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Date June 7, 2022 **Report No.** 2022-345

To Chair and Members
Committee of the Whole - Operations

From Inderjit Hans, P.Eng., PMP
General Manager, Public Works Commission

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic 2022 Community Gardens Update

3.0 Recommendation

THAT staff report 2022-345 Community Gardens Update BE RECEIVED.

4.0 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Community Garden activity for 2020 and 2021 and give a brief overview of the 2022 program.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to update City Council on the status of the Community Garden Program.

6.0 Background

In April 2015, City Council approved the establishment of a community garden program and directed staff to develop a Community Garden Policy and related user agreement. During this first year community gardens were established in

seven neighbourhood parks. In 2016, a draft Community Garden Policy was finalized and a license agreement was developed to be administered annually.

Although Parks Services is responsible for the general oversight of the Community Garden Program, Equal Grounds Community Garden (EGCG) members have and continue to facilitate the development and operation of garden sites throughout the City. The Community Garden Program has grown over the years and proven to be a positive and sustainable grass roots initiative in many of the City's park spaces. In 2019 the Community Garden Program had grown to include garden sites in fifteen neighbourhood parks in all wards including Cedarland Park, Charlie Ward Park, Lynden Hills Park, Earl Haig, Tranquility Park, Spring Street Buck, Woodman Park, Iroquois Park, Robert Moore Park, Princess Anne Park, Spring Gardens, Johnson Park, Rivergreen Park, City View Park and Greenwood Park.

As an essential source of fresh food for some families, individuals and those facing food insecurity, community gardens remained open throughout the province during the pandemic. In Brantford the Community Gardens Program also continued to operate albeit in a reduced capacity and at fewer sites following Covid-19 health and safety protocols.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

This report supports Council Priority Outcome # 1: All neighborhoods in the City are safe, vibrant, attractive and inclusive and Outcome #7: The City is mitigating its environmental footprint and adapting to climate change.

This report also relates directly to the Corporate Policies Parks and Recreation - 018 Community Gardens Policy.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

This report includes information supplied by Equal Grounds Community Garden members.

9.0 Analysis

This season marks the eighth year of the Community Garden Program. As activities return to pre-pandemic conditions the number of 2022 garden sites is also increasing once again at eleven locations in various City parks. These sites include Robert Moore Park, Johnson Park, Earl Haig, Spring St. Buck Park, Iroquois Park, Princess Anne Park, Lynden Hills Park, Spring Gardens Park,

Greenwood Park, Charlie Ward Park and Cedarland Park. Garden locations are attached as Appendix A.

Although community gardening activities took place at fewer sites during 2020 and 2021 productivity remained high with EGCG reporting conservative yields of more than 6500 pounds of fresh local produce donated to the Food Bank and distributed throughout the community. (Note these totals represent yields from twenty three EGCG sites operated throughout the City and County and thousands of volunteer hours).

In addition a number of other significant improvements have been initiated and/or are in the planning stages at several of the community gardens in City parks.

9.1 Water Infrastructure

9.1.1 Princess Anne Park

On June 23, 2020 City Council directed staff to install a waterline at Princess Anne Park to service both the existing community garden as well as a future ice rink in 2021. This water service was installed by Environmental Services in the park in June 2021 and is being utilized this season. The water service is housed in a rink box located close to the pathway into the park off Brunswick Street and adjacent to a flat open lawn area that can be utilized for a neighbourhood rink site in years to come.

9.1.2 Johnson Park

In March of 2021, City Council directed staff to include funding for the design and installation of a water service and other required infrastructure including hydro, lighting and back flow prevention at Johnson Park to accommodate a future neighbourhood ice rink and existing community garden in the 2022 budget.

This project is included in the 2022 capital plan: ID#002106 Johnson Park Future Ice Rink and Community Garden. Planning for the project is currently underway and includes relocating the community garden from the frontage of the park along Hansford Drive to an area next to the future rink site off Johnson Road. The new expanded garden will also have a new look - utilizing galvanized steel edging versus the wood border used previously. Wood edging has been found to deteriorate over a number of years requiring straightening and eventually replacement which is challenging when existing soil and plant

remnants remain in situ. The steel border is shipped in sections, can be assembled on site and is expected to remain in place for many years.

To date the neighbourhood have received notification flyers regarding the future rink site and community garden and a sign has been posted in the park. Two work dates have been set for volunteers to assemble the beds (May 28th, 2022) and another on June 4th, 2022 to plant the gardens.

Parks staff will be moving forward with preparing request for quotations for lighting specifications, and electrical service as well as the water infrastructure installation over the summer with the project construction anticipated during early Q4 of 2022. Water totes will continue to be used at the garden site for the 2022 season.

9.2 Earl Haig

Earl Haig remains as the largest of the community garden sites with 71 beds, 12 fruit trees, a berry patch, water service, seating and a large storage/working shed within the designated two acre property. To date Earl Haig has functioned as a central hub for EGCG, and this is anticipated to continue and expand over time with ample space available for composting, material storage, social gathering spaces and garden expansion.

In early 2021 EGCG applied for funding via the Ontario Trillium Foundation Community Resiliency Stream and were successful in securing grant funding for the purchase of a greenhouse and a full time staff to administer the expansive EGCG volunteer program, including training, education outreach and social media presence. The greenhouse will extend the community garden growing season and increase food production for donations of fresh food to the Brantford Food Bank and other community groups.

The greenhouse is proposed for installation at Earl Haig where it will also expand opportunities for educational workshops, volunteer participation and hands-on learning, as well as tourism and other outreach activities to encourage gardening and environmental awareness in the broader community.

The greenhouse is a galvanized arched steel structure with 10 mm double-wall polycarbonate panels, 25' wide, 26' long and 12.5' high, designed for commercial cultivation of agricultural crops. The structure will be installed at grade with foundation footings. Installation will be coordinated with EGCG members and overseen by Parks and Facilities staff. The costs of purchasing and operating the greenhouse will be covered by EGCG, who owns the

structure, with any incidental costs paid for through the community garden operational business unit.

Section 6.7 of the City's Community Garden Policy enables the Community Garden Committee to provide approval of site enhancements at community gardens. At a meeting of the Committee in June 2022, the addition of the greenhouse to the Earl Haig site was approved, conditional on EGCG securing the applicable building permits and an appropriate site plan.

10.0 Financial Implications

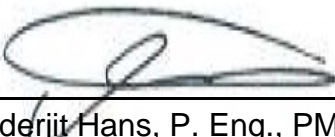
There are sufficient funds in the Community Gardens operating business unit to support the ongoing maintenance and implementation of the community garden program for 2022. The water service and electrical infrastructure at Johnson Park is funded in the 2022 capital budget. The purchase and operation of the proposed greenhouse at the Earl Haig site will be funded by EGCG.

11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

Community gardens raise awareness of urban gardening strategies and encourage residents to plant their own gardens and grow food at home. Locally produced food can reduce an individual's carbon footprint by cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions as a result of transporting food long distances and supporting biodiversity. Gardens also absorb stormwater, helping to prevent flooding and reducing run-off carrying pollutants into river systems.

12.0 Conclusion

The Community Garden Program has proven to be a positive and sustainable grass roots initiative in many of the City's park spaces. Community gardens enable residents of all ages and abilities to access and learn about food, connect with nature and each other, as well as make healthy choices. It is anticipated that the program will continue to grow and expand. The new greenhouse will provide EGCG with a launch pad for new programming and greater capacity.



Inderjit Hans, P. Eng., PMP
General Manager, Public Works Commission

Prepared By:

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Rick Cox, Director of Parks & Facilities Services

Attachments (if applicable)

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In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no