



Date: May 29, 2002

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Strathcona Community Garden - Proposed New Building

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board permits the Strathcona Community Gardeners' Society ("the Society") to construct a new permanent building ("the tool shed"), and fenced outdoor nursery storage area on the portion of Strathcona Park located at 759 Malkin Avenue ("the Premises") subject to conditions 1 through 6, contained in this report.**
- B. THAT the Society signs a letter of agreement with the Board prior to the issuance of a Building Permit, the content of which will include a clause that will supercede clause 1.06 (e) of the Lease dated October 11, 1994 between the Board and the Society which states that "no permanent structure or improvement shall be placed, constructed or maintained on the Premises".**

BACKGROUND

The Strathcona Community Garden has been in operation since 1985 on the portion of Strathcona Park located on the west side of Hawks Street (the official address is 759 Malkin Avenue). There are close to 400 plots in the garden, used by about 100 individuals and families. In addition to the allotment garden plots, approximately 1/3 of the site is dedicated to common areas that include an orchard, herb garden, children's play area and vine walk which serve broad community needs. A further 1/3 of the site is dedicated to wild areas which support a variety of wildlife and contribute to the bio-diversity of the area.

The 1.36 hectare (3.36 acre) site is leased to the Strathcona Community Gardeners' Society, a registered non-profit society. The Society promotes sustainability through a number of initiatives:

- to provide space to area residents for food growing
- commitment to education
- to reclaim restore and maintain the gardens using organic principles
- solar energy
- composting public toilet
- on site use of grey water
- storm water detention pond

- bio-diversity
- improving wildlife habitat
- social interaction through regular meetings, work parties, workshops and membership

The current lease was signed in 1994 for a ten year term.

The Society proposes to replace an existing old tool shed (less than 100 square feet in area) with a new, larger one (365 square feet in area). An area for storage of fruits and/or vegetables is also proposed to be included inside the building. Adjacent to the building, the Society is proposing to construct a fenced area (about 450 square feet in area), to serve as a secure outdoor storage area for nursery stock. The total construction cost is estimated to be \$48,000.

DISCUSSION

The tool shed is an old wooden structure which is no longer functional. It has been the target of numerous break-ins resulting in the loss of valuable tools and equipment owned by the Society. A new shed and outdoor fenced area will provide for more secure storage and enhance the ability to store apples.

The Society has demonstrated community support for this proposal through letters from community organizations as well through the funding commitments from PEACH and their partnership with the Environmental Youth Alliance and other partners. In consideration of this demonstrated support and the short time period, a limited consultation process was designed which involved a door-to-door distribution of information to the neighbouring residents to solicit input. Results of this input will be reported to the Board.

The Society is committed to the existing use and design of the site and has a vision to continue to improve the existing features in line with their purposes. The tool shed is one of five structures currently on site. Staff and the Society have begun discussions on seeking opportunities to consolidate uses to gain efficiencies and reduce the footprint of development on the site.

Conditions

The proposal supports the community garden function and the project does not adversely affect other park users and neighbours. Therefore, staff support the replacement of the old tool shed with a new one, and the development of the fenced outdoor storage area, subject to the following conditions:

1. the Society secures all capital funds required for the construction of the tool shed;
2. the Society obtains all permits required for the construction of the tool shed;
3. the Society obtains all necessary insurance with respect to the tool shed;
4. the Society maintains the tool shed in a state of good repair;

5. the Society agrees that the Board may require the Society, at the Society' s cost, to remove the tool shed and any other improvements from the Premises at the termination or earlier expiration of the Lease, repairing any damage caused to the Premises as a result of such removal;
6. the design, construction and maintenance of the building shall be to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Parks and Recreation.

If both parties agree to negotiate a new lease after the expiration of the existing lease (which terminates in October 2004), the new lease will incorporate clauses related to the presence of permanent building(s) along with the rights and responsibilities associated with such building(s).

CONCLUSION

Strathcona Community Gardeners' Society is a long-standing non-profit partner of the Park Board. The proposal to replace and expand the size of a tool shed and create a secure outdoor nursery storage area is consistent with their core activities and will improve conditions at the garden.

Prepared by:
Planning & Operations &
Vancouver East District
Board of Parks & Recreation
Vancouver, B.C.