

March 3, 2023

Equal Ground Community Gardens supports report #2023-166.

Equal Ground Community Gardens (EGCG) currently supports 28 garden sites across Brantford, 11 of which are in city parks in partnership with the City of Brantford since 2015. Last year (2022), more than 6,500 pounds of garden grown fresh produce was donated to the Brantford Food Bank and distributed to the community. Earl Haig is the largest community garden site with 71 beds, 12 fruit trees, and a berry patch.

Earl Haig is the flagship garden site for EGCG since it is centrally located with high visibility. In 2021, EGCG was awarded a Trillium Foundation Grant to build and operate a Greenhouse and Learning Centre in Brantford. As reported to Council in July 2022, following a comprehensive review of existing potential sites across the city, Earl Haig was selected as the best location for the new facility.

At Council's direction in December 2022, city staff has worked with EGCG to explore alternative locations for the Greenhouse and Learning Centre. After a review of a number of sites, a new opportunity was identified by staff to relocate EGCG flagship site to the Woodman Park as part of the renovation and upgrade currently underway. While the location is not as central or visible as Earl Haig, the Woodman location offers many other benefits.

On a fundamental level, the site meets most of the primary criteria identified by EGCG, such as access to water, parking and sufficient space to accommodate the same number of gardens, fruit trees, and storage as currently exists at Earl Haig as well as the Greenhouse and Learning Centre.

While the Woodman location is not as central as Earl Haig, it is still reasonably close to downtown and easily accessible by transit and is walkable. The opportunity to be located adjacent to an active Community Centre also offers a number of benefits, including security, visibility and access to indoor washrooms and meeting space. An integral part of the larger vision for the Greenhouse and Learning Centre is to become a community hub, and the Woodman location offers the potential for further partnerships and programming with both the City and the adjacent school as well as the residential community.

The EGCG Board applauds the work done by staff to build a viable alternative to Earl Haig. The Board is confident that relocating to Woodman as proposed will be good for EGCG and the Board encourages Council to adopt the recommendations of report #2023-166.

We look forward to continuing to work with Council and staff, and support increased food security and access to healthy, local food in Brantford.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Schneider,
President, Equal Ground Community Gardens