

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 13, 2016
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE, MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES BILL COXHEAD, MANAGING DIRECTOR PARKS AND RECREATION
SUBJECT:	LONDON COMMUNITY GARDENS STRATEGIC PLAN: YEAR ONE UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services and the Managing Director of Parks and Recreation, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- London Community Gardens Program Review (March 29, 2011)
- London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan (2015-2019) and Year One Implementation Plan (August 25, 2015)

BACKGROUND

At the Municipal Council meeting on September 1, 2015, Council resolved that the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan (2015-2019) and year one Implementation Plan be endorsed.

The London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan is directly linked to the City's Strategic Plan in two strategic areas of focus: Strengthening Our Community (invest in new parks and recreation facilities and pursue innovative models for programs and service delivery; support neighbourhood driven activities and decision making); and, Building a Sustainable City (invest in parks and recreation facilities and amenities). The City's role is to provide, facilitate, develop and maintain community gardens to act as gathering places in neighbourhoods, bringing residents of all ages together to promote healthy, vibrant, and engaged communities around a common focal point: food.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the progress being made towards implementing year one actions identified in the plan and in particular, address the action to "review the current oversight structure."

London Community Gardens Program

London is home to 15 neighbourhood gardens located on municipally owned land, encompassing over 400 plots where gardeners grow vegetables, fruit and other plants. These neighbourhood gardens are spread across the city and are located in parks or open space. One garden is located both on public and private land. The majority of gardens are at full plot capacity and some have waiting lists due to the growing popularity of community gardening. This number does not include many more community gardens spread across the community on non-City property, including roof tops, schools and universities, churches, and other private properties.

The London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan was developed with input from the community and provides the overall vision and direction for community gardens across London. This vision includes gardens both on municipal and private land. The Plan also clearly articulates the City of London's role and how this role aligns with the broader community vision of community gardening.

The role of the City of London in supporting the implementation of the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan is:

- acting as a resource for the community through information sharing and providing capacity building opportunities to current and future community gardens and gardeners;
- supporting the community to develop new community gardens on private land through sharing best practices and municipal funding opportunities such as the City's SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching Fund; and,
- providing the development and day-to-day oversight of all community gardens on municipally owned land.

Civic Administration identified the following Actions from the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan to implement in 2015/2016. Highlighted below is the status of each of these actions:

Action to Implement	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an internal and external communication strategy to be phased in over 2 years 	Completed: Public signage is in all municipally owned gardens. This signage includes contact information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve accessibility at gardens 	Completed: portable raised beds are now available and can be moved to a garden and are available on request. City staff will work with the Accessibility Advisory Committee when developing new community gardens.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive policies and guidelines manual including code of conduct, conditions of use, composting, and starting a new garden 	Completed and in its 4 th year of implementation. Guidelines will be reviewed in 2018 through consultation with gardeners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a training and support strategy for new inexperienced gardeners 	Currently training and support for gardeners happens through the third party agency. This Action will be further developed in 2017 in collaboration with community partners and interested stakeholders.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community gardens in city and community plans linked to other priorities in the city 	Completed: aligns with Strategic Plan for the City of London (2015-2019), the London Plan, and the Parks and Recreation Master Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the current oversight structure 	Completed through the Lean Six Sigma Improvement Project process. Current Contract with the third party agency ends on January 31, 2017. Details regarding next steps are included in this report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage municipal government and wider community in ongoing development of the London Community Gardens Program 	In Progress: This action will be ongoing throughout the duration of the Community Gardens Strategic Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan to identify and leverage sponsorship 	Ongoing: Included as part of the Corporate Sponsorship and Advertising Policy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden site selection process/ gardens on municipal land 	Ongoing in partnership with Parks Planning. Two new gardens: 2016: Ed Blake Garden 2017: Kiwanis Park Garden (to open in the Spring)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop wait list and conflict management processes 	These current processes are managed by the third party agency. In 2017, the sign up and payment process for leasing a garden plot will be managed by the City of London using Spectrum as the mechanism for payments. This means that processes such as wait list and conflict management will need to be revised, updated, and communicated to all gardeners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City staff to meet with key stakeholder groups including interested gardeners (create a committee) to develop and lay out an implementation plan including timelines for 2016 to 2019 	This action was put on hold pending the outcome of the review of the current oversight structure. The review has been finalized and city staff will hold meeting in early 2017 with interested stakeholder groups and gardeners.

Review of the current program oversight structure

Under the “effective governance at garden and system level” strategy in the London Community Gardens Strategic Plan, one of the actions was to “review the City of London oversight structure for the London Community Gardens Program.”

Through the Lean Six Sigma process, London Community Gardens Program’s current oversight structure was taken on as an Improvement Project. As part of this review, city staff, the third party agency, and community gardeners participated in extensive process mapping. Over six processes were mapped out by individuals who are directly involved in the day to day oversight of community gardens.

This process mapping identified the current challenges, inefficiencies, duplications, and opportunities for improvement with the current oversight structure and the day-to-day operations of community gardens. Based on these observations and learnings, process maps were then created for the “ideal” oversight structure for the London Community Gardens Program. After this careful review and analysis it has been determined that in-house resourcing of the management of the program will allow for the

most efficient and effective delivery of London Community Gardens Program, where customers can be supported, educated, and facilitated.

Benefits of in-house resourcing and management of the London Community Gardens Program

- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities around the management of community gardens on City owned lands
- Services and processes can be streamlined and enhanced through a one window approach at the City for planning and operation
- Superior process for registering and managing wait lists through the utilization of the SPECTRUM registration, allocation and payment process
- Maximization of existing financial resources to support an internal position that can and will support other community initiatives in addition to this program
- Treat community gardens like any other park amenity and manage internally.
- Develop process controls for all community gardens managed by Parks Operations.
- Enhanced collaboration between service areas with a clear ownership of the program being supported

Next Steps

The following steps will be taken as part of the review of the current oversight structure:

1. Work with the current third party agency and advise the City will not be renewing the existing contract that expires January 31, 2017.
2. Engage a new internal staff person to be in place by mid-January, 2017 to oversee the London Community Gardens Program which includes providing the development and day-to-day oversight of all community gardens on municipally owned land.
3. Develop a plan to ensure a smooth transition for all parties. This new position will work closely with Parks and Recreation and Parks Planning during the transition.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding currently exists in the base budget to meet the current needs of London’s Community Gardens Program. The addition of an internal staff position to oversee this program requires no additional resources.

CONCLUSION

Community gardens accomplish many purposes including food production, enhancing healthy living and contributing to active neighbourhoods. Over the years, London residents, City Council, and Civic Administration have recognized the benefits and significance of community gardens, and have expressed support for their continued development and sustainability.

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