

<b>County of Grey Comments</b>			
<b>#</b>	<b>County of Grey Comment</b>	<b>City Planning Staff Remark</b>	<b>How comment was incorporated into updated draft Policy</b>
1.	<p>County of Grey:</p> <p>County staff inquired whether there could be merit in extending the reach of the City's Community Improvement Plan (CIP) Landscaping &amp; Property Improvement Grant program to consider support for Community Gardens on appropriate lands owned by non-profit community organizations. City Planning staff acknowledge the potential benefits of including additional types of eligible projects under the Landscaping &amp; Property Improvement Grant program, however the Policy refines the scope of community gardens to being located on city-owned lands.</p>	<p>Staff are favourable to including a review of eligible projects under the CIP Landscaping &amp; Property Improvement Grant program during a subsequent Community Gardens Policy review period or during a CIP review period. The funds within the CIP are limited and should be shared among the eligible grant programs.</p> <p>It merits note that the county will not be contributing the annual \$20,000 in funding to the City's CIP after 2023.</p>	<p>The policy provides that Community Garden Collectives may seek funding for the cost of installing a water source in a Community Garden through a Landscaping &amp; Property Improvement Program grant under the City's Community Improvement Plan, provided the Community Garden Collective is eligible for funding and funding is available (sec.24).</p> <p>The uptake of this new CIP grant will be reviewed.</p>
2.	<p>The County would encourage the City to incorporate accessible and age-friendly features. Such features could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solid-surface pathways to support mobility devices</li> <li>• Raised planting beds at a variety of heights to support a range of movement abilities (for instance, some older adults may prefer a higher gardening bed to avoid crouching, while a mid-height bed might better accommodate a person in a wheelchair)</li> <li>• Shaded seating areas in proximity to gardening area to permit breaks on hot days</li> <li>• Storage on site for sharing tools, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Appendix 'A' to Policy No.FPR001 Community Garden Principles reflects the County's recommendations for accessibility and inclusivity within Community Gardens.</p> <p>The policy provides that Community Gardens may include features such as tool sheds and benches.</p> <p>It merits note that these recommendations above are permitted and encouraged, but are not required by the policy.</p>	<p>Community gardens be inclusive spaces that welcome all members of the community to partake in a shared enjoyment of gardening, being in nature, learning, and cooperation (Community Garden Principles sec.2).</p> <p>Community Gardens include accessibility features that employ the tenets of barrier-free design such as raised beds constructed at different heights, table planters, portable container gardens, and garden pathways featuring stable, hard packed paving materials with visual markers, etc (Community Garden Principles sec.8).</p>

			<p>The policy permits accessory structures such as tool sheds and design features such as benches (sec.15.a and c).</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p>Respecting the County’s Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), Going Green in Grey, County staff suggested the policy could be strengthened by including provisions that speak to community garden practices that enhance biodiversity and encourage native plant species, pollinator gardens, and rain gardens.</p>	<p>City staff have incorporated the suggested County recommendations to encourage planting of native species and listing pollinator gardens as a permitted community garden type into the draft Community Garden Policy.</p> <p>City staff are proposing to remove rain gardens as a permitted garden type as the intent and purpose of a rain garden as piece of Low Impact Development (LID) infrastructure is not aligned with the Community Gardens Policy. Typically rain gardens are used to slow down the rate of stormwater runoff from hard surfaces and filter pollutants on site rather than being carried into the municipal storm sewer and into waterways.</p> <p>City Staff do not support the redirection of stormwater runoff from paved or hard surfaces, which may carry harmful pollutants into Community Gardens where the lands may be used for cultivating plants for human consumption. While the City has such infiltration gardens they are not suitable for Community Gardens.</p>	<p>The policy includes that Community Gardens may be comprised of garden types such as ‘pollinator gardens’ (sec.4). Furthermore, the definition of ‘pollinator garden’ provides that pollinator gardens are encouraged to consist mainly of native plant species (sec.4).</p> <p>Rain gardens are not appropriate in current City parks proposed for inclusion in this policy.</p>



# Planning and Development

595 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue East, Owen Sound Ontario N4K 3E3  
519-372-0219 / 1-800-567-GREY / Fax: 519-376-7970

