

October 8, 2015

**DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES REPORT
PUBLIC WORKS SERVICES 2015-56**

TO: Committee of the Whole
SUBJECT: Community Garden
ORIGIN: Director Public Works Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT Development and Infrastructure Services Report - Public Works Services – PWS 2015-56, dated September 30, 2015 regarding the Feasibility of an Additional Community Garden be received and the following recommendation(s) be adopted:

- 1. THAT staff be directed to work collaboratively with the York Region Food Network and the Region of York Environmental Promotion & Protection Department to determine the feasibility of partnering on a second Community Garden at the corner of London Rd and Main St. N.;**
- 2. AND THAT staff bring forward any Town related costs for the second community garden in the 2017 draft budget requests, if required.**

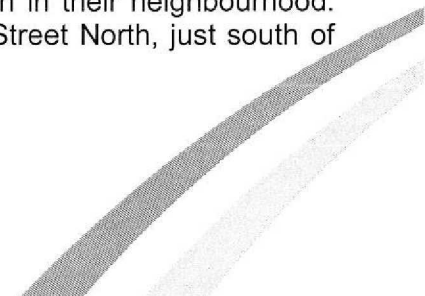
PURPOSE

This Report has been prepared to address a motion introduced in Council at the May 11, 2015, meeting with respect to staff investigating the possibility of a community garden at the naturalized area at the corner of London Road and Main Street North.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2011, in collaboration with the York Region Food Network (YRFN), Newmarket opened its first community garden. The community garden began with 85 plots and this year in 2015, with the help of Town staff, it has expanded its services to 106 plots. Each plot donates a portion of the harvest to the local food bank and provides locally grown food to the residents of Newmarket. The Town works closely with volunteers and the YRFN staff to prepare, plant and maintain the gardens.

Council has now authorized staff to consider expanding community gardens to another area of Newmarket to allow access for more residents to enjoy the benefits of a community garden in their neighbourhood. The area for consideration is at London Road, on the north east side of Main Street North, just south of Max Stiles Park.



Wording has also previously been placed in the Recreational Activity Guide asking the public for their comments on any additional community gardens for the Town. To date there have not been any responses.

COMMENTS

Staff have reviewed this request, conducted a site visit and had discussions with respect to the feasibility of the site for a community garden. This land has access to water, a roadway for cars to park and is also accessible by other modes of transportation via bike trails and bus corridor. It is large enough to hold a number of plots as well as composters. It is in a highly visible area and is located far enough from the original garden so as not to compete with other growers.

If Council directs staff to pursue a second site for a community garden then this site would be feasible. This proposed additional site should only be considered if it is to be a collaboration with York Region Food Network and York Region's Environmental Promotion and Protection Department. Consultation with LSRCA should also be undertaken given its location in the flood plain.

The York Region Food Network operates programs, raises awareness and promotes policy changes for increased access to affordable and nutritious food produced within a sustainable food system. YRFN also acts as a resource for groups interested in starting up new community gardens in York Region and would be the correct organization to continue with partnering for a second garden. YRFN receives charitable donations for the gardens from foundations, corporations and individuals.

The Region of York SM4RT Living Community Composting project partners with community gardens to set up composting demonstration sites. Trained volunteers compost organic waste from the garden using a variety of systems and techniques. The sites provide an interactive venue for sharing composting tips with the community through hands-on workshops. Four sites have been established in the Region in the last two years. These projects support the SM4RT Living Plan's target of reducing food waste by encouraging residents to compost on their own property and grow their own food.

BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES

Living Well

Emphasis on active lifestyle and recreation opportunities

Well-balanced

A project that encourages a sense of community through an appropriate mix of land uses.

Well-planned & connected

Improve accessibility for all to interact and benefit from interconnectivity with community and neighbours.

Provide sound maintenance services to an appropriate level with respect to revitalization of neighborhoods.

CONSULTATION

A meeting will be hosted with York Region Food Network to consult, provide input and explore a partnership with the Town of Newmarket. Further consultation will be required with the neighbourhood residents to provide information sessions about the project. Collaboration and discussions have also occurred with the Region of York to be involved in the program to encourage the composting

demonstration sites. Possible solicitation for funding sources through sponsorship and or advertising may be explored.

Information spots were also previously included in the Recreation Activity Guide asking for comments on additional community gardens. No comments have been received.

HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS

There are no Staffing changes anticipated with respect to this report.

BUDGET IMPACT

Operating Budget (Future)

Should Council direct staff to maintain an additional community garden in this quadrant, the amount will be included in the 2017 budget requests. Without finalizing partnership arrangements yet, at this time it is estimated that the budget impact would be approximately \$600/year for staff and vehicles/equipment for reoccurring maintenance, such as tilling, grass cutting and maintaining the water at this location.

Capital Budget (Future)

The cost to start the project would be for the water connection, and preparing the land and materials to ensure the soil conditions are conducive for gardening. To install the piping from the existing main with 8 faucets for watering the garden, along with a backflow preventer, the cost would be approximately \$6,000 for material, not including staff time. These costs could be split with York Region Food Network, or funds could be brought forward through sponsorship and advertising. If directed, staff would pursue these options in more detail.

CONTACT

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