



Date: February 18, 2013

**TO: Board Members – Vancouver Park Board**  
**FROM: General Manager – Parks and Recreation**  
**SUBJECT: Community gardens at Charleson and Cambie Parks**

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the Board approve a new community garden in Charleson Park, with all details to the satisfaction of the General Manager;*
- B. THAT the Board grant a five-year license to the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association to operate the community garden, with all terms consistent with the Community Garden Policy;*
- C. THAT the Board approve a new community garden in Cambie Park, with all details to the satisfaction of the General Manager; and*
- D. THAT the Board grant a five-year license to the Marpole-Oakridge Community Association to operate the community garden, with all terms consistent with the Community Garden Policy.*

## POLICY

The Board tasked staff with establishing a Local Food Assets Task Force on May 28 2012, and the Task Force is currently developing a Local Food Action Plan that is due to the Board in June 2013.

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 “What Feeds Us: Vancouver Food Strategy” on January 29 2013.

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.

A revised Community Garden Policy was approved by the Board 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).

## BACKGROUND

Staff are recommending approval of two proposals for new community gardens in our parks. Both were received in response to a joint call for Expressions of Interest for new

community gardens and orchards issued by the Park Board and the City (Social Policy and Engineering) in October 2012.

The first proposal is from the Charleson Park Community Gardeners, supported by the False Creek South Neighbourhood Association (FCSNA), and aims to build a community garden in Charleson Park. FCSNAs mandate is to encourage residents to be actively involved in proposed changes in the neighbourhood, and to provide residents with information on emergent issues. The gardeners have been working closely with the neighbouring McBride Community Garden coordinators to contribute to community building, healthy eating, and active living by creating community gardens in the South False Creek/Fairview area.

The second proposal is from the South Vancouver Green Thumbs, supported by the Marpole-Oakridge Community Association, and aims to build a community garden in Cambie Park. The South Vancouver Green Thumbs are a group that emerged from a gardening training and mentorship program offered by the Pearson Farmers at 57<sup>th</sup> Ave. and supported by the Marpole/Oakridge Community Centre throughout 2012. The Green Thumbs are now eager to create a new gardening space.

These proposals meet 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.
- The Charleson garden will have a community development component involving the neighbouring elementary school in a shared plot and growing program.

## **DISCUSSION**

### *Charleson Park Community Garden*

The neighbourhood of South False Creek is dominated by multi-family homes with very limited access to gardens. Alternative locations for a community garden in the area were considered, with the proposed location being favoured due to its good solar exposure, its underutilization as a park space, and its proximity to the school and to gardeners. The proposed site for the community garden is just west of the playing field, located between the fence and the pathway to the Laurel St. overpass.

Charleson Park is a busy park of 7 ha that has some of everything: playing field, dog off leash area, children's playground, duck pond, seawall pathways and casual lawn areas overlooking the water. Most spaces are already claimed by existing park uses, except for the proposed location allowing for a community garden of modest size. Careful attention will be given to all the edge conditions so that potential frictions can be properly addressed. Overall, the community garden is intended to be a neighbourly addition to Charleson Park where local residents of all ages can meet and cooperate with each other, and benefit from enhanced access to nature.



The proposed garden will include:

- 30-35 community garden plots
- A specially designed children's garden
- Wheelchair accessible plots
- Communal gardening beds
- Berry bushes around the perimeter for all to enjoy
- Seating
- Tool storage
- Space for compost production

#### *Cambie Park Community Garden*

Cambie Park is bordered on one side by predominantly single family housing, and on the other side by multi-family housing. The City has approved the Cambie Corridor Plan that allows for significant increases in density over the coming years. In the long term, Park Board staff intend to enhance the park with more features for a variety of park uses. The proposed garden location has been carefully chosen along the edge of the park to not encumber any future park enhancement. South Vancouver is underserved with regard to community garden spaces.



This proposed garden will include:

- Up to 30 community garden plots
- Communal crops shared with local food banks
- Tool storage shed
- Space for compost production
- Fence around garden

Cambie Park is a quiet park that has no formal uses, it is enjoyed by the local residents on a casual basis. The community garden will not disturb the existing character nor displace any existing uses, but provide for some social animation. Over time, it is hoped that additional features will make the park more accessible, including walkways and benches that are suitable for the many seniors living nearby.

For both proposed projects, the Park Board would provide some assistance to get the garden established, including drainage, water hook up, the first year of compost, and potentially some food bearing trees using existing capital and operating budgets. The gardeners are responsible for all other costs, and for all governance, maintenance and operations.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

### *Charleson Park Community Garden*

From January 15 – February 3 2013, public consultation on this proposal was held. Staff and garden volunteers delivered approximately 400 flyers to neighbours adjacent to the

proposed garden site (roughly a 2 block radius), as required by the community garden policy. In addition to this, a sign was posted on the site notifying other park users.

The Park Board received a total of 48 responses via email and telephone, and met with the principal of the False Creek Elementary School. Of these, 71% (34 submissions) were in favour of the proposal.

The most common reasons for supporting the garden proposal included:

- Many townhouse dwellers living nearby that would like gardening space close to where they live.
- Good use of an underutilised area of the park.
- Educational opportunities for school children in False Creek Elementary.
- Will encourage more local, community based uses of the park.

The most common concerns included:

- Soil contamination.
- Community gardens are messy, and are an exclusive use of the park.
- Park is already very busy, with many other competing uses, and there were concerns with conflicts.

If this garden is approved, gardeners will be asked to respond to these issues in their final design in response to the public consultation:

- Remove the garden plots around the north-west corner to maintain sight lines and play space for the school.
- Ensure all planting beds are raised and use clean soil/compost.
- Careful treatment of the edge of the garden along the path to reduce conflicts along the path (details to be discussed further during detailed design process).
- Design any necessary garden staging areas (for wheelbarrows, piles of compost, etc.) into the garden area itself and to always stay off the path for these uses.

#### *Cambie Park Community Garden*

From January 26 – February 10 2013, public consultation on this proposal was held. Staff and garden volunteers delivered approximately 700 flyers to neighbours within a 2 block radius of the garden site, as required by the community garden policy. In addition to this, a sign was posted on site notifying other park users.

The Park Board received a total of 24 responses via email and telephone, and of these, 67% (16 submissions) were in favour of the proposal.

The most common reasons for supporting the proposal include:

- Great for families and community building
- Bring some more people, positive activity and use to underutilised park

The most common concerns with the proposal include:

- The aesthetic of the garden
- Small park in busy area, other uses will be displaced

If this garden is approved, gardeners will be asked to respond to these issues in their final design in response to the public consultation:

- Ensure shed, compost and fence blend in well with park and surroundings.
- The garden is sited, and will be designed, to respond to future park redevelopment that will likely come with development of the Cambie corridor. The license agreement will also be written to reflect potential changes to the overall park design and garden location.

### **NEXT STEPS**

If the Board approves these garden proposals, the next steps would be for each garden to:

1. Produce final design that meets Park Board requirements;
2. Submit final design to General Manager for review and approval;
3. Enter into license agreement;
4. Garden construction can begin.

### **SUMMARY**

The proposed plans further the objectives of the Park Board's Strategic Plan and the Greenest City Action Plan. They meet the criteria of the Community Garden Policy. These gardens will contribute to increasing our local food assets, and will also build community connections. Staff recommends that the Board approve these proposals for two new community gardens – one each at Charleson Park and Cambie Park - and then work with the Charleson Park Community Gardeners, the South Vancouver Green Thumbs, and their project sponsors to develop final plans for each of the gardens.

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.