January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Jocelyn Wainwright  
City of Owen Sound  
808 2nd Avenue East  
Owen Sound, Ontario  
N4K 2H4

## **Re: Request for Comments on Draft Community Gardens Policy**

Dear Ms. Wainwright,

This correspondence is in response to the above noted Request for Comments, in relation to the City's Draft Community Gardens Policy. County staff have had an opportunity to review the proposed amendments in relation to the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) and the County of Grey Official Plan (OP). General planning comments have also been provided in relation to the County's strategic planning documents, which include the approved Climate Change Action Plan; and Age-Friendly Community Strategy and Action Plan. We offer the following comments.

Section 7.12 of the County's Official Plan speaks to the design and usage of Parks and Open Space:

*5) The design of new parks, or redesign of existing parks, are encouraged to be age-friendly accessible spaces, offering a wide range of passive and active recreational opportunities. The development of parkland and recreational facilities, and services should be done in consultation with local residents and in cooperation with other providers such as school boards. Establishing parks adjacent to school sites is encouraged.*

*6) Consider the need for further forms of parks such as dog parks (leash on or leash off), trampoline parks, skateboard, bicycle, or roller skate parks, food forests or community gardens, or water-based activity parks.*

The draft policy identifies several existing City parks that would be appropriate for the establishment of Community Gardens, subject to meeting the identified policy considerations. In any future redesign of these parks to support a Community Garden proposal, the County would encourage the City to incorporate accessible and age-friendly features. Such features could include:

- Solid-surface pathways to support mobility devices
- Raised planting beds at a variety of heights to support a range of movement abilities (for instance, some older adults may prefer a higher gardening bed to avoid crouching, while a mid-height bed might better accommodate a person in a wheelchair)
- Shaded seating areas in proximity to gardening area to permit breaks on hot days

- Storage on site for sharing tools, etc.

County staff note that the draft document identifies consideration for some of the plots to be reserved for children, with a focus on inter-generational programming and partnership with non-profit organisations. The County is supportive of these community-focused, age-friendly considerations.

One of the identified action items of the County's Age-Friendly Community Action Plan states:

*8.9: Community Garden Initiative: Map out all existing facilities and identify opportunities for new gardens that would enhance food security. Explore existing database on 211.*

As County staff and community partners begin to move forward with the implementation targeted Age-Friendly action-items, we look forward to further connection and collaboration with City staff in this respect.

One recommendation within the circulated Staff Report notes that City staff intend to update the City's Community Improvement Plan to recognize 'Community Gardens' as an eligible project through the CIP Landscaping and Property Improvement Grant Program. County staff are supportive of this direction and would inquire whether there could be merit in extending the reach of the program to consider support for Community Gardens on appropriate lands owned by non-profit community organisations. Expansion of this program could generate further potential for the benefit of new community gardens to be shared and maintained by existing organizations who currently work with vulnerable community groups.

The proposal has been reviewed by the County's Manager of Climate Change, and Trails and Forestry Coordinator. At a high-level the proposed policy aligns well with the County's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP), *Going Green in Grey*. Further alignment could be achieved if the policy were to speak to community gardening practices that enhance biodiversity and encourage growth of native plant species. Staff note that there is strong alignment with Action 19 of the CCAP, in relation to resident engagement in community gardens to encourage and learn more about local food production. Alongside the goal of food production, County staff would suggest that the policy may be strengthened by promoting references to garden types that promote climate action and ecosystem protection, such as pollinator gardens, rain gardens, etc.

The County would commend the City for updating this policy to increase opportunities for Community Gardens, which provide important opportunities for outdoor recreation, urban food security, social cohesion, climate action, and general community sustainability.

We kindly request notice of any decision taken regarding the finalization of these policies.

If you wish to discuss this matter further, please contact me.

Yours truly,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Becky Hillyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Becky Hillyer  
Intermediate Planner  
(519) 372 0219 ext. 1231  
[Becky.Hillyer@grey.ca](mailto:Becky.Hillyer@grey.ca)  
[www.grey.ca](http://www.grey.ca)