

Invisible – Visible

2022 Mt Pleasant Food Asset & Need Scan

February 2022



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This project was led by Union Gospel Mission and the Mount Pleasant Food Network (supported in part by the City of Vancouver), with the goal of assessing the current state of food access, needs, key stakeholders, and gaps, particularly considering significant changes made because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgments: Thank-you to these individuals and organizations for their input, commitment, and guidance: Broadway Youth Resource Centre, Food Stash Foundation, Coast Mental Health Clubhouse, Jewish Family Services, Mt Pleasant Community Center, Mt Pleasant Neighbourhood House, Salvation Army Boundless Vancouver, Spirit of Life Lutheran Church, St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, Tenth Church (Oasis Café), Tonari Gumi, Vancouver Chinese Pentecostal Church, 205 Kingsway (Supportive Housing), and Vancouver Fountain Alliance Church.

This work was done within the ancestral, traditional, and unceded homelands of the šxʷməθkʷəy̓əməʔt̓ təməxʷ (Musqueam), səʔilwətaʔt̓ təməxʷ (Tsleil-Waututh), and Skwxwú7mesh-ulh Temíxw (Squamish) Nations.¹ We offer it with gratitude and humility as we continue to learn about the rich, yet often painful and inequitable history of this region.



Contact churchrelations@ugm.ca with questions, suggestions, or updates to this report. Contact opsmanager@mpnh.org to get involved with community food security in Mount Pleasant through the Mount Pleasant Food Network.



The mural on the title pages is "The Evening" by Finton Magee (2019)²

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Updated: February 16, 2022

¹ <https://native-land.ca/>

² <https://fintanmagee.com/murals>

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Introduction

“I wonder how many people I've looked at all my life and never seen.”

John Steinbeck (Author)

This report assesses the state of food access for vulnerable individuals in Mount (Mt) Pleasant, Vancouver, in the winter of 2021-2022, two years after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. It was modeled after several similar scans of other Vancouver neighbourhoods.

Mt Pleasant is not known to be one of the more vulnerable neighbourhoods in Vancouver. Reflecting on what her congregation was doing for others, one interviewee commented that, “The work is not necessary in Mt Pleasant.” Another person referred to those who are vulnerable to food insecurity as the *invisible-visible*, which inspired the title of the report. Like all neighborhoods, Mount Pleasant has its challenges and inequities, and while it is a very pleasant place to live for many, not everyone is thriving.

Included in this report is a summary of key informant interviews with staff and volunteers from churches and community organizations that run supportive food programs for vulnerable individuals. This report is not an exhaustive list of food supports in Mt Pleasant, but instead aims to capture the overall availability of – and need for – further supports.

Recommendations are made with a particular focus on community meals and emergency programs that started or shifted with COVID-19. This report highlights strengths, key stakeholders, and gaps in service; and then charts ways to build on the good work being done.

This report also reflects our commitment to work towards the recommendations made in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The authors aim to understand and address the lasting impacts of residential schools and other discriminatory practices.

In particular, we are guided by the Call to Action 19, which outlines the need to measure and close gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities.³



Framing

Evidence tells us that food programs do not end hunger - only an adequate income will do that.⁴ Still, every shared meal, every bag of groceries, and every personal story matters as we work alongside our vulnerable neighbours as well as those with the power to influence the policies, budgets, and systems that could eliminate food insecurity and chronic poverty.

³ https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf

⁴ Tarasuk V, Mitchell A. (2020) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

Although it will be some time before we understand the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that on top of the challenges that already existed, the virus impacted the ability of nearly half of Canadian residents to meet their essential needs.⁵ Beyond economics, all of us have felt psychological and social stress caused by uncertainty and evolving restrictions. A recent public health survey on COVID-19 found that 37% of individuals in Mt Pleasant reported poor mental health and 66% reported worsening mental health.⁶ Yet, amid these challenges, the pandemic has also revealed new levels of generosity and highlighted strengths in our communities.

