



**CITY OF RICHMOND**

REPORT TO COMMITTEE

**TO:** Community Services Committee

**DATE:** January 12, 2001

**FROM:** Dave Semple  
Director, Parks

**FILE:** 7200- 20-CGAR1

**RE:** Richmond Community Gardening Program

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

1. That staff be directed to continue the existing Community Garden use at 6080 River Road site for an additional two years, to be reviewed in 2003 and on an annual basis thereafter.
2. That staff be directed to develop a strategy and detailed cost estimates for the construction of a future community garden to be located at the vacant land adjacent to the City Tree Nursery at 13871 No. 3 Road.

Dave Semple  
Director, Parks

Att. 3

**FOR ORIGINATING DIVISION USE ONLY**

**CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER**

## STAFF REPORT

### ORIGIN

On September 14, 1998 as part of the August 13, 1998 report "Community Garden Proposal" the following resolutions were approved:

1. *That Council approve the area outlined in the Attached map (Attachment 1) located at 6080 River Road for the future construction of a community garden for a pilot period of three years and;*
2. *That Council direct staff to work with the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps as part of the Partners for Beautification program to develop a design and implementation process for the community garden."*

Staff undertook a comprehensive process of working in partnership with interested residents, the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps and corporate sponsors to raise the necessary capital to construct the community garden between September 1998 July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1999 when the community garden was officially opened.

At the opening of the garden, it initially accommodated 47 families and averaged a wait list of 70 to 100 families. Given the continued demand for participation, the following referral was presented to staff at the April 12, 1999 Community Services Committee meeting:

*"That the Chief Administrative Officer investigate the feasibility of expanding the City's community garden plot program"*

Due to the overwhelming success and demand for participation in community gardening in Richmond, an additional 12 plots were added to the River Road Garden bringing the total to 59 families participating. This report provides a summary of the community gardening program pilot project to date and recommends future options for consideration of expanding the community garden plot program.

### FINDINGS OF FACT

The 100% organic garden was developed by the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps from the East Richmond Community Association, the City of Richmond, and the efforts of many volunteers and corporate sponsors in 1999.

#### *What is a Community Garden?*

The Richmond community garden provides a place for gardeners to enjoy the activity of organic gardening, it is a place to learn gardening techniques from others and to socialize. The Richmond community garden also relies on the stewardship from each and every plot holder to help maintain the entire site. Several "clean-up" events are scheduled each year and each plot holder contributes to the maintenance of the overall site.

The Official Community Plan Objective of "Building on Richmond's Garden City legacy to achieve a "park-like city" by making strategic use of natural amenities and landscape resources, and by fostering civic pride and partnership..." has been fulfilled in the development of the Richmond Community Garden. The program also lends support to the OCP policy of "promoting community gardens as an authentic way of reflecting Richmond's farming heritage."

***How a Community Garden Grows:***

- **May 1998** Richmond Environmental Youth Corps (EYC) proposes Community Garden project to the City of Richmond Parks Department
- **June 1998** City of Richmond launches the Partners for Beautification Program
- **July 1998** Richmond EYC in partnership with Parks staff, research community gardens and prepare a possible list of sites and a report to Richmond City Council
- **September 1998** Richmond City Council approved Richmond Community Garden project at 6080 River Road
- **January to March 1999** EYC and Parks Department solicit sponsorship for the Community Garden. \$27,000 donated by the following sponsors:

*692 Air Canada Squadron, Royal  
Canadian Air Cadets  
Canada Trust - Friends of the  
Environment Foundations  
Costco Richmond  
Home Depot Richmond  
East Richmond Community Association  
EcoWaste Industries  
Elizabeth Fry Society  
Hugh Boyd Secondary School -  
Construction Department*

*Jones Garden Centre  
International Plastics  
Richmond Sunset Rotary Club  
Richmond Youth Advisory Council  
Tri Jay Mill Fuels Ltd.  
University Sprinklers  
VanCity Credit Union  
The Vancouver Foundation  
Van Waters & Rogers Ltd.  
West Coast Seeds*

