



CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT

COUNCIL POLICY

TITLE: Community Gardens

NO. PARKS & REC - 01

CONTEXT

The Township of Esquimalt supports the principles of economic, environmental and social sustainability, and understands that it must be proactive to ensure that future generations have the same opportunities and quality of life that residents enjoy today.

The Township is committed to providing, encouraging and leveraging the development of facilities, amenities and programs to enhance the health and quality of life for all residents. In 2007, Esquimalt launched its Nutrition Strategy and Food Security Project, **Esquimalt Eats for Health**, to educate the community about healthy eating, and to work toward building a food secure climate. Support for community gardens is a natural next step in this direction.

Community gardens are widely seen as essential to urban environments. They provide public access to food, open space, environmental education, recreation and social opportunities. Community gardens are neighbourhood gathering places that foster the development of community identity and spirit, and allow for interaction with nature and the productive use of land.

Urban population growth in the Capital Region, both current and projected, will result in many more families living in multi-unit housing. Urban growth in Esquimalt is increasingly accommodated in new housing created through redevelopment and infill. In communities where people do not have access to their own yards, or a place to garden or grow food, community gardens flourish.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this policy, a community garden is defined as a plot of public or private land where members of a community gardening group produce vegetables, fruits and flowers (native or ornamental) based on an agreement with the land owner. Demonstration gardening and other instructional programming may also take place in community gardens.

GOALS OF THE COMMUNITY GARDENS POLICY

1. To support the Township of Esquimalt's commitment to sustainability and food security
2. To allow Esquimalt residents of all ages and backgrounds to garden in a community context where they can improve their quality of life and their natural environment.

EFFECTIVE DATE:
October 6, 2008

APPROVED BY:
Council

REFERENCE:
Staff Report
P&R-08-015

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OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY

1. To identify potential community garden sites in Esquimalt
2. To facilitate partnerships between the Township and other property owners and community residents for the establishment of self-sustaining community gardens
3. To provide strategic support to community gardening groups.

ESQUIMALT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

The Township of Esquimalt will facilitate the creation of community gardens where available land exists, where neighbours have been consulted and are supportive, and where a community gardening group demonstrates an interest and commitment to operating the site.

Esquimalt may also offer the following support as resources are available:

- Promote awareness of community gardening on Esquimalt-owned land
- Make information available to those residents who wish to participate in community gardening initiatives
- Where appropriate, offer undeveloped parcels of Esquimalt-owned land as potential garden sites
- Provide in-kind support, such as personnel and material resources, to prepare the land by removing unwanted vegetation and debris, adding compost, and providing a metered water connection.

CONDITIONS OF USE FOR MUNICIPAL PROPERTY

The following conditions will apply to all community gardens situated on Esquimalt-owned property:

- The garden is developed at minimal cost to the Township
- A community consultation process is undertaken by the proponents to determine how the community garden group and the neighbourhood can benefit and support each other
- Environmental innovation, demonstration and education are encouraged
- The community gardening group agrees to develop, manage and operate the garden according to a License of Use Agreement with the Township which specifies the terms of use, management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures.

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING COMMUNITY GARDEN SITES

In identifying potential sites for community gardens, the following guidelines will be considered:

- Interest and commitment of a volunteer, non-profit community gardening group
- Availability of the site
- Informed and supportive neighbours
- Sufficient soil quality, drainage and sun exposure
- Proximity to public transit
- Access to a municipal water line

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- A License of Use Agreement for up to three years
- Location outside areas of environmental sensitivity or hazard.

DEFINITIONS

Areas of environmental sensitivity: riparian areas or areas containing threatened, endangered or protected ecosystems

Areas of hazard: steep slopes or areas with potential for erosion

Community Garden: a plot of public or private land where members of a community gardening group produce vegetables, fruits and flowers (native or ornamental) based on an agreement with the land owner. Demonstration gardening and other instructional programming may also take place in community gardens.

Food security: actions that ensure all people in a community have access to culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate food through local, non emergency sources at all times

Sustainability: social, economic and environmental practices that ensure future generations will have the same opportunities and quality of life that people enjoy today

Undeveloped parcels of Esquimalt-owned land: municipal lands that have minimal development potential, such as vacant lots, municipal rights of way and parks, where gardening will not impede intended uses.

APPENDIX – Conditions for License of Use Agreement Between the Township of Esquimalt and a Community Garden Group

A License of Use Agreement between the Township of Esquimalt and a Community Garden Group authorizes the group to develop and maintain a community garden on Esquimalt-owned land. The agreement will include at least the following conditions:

- The term of the agreement will be up to three years, with an option to renew
- The Township of Esquimalt may provide in-kind support, such as personnel and material resources, to prepare the land (removing unwanted vegetation and debris, and adding compost) and provide a metered water connection
- The Community Garden Group will be responsible for the overall management of the garden site and for assuming all maintenance responsibilities and associated operating costs related to community garden infrastructure
- The Community Garden Group will develop site use regulations, and members will be asked to sign a contract indicating their compliance with regular maintenance and operational standards
- Membership in the Community Garden Group and use of the site will be revoked for non compliance with the use agreement or for inappropriate activity on the site
- Gardening practices will adhere to the Township's Pesticide Use Reduction Bylaw
- Produce and other plants grown on the site are not for private profit
- Access to the community garden for the enjoyment of the general public is permitted and facilitated
- Each Community Gardening Group is required to have liability insurance
- Community Garden Group contact information will be posted at each site to assist in establishing positive relationships with neighbours.