Demographics

The central source of the information presented here is the City of Vancouver 2020 Social Indicators Profile for Mt Pleasant, which is derived from the 2016 census.⁷ As with any census data, we recognize limitations. For instance, individuals experiencing homelessness or those who live in secondary suites are often missed. Furthermore, the census data is now six years old and does not capture recent trends, including the impact of COVID-19.

The following demographic data is based on the boundaries for Mt Pleasant used by the City of Vancouver: Cambie Street (west boundary), Clark Drive (east boundary), 16th Avenue (south boundary), and False Creek (west of Main Street) or 2nd Ave/Great Northern Way (east of Main Street) as the northern boundary.



In our interviews, we included one organization located just south of 16th Avenue, as these boundaries do not define where vulnerable individuals seek support.

Mt Pleasant has grown rapidly in recent years. Between 2011 and 2016, it grew the fastest of any Vancouver neighbourhood, adding 6500 residents (or 25% of its population). Most of the recent growth (75%) has been in the southeast False Creek/Olympic Village area. This is commonly a place that people move to as young adults, giving it the lowest median age of any Vancouver neighbourhood. Its high mobility rate is second only to Downtown. Most households (56%) live in low-rise apartments.⁸

Mt Pleasant's high mobility rate – especially among younger people – is not new. Historically, it's been a working-class neighbourhood and a place where immigrants seek to live.⁹ Recent growth, however, has changed the neighborhood, as new residents are often individuals with steadier incomes and less diverse backgrounds. This trend creates a risk of displacement for more vulnerable residents¹⁰ and it can make the challenges of some people less visible.

⁵ Men F, Tarasuk V. Food insecurity amid the COVID-19 pandemic: food charity, government assistance and employment. Canadian Public Policy 2021; Published online. Available from: <https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/abs/10.3138/cpp.2021-001>

⁶ <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/bccdc/viz/BCCOVID-19SPEAKSurveyRound2/BCCOVID-19SPEAKresults>

⁷ 2020 City of Vancouver Social Indicators Profile: Mount Pleasant. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/social-indicators-profile-mount-pleasant.pdf>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ 2020 City of Vancouver Social Indicators Profile: Mount Pleasant. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/social-indicators-profile-mount-pleasant.pdf>, 79.

¹⁰ Ibid. 79.

Currently, one third of the population of Mt Pleasant are members of a visible minority group but this rate has fallen substantially since 2001 (and is much smaller than the city overall). Nearly one thousand residents are Indigenous (about 3% of Mt Pleasant’s total population). From 1996 to 2016, Mount Pleasant’s Indigenous population decreased by 5%, while the non-Indigenous population grew by 40%.

Of a total population of 32,955, 18% of Mt Pleasant residents (nearly 6000 people) are below the poverty line, which is determined by comparing the family disposable income to the cost of basic needs in a community. We know that “poverty does not strike randomly: inadequate income to meet basic needs correlates with other systems of oppression and inequity”.¹¹ Income and food insecurity are closely linked.¹² In Mt Pleasant, “Indigenous residents, people without post-secondary education, newcomers, and seniors stand out for experiencing higher poverty rates”.¹³ More details on these populations are explored below.

Like the City of Vancouver as a whole, Mt Pleasant is polarized in its wealth distribution. Compared to the city overall, there is a low unemployment rate, yet 41% of rented households (and 25% of owned households) are spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Of all families with children in Mt Pleasant, 28% are lone-parent families, which tend to be female-led and experience social and economic challenges.

We appreciate City of Vancouver staff for pulling this data together. Demographic data offers insights but can also be reductive.¹⁴ It is best considered alongside the lived experiences of individuals. Ideally, our conversations with food providers should be placed alongside data compiled from interviews with individuals experiencing food insecurity, though that is beyond the scope of this present project. In what follows, we explore some of the positive changes experienced during the pandemic in addition to challenges faced by community food programs. We wanted to learn who the service-providers see as being particularly vulnerable or underserved in their neighbourhood and how we might move forward together towards food security for the entire population.

Positive Changes

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly brought some positive changes. Those interviewed for this scan reported:

¹¹ Ibid., 49.

¹² Tarasuk V, Mitchell A. (2020) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/>

¹³ 2020 City of Vancouver Social Indicators Profile: Mount Pleasant. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/social-indicators-profile-mount-pleasant.pdf>. 49.