- **March 1999** Community Garden volunteers, EYC and Parks Dept. tour Strathcona/Cottonwood Community Gardens in Vancouver for ideas and inspiration
- EYC receives City of Richmond Art Grant for the Community Garden "Picket Fence" project, 150 pickets were decorated at the 1999 Multifest Celebration by Richmond residents for display at the Community Garden. The project was sponsored by the City of Richmond Public Art Program, with the donation of materials and labour by Home Depot, Richmond.
- **March 20, 1999** Final design complete and construction begins. city crews, youth work parties and volunteers build the site together.
- **July 24, 1999** Community Garden opening ceremony with Mayor and Council.
- Substantial media coverage of the community gardening project (Attachment 2)

The Richmond community garden is also home to two public gardening displays:

1. The Waterwise Demonstration Garden -located at eastern the entrance to the garden, this garden demonstrates xeriscaping, a variety of water-wise plants that require little water throughout the year. The uniquely designed entrance-cover is designed to catch rain water and direct it into the swale which forms the garden design. The Richmond Environmental Youth Corps planted and maintains this unique interpretative area.
2. In the Spring of 2000 the City of Richmond constructed a Compost Demonstration Garden at the north west corner of the Richmond Community Garden. The compost demonstration area was re-located to this site from the Recycling Depot on Lynas Lane in order to facilitate the inclusion of the Hazardous material and Paint drop off at the recycling depot. Different techniques for composting are on display in this living garden. In 1999 and 2000 workshops on composting and organic gardening were held at the site with feedback and guidance from the GVRD. This program will continue to be enhanced and expanded in 2001 to encourage composting practises in Richmond.

ANALYSIS***Options for Consideration:***

**Option 1:** Continue the existing Community Garden use at the portion of land located at the 6080 River Road site for an additional two years, to be reviewed in 2003 and on an annual basis thereafter.

Initially the Richmond Community Garden project was approved for a three year period, to be reviewed in 2001 depending on the success of the pilot project. Currently there are no immediate plans for future development on the River Road site located at 6080 River Road. The 6080 River Road site (attachment 1) comprises City owned property spanning from Hazelbridge Drive inclusive of the land leased for the Richmond RV Park west to No. 2 Road.

With the option of keeping the Richmond Community Garden at the existing 6080 River Road site for an additional two years, the existing gardeners have the ability to continue their investment in time and plot maintenance at the current site. There are no financial implications to the City with this option as all site maintenance is undertaken by volunteers via the Partners for Beautification program and current plot holders. Annual plot fees of \$25 per plot generate the sustaining capital required for minor maintenance and also to help fund the annual EYC garden initiatives.

***Implications of not continuing the community gardening program at the 6080 River Road site:***

If the existing site was developed for an alternate land use in 2002 or beyond, the process of removing the community garden would entail the removal of individual plants in each plot- the responsibility of each plot holder, and the re-location of the garden shed, water tap connections and some established plant (150+ rose bushes), the compost demonstration signage and equipment and landscape material. Given the community interest in community gardening an alternate site is recommended for a future possible community garden.

**Option 2:** Direct staff to develop a community garden design and cost estimates for the construction of a second community garden in Richmond.

The construction of a second community garden in Richmond would require a vacant piece of farmland with adequate drainage and good soil conditions. Fallow farmland such as that located adjacent to the City of Richmond Tree Nursery at the south end of River Road (Attachment 3) is an ideal site for consideration of a second community garden in Richmond.

Given the existing grade and soil conditions at the site detailed in attachment 3 and the availability of existing parking and water, the development of a community garden at this location would require minimal site preparation. Currently the property adjacent to the subject site is being used by West Coast Seeds for trial planting and experimental seed testing grounds.

If approved, the methodology for the construction of a second community garden at the Gilbert Road nursery site would require the following:

- Garden Design
- Cutting of the grass
- The tilling of the existing soil
- The coordination of plotting out community garden plots
- Purchase of mulch for pathways

- Signage
- Purchase of gravel for the parking lot expansion at the existing site
- Given the existing irrigation and water connections located at the City Tree Nursery site, the cost for water connections for the garden can be reduced through the donation of materials and labour for the installation of water taps.

