

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON NOVEMBER 13, 2018
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE, MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN AND FIRE SERVICES
SUBJECT:	LONDON COMMUNITY GARDENS PROGRAM STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACCESSIBILITY UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director of Neighbourhood, Children and Fire Services, 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)
- London Community Gardens Strategic Plan: Year One Update (December 13, 2016)

BACKGROUND

At the April 10, 2018 Council meeting, Council resolved that the Civic Administration BE REQUESTED to report back at a future meeting of the Community and Protective Services Committee with respect to modifications to the Community Gardens Program, specifically with respect to accessibility.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the actions taken in 2018 related to improving accessibility within the London Community Gardens Program. In addition, this report includes the progress being made towards implementing the actions identified in the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan.

London Community Gardens Program

London is home to 17 neighbourhood gardens located on municipally owned land, encompassing over 450 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. The majority of gardens are at capacity and some have waiting lists due to the growing popularity of community gardening. In 2018, 96% of plots were leased by gardeners. Appendix A highlights the location of each garden including the number of plots per location and the number of plots leased to local gardeners in 2018.

London Community Gardens Program 2018 Accessibility Update

The London Community Gardens Program recognizes the importance of improving accessibility within all gardens. It is a priority to implement accessibility projects and upgrades within the gardens and provide an opportunity for all Londoners to participate in the program. The Community Gardens staff person attends the Accessibility Advisory Committee (ACCAC) and the Built Environment Subcommittee meetings as requested by the committee. In addition, two members of the ACCAC, who are also community gardeners, sit on the Community Gardens Advisory Group which currently meets quarterly. Outlined below are the specific steps Civic Administration has undertaken to improve accessibility in community gardens located on municipal land:

- The City of London Community Gardens webpages have been updated to show raised bed and accessible planter availability more prominently and the new quarterly e-newsletter features regular accessibility information and updates. Interested community gardeners can request raised beds and/or accessible planters by phone or email to community gardens staff.
- There are two flexible options for making garden plots more accessible depending on the needs each season. These are:
 - Raised Bed: these are standing height beds that allow gardeners to garden without having to bend or kneel. Eight raised beds were installed in a number of community gardens this past growing season.

- Accessible Planter: these are wooden planters that are installed on an accessible surface that allows a gardener to sit or wheel up to garden. Sixteen accessible planters were installed in a number of community gardens this past growing season.
- In addition, there are permanent accessibility features including accessible pathways, raised water taps, and dedicated accessible garden plots that are being installed at community gardens based on the availability of resources.
- Highlighted below is specific information on all accessible features completed at eight community gardens in 2018.

Community Garden	2018 Completed Accessible Features
Kiwanis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new accessible plots were installed permanently to the garden • Four accessible planters were installed on top of the two accessible plots
Ann Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new accessible plots were installed permanently to the garden • Two raised beds were installed • Accessible pathway was installed off of existing paved path
Proudfoot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new accessible plots were installed permanently to the garden • Accessible pathway was installed off of existing paved path
Ed Blake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installed an accessible water tap at accessible plots • Two accessible plots were booked through Spectrum, with a total of eight accessible planters installed
Nicholas Wilson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One new accessible plot was installed permanently to the garden • Accessible pathway was installed off of existing paved path
Carling Heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two new accessible plots were installed permanently to the garden • Accessible pathway was installed off of existing paved path
Glen Cairn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One new accessible plot was installed permanently to the garden • Four accessible planters were installed
Dillabough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six raised beds were installed

London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan 2015-2019

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 through Neighbourhood Decision Making; and,
- providing the development and day-to-day oversight of all community gardens on municipally owned land.