¹⁴ 2020 City of Vancouver Social Indicators Profile: Mount Pleasant. <https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/social-indicators-profile-mount-pleasant.pdf>. 4.

Generosity & Resilience: Despite some concerns raised about the risks of gathering vulnerable people in the community, many people and businesses in Mt Pleasant are **generous** and **caring neighbours**. Several interviewees shared stories about neighbours (and occasionally program participants) giving money, donated items, and practical support to the food program. In some cases, increased or new volunteer turnout led to more people seeing food needs firsthand, which led to an increased desire to help.

Flexibility & Adaptability: Several interviewees talked about how incredibly flexible and adaptable their organizations could be. **It is possible to start programs on short notice!** Several new food programs were organized quickly after the pandemic was declared, as staff recognized that even if their doors had to be closed, they were committed to their community. Many of these programs started small and grew rapidly through word of mouth. Several had to change their program set up five or more times during the pandemic. The word *nimble* came up as one interviewee reflected on their response and the "rather astonishing" speed with which their large organization was able to switch gears and implement new systems.

Nimble:
(adjective)
quick, light in movement, agile, quick to understand or think

Re-Evaluation: This upside-down season also led several organizations to **take a close look** at what they offered to the neighbourhood. One interviewee mentioned looking internally to address their own biases about who their programs were for. We heard an increased resolve to **elicit feedback** from program participants to find out what is needed and to direct the organization's priorities. One organization reached out to every participant individually when the lockdown started to learn who was living alone and who needed more support. This process allowed them to realize that while they thought they were well connected to participants, there were areas for improvement, including being more proactive about high priority groups and felt needs.

With the rising number of people accessing services, one organization had to really reflect on their reasons for serving. **Many meetings** took place, which helped articulate that they did not want to turn into a foodbank. They still **prioritized connection** and relationship and wanted to get to know the people they were serving. They wanted to find out what needs, besides food, their neighbourhood might have.

One organization had already been looking to move away from a foodbank model towards dignified food access before the pandemic, having established an important **intention towards transition**. The pandemic allowed them to realize some of the ideas they had been considering (while also making it necessary to continue programs already in place). There was important funding, energy, and support from their community for their food programs during the pandemic.

New Connections: Several interviewees talked about **invaluable new connections** with participants and other service providers. Weekly virtual meetings have allowed groups to connect regularly and allowed new relationships to develop. Many concerned neighbours notice when others are missing from these calls and make time to check up on them.

We also heard about positive interactions between people accessing food programs, volunteers, and staff. For example, security guards at one site were able to point people towards a meal instead of mainly limiting access to the space. These constructive on-site interactions have been an important and unexpected benefit of the program.

Food Quality: The **quality of food** from the food bank and others who provide food hampers has increased in several cases, as has the **systems of obtaining and distributing food**. Those that order from the Greater Vancouver Food Bank can access what they need for planning. For example, smaller items (family-sized canned food) are not helpful when cooking for larger groups, but preferable for other programs.

“We have more capacity than we might have thought we did!” Michael Volker, Mt Pleasant Neighbourhood House. This sentiment was widely shared.

Current Challenges for Community Food Programs

General Challenging Factors

Interviewees also articulated these main challenges in their delivery of food programs.

Funding: Despite much generosity and emergency grants made available, **funding for staff and ongoing operations** is often the limiting factor.

Capacity: Many programs are at capacity with the **increased needs** of people in the neighbourhood. As well, people from outside of Mt Pleasant also seek support. There are some unique and important initiatives within this neighborhood, such as the Broadway Youth Resource Center (BYRC) Fresh Kits, Food Stash’s Rescued Food Boxes, and traditional Japanese meals delivered by Tonari Gumi (See Appendix for more details). As word spreads about these programs, many individuals and organizations from as far as Burnaby, Surrey, and Coquitlam are interested in accessing these supports.

One organization felt the need to impose limits on meals served as they were not able to sustain operations (300 people were coming each week for meals, at one point). It is difficult to turn people away and to stretch resources for all who request support.

