the 21st-century potential of horticulture in the city.
- **Reinvest in the walkways through Allan Gardens.** As we aim to improve the pedestrian experience of the park, we imagine a central path or allée linking Homewood and Pembroke streets, enlivening the Gardens and setting a standard for future path improvements.
- **Reinvest in the dog park.** Allan Gardens has the potential to have a fantastic dog off-leash area, but recently the quality of that space has been diminished. A better designed dog park is essential for the vibrancy of the community.

#### CULTURAL INITIATIVES

- **Enhance (horti)cultural programming.** The Friends of Allan Gardens offers many activities in the park including gardening, plant sales, family drop-in programs, and musical performances. We want to facilitate more of these types of activities and expand what we do to include things like food vending, horticulture shows, and more educational programs.
- **Support Indigenous cultural programming.** Allan Gardens is a sacred landscape for many Nations. In the spirit of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, we commit to work with local Indigenous organizations on a variety of projects related to language-keeping, place-keeping, and ceremony. This is just the start of exploring, developing, and building positive relationships.

#### ECOSYSTEM OF INITIATIVES

These projects, and others represent our Ecosystem of Initiatives for Allan Gardens. You may learn more about these projects on pages starting on page 40 of this document.

The Friends of Allan Gardens sees *Growing with the City* as a *living plan* that we will use for continued community engagement and fundraising. This is a much-loved park in downtown Toronto, and through this document we aim to identify and act on the common goals that bring out the best in Allan Gardens.

#### Refresh

In 2017, the Friends of Allan Gardens published *Refresh*, a document that asked what a 21st-century horticultural park in downtown Toronto should look and feel like. *Growing with the City* illustrates how we continue to work to address this question.





## GROWING WITH THE CITY

### 1.2 Fundraising

The projects and programs highlighted in *Growing with the City* require support and resources to come to fruition. Beginning in 2023, the Friends of Allan Gardens and Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation have entered into a Fundraising Agreement to secure large financial investments in the park.

Prior to our 2023 Fundraising Agreement, the Friends of Allan Gardens secured financial support for select repairs and capital projects from the City of Toronto as well as support from Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) and Toronto Arts Council for arts and cultural programming in the park. We have also acquired a range of local, provincial, and national-level grants for capital projects, programs, employment opportunities, and more. We would like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Parks People, Miziwe

Biik, and the Landscape Architecture Canada Foundation for their past and ongoing support. We would also like to thank individuals and families for their support of our programs. Grassroots support was especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when our ability to run programs at Allan Gardens was limited.

Going forward, the Friends of Allan Gardens is excited to be working with the Veritas Foundation who is guiding us in undertaking a large-scale fundraising campaign that will ensure a stable financial future for the Friends of Allan Gardens and for park development projects. We continue to engage with the City of Toronto, TMU, community partners, and individual donors to see these initiatives come to life.

Visit [friendsofallangardens.ca/donate](https://friendsofallangardens.ca/donate) to donate and learn more about our fundraising goals.

#### Grassroots Fundraising from the Local Community Data from the Veritas Foundation

##### Number of Donors to Friends of Allan Gardens:

2021 = 163 donors

2022 = 196 donors

representing a 20% increase

##### Value of Individual Donations:

2021 = \$16,920

2022 = \$19,290

representing a 14% increase

##### Average Donation Size:

2021 = \$104.00

2022 = \$100.00

##### Number of Quarterly Recurring Donors

2021 = 28 individuals

2022 = 35 individuals

representing a 25% increase

##### Value of Recurring Donations Received Each Quarter = \$1,935

##### Value of Recurring Donations Received Year-To-Date = \$7,970

##### Average Recurring Donation Size = \$60.00

→ These images highlight our grassroots fundraising and outreach efforts in the community.



<Multiple intersecting links>





## GROWING WITH THE CITY

### 1.3 Planning in Context

*Refresh* was grounded in several policy documents and studies related to Allan Gardens. In the years since *Refresh*'s publication in 2017, the City of Toronto and the Friends of Allan Gardens have commissioned a series of insightful reports regarding both Allan Gardens specifically and Toronto's parks generally. *Growing with the City* is guided and informed by the findings and recommendations of the following studies:

- The City of Toronto's current "Corporate Strategic Plan" which outlines a vision to guide the public service toward the City's overall long-term goals. It highlights the importance of creative and effective partnerships between the City and other organizations.
- In 2018, the landscape firm Public Work produced the reports "Downtown Parks and Public Realm Plan" and "Park Districts" as part of the TOCore series of documents. They address how public space can enhance quality of life in the urban core, citing the Friends of Allan Gardens' *Refresh* document and outlining the need to "prioritize flexible uses, recognizing that space constraints demand more out of each square metre of park to enhance its benefit to a growing and diverse population."
- Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation's 2019 "Parkland Strategy Report" outlines the importance of a healthy, accessible, and interconnected park system in the rapidly growing city. Key tools include developing partnerships with community stakeholders to address inequities by ensuring access to these spaces for all Torontonians.
- Two studies were commissioned by Parks, Forestry & Recreation in direct response to the *Refresh* document "Link Building" for the Greenhouses. Lord Consulting undertook a Feasibility Study on the idea of an expanded Greenhouse and in 2019, BSN Architects prepared a visualization study of this proposed "Link Building" Greenhouse, providing much-needed additional space for educational programming, exhibitions, demonstrations, and horticultural activities.
- In 2020, the students at TMU, through the Office for Social Innovation, conducted three detailed studies for Allan Gardens: Establishing Roots, Neighbourhood Profile, and a literature review.
- In 2021, MaRS Solutions Lab and the City of Toronto published "Collaborative Governance Report: A Framework 1.0 for Toronto Parks," which emphasizes the importance of "collaborative governance" partnerships such as the ongoing relationships between the City and groups like The Friends of Allan Gardens.
- Current concerns around homelessness and tents in the park are being addressed by a series Allan Gardens Community Partners Meetings in which the Friends of Allan Gardens are participating.

→ Policy documents and reports considered in the creation of this document, *Growing with the City*.