Implementing the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan

In 2017 the City hired a full-time staff person to oversee the London Community Gardens Program and to continue the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Over the last year and a half, significant progress has been made toward accomplishing the plan's milestones, including most notably:

- The creation of a Community Gardens Advisory Group and volunteer Garden Ambassador positions within each garden;
- Improved digital tools including online registration through the City's Spectrum website;
- The development of several beneficial partnerships including ongoing communication and collaboration with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, London Middlesex Master Gardeners, Thames Valley District School Board and Sustain Ontario to name a few;
- Improved accessibility at six existing gardens and two new gardens;
- Creation of a spring "Vegetable Gardening 101" course through Spectrum for new community gardeners and;
- Implemented new communications tools including a quarterly E-Newsletter that is sent out to all community gardeners.

See [Appendix B](#) for a full report highlighting the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan accomplishments to date.

NEXT STEPS

In 2019, Civic Administration will continue to implement the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan specifically:

- targeting milestones that look to increase accessibility features in community gardens on municipal land;
- supporting new gardeners with ongoing education and assistance from the new volunteer Garden Ambassadors program; and,
- continuing to increase participation in the program by supporting the development of new community gardens in neighbourhoods based on resident-driven proposals and the availability of resources.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding currently exists in the approved operating budget to meet the current needs of London's Community Gardens Program. Funding from the City's municipal accessibility budget was also allocated to support the accessibility projects in four community gardens in 2018. Subject to available budget in 2019, Civic Administration will complete two additional accessible garden upgrades.

CONCLUSION

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

PREPARED BY:	PREPARED BY:
 VANESSA KINSLEY SUPERVISOR, NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN & FIRE SERVICES	 KAREN OLDHAM MANAGER, NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN & FIRE SERVICES
SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
 CHERYL SMITH MANAGER, NEIGHBOURHOOD STRATEGIC INITIATIVES & FUNDING NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN & FIRE SERVICES	 LYNNE LIVINGSTONE, MANAGING DIRECTOR NEIGHBOURHOOD, CHILDREN & FIRE SERVICES

- c. Scott Stafford, Managing Director, Parks and Recreation
 John Fleming, Managing Director, Planning and City Planner
 Andrew Macpherson, Manager, Parks Planning & Design

London Community Gardens Program Community Gardens and Locations

Garden Name and Location	Number of Plots per garden in 2018	Number of Plots Leased 2018
Ann Street – 65 Ann Street	27	27
Berkshire – 510 Berkshire Drive	41	41
Blackfriars – 2 St. Patrick Street	22	22
Carling Heights – 656 Elizabeth Street	36	36
Dillabough – 59 Dillabough Street	23	23
Ed Blake – 449 Barker Street	32	31
Glen Cairn – 410 Scenic Drive	8	8
Kiwanis – 1475 Brydges Street	18	3 ¹
Meredith – 450 Nelson Street	17	17
Meadowlily – 1510 Commissioners Road East	24	23
Nicholas Wilson – 16 Fitzroy Place	13	13
Proudfoot – 693 Proudfoot Lane	40	40
Reservoir – 552 Crestwood Drive	58	58
Riverforks – 17 Becher Street	41	41
Thames – 15 Ridout Street	49	49
University Heights – 290 Trott Drive	14	14
Total plots	463	446






¹ The Kiwanis Community Garden did not open until the end of June, 2018 therefore numbers were low as the planting season typically starts May 1.



London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan (2015-2019) Progress Report






Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate Efficiently and Effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer garden guidelines and processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure efficient waitlist management process Establish a garden selection process for municipal lands and a guideline for garden expansion Maintain efficient, coherent policies/guidelines that meet London Community Gardens Program stakeholder needs 	<p>A new online registration system and waitlist management process was created in Fall 2017 through the City of London's Spectrum Recreation.</p> <p>A process for establishing new gardens on municipal land is complete.</p> <p>The London Community Gardens Program Guidelines document, created in 2013, was updated in Fall 2017 and is reviewed yearly and updated as necessary.</p>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication and Collaboration 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a highly functional LCGP website and digital tools Implement a system wide and garden specific communication strategy 	<p>Several updates have been made to the website including online registration through Spectrum, links to the guidelines document and Strategic Plan, current garden availability listings, and garden maps. By October 2019 garden plot agreements will also be available online.</p> <p>Each year meetings are held in the Fall and Spring for all gardeners, and email and mailing lists are kept for ongoing communication throughout the growing season. A quarterly E-Newsletter was created in Winter 2018 as well and on-site bulletin boards are being planned to pilot in designated gardens in 2019.</p>								
<p>Status Indicators</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>✓</td> <td>Complete: Milestone is done with no ongoing tasks</td> </tr> <tr> <td>➡</td> <td>On Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone is ongoing or completed annually; or Milestone is on target to be completed by target end date </td> </tr> <tr> <td>■</td> <td>Caution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone is delayed by 1 quarter; or Milestone may not be completed by target end date </td> </tr> <tr> <td>➔</td> <td>Below Plan: Milestone is delayed by 2 quarters or more</td> </tr> </table>	✓	Complete: Milestone is done with no ongoing tasks	➡	On Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone is ongoing or completed annually; or Milestone is on target to be completed by target end date 	■	Caution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone is delayed by 1 quarter; or Milestone may not be completed by target end date 	➔	Below Plan: Milestone is delayed by 2 quarters or more		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimize the relationship between gardeners and stakeholders 	<p>Relationships with groups such as the Middlesex London Master Gardeners have been developed through participation in their Seedy Saturday event and through workshop collaboration. Several City service areas are involved in program delivery, most notably Parks Operations and Parks Planning, through support on site and in new garden development. Volunteer Garden Ambassadors provide a link between gardeners, City staff and other partners.</p>
✓	Complete: Milestone is done with no ongoing tasks										
➡	On Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Milestone is ongoing or completed annually; or Milestone is on target to be completed by target end date 										
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Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracting and retaining gardeners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Create a gardener skills inventory to share expertise  Create a training / support strategy for new or inexperienced gardeners: buddy system; orientation program and ongoing education curriculum  Establish a tiered garden plot membership model: demonstration gardens; 1/2 plot; shared plot; own plot  Improve accessibility at gardens identified by the community, including raised beds, solid surface, wide pathways into gardens, easy water access, available seating nearby, etc. This work is to be accomplished in partnership with gardeners, key stakeholders and possible funders. 	<p>In Spring 2018 a Vegetable Gardening 101 course was developed and delivered through Spectrum, and will continue to be delivered annually. Community Gardens summer staff and Garden Ambassadors are available within the gardens to provide expertise and share their skills. The bi-annual gardener meetings are also an opportunity for gardeners to exchange knowledge and information with each other.</p> <p>There are 16 garden ambassadors within 13 gardens who are available as a resource for new or inexperienced gardeners. The annual Vegetable Gardening 101 course, led by a Master Gardener, is specifically for new participants in the Community Gardens Program and had 39 participants last Spring.</p> <p>An opportunity for gardeners to share plots will be explored in 2019.</p> <p>Two new gardens were established in 2016 and 2018 and were built to accessibility standards, including hard packed pathways, accessible water and accessible planters. Four existing gardens were also upgraded in 2018 to the same standards. In addition there were eight raised beds (standing height) and 12 accessible planters (sitting height) booked in four gardens in 2018. All projects were supported by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building value-added partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Create linkages with food systems 	<p>The London Food Bank's Grow-A-Row program is promoted to gardeners who would like to donate produce, along with other neighbourhood based donation initiatives where they exist. In addition, the London Community Gardens Program partners with the London Middlesex Food Policy Council and London For All on items relating to community garden and food security, and the Community Gardens Program Supervisor co-chairs a provincial community growing network with Sustain Ontario which explores similar policy and program objectives.</p>

Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments
		<p>Develop an inclusive partnership strategy with schools, community agencies, local businesses, seniors' residences, and committees (Accessibility Advisory Committee and Age Friendly London's Outdoor Spaces & Building Working Group, etc.)</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>The City shares information to organizations on request to assist with the development of gardens on private lands and has partnered with the Thames Valley District School Board in the development and use of community gardens, including a small space on public land in Nor'west Optimist Park used exclusively by Emily Carr Public School. Staff attends the Accessibility Advisory Committee meetings as necessary to share garden plans and ask for input on any accessibility-related projects. Two members of the Accessibility Advisory Committee are community gardeners and also sit on the Community Gardens Advisory Group.</p>
		<p>Implement a strategy to mobilize multi-cultural and diverse groups into community gardening</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>The development of the Ed Blake Park Garden in 2016 was implemented in collaboration with the Life Resource Centre in Northeast London, which supports newcomers and specifically 20 newcomer individuals at this garden site. In Winter 2018, a Brescia University College community development student researched and interviewed community partners to produce a report focused on broadening engagement in community gardening within diverse communities. In June 2018, a workshop was delivered at a Networking for an Inclusive Community event to approximately 20 front line staff from local service agencies who work with newcomers and immigrants.</p>
	<p>Engaging neighbourhoods in community garden expansion</p> <p>■</p>	<p>Prioritize expansion into neighbourhoods that feature a high proportion of rental or high density housing</p> <p>←</p> <p>Conduct ongoing community outreach, including a broad advocacy strategy</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>Opportunities will be explored based on resident interest and the availability of resources.</p> <p>Each year staff attend Seedy Saturday, Go Wild Grow Wild, and various summer festivals, block parties and meetings to promote the London Community Gardens Program. The program is highlighted on the Neighbourhood London website and by the Neighbourhood Event Team staff.</p>

Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments
		<p>✓ Develop a community awareness / public relations plan, including a common identity for LCGP</p> <p>✓ Establish an 'Expansion Blueprint' for Community Gardens, including co-locating gardens with community facilities, parks or services, and rooftop gardens</p> <p>✓ Set up an Annual Meeting process for LCGP with reporting protocols</p>	<p>The Program has a logo and identifiable signs at all 16 garden locations. Regular tweets, Facebook posts and other online news items are posted throughout registration time.</p> <p>Partnership opportunities are identified whenever possible, as with the garden for Emily Carr Public School which is in a City park adjacent to the school, and also at Berkshire Park where water access is provided by Sifton Development through the Berkshire Club.</p> <p>Meetings are held every year in the Spring and Fall, and include updates on yearly accomplishments and projects. Milestones and accomplishments are being tracked and reported through an online tracking tool.</p>
<p>■ Build Capacity</p>	<p>■ Effective governance at the garden and system level</p>	<p>✓ Create governance models that reflect the unique needs of a community garden - 1. Top-down approach or bottom-up model, 2. Day-to-day management of gardens and 3. System oversight</p> <p>← Develop a local community garden structure for gardens on municipally-owned land that is self-managing and enables leadership and participation among gardeners</p> <p>✓ Establish a LCGP Committee to guide the development of a Garden Management Plan, advocate for the LCGP and support our community gardeners</p> <p>✓ Implement conflict management process</p> <p>✓ Review the City of London oversight structure for LCGP</p>	<p>The gardens are supported by City staff and the Advisory Group using a community development approach that recognizes the unique needs of each garden.</p> <p>In Fall 2017 the Community Gardens Advisory Group was created and in 2018 was comprised of 21 members representing 14 gardens. Members of the group are leaders within their respective gardens and create a linkage between the gardeners as well as with City staff. Of the 21 advisory group members, 16 gardeners have taken on the role of garden ambassador and provide support to new gardeners and also participate in garden activities and management.</p> <p>The goals of the Community Gardens Advisory Group are to review the Community Gardens Guidelines document each year, assist with implementation of the Strategic Plan and to provide feedback and information to City of London Community Gardens staff. In 2018 there were 21 gardeners on the advisory group, representing 13 Gardens.</p> <p>The City's R Zone policy is in effect in every city facility, including community gardens. The policy is highlighted on our signage and in our guidelines. The Community Gardens Guidelines document also outlines conflict management protocols within the gardens.</p> <p>In 2016, a review of the program oversight was completed and resulted in the recommendation to move the day-to-day operations from an outside agency to the City of London. In February 2017, the City of London began administering the program.</p>

Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strong community gardens leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage the municipal government and wider community through inclusiveness in the ongoing development of the London Community Gardens Program ➔ Generate a comprehensive strategy to attract and retain LCGP volunteers to fill leadership roles at the local garden level ✓ Set up a formalized community gardening forum with regular contact between all community gardeners to share experiences and ideas 	<p>Council was updated on the implementation of the London Community Gardens Program Strategic Plan in 2015 and 2016. An additional update is being provided in Fall 2018.</p> <p>This strategy is in progress. The creation of the Advisory Group and Garden Ambassadors was the first step in developing local, knowledgeable volunteers.</p> <p>The annual Spring and Fall gardener meetings provide opportunities for gardeners to share experiences and ideas.</p> <p>The Community Gardens Guidelines document was originally created in 2013 and has been updated with current and relevant changes six times. It will be updated again in 2019. The Guidelines clearly articulate the responsibilities of all stakeholder groups.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Manage Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to natural resources needed for gardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Create guidelines that address accountabilities and responsibilities of City of London, London Community Gardens Program Committee, garden leaders, and gardeners ✓ Ensure LCGP sites have access to needed natural resources 	<p>All gardens have reliable water sources, provided by the City of London. Compost, mulch and other site amendments are provided as needed in spring and fall.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Garden plots to meet demand and expansion requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify / designate public lands / co-location lands / surplus lands for LCGP ✓ Support community gardens on private land. For example, through assistance provided through the SPARKS! Neighbourhood Matching fund 	<p>Parks Planning identifies potential land for new gardens through their new park development process.</p> <p>A tool is currently being created for residents interested in establishing a community garden, on public or private land.</p> <p>The Neighbourhood Decision Making program allows residents to submit ideas for community gardens in their neighbourhood. Through the program residents are eligible to receive funding for their project as well as implementation support from City staff. There have been four garden projects on private property supported with this funding to date.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Municipal support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Work closely with developers to identify potential land for community gardens ✓ Assign sufficient staffing to support current and expanded LCGP program including maintenance and administration (noting any growth to the current program could be addressed as resources become available). ✓ Ensure community gardens is weaved into the Strategic Plan for the City of London and the City is committed to providing critical services to support the gardens. 	<p>Parks Planning identifies potential land suitable for use as a community garden.</p> <p>The City employs one full-time staff and one summer full-time casual staff to administer the program. In addition, the program is supported by a Parks Operations landscape crew and Parks Planning staff.</p> <p>Community Gardens is directly linked to two strategic areas of focus within the City's Strategic Plan: 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).</p>

Strategic Direction	Initiative	Milestones	Accomplishments
	<p>— Adequate funding</p>	<p>  Link LCGP program to city priorities (i.e. The London Plan, Child & Youth Agenda, London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy, Age Friendly London, Parks & Recreation Master Plan) </p> <p>  Create a multi-pronged funding approach, including a LCGP membership pricing model </p> <p>  Develop a plan to identify and leverage sponsorship opportunities to fund the LCGP </p>	<p>The importance of Community Gardens is recognized in all of these plans and identified as a priority.</p> <p>The London Community Gardens Program's plot fees are based on the gardener's ability to pay. The fee is a sliding scale ranging from \$15.00 - \$40.00 per gardening season. This user fee is reviewed annually.</p> <p>The City recently hired a Coordinator, Sponsorship, Advertising and Sales who will be identifying opportunities in the future.</p>