

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE

DATE 2022 February 18

FROM: GENERAL MANAGER
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
GENERAL MANAGER
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL
SERVICES

FILE: 76500 20

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM

PURPOSE: To establish a community garden program in Burnaby on City-owned lands.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to approve the proposed process and funding strategy for the establishment of a community garden program on City-owned lands including the creation of a pilot program for two sites, as outlined in this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission, Financial Management Committee, Environment Committee, and the Social Planning Committee for information.
3. **THAT** a copy of this report be sent to Mr. Jugoslav Bajkin at 4540 Wayburne Drive, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3V9.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 2020 June 16, the Social Planning Committee, as a result of discussion resulting from correspondence relating to the keeping of backyard chickens, requested staff to report on how residents could be supported to produce more of their own food. This was followed by a motion at the 2020 November 24 Planning and Development Committee that requested staff to bring back information on current policy related to community gardens on both City land and private land, with the intent of establishing a community gardens program. In response, this report outlines a process for the establishment of a community garden program through a pilot project on City-owned lands.

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2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

Expanded City efforts to support resident food security and access are aligned with the following Council-adopted policies and plans/strategies: *City's Equity Policy (2020)*, *Corporate Strategic Plan (2017)*, *Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016)*, *Social Sustainability Strategy (2011)* and the *Healthy Community Policy (1991)*.

3.0 COMMUNITY FOOD GARDENING

Agriculture has figured prominently in Burnaby's historical and cultural development, from a rural community to an urban centre since its initial settlement in the 1860s. The City was developed with a variety of agricultural areas and farm-based industries that have had a significant role in shaping the community. Burnaby's oldest cultural organization, the South Burnaby Garden Club (founded as the Central Park Agricultural Institute in 1897), continues to play an active role in promoting urban gardening and agriculture.

Burnaby's most productive agricultural lands are located in the Big Bend area, formed of alluvial and peat soils deposited as part of the Fraser River delta. The City has protected significant areas of these historic farm lands through community planning policies and zoning of the Big Bend area, and has supported their designation as part of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which was established in 1973.

In the 1970s, Burnaby residents pioneered urban agriculture, with the support of the City, through the creation of a large community allotment garden on City-owned agricultural lands in the Riverside neighbourhood of the Big Bend. The Ministry of Agriculture originally operated the gardens under a pilot program; when this program ceased, the Burnaby and Regional Allotment Gardens Association (BARAGA) was formed by plot holders, and to this day continues to operate the garden, under a lease agreement with the City. Also in the 1970s, Simon Fraser University students established a garden in Naheeno Park, which also continues to flourish. More recently, urban agriculture has been incorporated, in a variety of forms, within more densely developed areas of the City.

These urban agricultural initiatives have proven to be successful and important community amenities.

3.1 Existing Regulatory Framework for Community Gardens

At its meeting of 2013 June 17, Council adopted a report which clarified Burnaby's policy approach to urban agriculture, including community gardens. As stated in this report, community gardens are a permitted accessory use, with landowner or lessee permission, within A1, A2, A3 Agricultural Districts, P3 Public and Park Use Districts, and in the M1, M2, M3 and M4 Industrial Districts. The P3 District includes parks, public open space and public school sites.

In addition to the above, food gardening is permitted within the context of comprehensive development (CD) master plans and new developments. Garden plots for residents are regularly requested and included in new multi-unit residential developments as an avenue for both growing

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food and building social connections. Community gardens could be established on public lands owned or leased by other governments or government agencies (e.g. Provincial Government, TransLink, BC Hydro, etc.) if those lands have the correct zoning permitting the use, and if the landowner agrees to provide access for such purpose.

The 2013 Council report noted that temporary community gardens on privately-owned land that is awaiting redevelopment are not currently supported where the use would be contrary to an approved Community Plan designation. Doing so may have implications on the tax status of such lands, impede the planned development of lands, and result in the establishment of gardens in locations not well suited to the use.