Storage: Most sites have **limited storage space** for food, especially cold storage, and thus cannot always accept quality food donations. This is especially a challenge around special meals (i.e., turkeys for holiday dinners).

Preparation Space: Some organizations are adequately connected to food donations and volunteers but need **bigger prep spaces** and new **equipment** to expand operations (especially with COVID distancing requirements).

Volunteers: Several interviewees reported a **changeover and/or decrease in volunteers** throughout the pandemic, especially during initial lockdowns – sometimes by the volunteer’s choice, sometimes because they were not allowed to come on sites (in both cases, primarily related to health and safety concerns). In some cases, this decrease allowed volunteers to move on who were ready for change, or to “retire.” New volunteers did engage, but they needed to be trained. Several groups and congregations also talked about their **aging population**, who need increasing assistance themselves, and were no longer able to support the work of the food program.

One of the more challenging volunteer roles to fill is deliveries, especially when serving such a large geographic area and volunteers needing to supply a vehicle. It is usually easier to find on-site kitchen volunteers than to find **volunteer drivers**.

One organization had around 70 volunteers before COVID for their meal programs. Now they have just over 40. They **need more help**, as their meal programs require 10-15 people each week.

Choice: While all food providers want to provide choice and honour individual preferences, some expressed surprise at how “picky” their program participants can be, which makes it challenging to provide appropriate food. For example, **increasingly guests are concerned** with the sugar, gluten, sodium, and preservative content in their food.

Dignity: All interviewees expressed a desire for careful and thoughtful communication and **service delivery that conveys dignity**. It was widely recognized that there is shame associated with charitable food provision. Service providers look for ways to eliminate stigma associated with not being able to afford food, especially as costs rise and incomes are precarious.

Grocery Hampers provide significant food for **clients who are homebound**, but people need (1) enough food skills and familiarity to use the food delivered, (2) the necessary kitchen equipment, and (3) often other ingredients to compliment what was received and turn it into a full meal or complete recipe. There is value in providing full meals instead of groceries, especially for seniors, although this requires significant work to plan and orchestrate (and often volunteers for deliveries).

Dental Challenges: Many people, especially seniors and those who have experienced homelessness, need softer, **easy-to-chew food**. Gourmet food donations like sourdough bread, or even fresh apples, may not be appropriate.

COVID-Specific Challenges

On top of the challenges detailed above, supportive organizations in Mt Pleasant also reported these factors which the pandemic created or amplified.

Lost Connections: Several churches and agencies had to stop programs with the onset of the pandemic, or because of changes in funding or other organisational shifts. Several staff and volunteers expressed concern over the guests who had been regular attenders, as they did not know how these individuals are doing, do not know where they are going for support, and do not usually have a way to contact them.

One challenge identified was service to seniors and their use of **technology** as a way of keeping in touch. Many seniors had never participated in virtual meetings – some could not even imagine doing so. Organizations had to make time for things like practice calls and registering in advance.

Prioritization: Several interviewees talked about **COVID-forced-prioritization** and **redesigning programs** around acute needs, not necessarily the organization's goals and values. In some cases, this led to stronger connections with high priority participants, while losing touch with more casual members.

Fear & Safety: **Uncertainty** and **conflicting or changing information** around the pandemic, vaccinations, and social gatherings, caused significant fear and uncertainty, particularly among those who are vulnerable and/or elderly. It will take time and deliberate effort to address those fears and draw both guests and volunteers back into community supports.

Children & Youth: Mt Pleasant, with its younger population, has **housing needs** for youth. Without housing, it is difficult to store and prepare food. Youth that have a

secure place to live can still face cooking related challenges, such as shared homes with limited cooking space or pest issues in the kitchen. Some currently (or previously) live in foster care where they might not gain food preparation skills.

During **school closures**, or children needing to be home-schooled for a time because of COVID or other health challenges, students do not have access to the meal programs and nutrition that the school was providing.

Underserved Populations

A crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affects vulnerable individuals, as many of the existing supports disappeared, and challenges emerged and compounded. Service providers shared who they see as the most underserved and struggling populations in Mt Pleasant.

