



Alternative formats and communication supports available upon request. Please contact accessibility@brantford.ca or 519-759-4150 for assistance.

Date March 7, 2023 **Report No.** 2023-166
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 **Potential Alternative Sites for a Community Garden and Greenhouse [\$400,000]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT report no. 2023-166 Potential Alternative Sites for a Community Garden Greenhouse BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to incorporate a community garden and greenhouse into the redevelopment of Woodman Park currently planned for construction in 2023; and
- C. THAT the incremental cost of \$400,000 including contingency for procuring and installing the greenhouse, community garden beds and associated amenities BE FUNDED from the Canada Community Building Fund Reserve Fund (RF0446); and
- D. THAT the General Manager, Public Works Commission and Manager of Purchasing BE AUTHORIZED to award and execute any contracts and amendments as required for this community garden and greenhouse; and
- E. THAT the Manager of Real Estate BE AUTHORIZED to implement a renewable 5-year lease agreement for use of the greenhouse and

community garden site by Equal Grounds Community Gardens at a nominal annual lease rate; and

F. THAT the necessary By-laws BE PRESENTED to City Council for Adoption.

4.0 Executive Summary

During the December 7, 2022 Committee of the Whole – Operations meeting, a request of Council (Notice of Motion) to partially waive fees associated with the site plan control approval and building permit processes for installing a greenhouse at the Earl Haig community garden site was referred to staff for additional information including potential alternative sites. The greenhouse proposed for Earl Haig was being funded through a grant received by Equal Grounds Community Gardens (EGCG). Staff worked with EGCG to develop the criteria required for a successful alternative community garden site and then reviewed potential locations against that list. Through consultation with EGCG, Woodman Park was identified as a preferred alternative site for the Earl Haig community garden.

Incorporating community garden elements into the Woodman Park redevelopment project provides for a successful implementation plan and a permanent site for the community garden and greenhouse. The funding requested is to allow for the costs for construction of the community garden and greenhouse because the grant secured by EGCG for the greenhouse may expire prior to completion of the project. A 5-year minimal cost lease be entered into with EGCG for use of the greenhouse.

A letter of support from EGCG in regards to the Woodman Park location is attached as Appendix C.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

This report provides recommendations to Council regarding a site for a community garden and greenhouse that is a viable alternative to the existing community garden location adjacent to the Earl Haig Family Fun Park. The recommendations include a location (Woodman Park), approval of funding, and authorization to provide a 5-year nominal-cost lease to EGCG for the site once it is complete.

6.0 Background

6.1 Resolution Referred to Staff

As reported in July, 2022 via Report 2022-345, approval was given under the Community Gardens Policy for EGCG to proceed with the addition of a greenhouse to the Earl Haig site, conditional on EGCG securing the applicable building permits and an appropriate site plan. A resolution requesting partial waiving of planning and building permit fees for the greenhouse project was brought forward to the Committee of the Whole Meeting on December 7, 2022.

The Committee of the Whole recommended that the resolution be referred to staff with the following direction:

That Staff provide members of Council with the following:

- *Appraisal value of the current land;*
- *Degree of construction on the site with regards to footings and/or pilings;*
- *List of other locations that would be permanent which can connect to other utilities;*
- *A copy of the waterfront master plan; and*
- *License insurance information with respect to the application*

Staff prepared a memo with the requested information which was provided to Council at their meeting on December 20, 2022. A hyperlink to that memo is attached to this report as Appendix A. At that time, Council approved the recommendation to refer the matter to staff, with an expectation that the matter be brought back with additional information and a recommendation of a suitable alternative site for the greenhouse and community garden.

6.2 Current Configuration at Earl Haig Site

The community garden site at Earl Haig currently has 72 boxes with dimensions 2.4m X 1.4m (8' X 4.5'). These boxes are in groupings of three pushed together. The distance currently between the rows of boxes is approximately 3m (10') to accommodate mowers and service vehicles. There are currently two pollinator beds at Earl Haig at either end of the current layout with approximate dimensions of 2.7m X 2.7m (9' X 9') and 5.5m X 2.4m (18' X 8') and a fruit bush area roughly 10.7m X 4.3m (35' X 14'). There are also nine fruit trees on site. Earl Haig currently has both a water service and a water tote (roughly 5' X 5'). There would be a similar requirement at a new site. The community garden complex currently occupies approximately 2,700m² (0.7 acres) of the available space (9,700m²/2.4ac) at this site.