The majority of the labour required to develop a second community garden would be accomplished by volunteers, and it is proposed that participation in the development and maintenance of the garden would be a requirement for obtaining a plot. Many of the established volunteer groups in the Partners for Beautification program could also be approached to develop a new community garden site. An opportunity exists to generate \$2500-\$3000 per annum towards the Partners program in revenue from plot fees from a second garden site with a minimum of 60 plots.

### FINANCIAL IMPACT

#### *Existing Community Garden:*

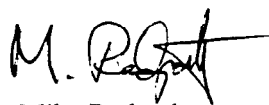
Through annual plot fees, the garden raises \$1500.00 in revenue from the \$25 plot fee. The revenue is collected by the East Richmond Community Association and used by the EYC to fund garden initiatives and also to off set EYC summer program costs. There are no financial implications with keeping the Richmond Community Garden at the existing site for the present time.

#### *Proposed Development of Future Community Garden:*

It is proposed that this revenue come from direct sponsorships generated via the Partners For Beautification Program and raised from the annual plot fees for the new site.

### CONCLUSION

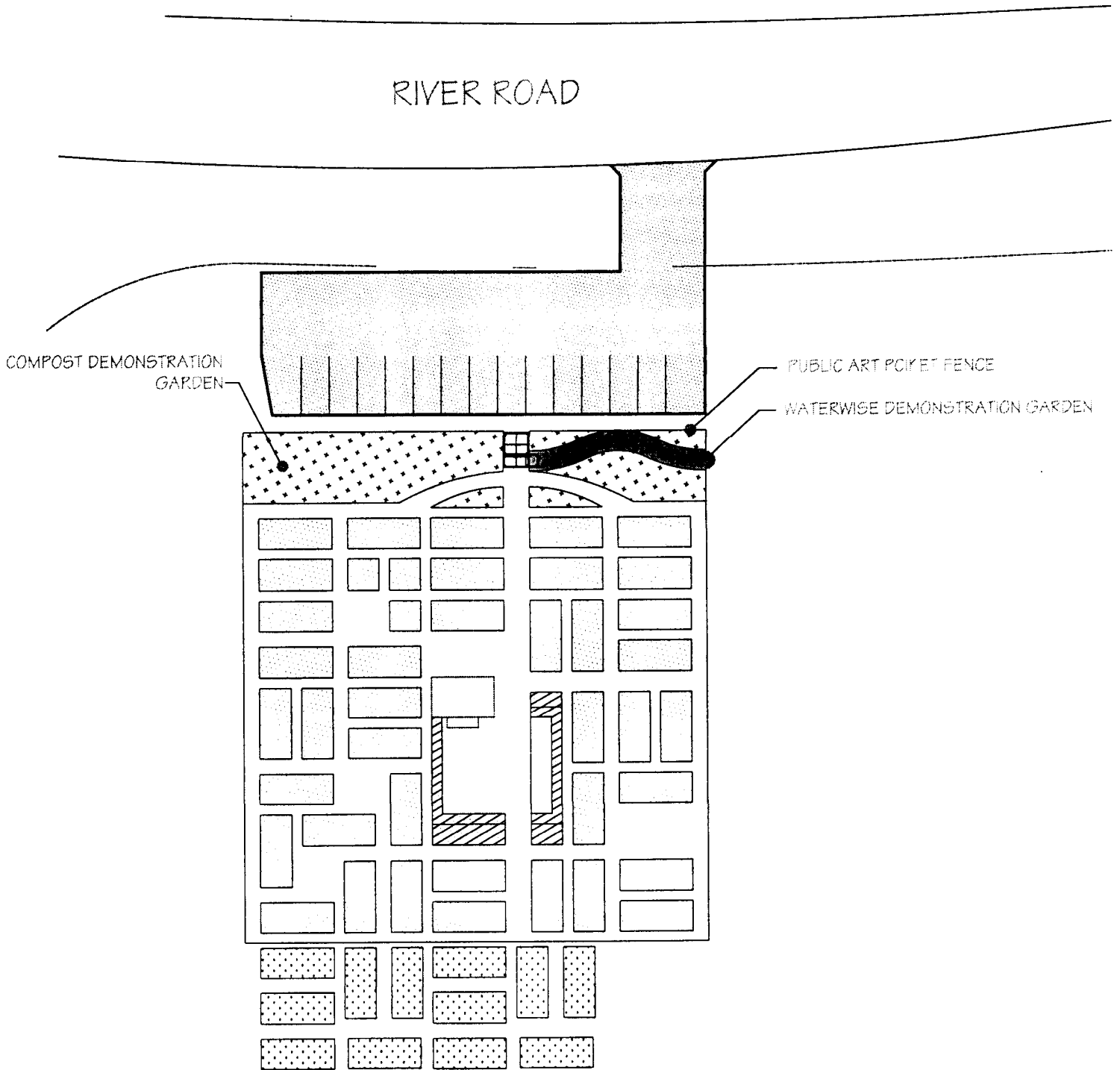
Community gardening is a productive recreational use of fallow or unused vacant land. As interest in the passive recreational activity of gardening continues to grow, an opportunity exists to create safe recreational gardening activities on vacant City owned land. The overwhelming success of the Richmond Community Garden in it's first three years of operation has created many hours of recreational gardening activities for Richmond residents. With the continuation of the existing community garden located on River Road and the future possible expansion of the City of Richmond Community Gardening program on unused City land, opportunities for participation in recreational gardening can be provided at little or no cost to the City.