Homeless Individuals: When individuals without a home access charitable food, they also often want to clean up, ideally taking a **shower** and doing **laundry**, or simply brushing their teeth and washing their faces and hands. The Mt Pleasant Community Center used to have showers available to the public but had to close them due to security issues. Staff report seeing a need for showers and hope to reopen them at some point. The Oasis Café at Tenth Church had showers available during their meals (and provided a clean towel and soap) but are not able to offer them during the pandemic.

Homeless individuals also need warm clothes, jackets, socks, tents, and other **survival gear**, especially in the winter months. The Salvation Army Boundless Vancouver started a new program to address the need for **eyeglasses** and vision care.

We did not find information on free or low-cost laundry options.

Seniors: Seniors especially stood out as demographic in need. Many of the guests of food programs are seniors, who are **housed, but not quite able to meet their needs**, and are often looking for **company** as much as food. Many also have increasing need for support with basic tasks like home **repairs** and **transportation** to medical appointments. Some cannot afford another place in the neighbourhood when they are forced out of their home, and thus move away from their community. Those without family nearby, or whose family also needs support, are particularly vulnerable. Many seniors live with tight budgets. One senior care worker reported that nearly every client had \$5-10 left over at the end of the month.

Individuals with Mental Health Challenges: Several interviewees confirmed that there is not enough support in the areas of **primary care, mental health, and substance use** in Mt Pleasant (sometimes referred to as “inreach support”). There are people with complex, compromised health who need care, but are too unwell to go to a clinic or who may have had poor experiences with care providers. One interviewee talked about how we can judge people who are not prioritizing their physical and mental health, but we must show concern toward those who have overwhelmingly hard histories and experiences of not getting the help they needed. Understanding this deficit leads us to have more **compassion** for self-medicating and other ways that individuals meet their immediate needs.

Outreach: In addition to the need for primary care, there is potential for care staff to **meet people where they are at** (i.e., to come to residences, where people stay on the streets, or to food programs). This support would contribute to a reduction of people at the breaking point. It would help people in pain, experiencing withdrawal, and who are falling through the cracks. Food program providers can help identify who needs help.

Indigenous Individuals: Indigenous people who are experiencing challenges of broken families and limited support systems (connected to our colonial past and present) require **support that fits their culture** and does not perpetuate unjust power dynamics.

Note that we did not find information on the food security assets and needs of Indigenous people in Mt Pleasant. This is an area for further exploration.

Isolated Individuals: It is challenging to support individuals who **remain isolated** due to COVID, are not interested in online programs, and/or who might not currently be seen by program staff. Isolation can be accentuated as people leave their houses less and less, get used to living alone, have anxiety, and/or become physically weaker (especially seniors).

Newcomers: Immigrants and those new to Canada who might not know about the **Canadian system** face challenges in accessing food. For example, some Japanese seniors said that they wished they had known more about the system earlier and where to access services (pension plans, attorneys, how to apply for BC housing, etc.).

Youth: Youth who are **younger than 18 years old**, who are prevented from accessing some adult services, need specialized support.

Young Adults: There is a growing number of young people/people in their 20’s in need of food support (as well as other supports, such as counselling and housing). Some service providers noted that people with higher income thresholds are

applying for support. Many in this demographic are **reluctant to reach out for help**. Some struggle because of job losses during the pandemic. As such, some programs have changed the criteria for who can access their support (i.e., opening applications to those who self-identify as food insecure).

Key Lessons from the Pandemic

“Community begins at the table.” Luke (Broadway Youth Resource Center)

Although not a new lesson, the pandemic helped us realize in deeper ways that people are hungry for community. Supports such as community meals can be key initial connections for those who are otherwise struggling and isolated. Other pandemic lessons that those we interviewed shared are:

Community: Service providers talked about how we must take seriously the need to meet together and to be **creative in finding ways we can still connect**, such as meeting outside, or running programs with fewer participants. At risk youth and/or those dealing with mental health challenges need a particularly supportive community.

Individuals needing connection are often physically hungry when they arrive at a supportive program. Eating together meets immediate needs and build connections in gentle ways.

