



## **Committee of the Whole Report**

### **For the Meeting of February 11, 2021**

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** January 22, 2021  
**From:** Thomas Soulliere, Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities  
**Subject:** Community Garden Licences of Occupation

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#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council:

Authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute licences of occupation for the following community gardens, subject to the publication of notices as required by the Community Charter, with terms satisfactory to the Director of Parks, Recreation and Facilities, and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

1. Oswald Park Community Garden in Oaklands (Oswald Park, 3031 Cedar Hill Road)
2. Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden in James Bay (300 Block Erie St and St. Lawrence Street)
3. Franklin Green Community Garden in North Park (1045 Mason Street)

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to execute licences of occupation for two new community gardens (Oswald Community Garden and James Bay Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden) and one existing community garden (Franklin Green Community Garden). The term of each agreement will be five years.

The City has received proposals from the Oaklands Community Association to develop a new community garden in Oswald Park, and from the James Bay Neighbourhood Association to adopt management of the existing James Bay Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden (currently maintained by City staff). The City approved the Franklin Green Community Garden proposal and awarded the North Park Neighbourhood Association a licence of occupation in October 2017.

The Community Gardens Policy outlines the process for the creation and management of community garden sites on City-owned lands. These gardens help facilitate positive community experiences, including educational and social opportunities for residents. Community associations

play an active role in designing the garden features, organizing events, providing signage, and developing other place-making features that benefit the community.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for licences of occupation for three community gardens on City land.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City's Community Gardens Policy (Appendix A) outlines the process for the creation and retention of community garden sites on City-owned lands.

In April 2018, volunteers from the Oaklands Garden Committee and the Oaklands Community Association (OCA) submitted an Expression of Interest for a community garden that would include an allotment, commons, and orchard garden at Oswald Park. From 2018-2020, community consultation was undertaken, and the project was adjusted to garner further public support. OCA has applied for the new Community Garden Start-Up Grant to build the proposed garden.

In July 2020, the James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) submitted an Expression of Interest proposing that the existing herb garden in the southeast corner of Fisherman's Wharf Park, be designated as a community garden, and a license of occupation be granted to the JBNA.

Franklin Green Community Garden was approved in October 2017 when Council accepted the North Park Neighbourhood Association's proposal and awarded them a licence of occupation. The garden is the last community garden licence on a three-year term. Once this new licence is executed, all existing 14 community gardens on City land will be on a five-year term.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

### Oswald Community Garden

The proposed project is approximately 548 square metres in the northeast corner of Oswald Park (3031 Cedar Hill Road), inside the pedestrian loop pathway that encompasses the park. Existing facilities in Oswald Park include an off-leash dog area, a playground, a basketball court, a raingarden, and a volleyball area. The proposed garden is anticipated to have an overall positive impact on the park by adding new features and activities.

The Oaklands Community Association (OCA) will oversee the Oswald Community Garden. The detailed proposal is available in Appendix B. The garden will be comprised of a commons garden, and a fenced-in food forest and allotment garden. The allotment contains 26 plots: six U-shaped raised beds, 14 allotment plots, two single allotment plots, and four wheelchair accessible plots.

The food forest includes a mix of food trees, herbs, and flowers, all marked with educational signage.

The unfenced areas consist of a commons garden with native plants, pollinator plants, culinary and medicinal herbs, and a little seed library. This area also includes one interpretive sign and a seating area, which staff will review before installation. The detailed proposal is available in Appendix B.

Opportunities for public input on this proposal included the following:

- In January 2020, the Oaklands Community Association (OCA) delivered information brochures to neighbouring residents on the 2900 block of Gorsworth Rd, the 1400 block of Stroud Rd, the 2800 block of Delatre St, and the 3000 block of Cedar Hill Rd that surrounds Oswald Road. The brochures were also distributed at nearby businesses and apartment buildings.
- The OCA conducted an online survey (70 respondents) from July 2019 to March 2020.
- An information board with an opportunity to submit feedback was installed at Oswald Park from January to May 2020.
- An OCA Design Workshop (January 2020) with 20 participants and a Design Open House (February 2020) with 30 participants were conducted and promoted through newsletters and featured in the Vic News article "Organizers seek input for long-awaited Oaklands community garden".

The consultations (see the Community Consultation section of the Oswald Community Garden Proposal in Appendix B) indicate overall neighbourhood support for this proposal. The concerns raised include limited parking availability, increased park usage, and potential issues with sight lines.

City support for the development of this new garden will include the installation of a quick coupler within the proposed garden area to allow for four watering access points. Additionally, the City will install a bike rack at the north entrance to accommodate cyclists and help alleviate parking concerns for the Oswald Road residents.

The applicant will install chain link fencing around the allotment garden and orchard area. To mitigate potential parking concerns, staff will evaluate the use of the parking lot located at the north entrance of Oswald Park and will investigate options to mitigate any parking issues that arise once the garden is operational.

Should Council approve entering into a new licence agreement for Oswald Park, the Oaklands Community Association would be eligible to receive a \$10,000 Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant in 2021.

## Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden

The herb garden situated in the southeast corner of Fisherman's Wharf Park in James Bay is approximately 498 square metres (Appendix C). This park includes a playground, a rain garden, native planting areas, pathways and a dog park.

The herb garden was added in 2012 as part of the Fisherman's Wharf Park redevelopment and is currently maintained by the City. The herb garden was intended to provide a supply of fresh, pickable herbs for neighboring residents, many of whom live in apartments and have limited access to gardening space.

The James Bay Neighbourhood Association (JBNA) has proposed the herb garden be designated and managed as a community garden (commons), with a license of occupation. The detailed proposal is available in Appendix C.

The JBNA has proposed to take responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of the herb garden, and to enhance accessibility by installing raised, tubed planters. Density and availability of herbs in the garden will be increased by inter-planting annual/biennial and culinary herbs native to the area, paired with a variety of flowering pollinator plants, and underplanting existing shrubs with shade-tolerant herbs. Improved plant signage will be installed, along with a composter and a welcome sign for the James Bay Community Herb Garden, inviting the public to harvest. The proposed design, location and materials of the sign will be reviewed and approved by staff before installation.

This is a unique situation, wherein the City has built a garden and is now considering the possibility of transferring management to a not-for-profit. The JBNA proposal in addition to their experience managing community gardening projects provides evidence of their ability to oversee the management of this space. In addition, they intend to improve accessibility, knowledge-sharing, and place-making for volunteers and the wider community. As the proposed changes do not significantly impact the garden design and use, staff concluded community consultation was not required.

The City will continue to maintain the exterior edge (snowberry plantings) of the garden and the existing gravel paths. There will be no reduction to the staffing complement of the City as a result of this change. One water access point will be provided, and staff will continue to maintain the irrigation system.

## Franklin Green Community Garden

The North Park Neighbourhood Association operates the Franklin Green Community Garden, located between the fence bordering the parking area at 1580 and 1518 Cook Street. This is a commons garden of approximately 110 square meters that includes a mix of native plants, pollinator plants, vegetables, as well as culinary and medicinal herbs. A team of 10 volunteers help to tend the garden. In 2020 The North Park Neighbourhood Association animated the use of the Franklin Green adjacent to the Community Garden for both the *North Park Days* and two neighbourhood

distribution days of *Get Growing, Victoria!*

There are no changes proposed by either the operator or the City for the renewal of this agreement, other than to establish a 5-year term, consistent with other garden licenses.

### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

#### Oswald Community Garden

The Oswald Community Garden will be located along the existing wheelchair accessible pathway from Cedar Hill Rd and Oswald Rd. The installation of one accessible parking spot in the north end Oswald Park parking lot will be considered. The installation of 1.5 metre pathways of compressed, crushed material, with access to four new, wheelchair accessible raised beds and a wheelchair access ramp to the toolshed will increase accessibility to the allotment garden.

#### Fisherman's Wharf Herb Garden

The garden at Fisherman's Wharf Park includes 1.5 metre pathways within, and adjacent to, the garden. Edging the pathways along the paths should reduce potential tripping hazards and will increase safety for visitors with sight accessibility considerations. Increasing the number and locations of raised herb tubes will improve access to harvest low-growing herbs.

#### Franklin Green Community Garden

The garden at Franklin Green is located along an existing wheelchair accessible pathway.

### *2019 - 2021 Strategic Plan*

Community gardens support Objective 8 (Enhance and steward public spaces, green spaces, and food systems).

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

All costs related to the installation of water access points in Oswald Park and Fisherman's Wharf can be covered under existing City operating budget of \$15,000 to support community gardens. Specific water usage costs are unknown but as directed by Council, will be borne by the City. The estimated annual range based on other existing community gardens is \$200- \$900 per year. The gardens will be installed and operated at no additional cost to the City.

The total cost of the bike rack and wheelchair accessible parking space installation at Oswald park is estimated at approximately \$3,500 and will be accommodated within the 2021 operating budget.

*Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

Community gardens help support goals identified in the Food Systems section of the Official Community Plan, including specifically:

- Objective 17.5: Encourage food production activities in visible and suitable public places to foster a connection between people and the process of growing, harvesting, and eating fresh produce; and
- Objective 17.7 Support the establishment of at least one allotment garden per neighbourhood, co-located with community facilities or services where possible, and more in neighbourhoods that feature a high proportion of rental or attached housing, where feasible.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Staff recommend Council support the licenses for a new community garden at Oswald Park, Fisherman’s Wharf Herb Garden, and the renewal of the licence for the Franklin Green Community Garden.

Respectfully submitted,

Navdeep Sidhu  
Assistant Director,  
Parks and Recreation

Thomas Soulliere  
Director,  
Parks, Recreation and Facilities

**Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.**

**List of Attachments**

- Appendix A: Community Gardens Policy
- Appendix B: Oswald Community Garden Proposal
- Appendix C: James Bay Fisherman’s Wharf Herb Garden Proposal