



Date: February 6, 2014

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

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## RECOMMENDATION

*THAT the Board support a temporary community garden adjacent to Creekside Community Centre, with all details to the satisfaction of the General Managers of the Park Board and Engineering.*

## 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).

The City utilises Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Lands Other Than Parks for governing community garden activities (Appendix B).

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 supporting a temporary new community garden in the street right-of-way east of the Creekside Community Centre, in partnership with The World in a Garden Multicultural Society. The proposal was developed collaboratively with the Creekside Community Centre, the World in a Garden, Engineering, Park Planning, and a local resident. The Park Board will work with the community gardeners to support integration with Creekside Community Centre, good governance, neighbourhood support and involvement and will also provide funding. Because the site is on a street right-of-way, Engineering will hold the license agreement for the project with the Society, and will also support the project with funding. Engineering supports this project, and views it as a strong collaboration between Engineering and the Park Board.

The space is currently a rough gravel area, used informally for parking as well as for special event staging. During the South East False Creek planning process it was identified as a potential future site for an emergency supplies shipping container, as well as a children's and/or youth play area. Because of these other uses, and because a significant new park will be developed on the Concert lands to the east of the Athlete's Village in the next 5-8 years, this garden will be temporary with the intention of moving to a permanent home in the new park, pending public process on that project.

This proposal meets the Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Lands Other Than Parks. It is also aligned with the Park Board Community Garden Policy.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed garden is in an underutilized location adjacent to the Athlete's Village, recognized as one of the greenest neighbourhoods in the world. Community garden plots have been integrated in other areas of the neighbourhood and there are long waitlists for these spaces indicating a high demand. The Creekside Community Centre is a hub of activity in the neighbourhood, and is looking for new opportunities to engage residents in community centre programming and activities, and to build connections in this relatively new neighbourhood.

The World in a Garden was invited to join this project and serve as the non-profit sponsor, educational partner, and community garden lead. They focus on educating community and youth about the nutritional, cultural and environmental aspects of growing and eating food and have the capacity, interest and skills to expand into this new site and animate the garden.

The proposed garden location is a high profile site along the Ontario Greenway, Central Valley Greenway, and adjacent to the Seaside Greenway (seawall). It will involve creative garden design and construction to take advantage of the temporary availability of the site, and model urban garden design and practices for the Athlete's Village neighbourhood, community centre patrons, and passers-by. Demonstration gardening techniques will be showcased including vertical growing, movable garden beds, a shared children's garden, and a learning and teaching area, and some individual plots will be available as well (see details in Appendix C). The garden area will be universally accessible for all ages and abilities.

The Park Board and Engineering will provide some assistance to get the garden established including: site re-surfacing, some materials for garden construction, and provision of water, the first year of compost and 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 30 posters and 800 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 others about 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 44 responses via email, telephone, and on-line survey. Of these 91% (40 submissions) were in favour of the proposal. Postal codes entered by on-line survey respondents were reviewed, with 75% 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, will further activate the Creekside Community Centre, will provide learning opportunities, and will build community connections. Staff recommends that the Board support this proposal for the temporary community garden at Creekside Community Centre.

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## **Appendix A: Park Board 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: Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Land Other Than City Parks**

The City of Vancouver (the “City”) recognizes community gardens as more than places to share one’s passion for gardening. Community gardening is a valuable activity that can contribute to community development and education, increased self-reliance, community health, public open space, wildlife habitat, environmental awareness, and positive social interaction.

The City is addressing food insecurity through the creation of community gardens as a means to relieve hunger, improve nutrition, and increase access to and distribution of food for its residents.

### **Definition:**

For the purposes of these Operational Guidelines for Community Gardens on City Land Other Than City Parks, (the “Guidelines”), a community garden is defined as a place on City-owned land, other than City parks, operated or overseen by a non-profit Societies, where people grow and maintain ornamental and edible plants. Residential boulevard gardens, Green Streets Program gardens and beautification projects are not included in this definition of community gardens.

### **Community gardens on City land other than City parks may exist in any area of the city and should serve one or more of the following purposes:**

- produce edible and ornamental plants for the personal use of Societies members;
- grow food for the garden members’ benefit through skill building programs or City approved economic development training opportunities;
- grow food to donate to charitable causes.

