



Date: July 11, 2012

TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board
FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Community garden at Woodland Park

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the Board approve the use of an area within Woodland Park for the purposes of a community garden, with all specifications to the satisfaction of the General Manager.*
- B. THAT the Board grant a five-year license to the Village Vancouver Transition Society to operate the community garden, with all terms consistent with the Community Garden Policy.*

POLICY

The Board endorsed Phase 1 of its new Strategic Plan on May 18, 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 the Greenest City 2020 Action Plan (GCAP) on July 12, 2011. GCAP includes a target to increase local food assets by 50%, by 2020.

The Board approved a revised Community Garden Policy on September 19, 2005, which outlines the terms and conditions under which the Board will consider community gardens to be operated on park lands (Appendix A).

The Grandview Woodland neighbourhood is currently in the process of creating a new community plan, due to be completed in late 2013.

BACKGROUND

The Board has received a proposal from the Village Vancouver Transition Society (“Village Vancouver”) to build a community garden in Woodland Park. Village Vancouver envisions Vancouver as a vibrant city at the leading edge of sustainability, where residents know their neighbours and participate in collective actions to minimise their ecological footprint. Village Vancouver is an entirely volunteer-driven organisation of more than 1,500 Vancouver residents, including several hundred already involved in gardening. They hold dozens of urban gardening workshops each year, led by local professional farmers and master gardeners. Village Vancouver is organised into local

villages, with the Grandview Woodland village active since January 2011 and having 70 members. Together, the garden applicants from the neighbourhood have experience in volunteer recruitment and management, direct gardening experience, art-based community development, and project management.

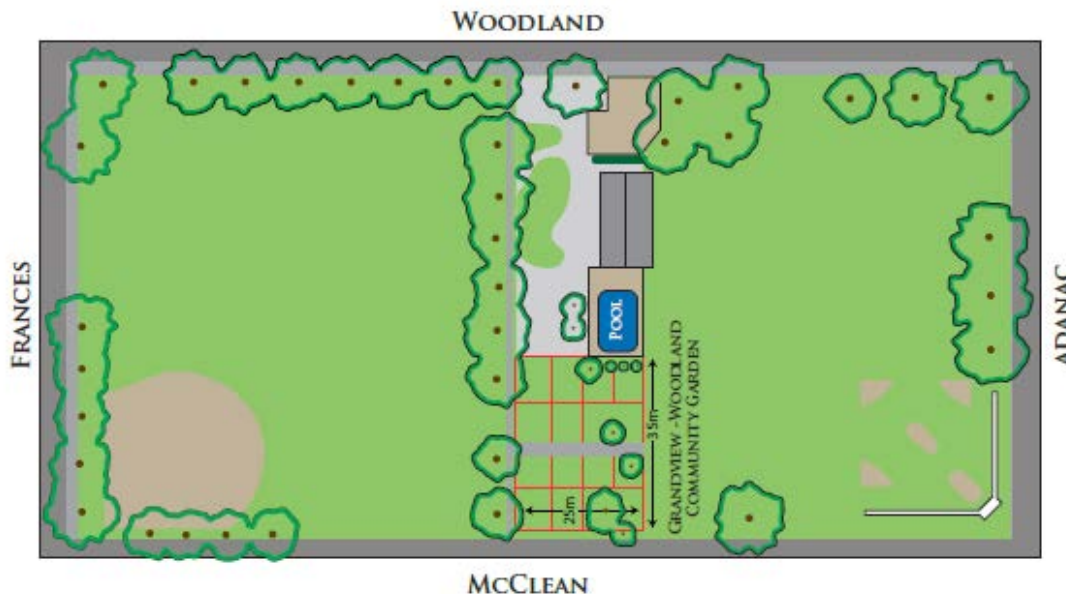
The proposal identifies the Grandview Woodland neighbourhood as home to a demographic that would benefit from new community gardens, as only 9.8% of residents live in a single detached home and thus most residents have limited access to private yard space. Grandview Woodland is also a relatively lower income neighbourhood compared with other parts of Vancouver, with 35.2% of residents living in lower income households. This demographic is most likely to face issues of food insecurity and could benefit from having the opportunity to grow some of their own food.