3.2 Existing Burnaby Food Initiatives

The City actively seeks to support access to food, the ability to grow food, and to support pollinators, through a range of formal and informal supports and initiatives. An overview of these supports are summarized and listed below:

- The City was a founding member of Burnaby Food First (BFF), which was a local community consortium that was formed in the late 1990's to advocate for affordable access to food for all community residents. BFF has offered free workshops to residents on container food gardening (designed for balconies) and food preservation.
- In 2009, City Council adopted amendments to the Zoning Bylaw to permit beekeeping (apiculture) in R1 through R5, R10 and R11 Residential Districts and A1 through A3 Agricultural Districts.
- The City partners with Artisan Farmers' Markets to offer a weekly market at Burnaby City Hall from May to October.
- The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department has historically offered free or subsidized food as part of many programs. Examples included subsidized seniors luncheons, youth cooking programs and children's gardening programs.
- Burnaby leases City-owned land at no-cost for two community gardens¹: the Heights Community Garden and the Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden. The latter garden is the largest of its kind in Western Canada. Both gardens are very popular and have long waitlists.
- Gardening plots are increasingly being included, as a result of City requests, within new multi-family developments for the use of building residents. As a result, over 100 new gardening plots have been created in new developments over the past five years.
- In alignment with the City's Social and Environmental Sustainability Strategies, the City is currently developing a first-ever Burnaby Food Systems Strategy to outline the current context of access to food as well as articulating short, medium, and long term actions for enhancement.

¹ To the knowledge of staff, there are currently 13 community gardens currently in Burnaby. 11 of the gardens are on educational institution property and two are on City property.

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3.3 Public Access and Benefits

Community gardens in an urban environment provide a valuable recreation activity that contributes to people's health and well-being, positive social interactions, neighbourhood building, food production, environmental education, habitat development and connection to nature. Publicly accessible and available gardens provide shared opportunities for teaching and learning, as well as encourage programming and gardening opportunities for the community. These successes are already exemplified at the Heights Community Garden and the Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden.

As noted above, the City has a history of encouraging urban agriculture and in supporting the socioeconomic and environmental benefit of food security for residents. As such, there is precedence for the creation of a community garden program on City-owned lands.

4.0 ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM IN BURNABY

Staff propose the following activities to establish a community garden program in Burnaby:

4.1 Develop Community Garden Program Component

4.1.1 Creation of a Program Application Form and Community Garden Operations Guidelines

The first step would be development of an application form, application process and criteria by which applications would be assessed. The application form, process and criteria would be publicly available on the City's website. Staff note that the applicant group would need to be formalized as part of this process, either through establishment of a non-profit society, or through creation of an operations partnership with an existing local non-profit organization.

Staff would also work to develop a set of guidelines for user groups providing direction on successfully establishing and maintaining a community garden on City-owned land. The information would provide guidance for user groups on the intent of community gardens; management of garden membership with priority given to Burnaby residents; development, physical accessibility and public access requirements; and management/operation of the garden. The guidelines would also identify relevant City regulations (e.g. bylaws), policies and practices as needed.

4.1.2 Site Selection

Upon application and confirmation of an applicant group's eligibility, the next step would be to work with the applicants to identify a suitable site. The site selection process is described further in *Section 4.2* of this report. It is important to ensure that residents living near the potential garden sites are made aware of the intended garden, and have an opportunity to provide comments on the proposal. Staff would provide information on the proposed community garden plan and survey neighbours within a certain radius to solicit their comments on the proposed garden.

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4.1.3 Site Plan and Garden Management Plan Development

Assuming selection of an appropriate site, staff would then work with the applicant group to both formalize a site/design plan for the garden, and to develop a garden management plan (based upon the guidelines noted above). The management plan would also include factors such as a planting schedule, maintenance standards, waste removal, pest control and an emergency response procedure.

4.1.4 License Agreement with the City

Upon completion of the steps noted above, the applicant group would be required to enter into a licensing agreement with the City to ensure that there are clear understandings of the terms and conditions for operating the community garden, and to provide proof of the appropriate liability insurance. The term (number of years) and potential options to review the license would be determined through the pilot process as discussed in the next section.

4.2 Conduct a Pilot Project

As outlined above, there are many aspects to the establishment of a community garden program. To test the feasibility of the program components, it is proposed that a pilot be undertaken alongside the development of the program, to allow for program elements to be amended as needed.