1986



1987



2001



2004



2006



2010



2014



2016



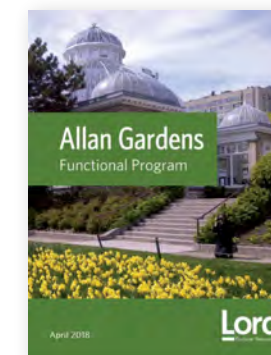
2017



2017



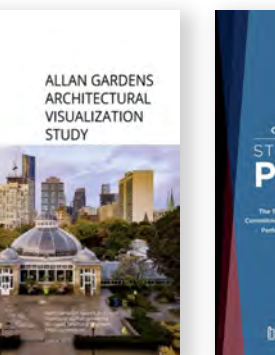
2018



2018



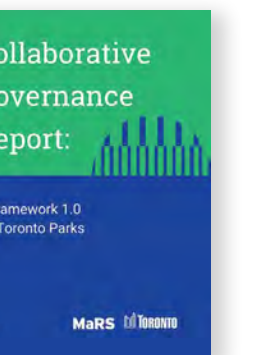
2019



2019



2019



2021





# 2

## ALLAN GARDEN CONTEXT

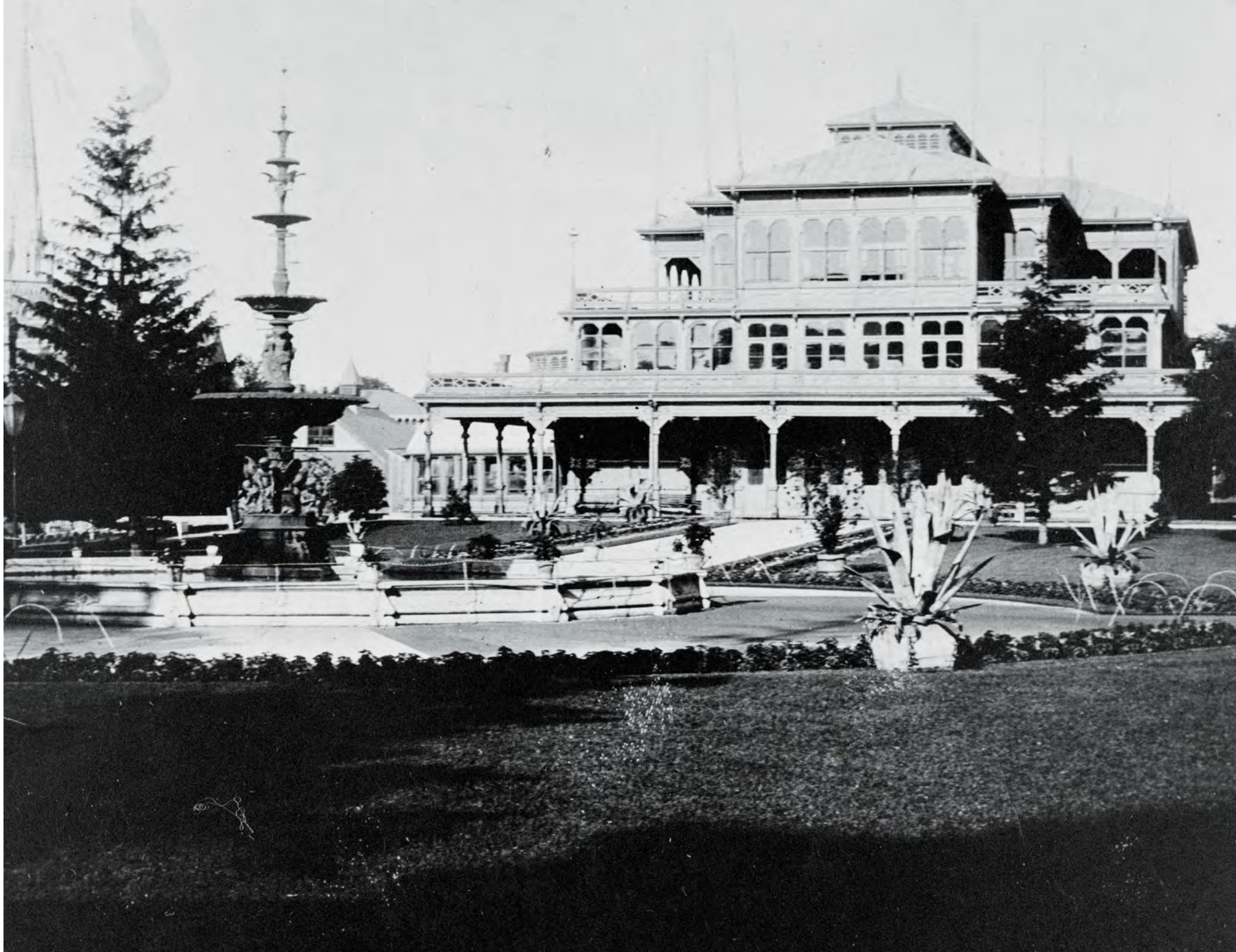
### 2.0 Allan Gardens History

Established in the 1860s as a Victorian horticultural garden, and conceived as the centrepiece of an upscale residential district, the park and surrounding neighbourhoods have evolved significantly over the past 160 years into a complex and layered cultural landscape.

Used by various communities who have strong and distinct connections to the park, and affected in an often acute way by larger socio-economic forces, Allan Gardens has remained a place of significant social and cultural history as the city has evolved and changed around it.



↑ The interior of Allan Gardens pavilion in 1890; courtesy Toronto Public Library  
→ Photographs of Allan Gardens’ original pavillion in the early 1900s; courtesy City of Toronto Archives.

