



Date: February 6, 2014

TO: Board Members - Vancouver Park Board  
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation  
SUBJECT: Proposed Expansion of Nelson Park Community Garden

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## RECOMMENDATION

*THAT the Board approve the expansion of the community garden in Nelson Park, with all details to the satisfaction of the General Manager; and FURTHER THAT staff amend the current license agreement with the Nelson Park Community Garden Society to include the expanded garden area, with all terms consistent with the Community Garden Policy.*

## POLICY

A revised Community Garden Policy was approved by the Board in September 2005, which outlines the terms and conditions under which the Board will consider community gardens to be operated on park lands (Appendix A).

Vancouver City Council approved the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (GCAP) in July 2011. GCAP includes a target to increase local food assets by 50%, by 2020.

The Board endorsed Phase 1 of its new Strategic Plan in May 2012, including the strategic objective to being "a Leader in Greening", and more specifically "to support community based food production by contributing to the development of neighbourhood and city-wide food infrastructure programs and assets".

Vancouver City Council approved "What Feeds Us: Vancouver Food Strategy" in January 2013.

The Board approved the Local Food Action Plan in July 2013, which includes direction to develop new community gardens and other food assets in parks and community centres.

The Nelson Park Community Garden was established in 2008; the Board renewed the license agreement for this garden with the Nelson Park Community Garden Society on September 23, 2013 for a term of 5 years.

## BACKGROUND

Staff recommends approval of expanding the community garden in Nelson Park, in partnership with the Nelson Park Community Garden Society. The proposal was received through an Expression of Interest for new community gardens and orchards in September 2013.

The Nelson Park community garden was created in 2008 alongside the redevelopment of the park. It currently includes 38 plots located along major walkways in the park, as well as a shed, composting space, and seating area. Water infrastructure was

upgraded in 2013, and included a new water connection accessible to the adjacent farmers market as well as improvements for the community gardeners. There are currently more than 200 people on the waitlist for plots.

This proposal meets the Park Board Community Garden Policy in the following ways:

- Will create and maintain an organic community garden that will increase the ecological biodiversity of Vancouver and provide increased understanding of local food production.
- Will produce food and flowers for the personal use of society members, as well as for shared benefit of the community.

## DISCUSSION

Nelson Park is an active park in a dense West End neighbourhood, and includes a fenced dog park, children's play area, passive recreation spaces, extensive seating, and the existing community garden. A washroom will be added in the winter/spring of 2014, and the park is adjacent to the new Comox-Helmcken greenway where a weekly summer farmers market is also held. The Lord Roberts Annex serving students from kindergarten to grade 3 is immediately adjacent to the park.

The proposed garden location has been carefully chosen to integrate into this busy park, utilise existing community garden infrastructure (i.e. shed, compost, water), and utilise and enhance spaces along the pathways and in the western entrance to the park. The garden expansion is adjacent to the fenced dog park, seating, pathways, the new washroom, and the Lord Roberts Annex school. It has been designed to integrate well with the existing uses and result in a lively, community-oriented hub of activity for park users (see details in Appendix B). It will also provide some universally accessible garden beds, which are not available in the existing garden.

The Park Board will provide some assistance to get the garden established including: removal of sod, installation of drainage and pathway material, extension of the water hook up, provision of the first year of compost, and provision of food bearing trees. The gardeners are responsible for all other costs, and for all governance, maintenance and operations.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From January 21 - February 6, 2014 public consultation was held. Staff and garden volunteers hand delivered approximately 80 posters and 1400 flyers to neighbours within a 2 block radius of the garden site, as required by the community garden policy. Two signs were posted on the site notifying other park users of the proposal, a website was created for the project, an on-line survey was posted on the city's website, and social media notification of the consultation was issued using the Park Board and Greenest City accounts.

The Park Board received a total of 52 responses via email, telephone, and on-line survey. Of these 81% (42 submissions) were in favour of the proposal. Postal codes entered by on-line survey respondents were reviewed, with 94% entering postal codes with an address in the immediately adjacent area.