In order to determine optimal locations for potential sites for community gardens, staff undertook an initial review of City-owned lands. This review included examination of: riparian setbacks, tree cover, access to water, sun exposure, availability of washrooms, access to parking, slope, drainage, proximity to multi-family housing, past expressed community interest, and distance from collector and arterial roadways.

City-owned lands with contamination (e.g. former manufacturing sites), sites held by the City for other purposes (e.g. creation of affordable housing/parks and greenspace consolidation) or sites encumbered with utility right-of-ways were not included for consideration.

Through this process, twelve (12) sites were identified across the City as potential pilot community garden locations. Staff then conducted site visits and performed a secondary level of suitability analysis by examining ground conditions including active use patterns in on and around the area, sun/shade, tree and shrub health and compatibility with impact to plant growth, invasive species (pest and plant conditions), soil conditions and water source connections.

Based on this process, two preferred pilot sites were identified:

- Greentree Village Park, in the southeast corner near the playground. This location is zoned P3 District and designated as Park land (see *Appendix #1*).

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- 7679 13th Street (adjacent to Ernie Winch Park). This location is identified as open space and is currently zoned R5 District. To proceed as a pilot site, staff note that this location would need to be rezoned to P3 District (see *Appendix #2*).

Staff are aware of groups of community members in both areas who may be interested in working with the City to establish these pilot sites. Should the pilot project approach outlined in the report be approved, staff would meet with the groups in question to discuss next steps, and the proposed program elements described above.

4.3 Program Management

In order to enable creation of the community garden program, appropriate staffing resources are required. As such, the creation of an additional RFT position within the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department (Parks Planning) to act as the Community Garden Coordinator is being requested. Key responsibilities would include:

- acting as the staff contact liaison with the user group proponents for each garden site;
- facilitating connection between project proponents and other potential partners;
- facilitating project and staff support between City departments;
- where appropriate, further assessing the suitability of each garden site for food consumption and production;
- working with the user group proponents to establish a licensing agreement with the City for the operation of each garden site;
- working with the user group proponents of each site to design the garden including pathways, fencing, loading areas and accessibility for users who use mobility devices; and
- providing other in-kind support, as appropriate.

4.3.1 Capital Costs

The establishment of garden sites would have initial start-up costs such as garden bed area clearing, soil remediation, connection to water service lines and support facilities including pathways, seating, tool storage, signage, fencing, and other elements that reveal themselves through the detailed site inspection process. To support the initial set-up, it is proposed that the City supply the water service line and develop a vehicle access point to facilitate delivery of construction supplies and the ongoing material needs of the garden. These works may range in cost from \$25,000 to \$150,000 depending on proximity to waterlines and roadways. In addition \$50,000 would be allocated for each site for ancillary operating items. Detail site development plans would be identified in the application and consultation process and would be reflected in the license agreement.

Funding for the RFT position and any further operating or capital requirements for the Community Garden Program will be included as part of the 2023- 2027 Financial Plan process for Council's consideration.

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5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The City has a history of supporting food security and access in Burnaby. In line with this direction, this report proposes a process for establishment of a community garden program on City-owned lands.

As such, it is recommended that the Committee request Council to approve the proposed process and funding strategy for the establishment of a community garden program on City-owned lands, including the creation of two pilot program sites.

It is further recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission; Financial Management Committee; Environment Committee; and Social Planning Committee for information and to Mr. Jugoslav Bajkin at 4540 Wayburne Drive, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3V9.