The 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.
- Will have a community development component involving local child care and non-profit agencies.

DISCUSSION

This area of Grandview-Woodland has many renters and co-op members without access to gardens. A neighbourhood-wide survey of potential gardening spaces, also including other public and private underutilised sites, resulted in the Woodland Park location as the preferred option. The proposed site for the community garden is in the centre of the park, located just west of the field house and an older wading pool. It is situated between two playing fields and will not interfere with these active uses.



The proposed garden is 25m by 35m, and will combine a generous public area connecting the two fields with cooperative garden spaces and private allotment beds. This combination of uses invites people to enjoy the garden as passers-by, as visitors and as gardeners of communal or individual plots. Also included are:

- Wheelchair accessible raised beds
- A small shed or waterproof box for tool storage
- Space for compost production
- Edible berry bushes
- Natural building elements

The garden will be developed at no cost to the Board, and will be operated by volunteers from the community. The exception to this is that the Board will provide the first year of compost, the water hook up, and potentially some fruit trees. Funding for this is available in the 2012 Park Board Capital Budget.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From June 11-30, 2012 public consultation on this proposal was held. Staff and garden volunteers delivered 500 flyers to neighbours (both residential and commercial) within a 2-block radius of the proposed garden site, as required by the community garden policy. In addition to this, a sign was posted on the site and an open house was held on June 21, 2012 from 7:00-8:30pm with both staff and Village Vancouver representatives on hand.

The Park Board received a total of 63 responses in both written form and via email. Of these, 81% (52 submissions) were in favour, and 19% (12 submissions) were not in favour or had concerns.

The most common reasons for supporting the garden proposal included:

- Many apartment dwellers living nearby that would like gardening space close to where they live.
- Project will create more community and build connections, break social isolation, increase social capital and encourage placemaking by drawing out a diversity of local residents to interact with each other
- Having more people who constructively use the park will displace less desirable activity - more “eyes in the park”
- Provision of an excellent learning opportunity for kids and encourages family time together

The most common concerns included:

- Creating a division/barrier between north and south sections of park
- Park already has a number of transient people who conduct activities that create a security problem, garden will increase this activity at risk to residents
- Lack of park space in neighbourhood for growing population
- Creating a space in the park that is exclusively used by a few people

- Would like to see a bigger plan to revitalize the park, including off-leash dog area

If the Board approves this garden proposal, Park Board staff would require the proponent to respond to community concerns by inviting neighbourhood residents to participate in a collaborative workshop that finalises the design of the garden, achieving:

- A generous welcoming space/path through the centre of the garden (north-south) to maintain clear visual and pedestrian connections between the north and south;
- accessible, welcoming public seating and space for passive recreation and enjoyment by all park users;
- space for shared gardening and shared harvest, for all park users to enjoy as well as for sharing with local food banks (and similar organisations);
- Respect the run out requirements of the baseball field to the south in garden design and operation;
- All requirements outlined in the Community Gardens Policy.

NEXT STEPS

1. Produce final design that meets Park Board requirements and integrates responses to public concerns specific to the garden that were heard during consultation;
2. Submit final design to General Manager for review and approval;
3. Enter into license agreement;
4. Garden construction can begin.

SUMMARY

The proposed plan furthers the Park Board local food objectives as well as the City and Park Board's Greenest City target and actions. It meets the criteria of the Community Garden Policy. The garden will contribute to increasing our local food assets, and will also build community connections. Staff recommend that the Board approve this proposal for a community garden at Woodland Park, and that Park Board staff work with Village Vancouver to develop a final plan for the garden.

Prepared by:

Parks
Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
/LC

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.