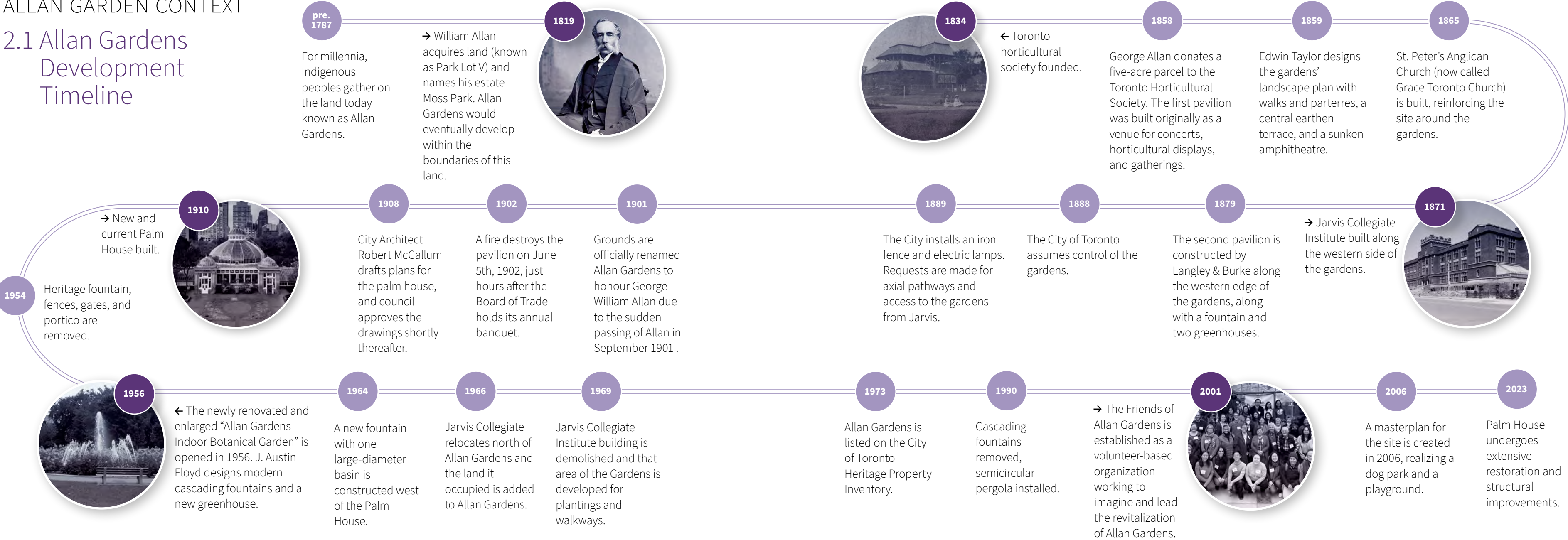






ALLAN GARDEN CONTEXT

2.1 Allan Gardens Development Timeline





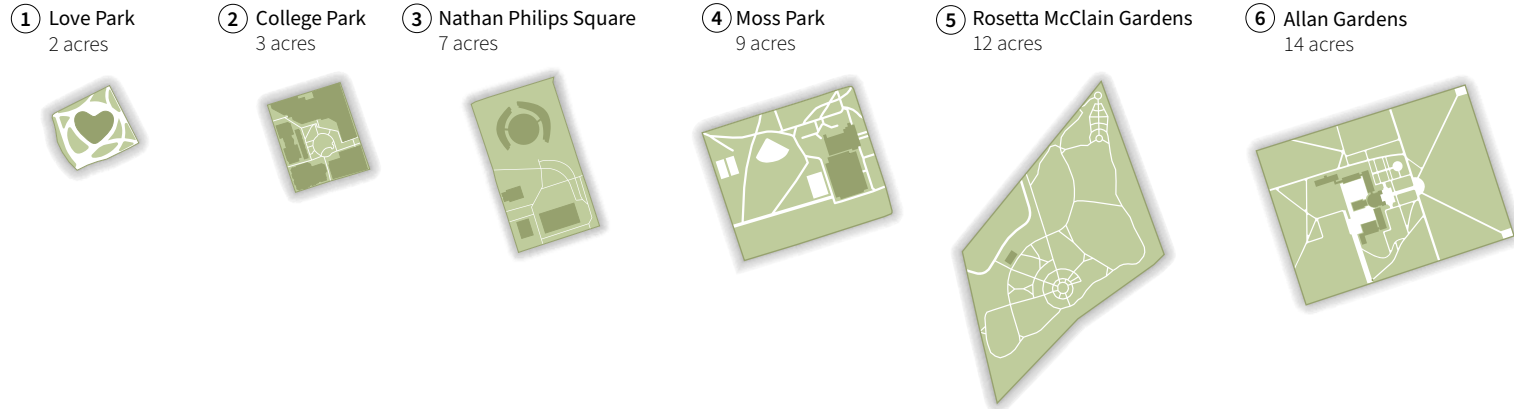


## ALLAN GARDEN CONTEXT

### 2.2 Allan Gardens Scale Comparison

Allan Gardens is an amazing public park and garden within the downtown core of Toronto. This scale comparison highlights the size of Allan Gardens next to other notable parks in Toronto. It demonstrates that Allan Gardens is one of a limited number of public green spaces within the dense fabric of Toronto. Given its location, Allan Gardens' size of about 13 acres is considerable. It is one of the only horticultural sites in downtown Toronto, allowing residents to enjoy botanical gardens steps from their home. This scale comparison illuminates the uniqueness and importance of Allan Gardens as a large green space within a dense urban core.

When Allan Gardens officially opened in 1860, the population of the entire city of Toronto was 40,000. Downtown Toronto has since experienced meteoric growth: as of 2016, "close to 250,000 people live Downtown, with more than 7,500 residents added annually over the past five years. By 2041, Downtown, in combination with its shoulder areas...has the potential to reach...as many as 475,000 residents." This presents both important opportunities and crucial social considerations for central public spaces like Allan Gardens. Given its static size, how do we prepare Allan Gardens to address the capacity issues of this much larger population with its complex needs?







