

Mayor and Councillors,

The strategic plan for London's community gardens program (Lcgp) was accepted at the August 25/15 meeting of Community and Protective Services Committee.

This letter requests that Council require answers to some serious questions about timeline, actual tasks, oversight, communication, monitoring and reports before approving the plan. Can a strategy be written into the plan a that will guarantee that you - Council - and everyone involved knows and sees that what is supposed to be done gets done?

London supports community gardening by dollars and services. This is good. People and cities benefit from gardening. I do a website that tries to advocate for community gardening and urban agriculture, so I want to support what London does. And that's why I'm submitting this admittedly long letter.

The strategic plan talks about having a community garden in every area of the city, gardeners deciding how their gardens are managed, productive relationships being gardens and neighbourhood organizations, City departments working with citizens to develop gardens as green space. These are good ideas; they've been around since long before the strategic plan, before the Review accepted by Council in April 2011, before meetings in summer of 2009 led to the review.

Community gardens happen because of ongoing work and communication: knowing exact resources, building, gardening, evaluation, do-overs, problem-solving, reaching out. Community gardens don't happen because of sound bites, big words, or great ideas on paper.

I'm concerned that there will be more years of little communication, participation and oversight.

This note now divides into

- (1) Concerns and questions about the strategic plan and garden management
- (2) is a request to remove a last minute amendment about urban agriculture from that plan.
- (3) a summary I've made of info gathered about the budget of Lcgp (added after my signature)

(1) Concerns and questions about proposed strategic plan and management of London's community gardens program.

Why was this brought forward in summer when people are away, and with no notice? Gardeners and interested parties who had participated in surveys, focus groups and meetings - some of us over years - were not informed by email. Notice was not posted on the City's Community Gardens page, or on the coordinating agency website or facebook page; a "good news" story must not have been sent to media, or it would have been picked up.

In my opinion, people and gardening are left out of the plan, which is heavy on administrative detail and administrative language. My questions and concerns about the plan have much to do with transparency, communication, real time frames for getting things done, real plans to develop neighbourhood involvement, and real oversight of the program.

- Isn't a strategic plan supposed to begin with a detailed "Where are we now" inventory? Where is back-up information - inventory of resources - about the gardens in the survey?
- a map of where they even are?
- assets held by the various gardens (not just for gardener use, but so City knows its assets)
- how many people garden at each location? How many plots are there really?(if there are now 14 gardens with 600 plots, and the Review 4 years ago said 21 gardens and 600 plots, just how did that come about?)
- a list of neighbourhood organizations or services that are in each existing garden community, and that might be able to assist/support the gardens

- a really detailed budget that shows what money was spent where, on what ... assets that are permanent, what is temporary
- how many requests for gardens came in over the last three years and what happened?
- how many problems were there?

What guarantee is there that the administration of the Community Gardens program is really going to start talking with the community partners and community members concerned about community gardens? These people were supposed to be brought into the gardens' care and oversight system, according to the review in 2011. It hasn't happened. Who oversees the coordinating agency and the City staff desk that holds the gardens program?

The plan talked about how great community gardens are ... but where were real examples of London's gardens as part of their communities?

What will an exact time frame be to get reports about the community gardens? And a guarantee that gardeners, interested people, and media will be notified?

When will gardeners be invited to really participate in how their garden is run? Be given some choices on management style?

What guarantee and real, accountable time line is there for putting in place ways for gardeners to communicate with each other? The gardens review came out in 2011, and the new - old - coordinating agency (London Community Resource Centre) took over in 2012. But neither the City website, nor the website or facebook pages of the coordinating agency are a forum for communication.

Where's the guarantee that there will be a visible budget of dollars and in-kind services for the community gardens program? How is the program responsible, accountable, transparent? Pick your word. When a community program can show it is managing its resources it can say with pride and truth that it is doing something good when it does something good.

Up to now, it has been extremely difficult to get budget information ... see document that follows my signature.

Several sections of the strategic plan talk about gardens not on municipal land being brought into - and under the jurisdiction of - the municipality. This was never talked about before. Where did this come from?! The City and coordinating agency has not been talking with the gardeners it has, how can it think to handle more? What level of regulation might be brought in? Why should it be?

What concrete, practical plans are going to be done - and when - to really make community gardens part of their neighbourhoods?

(2) Request to unhook urban agriculture from the strategic plan for London's community gardens program.

A sudden addition to the community gardens strategic plan was a request to City staff to start to investigate regulations that affect urban agriculture and find a definition of it. The exact wording of this instruction to staff didn't appear on the CPSC overhead screen, and it was really unclear to anyone in the gallery that this was about to be put into the community gardens strategic plan. It had been the intention of the councillor who initiated the urban agriculture discussion - *with the best of intentions, and I'm truly glad she has the interest!* - to have the topic brought to the CPSC meeting under "additional business". Some procedural confusion occurred and it went in with the gardens strategic plan.

