



James Bay Neighbourhood Association

234 Menzies St
Victoria, B.C.
V8V 2G7

www.jbna.org

July 10th, 2015

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria

Re: Niagara Boulevard Garden (relocation of Michigan Street Garden)

After 22 months, relocation plans for the Michigan Street Garden have been submitted. It has been an arduous journey, but an important and 'fruitful' journey. The **Garden of All Sorts** proposal was reviewed by the internal CALUC on June 14th and at the open JBNA General Meeting of July 8th, which I chaired.

In 2011, JBNA proposed to the City that two sites be explored to create more allotment and searched for alternate garden locations in James Bay. This search was unrelated to the Capital Park development. Two locations were identified, measured and proposed to Parks staff. The Niagara Boulevard was one of the locations.

We are pleased that the Niagara strip of land will find a productive use while assuaging the need to relocate the Michigan Street Garden.

Observations, considerations, and problems brought forward at the June 14th and July 8th meetings include the following:

- There is general agreement that the proposed site has some challenges such as wind and sunlight as well as size. Some of these can be mitigated by the proposed configuration and adjacent improvements such as removal of trees and raising the canopy. While some suggestions of alternate sites were made at the July 18th meeting, these had all been considered in the process to date and there seemed to be general agreement that the current proposal is the best option available at this time.
- Garden membership should be restricted to residents of James Bay. This was/is a condition of gardens as people leaving a neighbourhood gave up plots. At the June 14th meeting one individual who has been with the garden since its inception was identified as no longer living in James Bay and it was agreed she would be the one exception. At the July 8th JBNA General meeting, the proposal included two exceptions rather than the one; the second exception must also be a current active member as well as a long-time member of the Michigan Garden.

- We understand that the Michigan Garden does not currently have a wait-list. If all Niagara Boulevard plots are not taken up by Michigan Street 2014 gardeners, those on the waitlist of the Montreal Street Garden should be offered a plot before any other residents are given the opportunity.
- Going forward, within a set period during which the garden is established, a turn-over target should be created (i.e. limit terms if turn-over does not meet a target of say, 10% per year over a set number of years). The proposal indicates a turnover rate of 1 member annually beginning in 2018 based on the rationale of there being only 18 allotments which is seen as the minimum number for the project to be viable.
- It is important that the garden be visually open and inviting to all residents as the Montreal Garden is. To this end, the creation of a pathway, or openings in any fencing, through the garden is encouraged.
- To create more openness, fencing should not be placed on the garden's north edge. Sports fans stay near to the sports field fence and would not be expected to interfere with the garden in any way greater than experienced by the Montreal garden.
- There was one objection, by a resident near the site, to the loss of any trees or change to the park at it is presently. The possibility of lifting of the tree canopy and removal of the honey locust trees is understood and accepted. (Note: JBNA has a project which, if approved, may require the planting of two trees nearby, compensating in a small way for the loss of the honey locust trees.)
- While acknowledging that the proposed Niagara Garden site is a viable solution to the immediate need for relocating the Michigan Street Garden, the situation and solution has raised questions regarding the use of public parkland and street boulevards for private allotment garden use. At the public meeting, there were strong diverging opinions on both sides of public land use issue, but general agreement that the City of Victoria needs to establish a clear vision and operational policy to guide future decisions.

Should Parks staff and/or Council wish to discuss the matter further, JBNA would be pleased to meet with you.

Yours truly,

Wayne Shillington,
Treasurer, JBNA
for JBNA CALUC

Cc: Julie MacDougall, Parks
Jim Handy, Planning

May 25, 2015

To Leigh Sifton,

Hello. This letter is a response to the proposed boulevard gardening along Niagara Street at Mac Donald Park. **Personal information**, I feel very strongly about the park and the environs next to me and I would like to register my voice as a “no” vote to this proposal.

I have heard a lot about people’s desire to garden to grow their own food, the need for food security and the city’s intent to provide spaces for those activities. I do understand that this has been a difficult process. I understand that the city is beholden to replacing these 15-18 garden plots from the former Michigan Street gardens. I am not sure how that all came to be but it sure has me concerned about this whole process and future endeavors.

If the City of Victoria holds as a priority community gardens and food security and the active living inclusiveness of such deals, then a proper, cohesive plan really should be the first step. This appears to be a simple land grab. If it is this hard to find space to re-allocate these 15-18 plots then how on earth will city council grow this food futures program?