## ALLAN GARDEN CONTEXT

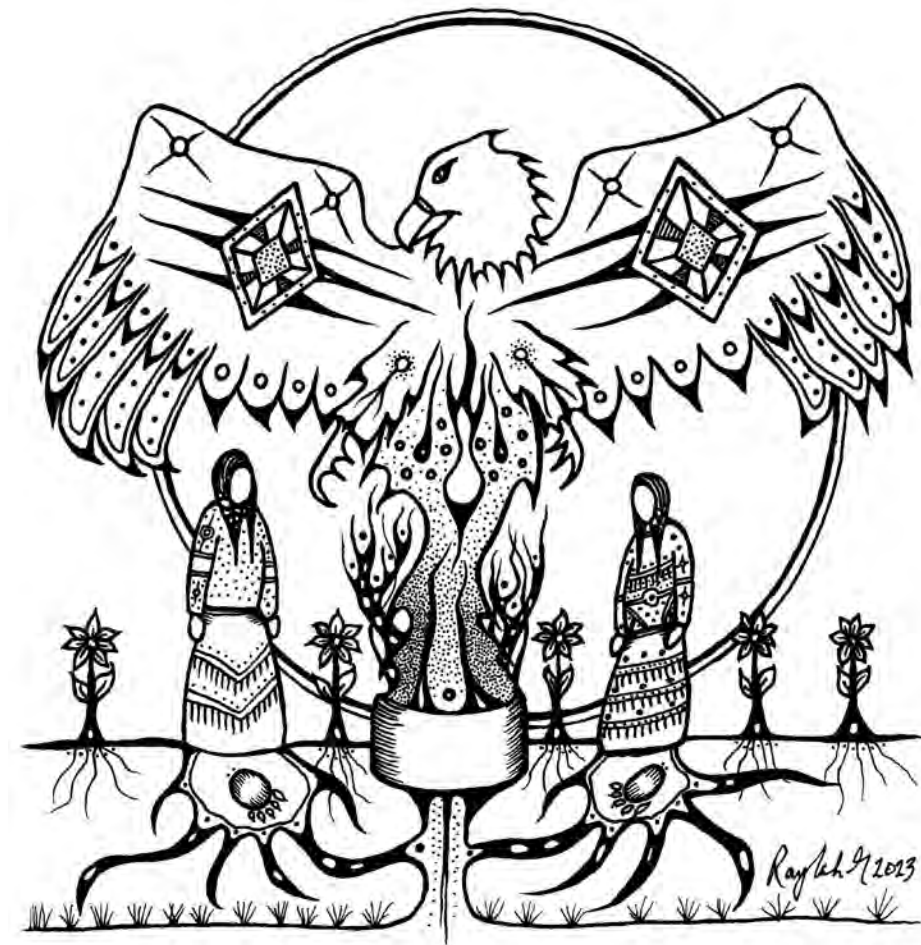
### 2.3 A Sacred Landscape

Allan Gardens is a sacred landscape. This park is a historical and contemporary gathering place for many Indigenous peoples and organizations.

In 2022, the City's Indigenous Affairs Office announced that Allan Gardens would be one of three designated sites for its new Sacred Fires program, where First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community members can host a sacred fire ceremony.

While the Sacred Fire program in Allan Gardens has since been paused, the presence of these fires in the park, developed through grassroots efforts into official policy, illustrated the significance of Allan Gardens to Indigenous communities and created a platform for cross-cultural dialogue about Indigenous placekeeping.

Since November 2022, the fire in Allan Gardens has been burning daily in remembrance of children taken away from their families during the Sixties and Millennium Scoops. The Fire was given the Anishinaabemowin name Mishkiki Abinoonjiinh Skode, which translates to Medicine Children's Fire.



↑ “Path” by Raylah Moonias, 2023. This piece represents the many directions and choices that we’re presented with in life. We feel pressured to choose one direction over another, but in reality, we’re supposed to go right through the centre.

→ In 2019, the Red Embers art project took over Allan Gardens with 13 banners created by 15 Indigenous artists. This art installation was a sacred memorial to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous women, girls, and trans and two spirited people.







# 2

## ALLAN GARDEN CONTEXT

### 2.4 Institutions, Community Organizations, and Health & Housing Services

Many community-based, faith-based, and institutional organizations are located within the park's immediate vicinity. These include resident ratepayers associations, business improvement areas, and faith communities such as Saint Luke's Church at the northeast corner of the park who, since the spring of 2020, have been convening community conversations about how to make Allan Gardens an inclusive public commons. These important dialogues have resulted in a number of new connections and relationships within the community.

Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU; formerly Ryerson University) is the largest major institutional neighbour of Allan Gardens. The Friends of Allan Gardens have been collaborating with TMU's Office of Social Innovation on programming in the park as well as a longer term partnership strategy. This longer term strategy would leverage University resources toward programs and initiatives in the park while engaging TMU faculty and students in community based service, research, and experiential learning.

The park has served a significant population of people experiencing homelessness, some of whom are Indigenous. During the pandemic, an encampment community established itself throughout the park, highlighting a number of layered socio-economic issues including the urgent housing affordability crisis in the city.

This issue of homelessness raises important and complex questions about access and use of public space by the most vulnerable in society during times of crisis, questions about police and community relations, and questions about reconciliation with Indigenous communities. The Friends of Allan Gardens is dedicated to working with City Council and local institutions and community organizations to help where possible and appropriate.

→ A map by Daniel Rotsztain (the Urban Geographer) of the condition of Allan Gardens in 2022, at the commencement of the *Growing with the City* report. Since 2020, the park has been the largest encampment for homeless people in the City of Toronto.