### **Once a suitable City-owned site has been located for a community garden, the following conditions will apply:**

1. A community consultation process, jointly undertaken by the non-profit Societies (the “Societies”) and the City, indicates neighbourhood support for the garden;
2. The Societies agrees to create their own membership agreements, and develop and operate the garden according to the Guidelines and the Community Garden Licence, (the “Licence”) which specify terms of use, management responsibilities, and procedures;
3. The standard term of use will be five (5) years unless the specific terms of use dictate otherwise.
  - a. Should cancellation of the Licence be required, a minimum of ninety (90) days written notice will be provided to the Societies and whenever possible, with the cancellation taking effect after the growing season for that year has been completed.
  - b. Notwithstanding, in an emergency such as an unexpected infrastructure repair, the City would require immediate access to the site.
4. The garden is developed and maintained at no cost to the City, except that prior to the first season, the City will, at its cost, prepare the site for planting by removing undesirable vegetation, leveling the land, adding compost and providing a water service to the property;

5. A comprehensive garden site plan must be approved by City staff. The plan shall include the layout of the plots, irrigation, accessible pathways, trees, garden art, paved areas, picnic areas, compost areas and indicate the locations and dimensions of all proposed temporary structures and fences;
6. An ornamental perimeter garden must be provided between the community garden and the adjacent lands and street to create an attractive buffer with the neighbourhood. Fences are permitted around the larger community garden and may not be more than one meter high;
7. All gardens shall include provisions for accessibility for seniors and/or disabled persons, as well as fully accessible paths.
8. In addition, two (2) plots of average size designated for one of the following: a) a local non-profit, b) a neighbouring child-care centre, or c) a common area for food grown for charitable purposes;
9. The City requires \$2 million liability insurance for all gardens prior to issuing or renewing a Licence. Liability insurance requirements may be modified at the discretion of the Directors of Risk Management and Legal Services.

**General rules for community gardens:**

1. Allotments of space must be made from a waiting list on a first-come, first-served basis to any resident of Vancouver with preference to those with no garden plots elsewhere and who reside or work in the local neighbourhood;
2. Community gardens are for chemical-free gardening only. Section 5.17 of the Health By-law No. 6580 (City of Vancouver's Pesticide Use Restriction By-law), restricts the application of synthetic pesticides, including insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides. Synthetic fertilizers are not to be used;
3. Plots must be planted by May 25, with exceptions made for extreme weather. Plots not utilized by this date must be reassigned;
4. Plots must be tidied and prepared for winter by November 1 preferably by mulching, planting cover crop seeds, and/or winter crop gardening;
5. Water is a limited resource, and should be used sparingly. Gardeners are encouraged to collect and use rainwater for irrigation;
6. Tires are not permitted;
7. Garbage service is not provided. Trash removal is the responsibility of the community garden;
8. Best practices must be used in the management of compost bins and windfalls to deter pests;
9. The general public is to have access to the garden at all times. Locked barriers are not permitted;
10. Bees may be kept in community gardens in accordance with the City's hobby beekeeping guideline

## Appendix C: Proposed Design for Creekside Community Garden

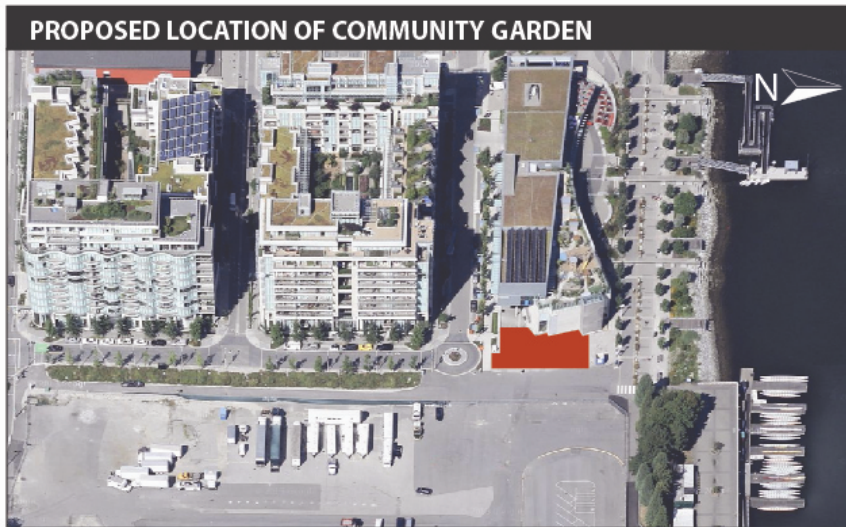


Figure 1: Location of proposed community garden at Creekside Community Centre

This proposed garden (Figure 2) includes:

- 350 m<sup>2</sup> of garden area
- Mobile garden beds that can be easily moved or dismantled
- Accessible garden beds for people of all ages and abilities, with activities tied to community centre programs
- Community gathering spaces with benches and seating
- Integrated children's play area
- Themed demonstration gardens with an education focus, including:
  - Indigenous food plants
  - Vertical growing wall and trellis
  - Rain garden
  - Culinary herb garden
  - Pollinator beds
- Multilingual signs for greater accessibility and self-guided tours
- Reused and repurposed materials from nearby businesses
- Tool storage and compost





Figure 2: Proposed Creekside community garden design for consultation