Mike Redpath  
Manager Parks Administration and Programs

MER:mer

RICHMOND COMMUNITY GARDEN 6080 RIVER ROAD



# Weekender

Sunday, July 26, 1998

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## SHAPING TOMORROW

Richmond environmental youth corps lead drive to create community garden

Don Fennell  
staff reporter

If city council has its way, Richmond will grow into "the most appealing, livable and well managed community in Canada."

An advisory committee has been formed to oversee 'Partners for Beautification,' a community-based program designed to enhance and maintain the city's park, trail, street and dike legacies for future generations.



Partners for Beautification

### Part 1 of 2

Appropriately, youth are playing a vital role in the early stages of the program. Recognizing the increasing development of urban land and the eroding green space, the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps (EYC) recently approached the city with the idea of establishing a community garden.

### EYC ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY

- The Richmond Environmental Youth Corps participates in many projects throughout the year, including such summer activities as cleaning up environmentally-sensitive areas, replanting native plant life, improving public accessibility to natural sites, monitoring the state of local estuaries and creating more public awareness of environmental issues facing Richmond.
- The EYC has been awarded the Mayor's Environmental Achievement Award five times since the award's inception in 1993.
- Completed projects include building a trail in the Nature Park, working with the aquarium's "river works" program, and clearing rubbish from Bath Slough.
- More information is available by calling 273-3394.



CARMEN DE SOUSA of the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps hopes to be able to spend plenty of time clipping shrubs in a future community garden. (photos by Mark Patrick)

"This would truly be a community garden, and would not only have private plots but also larger gardening plots for community groups, a youth demonstration garden and a common garden," said EYC coordinator Lisa Acosta.

EYC members are currently working with city staff in the planning and design of the garden as well as trying to find a suitable site.

"The city wants a permanent site (which can be used for at least three years) but that's hard because there are a lot of sites slated for development," Acosta explained.

The benefits of a community garden are many, she said. In areas with similar projects it has helped promote healthier lifestyles, improved social interaction, and provided new education outlets for children and adults.

The EYC hopes to use a quarter of the community garden for demonstrations, explaining to other youth the different types of plants available and the benefits of organic growing. The group also hopes to share its principles of environmental responsibility, adding that the use of harmful

chemical plant pesticides and herbicides will be discouraged.

The EYC will also promote efficient recycling via composting and mulching demonstrations.

"I think there's a real need for youth to express their views and participate in civic projects," she said.

Formed five years ago as an initiative to empower youth to take an active role in protecting the environment, the EYC is supported by the East Richmond community association.