## THE FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS

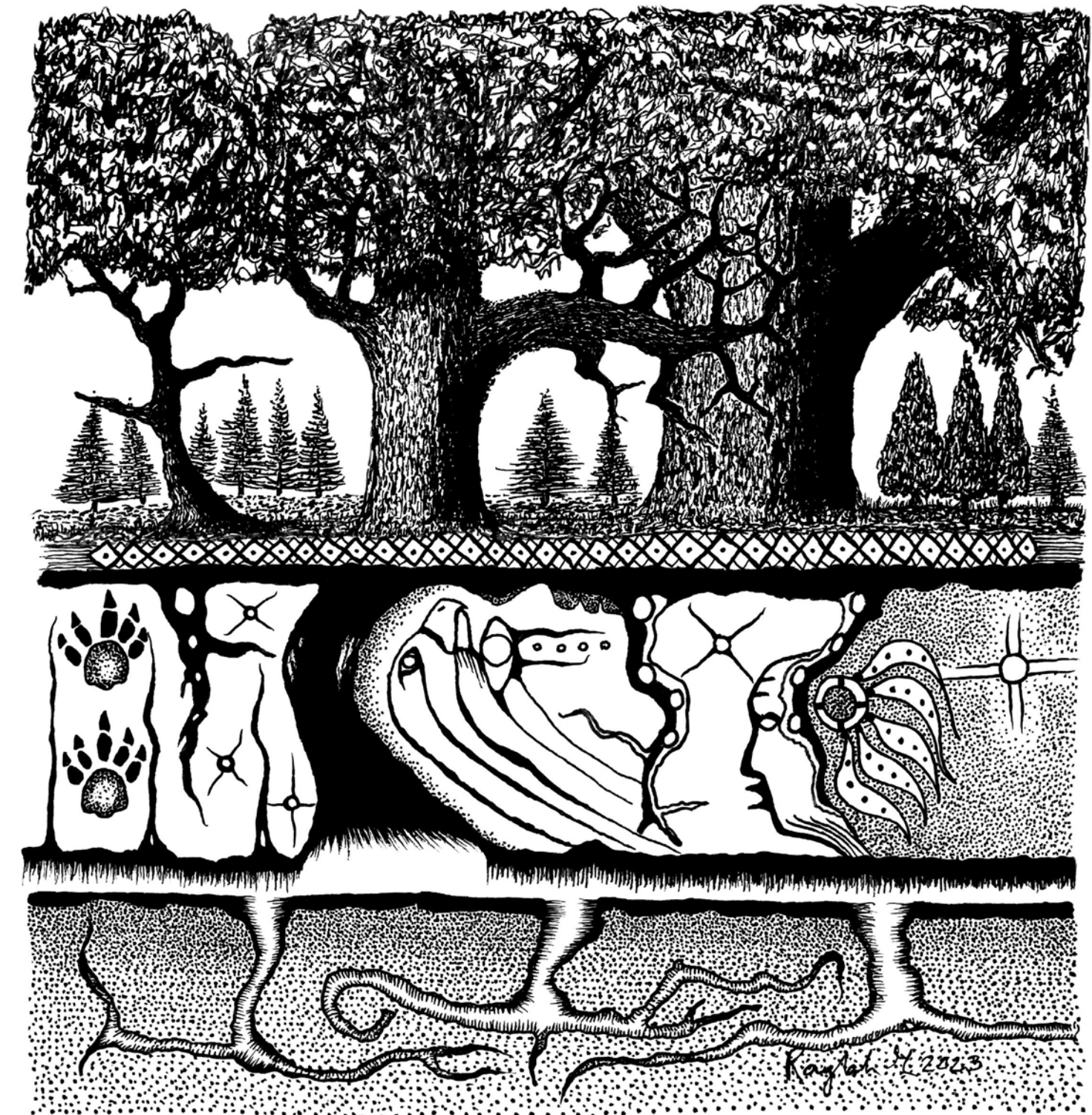
### 3.0 Stewards of the Park

The Friends of Allan Gardens think of our efforts to harmonize and coordinate the many interacting forces in the park as mirroring connections within a healthy, complex ecosystem. One ecological metaphor in particular brings this parallel to life for us: that of mycorrhizal fungal networks.

Over the past decade, forestry scientists like Suzanne Simard and Peter Wohlleben have identified the existence of a symbiotic relationship between some forest root systems and a root-like fungus called mycelium. By intertwining beneath the soil, the trees supply the fungus with food and in turn the fungus shares water and nutrients with the trees.

It takes time for a mycorrhizal network to develop, but when it does the relationships it fosters transform a group of trees into a forest, uniting single organisms into a larger, coordinated super-organism. We can think of these networks as a form of ecological infrastructure that protects and stewards the forest. In this way, the Friends of Allan Gardens envision ourselves playing a similar role: we connect those who use Allan Gardens with the diverse facets of the park and with each other to form a social and physical ecosystem that's more than the sum of its parts.

→ “Seek” by Raylah Moonias, 2023. This piece serves as a reminder that nourishment often comes from what's hidden or buried underneath.







# 3

## THE FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS

### 3.1 Community Partners

The Friends of Allan Gardens rely on the local neighbourhood knowledge and deep community connections of many respected collaborators, who help to inform park programs and initiatives for the benefit of the diverse publics they serve. Get to know Allan Gardens’ community partners:

#### Centre Francophone

The Centre Francophone du Grand Toronto (CFGT) is the gateway for Francophones who live in Toronto or who come to settle there. The Centre is a non-profit organization that offers a diverse range of community health, social, and housing services that improve the well-being of all Francophones in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The Friends of Allan Gardens support Centre Francophone by providing space for children’s horticultural programs in the Children’s Conservatory and Edible Garden.