## SUMMARY

The proposed garden furthers the objectives of the Park Board's Strategic Plan and the Greenest City Action Plan, and complies with the Community Garden Policy. The garden will contribute to increasing our local food assets, and will also build community connections. Staff recommends that the Board approve this proposal for the expanded community garden at Nelson Park.

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## **Appendix A: Community Gardens Policy**

### **Revised September 19, 2005**

#### **Definition**

The Board recognizes community gardening as a valuable recreation activity that can contribute to community development, environmental awareness, positive social interaction and community education. The Board will collaborate with interested groups in assisting the development of community gardens.

For the purposes of this policy, a community garden is defined as a community development program operated by a non-profit society. The program has one or more of the following features:

- A piece of land is utilized by the society to produce food and flowers for the personal use of society members.
- A community development program is in place which encourages the involvement of schools, youth groups and citizens who do not have an assigned plot in gardening activities.
- An organic community garden is maintained, that will increase the ecological biodiversity of Vancouver and provide increased understanding of local food production

#### **Clause One**

The Board will support the development of community gardens in Vancouver through the following means:

- Providing access to information on the development and operation of community gardens.
- Assisting interested groups in searching for suitable land for the development of community gardens. This inventory must include City-owned land, land controlled by other government agencies, and privately owned land.
- Assisting in the development of user agreements with the owners of sites chosen.
- Assisting with the development of a community led environmental education program.

#### **Clause Two**

If it is determined that park land is the most suitable site for community gardens, the following conditions will apply:

- The garden is developed at no cost to the Board, except that prior to the first season, the Board will, at its cost, prepare the site for planting by removing grass, ploughing the soil and adding compost.
- A community consultation process indicates neighbourhood support for the garden.
- A garden site plan must be drawn up and approved by the General Manager. The plan must include the layout of the plots and indicate any proposed structures or fences.
- A non-profit society agrees to develop and operate the gardens according to a users agreement which will specify the term of use, management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures including the following specific terms:
  - a. "The standard term of the user agreement will be five years. The Board may consider the granting of multiple terms in exceptional circumstances. The issuance of such longer terms is warranted in circumstances where the Society can demonstrate that the standard five year term would significantly restrict the Society's ability to:

1. comply with Park Board policies and direction
  2. conduct community outreach programming beyond the Societies members
  3. implement a long term plan
  4. execute significant approved site improvements
  5. such other circumstances that the Board deems relevant
  6. For terms longer than five years, a review and formal reporting to the Board will be required at each 5 year period and the agreement will incorporate a strengthened termination clause to allow both the Society and the Park Board the option to terminate the agreement with adequate notice."
- b. Allotments of space must be made from a waiting list on a first come first served basis.
  - c. While community gardens are a neighbourhood initiative, membership in the Society, and the opportunity to be allotted a plot, must be open to any resident of Vancouver.
  - d. Organic gardening methods and integrated pest management principles are to be followed.
  - e. Allotment fees charged by the society must be reported to the General Manager.
  - f. The Society must adhere to maintenance standards set by the Board.
  - g. No barriers to general public access to the site can be erected.
  - h. Garden practices shall comply with all Park Board and City Policies and Bylaws.

Although located on Parks with the prior approval of the Park Board, Community Gardens are operated by volunteers from the community.

## Appendix B: Proposed Design for Nelson Park Community Garden Expansion



Figure 1: Location of proposed community garden expansion in Nelson Park

This proposed garden (Figure 2) includes:

- Addition of 450 m<sup>2</sup> of space, increasing the garden area to 940m<sup>2</sup>.
- ~30 community garden beds for users of all abilities and ages
- A children's nook next to the school and daycare
- Food bearing trees
- Pollinator gardens
- New seating



Figure 2: Proposed Nelson Park community garden expansion design for consultation