Deeper Hungers: Several interviewees talked about their desire to **give in a human way** – to provide basic needs, particularly for food, in ways that creates connection and **satisfies deeper hungers**. To do this takes significant time, outreach skills, and often tangible resources. One service provider observed that we miss something significant when we only eat with those we know, and who are not food insecure. Others talked about the value of volunteers who are not task-focussed, but who can talk with program guests.

We also learned in new ways that people respond to both the opportunity **to receive and to extend hospitality**. One program has a volunteer that writes, “You are loved!” on each lunch bag they give out as a way for the team to show extra care, and the community is often touched by the message. Guests of community programs appreciate things that build their **choice** and **agency**. Many ways they would have done this (i.e., helping with their community programs) were lost during the pandemic.

One interviewee commented that it is important to be clear that those who access rescued food are active participants in sustainable initiatives, **preventing that food from going to waste**. Other programs are intentional about including special food items when the budget allows, which grants a sense of importance and **celebration**.

One individual expressed a vision for a **sustainable community kitchen** that would be open and accessible to those in need, stocked with supplies. This would allow individuals to prepare their own simple meals and have a space to gather. It would take effort to ensure it works well but the dignity and empowerment would be worth it.

Availability: Several service providers talked about how when **services disappear**, the people needing those services do not stop being in need. We need to still be available for our community. Some – particularly those who focus on mental health – saw closing doors during the early days of the pandemic as unfortunate, although service providers did the best they could at the time. Our lack of knowledge about COVID made it necessary to be cautious. We must learn from looking back at this time and understand that there were serious costs to our communities with the interruption in services.

Program-Related Learning: Service providers stressed the importance of having a **chef** (or someone with **solid kitchen experience**) behind food programs and not only volunteers. Chefs creatively use food, understand large quantity cooking, can use industrial equipment, set up effective systems, and know safe food handling practices. Some organizations started new food programs during the pandemic and learned this lesson over time. Most importantly, they know how to offer nutritious meals that are also healthy, comforting, and full of good ingredients.

Training: Volunteer **training** and intentional **orientation** is also essential. If community-building is the focus, staff must cultivate a particular **culture** with volunteers and not to overlook training. Solid kitchen training is also important for volunteers, especially with extra COVID-related precautions. We must implement safe practices as early as possible.

Soft skills area also important, including non-violent crisis intervention training, managing hostile interactions, trauma informed care, leadership, and workshops where we learn about our own biases.

Shared Mandate: It is important to have a **clear mission and vision** that guide work in all departments. And little happens without good **leadership**. When a community trusts their leaders and are willing to respond to needs assessed by leadership, they can work towards their goals, and address any conflicts that may arise.

Mental Health: Several interviewees talked about what we have learned (and are learning) about **mental health** through the pandemic. We have focused more on physical health, but the pandemic has affected mental health in huge ways, increasing fear, anxiety, and isolation. These challenges are particularly felt by people who already had few supports in place.

Adaptability: Programs need continued **flexibility**. We must consider (and reconsider) the needs of everyone – staff and participants. **Burnout** is a real concern. We must be willing to adapt programs as needs and resources change, or as we better understand the needs of people we are serving.

Recommendations

“Be kind. Be calm. Be safe.” Dr. Bonnie Henry.

When sharing the results of this scan with those we interviewed, we heard the following as beneficial, actionable next steps.

1. Restart **regular meetings** of the Mt Pleasant Food Network, building connections between those building the food assets in the neighbourhood. Start with reviewing and updating the **networks action plan** (focusing on systemic justice issues), terms of reference, contact list, success measures, and food philosophy.
2. Explore more about the barriers to accessing the food and support available in Mt Pleasant, and the unmet needs. Include the **perspective of those with lived experience** of food insecurity. Ensure any research done with individuals is done sensitively, using parameters like those outlined in the 2019 Research 101: A Manifesto for Ethical Research in the Downtown East Side¹⁵.
3. Continue to **collect data** around food available, organizational needs, and demographic trends of those who are vulnerable to food insecurity in this neighbourhood.
4. Explore the **environmental impact** of the food supports, and find ways to decrease it, potentially following the model of FoodStash's 2021 Greenhouse Gas Report¹⁶.