#### Common Boots Theatre

Common Boots Theatre is an independent not-for-profit professional theatre company that has been creating timely and playful experiences for 40 years. Collaboration, play, comedy, and community are central to their approach and work, which ranges from traditional plays to outdoor winter spectacles. Common Boots partners with Friends of Allan Gardens to bring fun, accessible theatrical activities and events to a wide audience, and to activate Allan Gardens as a welcoming public space.

#### Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Services

Dixon Hall is a multi-service agency located in the heart of downtown Toronto. Dixon Hall serves more than 10,000 people annually, impacting the lives of the most vulnerable and the most at-risk members of our community. They began providing food and support services in 1929, and have continuously worked to build a city where everyone thrives. They have evolved as an organization to meet the needs and demands of the community through a wide range of integrated programs and services. The Friends of Allan Gardens frequently consult with Dixon Hall on the topics of safety and well-being of residents living in and around the park.

#### Garden District Residents Association

The Garden District Residents Association (GDRA) is an organization made up of volunteers who are dedicated to creating a safe and healthy environment in Toronto’s eastern downtown. The association’s name references the close proximity of two of Toronto’s oldest public parks, Allan Gardens and Moss Park.

The committees and initiatives of the Association are related to safety, urban planning and development, private and public housing, rooming houses, social services facilities, traffic regulations, and community recreation. The GDRA and the Friends of Allan Gardens have a shared belief that attractive green spaces, protected landmarks, safe children’s playgrounds, and well tended parks, streets, and sidewalks are a right.

#### Green Thumbs Growing Kids

Green Thumbs is a for-impact food and nature literacy program in three adjoining dense urban neighbourhoods in eastern downtown Toronto. They work with schools and community agencies including the Friends of Allan Gardens to foster urban agriculture, greenspace enjoyment, and physical and mental health benefits. The Friends of Allan Gardens support Green Thumbs by providing them with space to run their children and youth programs.

#### Miziwe Biik

Miziwe Biik is committed to assisting all persons of Aboriginal ancestry—First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit, and Métis—to attain a better quality of life. Miziwe Biik provides training and employment opportunities in a supportive environment in which people can affirm their Aboriginal identities and develop to their fullest potential. They believe that community needs and aspirations are paramount and are committed to strengthening the community through partnerships that promote equality and self-reliance. Miziwe Biik believes that it is through traditional and cultural values, practices, and resources that Aboriginal people will reclaim their destiny.

The Friends of Allan Gardens is grateful to Miziwe Biik for their support. Miziwe Biik currently funds a full-time Community Facilitator role at our organization. This allows us to create opportunities for young Indigenous people interested in a career in horticulture and community development as well as increase our capacity to more effectively serve this park.

#### Native Women’s Resource Centre

The Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto (NWRCT) provides a safe and welcoming environment for all Indigenous women and their children in the Greater Toronto Area. NWRCT aims to build self-sufficiency and develop collective capacity to make positive change. NWRCT’s second

home is Allan Gardens, and they run events and host ceremonies in the park. In 2019, NWRCT led a project in the park called Red Embers. The project was envisioned and designed by an all-women team of designers and Indigenous artists as a sacred memorial to missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and trans and two spirited people. In 2023, the Friends of Allan Gardens have committed volunteers to support NWRCT in the growing of sacred medicines in the park.

#### Saint Luke’s United Church

Saint Luke’s United Church, the House of Friendship, is an Affirming Ministry where all are welcome regardless of age, gender, sex, race, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, differing abilities, and economic circumstances. The Friends of Allan Gardens have partnered with Saint Luke’s to conduct engagement exercises to better understand the needs of the community. Like many neighbourhood partners, Saint Luke’s prioritizes the health, safety, and well-being of all who use the park.

#### Sherbourne Health

Sherbourne Health strives every day to meet the needs of the people and diverse communities they serve. Their extraordinary team of dedicated and passionate staff and volunteers—the driving force behind many of Sherbourne’s programs and services—ensures the health and wellness of every person who walks through their doors.

#### Toronto & York Region Métis Council

As part of the Métis Nation, the Toronto & York Region Métis Council (TYRMC) represents Métis people in Toronto and York Region. They aspire to provide cultural events and education and build healthy and reciprocal relationships in the spirit of reconciliation. The Friends of Allan Gardens is pleased to share space in the Edible Garden with the Toronto and York Region Métis Council that allows them to offer horticultural programming to their members.

#### Toronto Food Not Bombs

Toronto Food Not Bombs provides mutual aid survival programs assisting the houseless and hungry, and stands in opposition to the violence of war and poverty. On Sundays, Friends of Allan Gardens volunteers donate freshly harvested herbs and vegetables to Toronto Food Not Bombs who distribute the harvests in the park that evening.