The storage shed measures 6m X 4m (19.5' X 12.5') and is connected to hydro service. The proposed greenhouse is 7.3m X 9.2m (24' X 30'). There is plenty

of accessible free parking and the site is on a transit route. The proposed greenhouse and associated buildings are subject to site plan control, pursuant to By-law 90-2018.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

The Waterfront Master Plan (2010) notes the importance of Earl Haig Family Fun Park as an important destination facility for residents and visitors. The plan also mentions that the City should reassess its role as a facility operator for the Earl Haig Family Fun Park if the facility becomes a financial burden. *“The site is clearly an appealing site for redevelopment because of its riverside location.”*

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2018) *“recognizes Earl Haig Family Fun Park as an important component to the City’s open space network, one that should be retained as part of a much broader strategy for the protection of greenspace and municipal waterfront land”* and recommends the City continue with plans to invest in the Park (Recommendation #34). Recommendation #66 is to, in part, *“continue to work with community groups to plan for and establish community gardens and food forests including locations within existing parks...”*

Policy # 018 Community Gardens Policy sets out general requirements for new community garden sites.

8.0 Input From Other Sources

Parks & Facilities Services staff consulted with staff from Engineering Services, Planning, Economic Development and Finance during the preparation of this report. Executive members of Equal Grounds Community Gardens were also involved in assembling the information regarding current state and future needs.

9.0 Analysis

9.1 Alternative Sites and Requirements

Potential alternative locations was prepared by staff and evaluated in regards to site requirements, in collaboration with EGCG, such as size, spacing of beds/trees/shrubs/pollinators, water supply, hydro availability, parking, bus route, greenhouse and storage shed siting, sunlight, space to expand, visibility, and drainage. “Nice to haves” were also considered such as nearby meeting space and washroom accessibility. The following highlights the lack of certain requirements at the respective sites:

-
- Princess Anne Park (1.4 ac) is not directly on a bus route and does not have parking. There is community garden currently at this site.
 - Conklin Park (1.8 ac) may accommodate a parking lot, however it is not on a bus route or serviced with hydro or water
 - Rivergreen Park (1.9 ac) visibility was not adequate and is not serviced and does not have parking. A community garden was previously attempted here, however experienced a lot of vandalism and the location was ultimately abandoned
 - Parson's Park (1.9 ac) has an existing community garden and food forest. It has a water service with no hydro or parking
 - Burnley Park (1.7 ac) is currently serviced with water, however does not have parking
 - Woodman Park (1.4 ac) has all of the required amenities however the community garden as conceptualized would use up all of the available open space (approximately 3,700 square metres or 0.9 acres) in the park that may impact community programming.

9.1.1 Woodman Park

Staff reviewed existing conditions at Earl Haig and produced a high level conceptual plan (Appendix B). The vision at Woodman Park would be that of a premier community garden. Raised planting beds esthetically laid out, appropriately accessible width pathways surrounding the planting beds, storage shed, material bin, maintenance vehicle access road, fruit trees, fruit bushes, solar components including lighting and shade structure. Additional benefits of this location is the opportunities to build programming and engagement both in recreation as well as the nearby school.

Moving into detailed design staff would complete condition assessments of the existing trees to determine pruning and/or removals, geotechnical investigations of the area to determine required drainage enhancements, hydro and water servicing requirements and begin the Site Plan Application process triggered by the proposed development of the greenhouse and any associated buildings. To aid in potential expedited construction, staff will separate the build and proceed in two phases.

Phase 1 being the planting bed, paths, access road portion and Phase 2 being the greenhouse portion.

While there are space constraints at Woodman Park, the consensus of staff and EGCG representatives is that the site has the best combination of characteristics for a successful alternative to the Earl Haig site and therefore staff are recommending it be selected as the preferred location.