Residents are encouraged to participate in several other components of the Partners for Beautification program. They include adopting streets, gardens and trees and helping to keep the city's buildings graffiti free.

Depending on the level of individual or group commitment to any of the "adoption" programs, participants in the 'partners for beautification' will be recognized for their efforts by the City of Richmond. Significant donations will be rewarded with permanent signs recognizing individual or sponsor groups for their commitment to enhancing the beauty of the community.



GARDEN ENTHUSIASTS: Lisa Acosta and Ian Preca are among those leading the EYC's bid to help create a community garden in Richmond.

# REGIONAL ROUNDUP

## Community garden concept takes root, grows in Richmond

It's a plot to allow city dwellers the chance to get their hands dirty growing their own organic fruits, vegetables and flowers, while contributing to the city's beautification plan.

### RICHMOND

When the Richmond Community Garden officially opens Saturday, it will already be a growing success.

Gardeners have been working the soil at the River Road and No. 2 Road garden for several months. The project, part of the city's Partners in Beautification Program, allows renters of plots to grow organic fruits, vegetables and flowers.

The city donated the land and the Richmond Environmental Youth Corp raised \$20,000 to develop the site.

Parks department coordinator Mike Redpath said all 47 plots are rented and there's already a 70-name waiting list.

"Because the demand for this garden was so great, staff are preparing a report to council which will recommend other gardens in alternate sites," Redpath said.

Gardeners, who pay \$20 a year for the three-by-seven-metre plots, are responsible for their own plots and must also tend to the overall maintenance of the garden, including weeding trails and watching out for vandals.

Richmond Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt will officially open the garden at 11 a.m.

For more information about the Richmond Community Garden, call 273-3394.



COLLEEN KIDD/Sterling News Service

**GARDEN PARTY:** Environmental Youth Corps assistant coordinator Jane Copeland weeds one of the plots in the Richmond Community Garden. Mayor Greg Halsey-Brandt will officially open the garden Saturday.

## City plants hopes of first community garden

David DaSilva  
staff reporter

**T**he Garden City is getting serious with its nickname.

City hall is on the verge of turning a plot of land - likely a piece of prime real estate just east of the No. 2 Road bridge - into a community garden.

If approved it would be the first in Richmond, albeit only a three-year pilot project.

Taking a page out of the City of Vancouver's book, which has encouraged several such gardens, city council will soon decide whether to turn the large 60-foot-by-100-foot plot of land into a community garden.

"It's a wonderful site," said Mike Redpath, coordinator of the

Partners for Beautification program. "There's lots of opportunity to actually expand it if the community's interest grows. And we would be looking at it as a pilot for other community garden projects in the city as well."

The garden's cost is \$21,000, with about \$10,000 already coming from the Richmond Environmental Youth Corps. The youth corps, which has spearheaded the drive, is expected to pay for other costs, through fundraising and private sponsors.

Gardeners could be toiling in the soil by next spring, Redpath said.

"With Richmond's ever-increasing population and more frequent development of urban land into condominiums and townhomes,

the need for a community garden is evident," according to the youth corps' written proposal.

All residents are free to join the garden upon paying an association fee and a yearly rental fee to use the land, which could run between \$10 and \$45 a year.

The garden's aim would be to promote organic growing, but proponents admit this could be a problem if some gardeners insist on using pesticides. However, the organizers say harmful chemical plant pesticides and herbicides will be discouraged through garden rules while recycling and composting will be encouraged.

A city staff report also notes that community gardens in Vancouver and throughout the U.S. help stock local food banks

and feed low-income families.

The idea also piggybacks on an earlier idea by city hall to beautify the city by sprucing up boulevards with landscaping, planting street trees and hanging baskets and cleaning up the dike.

The garden plan was expected to be debated Tuesday afternoon after The Review's press deadline. Regardless of that outcome, it will proceed to a future council meeting, probably on Sept. 14.

A survey of Vancouver's community gardens shows residents also have access to a children's play area, picnic areas, greenhouses and tool sheds. All are organic gardens.