## THE FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS

### 3.2 Collaborative Governance Partnership with Parks, Forestry and Recreation

In July 2021, the City of Toronto's Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PF&R) division commissioned a document called the Collaborative Governance Report. Written during the COVID-19 epidemic, this document outlined the clear need for creating collaborative alliances between PF&R and local community organizations. These alliances were deemed crucial in enabling parks to fulfil the broadest mandate for how parks could provide for their citizens. The report was subtitled "A Framework 1.0 for Toronto Parks" as it recognized much work still needed to be done. *Growing with the City* is a response to that call to action.

In 2022, Toronto City Council unanimously adopted a report from PF&R to enter into formal management and fundraising agreements with the Friends of Allan Gardens. These agreements, currently in progress, are the next step in building the framework as described in the Collaborative Governance Report.

In 2023, the Friends of Allan Gardens and the City of Toronto agreed to enter into a Fundraising Agreement to secure large financial investments in the park, such as the ones outlined in the 2017 *Refresh* document, and the ones outlined in the Ecosystem of Initiatives section of this document.

→ Friends of Allan Gardens trains docents to give tours and answer questions from the public in the City of Toronto's display houses. Our collaborative relationship with the City means a more positive experience for visitors to Allan Gardens. Pictured here are some of the trained docents at Allan Gardens.





## THE FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS

### 3.3 Partnership with Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU)

Toronto Metropolitan University's 2020-2030 Campus Plan reaffirms its commitment to education that powers progressive social transformation and its explicit commitment to the priority neighbourhoods that surround it. In particular, the Plan commits TMU administration to pilot new approaches to the kind of intractable urban issues present in cities worldwide.

Adjacent to TMU, Allan Gardens is a dynamic crossroads of old and new, planned and accidental, affluent and marginalized. In spite of the large greenspace and its iconic conservatory, this neighbourhood grapples with the tensions that increasingly threaten our social well-being and entrench our sense of separateness from each other.

The mission of TMU's Office of Social Innovation (OSI) is to address complex social issues and, in partnership with those most affected, explore new pathways forward. Our work in

Allan Gardens grows out of the OSI's commitment to support the vitality of the neighbourhoods surrounding the University and to help bridge the chasms of race, class, and culture that undermine the community's potential to flourish.

In the spring of 2020, OSI approached the Friends of Allan Gardens to learn more about our work and history, and especially about plans moving forward from *Refresh*. That was the beginning of an important partnership bringing together these two diverse but powerfully complementary organizations in the service of a common goal: to make Allan Gardens a healthier, more creative, and more inclusive point of convergence in the heart of the city. This partnership is grounded in a shared vision of Allan Gardens as a magnet for neighbourhood interaction on a day-to-day basis, creating a new and dynamic cultural, social, and intellectual pulse for the city.

→ TMU's People, Power & The Park display set up at Allan Gardens in September 2022. Image provided by TMU.







## THE FRIENDS OF ALLAN GARDENS

### 3.4 Commitment to Truth and Reconciliation

Friends of Allan Gardens is committed to working with the City and Indigenous communities to further the goals of Truth and Reconciliation.

#### Education, Employment, and Economic Reconciliation

In November 2022, the Friends of Allan Gardens, with the support of Miziwe Biik, hired Renita Swan as a Community Facilitator. This position was created to provide a young Indigenous person the opportunity to find meaningful work in horticulture and community development. In 2023, after Renita moved to British Columbia to be closer to her family, the Friends of Allan Gardens began employing Charles Leonard as its Community Facilitator. Later in 2023, Tiana Osborne joined the staff team as a communication specialist. Today, the small-but-mighty staff team at the Friends of Allan Gardens workforce is 50% Indigenous.

#### Culture, Ceremony, and Language Keeping

In addition to creating employment opportunities for Indigenous people, the Friends of Allan Gardens is committed to providing resources and space for cultural expression, language keeping, and ceremony. We assist and facilitate Indigenous organizations if they wish to host ceremonies in the Children’s Conservatory, Edible Garden, and other locations in the park. We are also working with Elders and Language Carriers on an Indigenous tree interpretation project that aims to share the names and stories of trees in multiple Indigenous languages.

#### Growing and Preparing Medicines

The Friends of Allan Gardens supports four Medicine Gardens in and around the park. We work with Native Women’s Resource Centre, Medicine Children’s Fire, Miziwe Biik, Toronto and York Region Métis Council, and their respective Elders and Knowledge Keepers to plant, manage, harvest and prepare these traditional medicines. We have much to learn about gardening with traditional medicines, and about the cultural practices related to these plants. The Friends of Allan Gardens staff and volunteer teams are both grateful and humbled to be gardening in partnership with so many Indigenous organizations in the community.

→ Two of our Indigenous staff, (left) Charles Leonard, Community Facilitator, and (right) Tiana Osborne, Communications Specialist.

