



Date: April 1, 2015

TO: Park Board Chair and Commissioners
FROM: General Manager - Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Healthy Local Food Field House Residencies - Norquay and Strathcona License Agreements

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Vancouver Park Board approve, with all arrangements to the satisfaction of the General Manager and Director of Legal Services, the following two Healthy, Local Food Residency license agreements:

- A. A license agreement with Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society, effective May 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017 for the Norquay field house Healthy Local Food Residency.
- B. A license agreement with Village Vancouver Transition Society from May 1, 2015 to December 31, 2017 for the Strathcona field house Healthy Local Food Residency.

POLICY

In July 2013, the Vancouver Park Board approved the *Local Food Action Plan*, with a direction to develop and support new food assets and programs in parks and community centres.

In May 2012, the Board endorsed the *Park Board Strategic Plan*, including the priorities of "Engaging People" and being "a Leader in Greening". More specifically, the Board directed staff "to support community based food production by contributing to the development of neighbourhood and city-wide food infrastructure programs and assets".

On June 27, 2011, Park Board directed staff to "explore the potential use of any surplus facilities such as closed field houses for re-purposing" in order to benefit people and communities. Further, the Board instructed that the process be "guided by consultation so that these spaces become expressions of the will of the residents of the City of Vancouver."

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

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.

Vancouver City Council approved the *Vancouver Food Charter* in 2007.

BACKGROUND

There are about 75 field houses in Vancouver parks, many of which served a historical purpose of providing live-in accommodations for caretakers and concessionaires in the park system. Although many field houses still provide these accommodations, this practice is changing over time as Park Board priorities shift. A field house typically consists of a small caretakers suite, public washrooms, change rooms and often ancillary rooms for programs and storage, although the design and use varies. There are a range of current uses including: social spaces for neighbourhood groups; support and storage space for sports organisations; artist, food, and environment residencies; concessions; and Park Board staff support space for gardeners, park rangers, and community centre programmers. The buildings are small but solidly built, and provide a valuable amenity for the Park Board and the community.

Staff have received significant input from a variety of stakeholder groups about these spaces, how they might be more fully utilised for community benefit, and the need for a transparent allocation process and usage agreements to ensure equitable and appropriate use.

The 2015-18 Capital Plan has allocated \$800,000 for investments in field house upgrades to support enhanced community use and benefits in the areas of art and culture, sport, local food and environment projects.

The Park Board Local Food Action Plan identified existing assets that could be more fully utilised to support local food projects and programs, and field houses were identified as a high priority opportunity to explore.

DISCUSSION

Objectives:

The Healthy, Local Food Residency program provides a new opportunity to bring community-based local food initiatives more strongly into parks and community centres in Vancouver neighbourhoods, and aims to:

1. Create a physical hub where community, colleagues, and curious visitors come together to imagine, create, and celebrate healthy, local food systems together.
2. Contribute to the vibrancy and resilience of our neighbourhoods by inspiring participation and relationship building using food as a catalyst for individual and community engagement.
3. Encourage the development of community-based hubs of activity focused on access to healthy, local food and food resources and where new relationships, approaches, and creative collaborations can be cultivated and grown.
4. Build strong relationships between residency participants and adjacent parks and community centres, and Park Board staff.
5. Provide residency participants with a stable space to develop their programs, practices, networks, tools, resources, and relationships in service of community.

Allocation Process

Over the past year, Recreation staff from Arts, Culture and Engagement, Environment as well as Park Operations worked collaboratively to identify potential field houses for local food programs.

The Strathcona Park caretakers suite was used for an Artist Residency from 2012-14, and was determined to be a great food-focused space due to its proximity to two large community gardens and the Strathcona Community Centre which offers many successful food access and literacy programs. The Norquay Park field house was identified as a great candidate for a local food residency due to an adjacent unused community garden space as well as active food programming in the neighbourhood.

A Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) was issued in October 2014, and modeled after the successful artist residency programs. The RFEI was distributed to organisations and individuals working on local food initiatives throughout the city, as well as posted on the City's website. Staff in community centres, neighbourhood houses, and other community serving facilities adjacent to the field houses were notified and encouraged to consider the opportunity that these new spaces may offer for their organisations.

An open house was held at each field house so that interested potential partners could view the suites and discuss the program with Park Board staff. A small number of expressions of interest were submitted and reviewed by staff in Park Planning, Arts, Culture and Engagement, and Social Policy (CoV), and the recommended successful proponents are briefly described below.

Norquay Food Hub

Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society will be the lead organisation for the Norquay Food Hub. In collaboration with the Renfrew-Collingwood Food Security Institute, Vancouver Fruit Tree Project, and the Renfrew-Collingwood Aboriginal Youth Canoe Club they will offer a range of food programs. The Hub will host events, celebrations, and a thriving neighbourhood food system.

Fresh Roots envisions a world where everyone has access to healthy soil, food and community. They work toward this by cultivating engaging gardens and programs that catalyse healthy eating, ecological stewardship and community celebration. They currently have two schoolyard market gardens in partnership with the Vancouver School Board, and were named Greenest City Leaders in 2014 through the City's Awards of Excellence. Fresh Roots, along with their three partners on this project, bring very strong food literacy skills alongside strong partnerships with different cultural communities and other neighbourhood-based organisation, making them an excellent partner for this project.

Strathcona Park Field House Residency

Village Vancouver will be the facilitator of the Strathcona Park Field House Residency. The program aims to attract local residents into workshops and events related to producing, preserving and preparing food. Skill sharing activities, food-art collaborations and food sharing on a variety of topics will unfold with community partners around Strathcona.

Village Vancouver is part of the international Transition Towns Initiative, where almost 400 communities are taking actions that build sustainable and resilient communities and cities.

They are 100% volunteer-driven, and are fuelled by passion and engaged citizens who wish to make Vancouver a more socially just, ecologically resilient and fun city. They partner with a wide variety of community organisations, and successfully initiated over 300 activities and events in 2014. Village Vancouver brings their excellent grassroots community organising skills, as well as their strong network and volunteer base, to create some place-based programming in Strathcona that builds on the strong local food work already happening in this neighbourhood.

Funding Model

Park Board, with support from the City's Real Estate and Facilities Management department, will renovate the caretakers suites to ensure that the spaces are healthy, safe and functional for food focused uses. The cost of upgrading these two facilities is estimated at \$100,000 which would be funded through the 2015 capital plan. In exchange for use of the field house spaces, each organisation will provide a minimum of 350 hours per year of community-engaged programming that supports the objectives of the program.

SUMMARY

Staff recommend that the Board approve these two new partnerships. These Healthy, Local Food Residencies align with the Park Board's Strategic Plan and the Local Food Action Plan, and will animate under-utilised spaces in ways that add a great deal of value to the communities and beyond. These programs will enable the Park Board, Fresh Roots and Village Vancouver, along with their many partners, to further existing development and engagement work on food literacy skills, healthy living, and building strong and resilient community connections.

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Appendix A: Location of Healthy Local Food Field House Residencies

Figure 1: Strathcona Park field house caretakers suite (yellow star).



Figure 2: Norquay Park field house caretakers suite (yellow star), includes outdoor area designated for food growing (orange star).