Urban agriculture is an important topic and needs its own conversation, amongst many people already active in community organizations and entrepreneurial undertakings. Certainly, let's begin a conversation amongst City departments and these people. And if City staff begin to look at regulations, great.

However, if there's any way to get that request moved off the community gardens strategic plan and make it a separate request to staff, *please do so!*

My interest in London's community gardens program began in summer of 2009 when I and several others met with Ross Fair to request a review of London's community gardens program. The review of the program in 2011 was written in clear language and had practical recommendations. The recommendations to do with community building and gardener participation in their garden management have simply not gotten off the ground. As mentioned above, there's not been a functional forum set up for gardeners and others interested to communicate. There's been no annual reports, no detailed budget; clarity of programs and money can be a good thing to justify a program.

I am webkeeper for a site called [Community Gardens London](http://www.communitygardenslondon.ca) (www.communitygardenslondon.ca), online since February 2011, which includes most of the environment-minded groups in the City (we are a member of the London Environment Network). The site goes beyond community gardening, into urban agriculture and environment topics. Through the site - and its [partner facebook pages](#) - we try to educate about, advocate for, and celebrate urban agriculture and community gardening. I was a lead organizer of a conference in fall 2011 titled *From Community Gardening to Urban Agriculture in London*.

Again, I hope you will ask some serious questions about the strategic plan for London's community gardens program and not have it passed until there are real answers to questions and processes in place to guarantee it will do what it says it will do.

My notes about trying to get budget information about London's community gardens program follow my signature.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Maureen Temme

London
webkeeper: Community Gardens London (.ca)
Mayor's News Years Honour list, 2012, Environment

(3) Trying to find real budget information about London's community gardens program ... info found varies and isn't comprehensive

I have all back-up documents in paper form, and quite a few on my hard drive. There's nothing written about actual programs, what's been purchased, special programs, donations, ... and numbers from different sources differ.

- Community gardens mention in the City of London 2015 budget and other sources
- LCRC budget figures from Revenue Canada
- budget inconsistencies from the Review and RFP 11-42 (2011)
- budget lack from London Strengthening Neighbourhoods program (which relates to LCRC and gardens)

London community gardens program budget information in the 2015 city budget ... mentioned with other sources ... and the dilemma of figuring out money

In March 2015 **Anna Lisa Barbon**¹ directed me to the City budget and the Municipal Grants overview to find out what monies the City had allotted to the London Community Resource Centre. She also sent me to look at the Strategic Funding Framework. I had already looked through sections of the Parks and Recreation budget, but had found no specific budget figures for the community gardens².

¹ Anna Lisa Barbon, Director, Financial Services, ext. 4705. abarbon@london.ca

I'd met her at a January 17/15 budget meetings

² **Parks and Recreation** section of the budget (pp. 199 - 295), specifically within the Business Plan: Community Development and Funding (pp. 243-251), which then goes on to Business Plan: Community Recreation and Leisure (pp. 252 - 261). There was

From Barbon's noteⁱ (reference at end of all these pages)

**The City of London provides \$38,000 annually to the London Community Resource Centre as core funding through the strategic funding framework. ...
... In additional to this funding, there is a purchasing contract in place to support the delivery of the community gardens program in the amount of \$70,000. The City also receives approximately \$12,000 in revenue annually from renting the plots. These amounts are included within the City's approved budget.**

The London Community Resource Centre is mentioned on page 1063 of the *City's 2015 budget*, in the City of London Municipal Grants Overview (Strategic Funding Framework). The relevant info there is:

London Community Resource Centre
Operational Funding - Community Development Funding:
- 2015 budget - \$38,060
- 2014 budget - \$38,060
- 2013 budget - \$38,060

There's no mention on those budget pages of Strengthening Neighbourhoods (City) money (if there was money given to LCRC under this program)

Canada Revenue information that total revenue given to LCRC from municipal source is above the \$38,060.

Budget for London's community gardens program varies in these sources also:

London Community Gardens Program Review, April 2011

Since 2006, the City of London has provided annualized core funding to LCRC to support the management of London's Community Gardens Program. LCRC receives all revenues (\$47,000) from the rental of plots, and from a variety of other funders including Service Canada, MLHU, Y.O.U. Summer Services, and London Lawyers. They also undertake their own fundraising activities. The 2010 City of London allocation for the Community Gardens Program was \$38,000, plus provision of office and storage space in a city-owned building. This funding is managed through a service agreement between the City and LCRC and is managed by the Neighbourhood and Children's Services Division.

