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# COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY

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## STRATEGIC INITIATIVE:

- The City should identify itself as the hub for agricultural based businesses and market its agricultural assets and opportunities.
- The City should be governed by the principles of sustainable development and planned growth in retaining long-term lifestyle and economic opportunities.
- The City should give a high priority to the implementation of plans and policies aimed at enhancing and revitalizing the City's Downtown Core and Waterfront.
- The City should ensure that its planning documents are updated to reflect good planning policies.
- The City should encourage public / private partnerships to achieve the City's planning and development objectives.
- The City should promote the objectives of 'Healthy Communities' through program and facility development.
- The City should play an advocacy role in identifying and promoting health needs in the community.

## BACKGROUND

Municipalities are increasingly investigating aspects of urban agriculture, such as community gardening, in order to pursue 'healthy community' goals and to establish local food strategies. These local food strategies examine a region's outlook as it applies to the capability of the area to procure and produce enough food to fulfill the population's requirements.

Community gardens transform passively-used green space into productive garden plots. Community garden projects rely on community volunteers, who plant, tend, and harvest different types of fruit, vegetable and flower crops each season. These projects are often the result of partnerships between community members, municipal governments, and private stakeholders. The produce garnered from a community garden project can be sold through local food markets (e.g., Farmers' or 100-Mile Markets), donated to local food banks or charitable meal programs, and/or shared among the participant gardeners.

Community garden projects provide the opportunity for numerous community and individual gains, including (but not limited to):

- Mental and physical health promotion through the activity of food production;

- The opportunity for social engagement with family, neighbours and fellow gardeners;
- Contribution to the creation of a sustainable local food economy;
- Development of important food production and gardening skills;
- The opportunity to re-establish the community's understanding of the importance of agriculture and local food systems; and
- Contribution to civic enrichment and beautification.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVE**

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The purpose of this policy is:

- i) To initiate steps toward a food sovereignty strategy for the City of Owen Sound;
- ii) To provide every citizen the opportunity to access healthy food and a healthy lifestyle;
- iii) To promote the tenets of a healthy community;
- iv) To establish the City's willingness to support and enter into community partnerships for food procurement; and
- v) To guide the placement and operation of community gardens on City-owned lands.

## **DEFINITIONS**

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'Community Garden Collective' means all gardeners who contribute to the productive operation of their respective community garden. Reference to the 'Collective' includes the 'Executive'.

'Community Garden Executive' means a group of 2 or more individuals who agree to represent and administer the operations of the community garden project.

'Community Garden' means any planter, bed (raised or otherwise), or piece of land that is used to produce flowers, fruits, and/or vegetables as a community, neighbourhood or group initiative.

## **POLICIES**

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### **1. PROMOTING HEALTH & PARTNERSHIPS:**

- 1.1 Community gardens are encouraged to establish distribution partnerships with local food markets (e.g., Farmers' or 100-Mile Markets) and local food banks or charitable meal programs.
- 1.2 Use of herbicides and pesticides in community gardens shall be regulated in accordance with provincial legislation.
- 1.3 Participation in any community garden project must be peaceful, cooperative and inclusive.

- 1.4 Community gardens shall be used as a tool to beautify and enrich the City's visual landscape.
- 1.5 Community organizations, such as Community Living, Safe 'n Sound, the Children's Aid Society, and the Canadian Mental Health Association, are encouraged to participate in community garden initiatives.
- 1.6 Community Garden Collectives shall foster inter-generational interaction. Children and youth of all ages shall be permitted and encouraged to participate in community garden projects. Community Garden Collectives are encouraged to set aside plots for exclusive use by children.
- 1.7 Community gardens are encouraged to enter into partnerships with local schools, businesses, and other enterprises to help realize community garden project goals. This includes assistance with garden infrastructure, administration and maintenance.