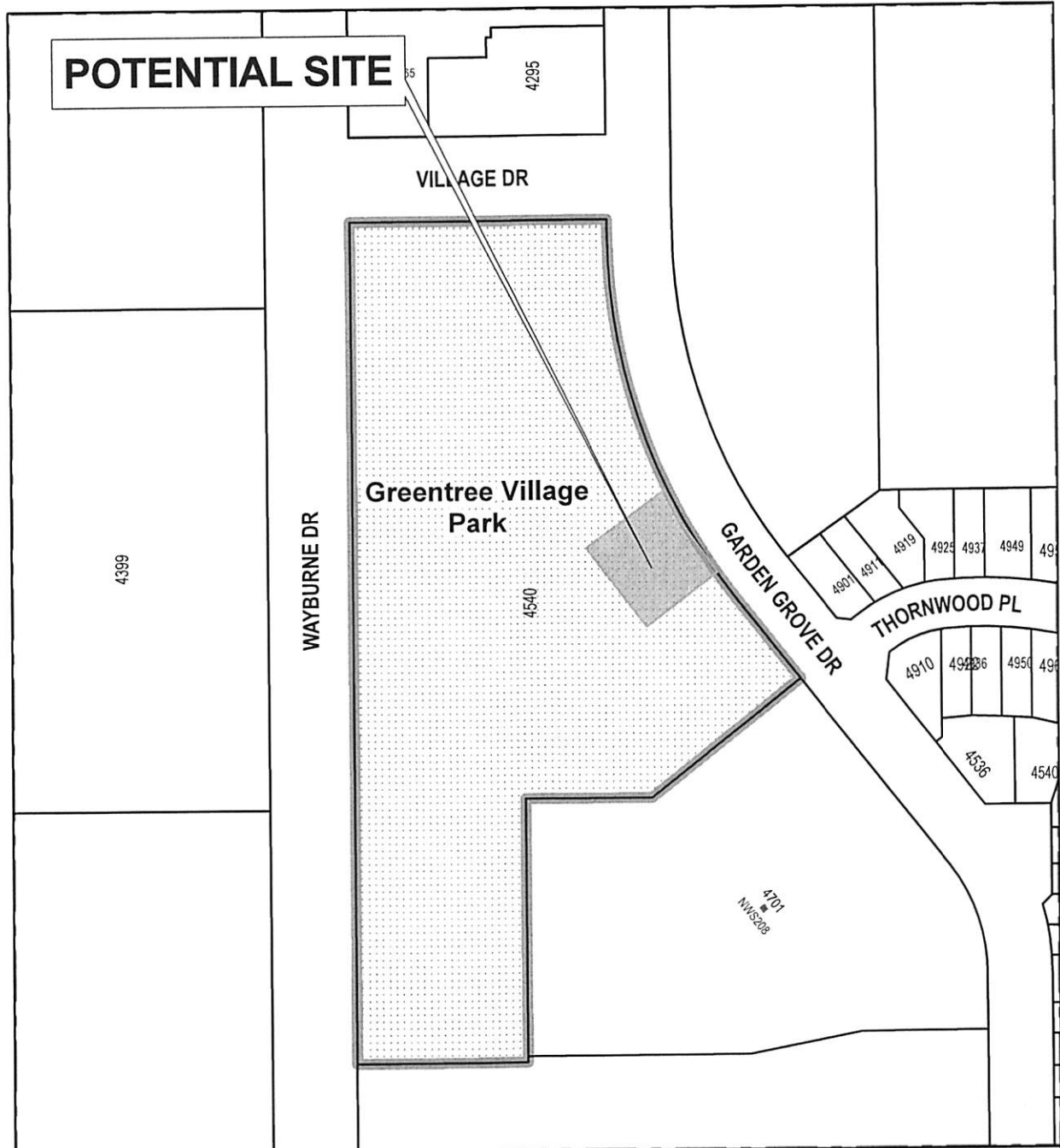
E. W. Kozak, General Manager
PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Dave Ellenwood, General Manager
PARKS, RECREATION AND
CULTURAL SERVICES

KO/HE/sa

Attachments

Copied to: Chief Administrative Officer
Deputy Chief Administrative Officer and Chief Financial Officer
General Manager Corporate Services
General Manager Engineering
General Manager Community Safety
Chief Human Resources Officer
Chief Librarian
City Solicitor
City Clerk



PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Date: NOV 09 2021

scale: 1:2,000

Drawn By: JS

**COMMUNITY GARDEN PILOT PROJECT
PORTION OF 4540 WAYBURNE DRIVE**



Potential Garden Site



Park



POTENTIAL SITE

Ernie Winch Park



PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT



Date: NOV 26 2021

**COMMUNITY GARDEN PILOT PROJECT
7679 13TH STREET**

scale: 1:2,000

Drawn By: JS

 Potential Garden Site

 Park