The City of London's Parks & Recreation Division provides in-kind contributions, including assistance with garden openings, maintenance and seasonal closures, watering and composting services. The City of London's Parks Planning Division works with the community in selecting a site, consultation and any necessary public processes and ongoing liaison with gardeners and the LCRC related to garden issues in parks (by-laws, vandalism, maintenance, etc).

In summary, it is estimated that the City contributes over \$100,000 per year to the Community Gardens program, including funding, supplies, service and staff time.

Request for Proposal 11-42,

.... [the] "City will contribute "up to \$70,000" to the program"

Re: LCRC budget figures -

concerning LCRC as gardens manager

- during the 2012 through 2015 garden seasons - the time LCRC has been under contract with the City of London to manage the gardens - neither the LCRC website nor its facebook page has been used as a communications point between gardeners in the program and the LCRC.

mention of community gardens on pp: 245, 246, 247 (within lists of other programs), however, there is no dollar figure given for London's community gardens program (Lcgp), nor an in-kind services figure given for Lcgp.

- during that time there has not been any budget information posted about the program, no numbers of programs given, nor any numbers of participants in the program
- there has not been an annual report published about London's community gardens program on the LCRC site (or on the City website, nor presented to any standing committee or council)

LCRC as independent charitable organization - info from Revenue Canada

The Revenue Canada website has information about the London Community Resource Centre. The table below gives some budget information based on this. I have the printouts from Revenue Canada.

Year	Total LCRC Revenue (<i>revenue from City of London -L</i>)	LCRC exec director's salary	Exec director's salary as % of total LCRC revenue	All other salaries at LCRC
2013	\$153,449 (<i>\$75,000 - L</i>)	\$52,660	approx 34%	\$ 85,931
2012	\$157,332 <i>*? (\$70,000-L)</i>	\$51,125*	approx 32%	\$ 99,638
2011	\$ 83,762 (<i>\$40,635-L</i>)	\$48,673	approx 58%	\$ 51,585
2010	\$119,802 (<i>\$37,985-L</i>)	\$51,125*	approx 42%	\$ 79,384
2009	\$166,514 (<i>\$ 30,448-L</i>)	\$56,792	approx 34%	\$122,432

* Executive director's salary determined here as average of the 3 years where it was known

*? did \$70,000 from City in 2012 include money from Strengthening Neighbourhoods program? ... see below on for comment on that program

The tax information is not set up to indicate that the LCRC *manages* a program for the City of London ... so there's no indication which City money goes to the LCRC's own "core" funding and what City money is turned over specifically for managing the community gardens program

I understand that LCRC is its own entity, apart from being hired as gardens manager by the City. I also realize that LCRC is not required to publish its annual report. It used to post an annual report on its website, however. The latest had been for the year 2009/2010. That report and the few previous did not contain any budget figures for LCRC, in dollars; nor were there any actual numbers of programs given or participants, or in-kind services (donated) mentioned or given as dollar-worth. These reports are no longer on the LCRC website. I think I did save them on my hard drive.

Re: RFP-11- 42 - manage London's community gardens program -

- RFP 11-42 was posted late November 2011, with deadline Dec. 22, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.
- disclosure: Community Gardens London did send in a proposal - under the kind sponsorship of LifeSpin. We were not interviewed. We've come to look upon our proposal as an exercise in municipal process.

Budget information available for organizations which wanted to put in proposals to manage London's community gardens program was not given clearly in the request for proposal. Chris Ginty of the City Purchasing Department was not able to get/supply information.

From proposal/response to RFP 11-42, section titled Budget concerns that need to be clarified

...The London Community Gardens Program Review gave information concerning the City's substantial contribution to the community gardens program³. In 2010, the City of London gave \$38,000 cash (annualized funding) and \$68,000 in-kind contributions. In the RFP it says that the City will contribute "up to \$70,000" to the program. These figures do not relate to each other.

... [implication is that] garden plot rental fees remitted to the City will be used as a sort of bank account for "in-kind" services. CGL does not know what this means in relation to the City departments giving services to the gardens program, particularly as it relates to the \$68,000 in-kind services referred to in the Review

... it is unclear whether the in-kind services from the City, mentioned in the Review, include the provision of office and storage space in a city-owned building

Strengthening Neighbourhoods program - mentioned here because LCRC has gotten money from this program, and because tracking it down was another effort I had to make

- In April 2015 I checked with Cheryl Smith's administrative assistant about Strengthening Neighbourhoods. At that time I'm pretty sure there was only information on the City website about the first year of the program. I asked about annual reports for years 2 through 5 and was told "there are progress reports and newsletters, however not for the last year as we are planning to create a final report coveral [sic] all 5 years when we launch the next LSNS". In regards to budget for the LSNS, she said "There is not a separate budget report for LSNS. Council approved \$100,000 to support annual LSNS projects. This amount along with other funding that support community development initiatives is incorporated into a Community Development and Funding budget line."

