



Date: January 20, 2014

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. *THAT the Board approve a new community garden in Beaconsfield Park, with all details to the satisfaction of the General Manager; and*
- B. *THAT the Board grant a five-year license to the Italian Cultural Centre Society to operate the community garden, 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.

BACKGROUND

Staff recommends approval of a new community garden in Beaconsfield Park proposed by the Italian Cultural Centre Society. The proposal was received through an Expression of Interest for new community gardens and orchards in April 2013.

The Italian Cultural Centre Society has a wide array of existing food related cultural and community programming. They have engaged the Montessori School on their site, the Still Creek Housing Co-op next door, and Fresh Roots Urban Farm working at Van Tech high school nearby in discussions about the potential garden and associated programming.

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

- Will include (a) community development program(s) that encourages the involvement of schools, youth groups and citizens who do not have an assigned plot in gardening activities.
- 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

Beaconsfield Park is a large, active park bordered on three sides by single- and multi-family housing, and on the other side by the Italian Cultural Centre and two seniors housing developments on their property. Beaconsfield Park is active with sports field user groups, children and families, and other active and passive park users. The proposed garden location has been carefully chosen to the west of the playground on a sloped area that will not encumber any future park enhancement or displace current park uses, and will also activate an area of the park surrounded by the playground, field users, and the Italian Cultural Centre (see Appendix B).

The Park Board will provide some assistance to get the garden established including installation of drainage, water hook up, the first year of compost, and potentially some food bearing trees and other support depending on available existing capital and operating budgets. The gardeners are responsible for all other costs, and for all governance, maintenance and operations. The Italian Cultural Centre Society has already confirmed a \$20,000 grant to support garden construction and programming, pending approval of the garden by the Park Board.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From November 21 - December 7, 2013 public consultation was held. Staff and volunteers hand delivered approximately 700 flyers to neighbours within a 2 block radius of the garden site, as required by the community garden policy. A sign was posted on the site notifying other park users, 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 57 responses via email, telephone, and on-line survey. Of these 93% (53 submissions) were in favour of the proposal. Postal codes entered by on-line survey respondents were reviewed, with 69% 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 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 the new community garden at Beaconsfield Park.

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.

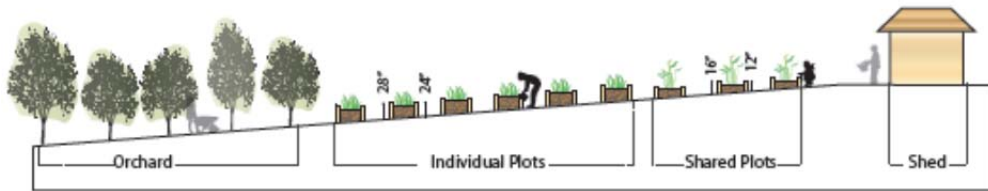
Appendix B: Proposed Design for Beaconsfield Community Garden



Figure 1: Location of proposed community garden in Beaconsfield Park

This proposed garden (Figure 2, next page) includes:

- 800 square metre area
- ~40 community garden beds for users of all abilities and age groups
- Programmed spaces for demonstrations, teaching and children
- Portion of the food grown will support nearby community programs
- Pollinator gardens
- Decorative fencing
- Tool storage shed, compost production spaces, bench seating
- To be considered in a future phase of park and garden development:
 - Accessible walking path connecting the garden to nearby facilities
 - Bake oven to support community food programming
 - Community orchard



S1 Cross Section Through Proposed Community Garden

Figure 2: Proposed Beaconsfield Park community garden design for consultation