

Dig it! A Practical Toolkit

How local governments can support community gardens



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Agreements and Insurance: policies and examples for community gardens

POLICY TYPE	INTENT	POLICY	EXAMPLES
Agreements between gardeners and local government or landowner	Ensure high standards (of maintenance, etc.) and sustainability of gardens	Put in place contracts, memoranda of agreements, or letters of agreement regarding: land leases and tenure, garden governance, insurance, user fees and standards of maintenance.	<p>Saanich has a comprehensive Community Gardens Policy which includes background, policy definition, goals, a description of the ways in which Saanich supports community gardens, conditions of use, and guidelines for selecting new sites and retaining existing sites.⁷²</p> <p>Central Okanagan Community Gardens partnered with the City of Kelowna Parks Department to create community gardens and assist in developing policy to support them.⁷³</p> <p>The City of Toronto Department of Parks and Recreation has developed an application process and an implementation process for gardening groups that wish to use land in public parks. The processes have a strong focus on community involvement and research.⁷⁴</p>
Insurance	Financial protection for the landowner against lawsuits. Most gardens carry insurance to protect the sponsoring organization or because some other entity, for example a local government, requires coverage in order for the garden to exist. ⁷⁵	Ensure insurance coverage. Local governments can include community gardens in their own policy, the community group may cover their own insurance, or there can be a combination of approaches.	<p>The City of Ottawa pays the insurance for the Nepean Allotment Garden Association's community garden.⁷⁶</p> <p>In March 2006, the City of New York extended municipal liability protection to community gardeners on city-owned land, thereby no longer requiring garden organizations to pay for private insurance policies.⁷⁷</p>

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Effective communication plays an important role in both educating local government staff and elected officials, and raising public awareness. Communications from local governments also signal support for community



gardens and the organizations that support them, are critical in building a higher profile for gardens as well as attracting further funding. In this section, we offer a sample briefing paper for communication with staff and elected officials. This tool contains information which is covered elsewhere in the report; it is offered here as an example or template, to be adapted for use by local governments.

SAMPLE Briefing Paper

Community gardens and potential role for local governments

Start with a brief two or three sentence introduction to the issue. Example: There is an opportunity to revitalize underutilized municipal land as community garden space. This could contribute to greater food security in the region.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY GARDENS?

This is the background section which provides, in two brief paragraphs at most, background information on community gardens. This could include any information on existing gardens in the community.

The American Community Gardening Association defines a community garden as:

"Any piece of land gardened by a group of people. ... urban, suburban, or rural. It can grow flowers, vegetables or community. It can be one community plot, or can be many individual plots. It can be at a school, hospital, or in a neighbourhood. It can also be a series of plots dedicated to "urban agriculture" where the produce is grown for a market."

Community gardens take many shapes and sizes, and include the growing and harvesting of vegetables, fruit, flowers, and the raising of small livestock, both for personal and commercial purposes. Most people think of community gardens as common or individual garden plots, but there are community gardens in backyards, on rooftops, balconies, boulevards, and in greenhouses. Gardens are located on vacant land, in parks, alongside schools, churches, recreation and health facilities, and elsewhere.

HOW CAN COMMUNITY GARDENS BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY?

This section discusses, in a maximum of three to four paragraphs, the reasons for taking action: community pressure to act, food security, revitalization, greenhouse gas emission reductions, etc. It also presents expected benefits, which could be drawn from the benefits section of this Toolkit or taken from local organizations willing to share more site or locally specific information.

RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

This section outlines the proposed course of action and describes both positive and negative impacts. It is appropriate to include positive and negative information on the potential impact of not taking action. You may also want to include more detailed information on the stages of planning and implementation.

Most importantly, be clear what you are asking for and keep it brief!

Fact: A Briefing Paper can be used to communicate to staff and elected officials about community gardens. In 2007, a version of this briefing paper, accompanied by a Power Point presentation, was used to provide background information on the benefits of urban agriculture to staff and Council of the City of Victoria. This work resulted in the adoption of a Resolution on urban agriculture, soon after.

Appendices to the briefing paper might include:

- 1. Examples of local governments and other organizations who have developed community garden or urban agriculture strategies:*
- 2. A detailed synopsis of community garden activities in the local area*



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- 54 <http://www.regina.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=967>
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- 66 http://www.metrovancouver.org/boards/Land%20Use%20and%20Transportation%20Committee/Land_Use_Transportation-October_10_2008-Agenda-Item5-2.pdf
- 67 <http://city.nelson.bc.ca/pdf/OCP/schedaocpbylaw3114.pdf>
- 68 http://www.city.langley.bc.ca/_pdf/downtown_master_plan.pdf
- 69 Available through <http://northcowichan.fileprosite.com/contentengine/launch.asp?ID=4>
- 70 <http://www.sooke.ca/assets/Local-Government/Departments/Planning/PDFs/Final%20Sooke%20Sustainable%20Development%20Strategy.pdf>
- 71 http://cfcdmall.com/cms/fileadmin/files/VisionsToAction/PDFs/VisionstoAction_SSP_Final1.1_050808.pdf
- 72 <http://www.saanich.ca/municipal/clerks/bylaws/pdfs/gardens.pdf>
- 73 <http://kelowna.cioc.ca/details.asp?RSN=556>
- 74 See http://www.toronto.ca/parks/programs/gardening_application.htm and http://www.toronto.ca/parks/programs/gardening_implementation.htm
- 75 For more advice on liability insurance, see the American Community Gardening Association's website at <http://communitygarden.org/docs/learn/articles/InsuranceforCommunityGardens.pdf>
- 76 Report to Health, Recreation and Social Services Committee, September 18, 2003, submitted by Jocelyn St. Jean, General Manager, People Services, City of Ottawa. <http://www.ottawa.ca/calendar/ottawa/citycouncil/hrssc/2003/09-18/ACS2003-PEO-IDP-0020%20Community%20Gardening%20in%20the%20City%20of%20Ottawa.htm>
- 77 http://www.nycgovparks.org/sub_newsroom/press_releases/press_releases.php?id=19761
- 78 This list is taken from BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, 2008. BC Community Gardens Project: Inventory Report.