While no community gardens exist in Richmond, the city is home to a private "allotment" garden on Palmberg Road.

Aus 26/98



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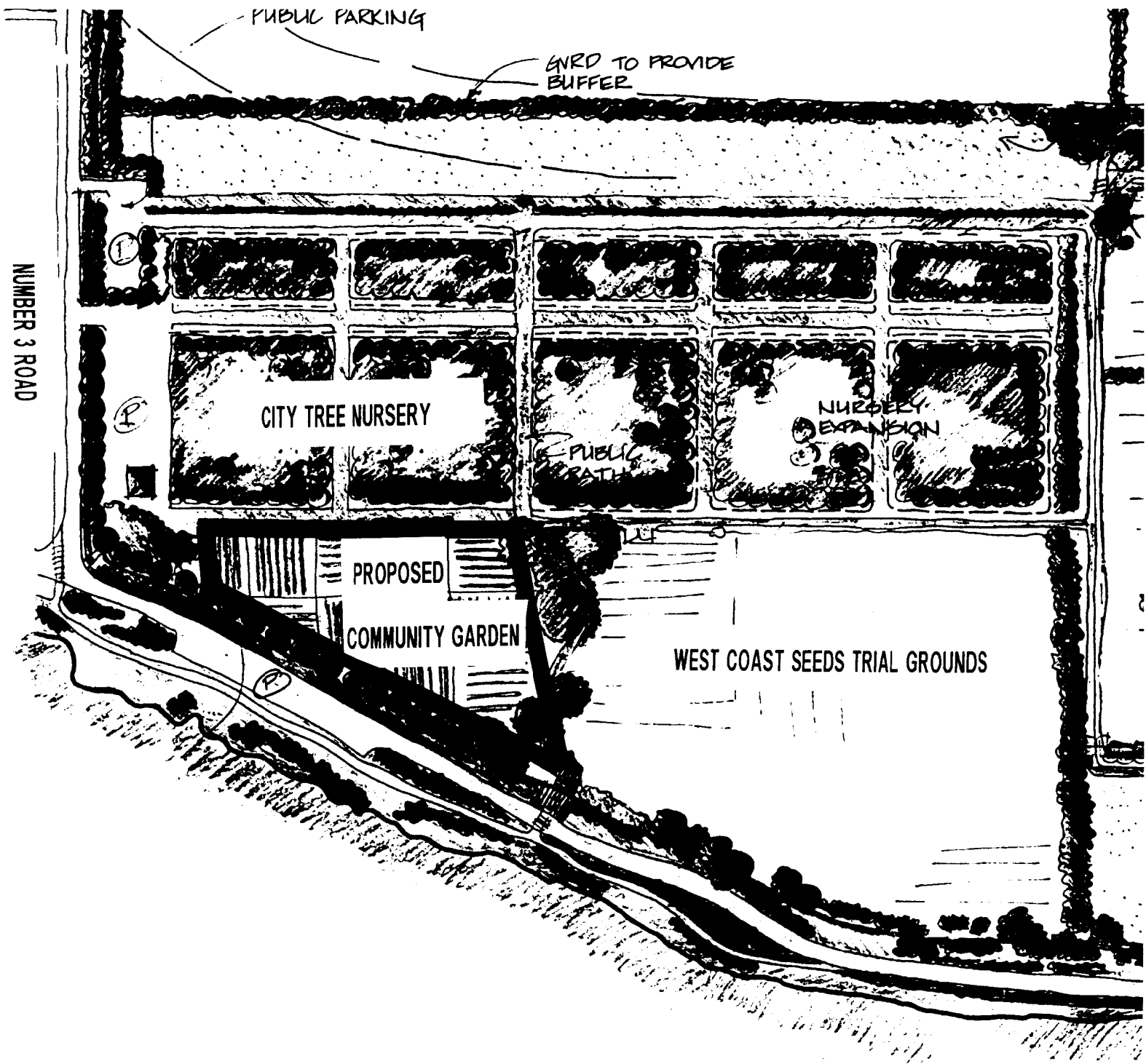
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