As of August 26, 2015 - there are no links to reports or newsletters on the [Strengthening Neighbourhoods](#) page (<http://www.london.ca/residents/neighbourhoods/Pages/London-Strengthening-Neighbourhoods-Strategy.aspx>). They had been there; I printed out several and have them on paper beside me.

- The end-of-first-year Strengthening Neighbourhoods report is no longer on the website page (I have it on my harddrive tho') ... It had been item 19 on the March 29, 2011 agenda of the Community Services Committee, which was the same report that had the Food Charter and the Community Gardens program review. That first year report is [here](#).

(<http://council.london.ca/CouncilArchives/Agendas/Community%20and%20Neighbourhoods/CNC%20Agendas%202011/2011-03-29%20Agenda/Community%20and%20Neighbourhoods%20Committee%20Agenda.pdf>)

And I think that there should be budget and program detail clearly available about this program too ... not just a "budget line".

ⁱ email from Anna Lisa Barbon, March 23, 2015

HI Maureen,

³ **This excerpt is from the London Community Gardens Program Review, Appendix A, Review Findings:**

Since 2006, the City of London has provided annualized core funding to LCRC to support the management of London's Community Gardens Program. LCRC receives all revenues (\$47,000) from the rental of plots, and from a variety of other funders including Service Canada, MLHU, Y.O.U. Summer Services, and London Lawyers. They also undertake their own fundraising activities. The 2010 City of London allocation for the Community Gardens Program was \$38,000, plus provision of office and storage space in a city-owned building. This funding is managed through a service agreement between the City and LCRC and is managed by the Neighbourhood and Children's Services Division.

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In summary, it is estimated that the City contributes over \$100,000 per year to the Community Gardens program, including funding, supplies, service and staff time.

My sincere apologies for not responding sooner as I had planned to respond before I was off on vacation, but in my attempt to get some information to your question from another area inadvertently missed it as outstanding.

I believe that you have since emailed confirming that you had identified the information that you were seeking however, I did wish to clarify some information for you as it appears you may have misunderstood our discussion at the January budget meeting.

When we met at the budget meeting, I had indicated that the City of London provides municipal grants to a host of organizations through the Strategic funding framework. This is the program that I was referring to that provides information to the organization you had noted. At no time did I indicate that there is no mechanism for the City of London programs or budget to be open and available. Information from the City of London is available and intended to be transparent. All City programs and budgets are available to the public and also available on the city's website, albeit some may not be readily identifiable given they are so small compared to the larger expenditures that make up the City's budgets by service area. The City delivers hundreds of different and very diverse programs.

What I was trying to convey to you is that if an organization external to the City of London has the information that you are looking for, the City would not have that information available publicly as the organization is not part of the City of London. I was not referring to City of London specific programs. Your specific request for information about the details of the London Community Resource Centre is not available to the public as they are NOT a city of London organization and as such we do not govern them nor have any jurisdiction over the information that they may provide.

What I tried to indicate to you is that the organizations (all not for profit organizations) for which the City may provide funding have a separate governance structure and the City cannot disclose information that is **not** the City's information to disclose. The City of London does not govern the organizations that it does business with by virtue of a grant or purchase of service arrangement – and as such is not able to dictate how the organization conducts its business or what it puts on its website. The organizations are accountable to the City to provide and abide by the terms and conditions that may be set out in the agreement.

The Strategic funding framework provides for a standard agreement that was approved by Council for all agencies that receive core funding, that sets out standard reporting requirements to the City for specific outcomes to ensure the funding has met its objectives. Civic Administration has been requested to update this framework in 2015 to investigate different funding sources and process that ties to the City's strategic plan and multiyear budget. We anticipate that something should be going before committee before the summer.

The City of London provides \$38,000 annually to the London Community Resource Centre as core funding through the strategic funding framework. The listing of all organizations that the City funds as provided through the annual budget process can be found on the City's website. I have provided the link for you below - just click on the municipal grants link in the listing.

<http://www.london.ca/city-hall/budget-business/business-planning/Pages/2015-Submitted-Detailed-Budget.aspx>

In addition to this funding, there is a purchasing contract in place to support the delivery of the community gardens program in the amount of \$70,000. The City also receives approximately \$12,000 in revenue annually from renting the plots. These amounts are included within the City's approved budget.

I trust that this will answer many of your questions and clarifies our conversation with respect to the municipal funding through the strategic funding framework. Thanks for our enquiry. Anna Lisa