9.2 Long term Lease or License

Including 2022, licenses for current community garden sites on municipal properties have been reviewed and renewed annually. These licenses do not have a fee associated with them. Staff recommend a longer term arrangement for the Woodman site to allow EGCG to establish a robust and resilient program. Staff do not have the authority to negotiate agreements longer than three years nor at rates less than market value. While the annual review and renewal cadence is appropriate for other sites, staff recommend that Council authorize staff to enter a lease agreement of at least five years at a nominal annual rate. This approach is similar to arrangements in place with Brantford Minor Ball Association for use of space at Cockshutt Park at a rate of \$2 per year.

9.3 Continued Use of Earl Haig Site

Until such time that the construction of the proposed community garden at Woodman Park is complete, the existing EGCG community garden at Earl Haig will continue to be actively utilized by EGCG. Once the relocation is complete, staff will work on a decommissioning and potential alternate use plan for the area.

10.0 Financial Implications

The initial request of Council was to consider partially waiving the fees associated with Site Plan Approval and Building Permits for installing a greenhouse at Earl Haig. The purchase of the greenhouse was funded by an Ontario Trillium Fund grant obtained by EGCG, who had also negotiated a partial in-kind donation of the installation of the greenhouse. The grant is currently funding one new staff person hired by EGCG to implement programming and community engagement. However, the duration to implement the community garden and greenhouse at Woodman Park may deplete the funding for this position prior to completing the goals and objectives as outlined in the grant application. To ensure the success of this location by utilizing this staff member as a subject matter expert, there will be a need to contract this

staff member through the capital project for a short duration to complete the programming and community engagement for the community garden and greenhouse.

The cost to add a premier community garden component (greenhouse, shed, pathways, utility vehicle access, garden beds, lighting, etc.) at Woodman Park is estimated to be \$400,000 which includes a contingency. The final cost would be refined during detailed design for the project. Staff recommend that this cost be funded from the Canada Community Building Fund Reserve Fund (RF0446).

Ongoing operational support for the community garden, once in place, would continue to be brought forward as part of the Parks & Facilities Services annual Operating budget. Costs borne by the municipality would include the water, turf and pathway maintenance, repairs to the garden boxes, etc. For the Woodman site as it is proposed, a reasonable expectation would be \$4,000-\$5,000 annually, which is slightly higher than that typically deployed at Earl Haig in recent years.

Ongoing capital maintenance would be the responsibility of the municipality as well since the greenhouse and shed would be added to the municipal assets. Building lifecycle considerations would be incorporated into the ongoing 10 – year capital planning.

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 (GHG) emissions as a result of transporting food long distances. Community gardens also support biodiversity and pollinator species. The relocation of the community garden to Woodman Park will include planting 10 fruit trees and fruit bushes which will capture 0.22 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent annually. Additionally, the greenhouse will be an off-grid solar greenhouse resulting in no GHG emissions from greenhouse operations. Other climate and environmental benefits include using rain barrels to catch water coming off the roof for use in greenhouse and garden operations as well as composting organic waste for use in the gardens rather than being sent to landfill.

12.0 Conclusion

Equal Grounds Community Gardens (EGCG) secured grant funding to purchase a greenhouse to install at the Earl Haig Community Garden site and sought partial waiving of the site plan application and building permit fees. At the City Council meeting of December 20, 2022, Council referred the matter to staff to develop a recommendation for an alternative site. This report outlines the requirements for a successful alternative site and recommends that the City incorporate a community garden including a greenhouse at Woodman Park at an estimated cost of \$400,000. This work will be at the City's expense and support a long-term tenancy agreement with EGCG for a community garden complex at that site. The report recommends that Council authorize a renewable 5-year lease with EGCG.

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

Prepared By:

Rick Cox, Director of Parks & Facilities Services

Attachments (if applicable)

Appendix A: [Memo regarding Community Garden Greenhouse at 101 Market Square - 2022-747](#)

Appendix B: Woodman Park Conceptual Plan

Appendix C: Support Letter for Woodman (from EGCG)

Copy to:

Community Gardens Committee

Equal Grounds Community Gardens (EGCG)

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