¹⁵ <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubccommunityandpartnerspublicati/52387/items/1.0377565>

¹⁶ <https://www.foodstash.ca/climate-action>

Conclusion

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” James Baldwin (Author)

Conversations with these food providers made clear the multiple social benefits of community-wide food security, which contribute to making Mt Pleasant a resilient and stable community. One interviewee reflected on how when we take seriously the social benefits of eating together, we imagine so much more for Mt Pleasant. Instead of measuring success by the number of people served or pounds of food given, we could work towards the things that really bring flourishing.

In our conversations with food providers, this desire to bring together the social and physical benefits of sharing food is clear. We were encouraged to learn about old and new community supports, and to see the willingness of organizations to put the lessons learned from the pandemic, thus far, into action. The authors of this report hope the insights shared have made some of the invisible and under-recognized challenges in Mt Pleasant more visible. By working together, we will make our community a more pleasant and nourishing home for all of us.

APPENDIX – Food Available

See below for a list of charitable food available in the winter of 2021/2022 in Mt Pleasant. This is not an exhaustive list of available food supports, as some organizations, churches, and individuals also provide special-occasion meals, gift cards, and other emergency supports. These numbers can vary from week to week, and as the seasons change.

Org/Church	Meals	Hampers/Groceries	Notes
Broadway Youth Resource Center	700 meals/week: School lunches, Youth dinners (5 days/week), Dinners with elders	Fresh Kits for youth: 40 kits each week, accessed bi-weekly (80 youth total)	Have an on-site pantry with non-perishable food available for youth as needed
Coast Mental Health Clubhouse	Lunch (5 days/week) for members (anyone with mental health concerns); 60-70 meals served each day; \$2/meal		Due to COVID, 12 people are allowed in the dining room at one time (previously could have 60 people).
Food Stash Foundation		100 Rescued Food Boxes/ week; Each with 30 pounds of rescued food; \$10 delivery fee	Rescued Food Market: open Fridays 3:30-6 pm. Accessible to everyone and “pay what you feel” model.
Jewish Family Services	150-200 meals delivered each week throughout Greater Vancouver.	Approximately 200 grocery orders given out per week	Meal delivery program is for individuals who have difficulty cooking for themselves. Food Cupboard also available on site for urgent food needs.
Mount Pleasant Community Center	Soup for 50-60 people/day Mon-Fri; Sandwiches served on weekends (300-400 people each week)		Started during the pandemic in response to a recognized need. Began with 4 guests and quickly grew.
Mount Pleasant Neighborhood House	60-70 meals delivered weekly through the Better at Home program (20 individuals receiving 1-5 meals/week)	Available on an emergency basis	
Salvation Army Boundless Vancouver	Fr breakfast, 9-10 am (take-out). Serving about 100 meals; Also 100 lunches & 50 snacks/week (open to anyone)	Nourishing Hope Marketplace on Tu & Th; Access program based on income; 50 hampers/week.	; Emergency hampers available for people in need of food ASAP.
Spirit of Life Lutheran Church	65 lunches/week (Thursdays)		
St Vincent de Paul Society			Have non-perishable food and bread available daily

			through Thrift Store on Main & 12th
Tenth Church (Oasis Cafe)	Monday dinner: 5:30-7 Tuesday lunch: 11 -1; 200 meals served/week; Open to everyone, no barriers.		Host Extreme Weather Response ¹⁷ (providing shelter when extra spaces needed). Oasis Cafe makes food to support the shelter.
Tonari Gumi (Japanese Community Volunteers Association)	70-80 Japanese bento boxes prepared weekly on site; 50 delivered to those with challenges cooking/going out (assessment needed). The rest are picked up.		Traditional Japanese meals for Seniors only; Cost per meal: \$6 for members, \$7 non-members (cost increase April 2022)
205 Kingsway	One hot meal (dinner) provided every day to tenants; Modest breakfast is also available.		No on-site kitchen, so meals are prepared by a cook at a nearby location.

¹⁷ <https://hsa-bc.ca/program-outline.html>