Here are my objections:

1. The beauty of this tree boulevard will be ruined by possible tree removal, limbing up for light and interference of nesting and foraging sites for resident birds, bats and pollenating insects
2. I worked my **Personal information** - it is too damn cold here to adequately grow food crops
3. If it is too cold, wrap it in plastic – imagine how lovely that would look for our residents and let’s not forget our tourists
4. A representative from the Michigan street gardens mentioned chain link fencing around plots to protect the gardeners’ interest. One word – ugly.
5. There is a lack of cohesiveness of space. The community garden down on Montreal St. makes sense visually whereas this will look meagre; a project without a vision

Speaking of vision, this is a large issue and I do not underestimate the difficulty that your department faces in addressing it. But that is the crux of it. The changing desires of urban dwellers are posing challenging to sacrosanct institutions such as sports fields, rights of way, private property usage, the roles of development and evolving aesthetics.

If the city really wants to encourage sustainability and elevate food security, then it will have to negotiate hard to hold developers accountable to land use provisions. Changing the building code would need to consider:

1. Requiring sporting clubs, schools, parks and other fields to share space
2. For apartment buildings/blocks to provide space for their own tenants (the only people who ever seem to use these vast tracts of land are the lawn cutting crews), perhaps with incentives of tax rebates
3. To consider multi-generational ideas such as seniors' facilities that can accommodate community gardening

I urge the city to be very mindful in deliberating this proposal. Too many times a very good idea or intention can be lost with bad implementation. If people in the community feel railroaded by this proposal it will create distaste and resistance to future projects. Real plans do not look like grasping for straws. I look forward to any feedback you may have and I would like to attend the City Parks Master Plan Forum if it is open to the public. Do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions for me.

Sincerely,

Personal information

Good Morning,

I want to discuss this in relation to Strategic Plan Objective 8, Enhance and Stewart Public Spaces, Green spaces and Food Systems.

I am a new resident to Jmaes Bay and I live at **Personal information**. The community's proximity to the open water as well as its human scale attracted me. Last November I 'discovered' the Michigan Street Allotment Garden oasis in the heart of James Bay. I've witnessed its dismantling as the Jawl group embarks on it Capital Park Development. When I became aware that last evening's (July 08, 2015) JBNA meeting had the reconstituted gardening group on the agenda I decided to attend.

Mary Lynne Rimer, spokesperson for the Neighbourhood Garden of All Sorts, presented well and clearly demonstrated that her group is working diligently to meet the requisites steps to gain approval for the location offered by the City's Parks Department. There was a lively discussion period that without exception offered support for community gardens yet repeatedly echoed the statement, "The JBNA and City has failed in this attempt to provide a new site on the Niagara Street boulevard of MacDonald Park".

I am a walker and the Niagara Street corridor is one of my routes. This morning as I walked the neighbourhood my vision was more keenly focused. Mayor Helps I ask you to explain this choice of MacDonald Park as an alternative to the Michigan Street Allotment Garden. The site is under the canopy of coniferous and deciduous trees, is in complete shade during summer months, is in the wind tunnel north-south street and is literally at the street's edge and adjacent to an established baseball park. Does this meet with the laudable outcomes of Objective 8 of the Strategic Plan?

As well there was a second echo during the post presentation discussion. Why isn't Irving Park the new site? I understand process and protocol. As a newcomer I am certain there is much I've missed in the City's process. Yet, if you and your council truly believe in the Strategic Plan, why are you offering marginal land when there is better to offer; and why are you asking your electorate and citizens to go through your process to put their best efforts into a site that is far from the City's best offer.

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Personal information

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From:

Email

Reference : **Personal information**

Daytime Phone :

Re: Relocation of the Michigan St. allotment garden.

Earlier this week I attended the JBNA meeting at JB New Horizons. I was pleasantly surprised to see that the Parks Department has approved the installation of a small fenced apiary on the edge of Irving Park, adjacent to the New Horizons building. At this meeting we heard a presentation

from the Michigan St. allotment garden folks, telling about their search for a new location. The spot that was offered them by the Parks Dept. is on Niagara Street on the edge of MacDonald Park. The gardeners said it is not their preferred option, but the only one that Parks came up with. The immediate neighbours were not supportive, and reported that it is a difficult spot to grow anything, as it is in a wind corridor. The most preferred option would be in Irving Park, which is protected from the wind and has good sun. I support the location of the garden in Irving Park. The park is large enough to accommodate this use.

It would be visually attractive and will contribute to food security as well as providing pro-social activity in an area that is "home" to challenging street people.

It seems to me that a precedent has been set by allowing the apiary to be located in this spot. A garden would be a good addition as well.