## **2. LOCATING COMMUNITY GARDENS:**

- 2.1 Community gardens may be located on City-owned lands indicated on Schedule 'A' attached hereto.
- 2.2 Notwithstanding Clause 2.1, if a person/group wishes to locate a community garden on City-owned lands not specified in Schedule 'A', the proponent may submit a written request to the Community Services Department for consideration by the Community Planning & Heritage Advisory Committee.
- 2.3 Private landowners, including schools, churches, and other community groups are encouraged to initiate community garden projects.
- 2.4 Private lands may be used for community gardens, subject to the land owner's explicit authorization and cooperation with the community garden executive.
- 2.5 No community garden shall be placed on lands zoned 'Hazard' (ZH) in the City's Zoning By-law; otherwise, zoning shall not limit the placement of a community garden.
- 2.6 No community garden shall be placed on any site that is known or suspected to have contaminated soils.
  - 2.6.1 In accordance with O. Reg. 153/04 of the Environmental Protection Act, only lands where the current or last know use was residential, parkland, or agricultural will be considered for a community garden site on City-owned or managed lands.
- 2.7 Where possible, community gardens should be located on lands in close proximity to the City's trails or public transit systems for increased pedestrian access.
- 2.8 All community gardens shall be considered for integration into new and existing City Walking Tours.
- 2.9 All community gardens shall be located such that easy access by pedestrians, cyclists, and persons with disabilities is facilitated.

- 2.10 Where possible, community gardens should be located with priority on lands within walking distance (400-800 metres) to areas with higher proportions of affordable and social housing units.

### **3. OPERATIONS & AMENITIES:**

- 3.1 Each community garden shall operate under the supervision of a planning committee or 'Community Garden Executive', as defined in this policy.
- 3.2 The Community Garden Executive shall operate transparently and cooperatively with the community garden collective, other groups, and members of the community as a whole. A Community Garden Executive may include an existing organization.
- 3.3 The Community Garden Collective shall act responsibly and democratically, and are encouraged to establish and operate under rules, which govern the fair and inclusive operation and administration of the Collective.
- 3.4 Community garden projects located on City owned lands must be not-for-profit operations.
- 3.5 Subject to approval from the City, the Collective may place small compost receptacles and water barrels on the garden site.
- 3.6 Subject to approval by the City, the Collective may fence the garden area.

### **4. THE CITY'S ROLE:**

- 4.1 That City Council will endeavour to allocate a portion of its budget to the Community Services Department, Parks Division to support the establishment of community garden projects. The funds allocated will be used by the Community Services Department to cover applicable direct and indirect costs in kind:
- 4.1.1 DIRECT: Prepare the community garden in the first year by removing the grass and turning the soil in the allocated garden location.
- 4.1.2 INDIRECT: administration and management of the City's Community Garden Program, and coordination costs relating to the license agreement.
- 4.2 The City shall encourage and nurture its relationship with community gardeners.
- 4.3 The City will dedicate a new webpage(s) of the City's Website to encourage, promote, and administer the network of community gardens within the City.
- 4.3.1 The community gardens webpage(s) will be a primary hub that connects stakeholders of all types.
- 4.3.2 The City shall create a public register of all community gardens – the 'Community Garden Register' – in order to provide a central reference point for members of the community to encourage participation in community garden projects.

- 4.3.3 The City will maintain a current list of City lands available for community garden projects. This list shall be updated and posted on the City's Website each spring.
- 4.4 Other than regular lawn care and waste management, the City shall not be responsible for maintenance of community gardens beyond the initial tilling of the soil in year one of the project's operation.
- 4.5 The City shall not be held liable or responsible for any damage or losses to produce, materials, or the garden itself.
- 4.6 The City's in-kind contributions (as noted in Section 4.1) and promotion of any community garden project is subject to funding availability from year-to-year.

## **5. THE LICENSE AGREEMENT:**

- 5.1 All community garden projects located in City-owned or managed lands must enter into a license agreement with the City.
- 5.2 A standard term of a license agreement is to be three (3) years, with an option to renew.
- 5.3 The purpose of the license agreement is twofold:
  - 5.3.1 To outline the specific details of operation, management, administration, and maintenance of a community garden project; and
  - 5.3.2 To outline the responsibilities of each stakeholder to one another.
- 5.4 The members and contact information of the Community Garden Executive will be specified in the license agreement.
- 5.5 The license agreement must contain the details of the Public Liability Insurance obtained by the Community Garden Executive indemnifying the property owner and/or the City against any loss or injury of persons or property. All details regarding insurance will be examined on a case-by-case basis by the City in collaboration with the Executive.
- 5.6 Where community gardens are placed on private lands and the City's participation is requested/required, license agreements are required in accordance with the provisions of this Section 5. The cost of the license agreement shall be borne by the land owner and/or the Community Garden Executive.
- 5.7 At the end of a group's license agreement term, that same group shall have the right of first refusal to enter into a subsequent agreement with the City for use of the same community garden. Prior to the end of the agreement, the Executive shall submit written request to the Community Services Department if it wishes to enter into a new agreement.