

Thank you.

Your patience with Green Village Initiative since the announcement in November at Harvest Fest of the downsize and merge our organization is felt and deeply appreciated. Thank you so much to the dozens of you who have reached out sharing your appreciation, concern, commitment to support future iterations of GVI's work, and offered support during this period of transition.

To some, this is simply a nonprofit going through transition due to financial, systemic, and structural pressures - and, on one hand, I absolutely understand that perspective. Yet to those who put our hands in Bridgeport's soil up on the Farm, or saw a teenager light up from within with pride while growing food for others, or felt the electric magic of neighbors meeting and bonding over their shared love of a specific flavor of herb...well, it just hits different.

It's been a challenging yet beautiful few months winding down much of our team's time and my tenure with GVI. What by all accounts should have felt jarring and painful went as well as it could have - our incredible team of Farm, Youth, and Operations staff held the confusion with grace and their care for our gardeners, our youth, our land with joy.

Our Team planted garlic together into Reservoir Community Farm's soil this winter with a ceremony for the future. Over those final weeks of 2023 we reminisced, fed one another, re-distributed our resources with intentionality, and took quiet moments to root the land with our hope for continued farming and greenspace there, no matter the odds in a municipality so eager for development.

I felt in those weeks of November and December that our collective grief had unfolded and unfolded like a long tapestry made out of memories, lessons, laughter, shared stories, land, food. We wrapped one another up in it, and it comforted and soothed the hurt.

It was shared over and over how there is something so special about the land on Reservoir Avenue. That energetically newcomers can feel it's been farmed with love for over a decade by thousands of people from all walks of life, without having been told. The land and neighborhood around Reservoir Community Farm was transformed by the people who learned from, cared for, and worked this land. Each of us - staff, farmers, farmers market customers, volunteers, field trip children, elders, community gardening families, visitors, teenagers - were changed in turn. In the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer, "action on behalf of life transforms. Because the relationship between self and the world is reciprocal, it is not a question of first getting enlightened or saved and then acting. As we work to heal the earth, the earth heals us." We are tied together, transformed, and held by this land once seen as a vacant parking lot, now a thriving community farm that beats in time to the heart of the city, season by season.

I speak for the Team in saying that while this iteration and size of GVI was not able to be sustained at this time, we are very excited to see how our Board and the remaining Team usher forward GVI's next chapter. There is so much to look forward to!

Later this year GVI will be converting some of Reservoir Community Farm's space into community-led programming areas and are pursuing potential merging and site partnerships with trusted organizations who believe in GVI's mission of food, knowledge, community, leadership, and food justice as much as you do! Over the winter we spent lots of time updating our website to open source our lessons, handouts, and internal processes for running farms, youth programs, school garden activities, and community gardens and we hope that you will click through them and our newly published Food Justice Framework to get inspired as to how you can help us use the farm.

GVI's Board of Directors will lead the next steps of the Transition Year with staff Diego Osses and Andrés Torres Alvarez, and I hope you'll meet and connect with them as they position GVI for success.

It's been a pleasure to be GVI's farmer and executive director for these many years, thank you to each of you for the many ways in which you have seeded, grown, and harvested the fruits and food justice alongside me and our neighbors.

Sending you lots of warmth for this new year and hope that you're entering it rooted, warm, and with peace.

Ellie



