



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Committee

From: Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services

Re: **Community Gardens Referral Response**

Date: July 2, 2021

File: 06-2345-01/2021-Vol
01

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Community Gardens Referral Response," dated July 2, 2021, from the Director, Parks Services, be received for information.

Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services
(604-247-4942)

Att. 3

REPORT CONCURRENCE	
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:
APPROVED BY CAO	

Staff Report

Origin

At the June 29, 2021, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee meeting staff received the following referral:

That the concept of community gardens be referred to staff and that staff:

- 1) provide a list of potential community garden sites;*
 - 2) provide information on the process of establishing community gardens and community consultation plan;*
 - 3) examine community garden maintenance regulations;*
 - 4) provide information on the submitted requests for community gardens; and*
 - 5) examine buffers between community gardens and residential areas;*
- and report back.*

The purpose of this report is to respond to the above referral.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #2 A Sustainable and Environmentally Conscious City:

Environmentally conscious decision-making that demonstrates leadership in implementing innovative, sustainable practices and supports the City's unique biodiversity and island ecology.

2.3 Increase emphasis on local food systems, urban agriculture and organic farming.

2.4 Increase opportunities that encourage daily access to nature and open spaces and that allow the community to make more sustainable choices.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #3 One Community Together:

Vibrant and diverse arts and cultural activities and opportunities for community engagement and connection.

3.1 Foster community resiliency, neighbourhood identity, sense of belonging, and intercultural harmony.

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Strategy #8 An Engaged and Informed Community:

Ensure that the citizenry of Richmond is well-informed and engaged about City business and decision-making.

8.1 Increased opportunities for public engagement.

Analysis

Site Selection Process

The criteria for selecting potential community garden sites are varied due to specific needs of each location. The following is a list of criteria used to evaluate potential sites (in no particular order of priority):

- Location: availability, site ownership, proximity to demand, surrounding density;
- Proposed size of garden site: compatibility to garden needs and resident impacts;
- Site features: solar access, existing trees, topography, drainage, water connection, proximity to other park amenities;
- Accessibility: accessibility and proximity to transit, greenway, cycling routes and parking (on- or off-street);
- Community synergy: connection to existing community facilities, e.g., community centres, schools, washrooms and other City facilities;
- Partnership capacity: input from Urban Bounty (formerly known as Richmond Food Security Society) on resident need and management capacity.

Waitlist Neighbourhood Analysis

Urban Bounty manages the community gardens waitlist for the City. When a resident submits their name onto the waitlist, their home address/location is noted based on postal area code. As of June 2021, the waitlist for community gardens was 661 residents.

Attachments 1 and 2 are two maps shared by Urban Bounty, indicating where waitlisted residents reside. On a City-wide basis, residents currently on the waitlist are generally spread throughout Richmond, but concentrated west of Highway 99 (Attachment 1), and within this area the highest concentration of residents resides in the City Centre and Steveston Neighbourhood.

The 2021 proposed project locations (Garden City Lands, City Centre, and Railway Corridor) are located in these areas to directly address waitlist demand. The waitlist for the existing Railway Community Garden (Attachment 2) indicates a generally widespread demand throughout the City for this specific community garden with higher concentration in the Steveston Area. This indicates to staff that another community garden in this vicinity would help address this waitlist demand.

Public Consultation Process

Upon Council approval of the 2021 Capital Project for community gardens (including the identification of specific sites), the City initiated a multi-faceted, community-wide public consultation process. Each site is evaluated to consider the extent public input is required. Every public consultation process begins with a “Capital Project Highlights” via its virtual Let’s Talk Richmond (LTR) portal. This online platform allows the community to view upcoming capital projects, ask questions online or contact the project lead directly to find out more about specific highlights or the City’s Capital Project Strategy.

For sites where demand for community gardens is high and there is little impact to the existing community, staff will install a sign announcing the upcoming construction of a new garden with contact information to provide comments or feedback. This is typically done several months prior to construction commencing. An example of this would be the upcoming Garden City Lands and Cook Neighbourhood School project sites.

For other sites where community impacts are determined to be higher due to current use of the site and proximity to private residents, staff will utilize a more robust public consultation and Council check in process similar to major park planning construction projects. This may include:

- On site signage;
- Design options on LTR;
- Public survey;
- Public feedback;
- Public meetings;
- Committee updates and reports, and
- Posting of final consensus on LTR.

Regardless of which process is utilized, staff check in with Council and use public feedback to develop the best option for the community which may include cancelling or relocating a project. Where ever possible, staff seek to find a compromise that will meet Council’s direction, address all interests (those in support and in opposition of a project) while balancing the concerns of those immediately impacted by the project.

List of Currently Planned Sites

Since last year, staff have been studying potential locations throughout Richmond where new community gardens may be suitable. These include: Riverport waterfront; the Gilbert Lands along South Dike; King George Park; Paulik Park; Terra Nova Rural Park; Alexandra Neighbourhood Park and Greenway; Garratt Community Garden; Railway Greenway and McCallan Neighbourhood Park. Some of the above locations may be expansion projects on existing community gardens, while others will be new gardens.

The following sites are currently planned for construction in 2021:

Site Location		Proposed Number of Plots
1	Garden City Lands*	200
2	Railway (existing community garden site, south of Moncton Street)	15
3	Cook Neighbourhood School Park	20
4	Railway Greenway corridor	25
Total		260

*This project is pending approval from the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC).

Comparable Railway Greenway Corridor Site Options

Locating community gardens along a greenway corridor is not without precedence. The Arbutus Greenway in Vancouver is host to a significant number of community gardens along the multi-use path in both residential and commercial areas. Locating gardens along the Railway Greenway, which generally bisects the area of concentrated waitlisted residents (see Attachment 2) capitalizes on transit and alternative transportation modes as well as provides the largest areas of unprogrammed space as potential community garden sites. Staff have identified a number of sites beyond the Branscombe House site. With Council's direction, staff can look at those locations and develop a public consultation process to gain resident feedback for these alternative sites.

Current Maintenance Regulations

The maintenance of individual community garden sites is the responsibility of Urban Bounty as per the License to Use Agreement for each site. The care, maintenance and overall appearance of each individual plot is the responsibility of each plot gardener as per the commitment made each year when their annual fee is renewed. Urban Bounty rules and regulations can be found in Attachment 3.

City staff maintain the grounds outside of the community garden fence line per standard City maintenance practices for that location which include grass mowing, removal of refuse, and annual vegetation management. In the event that there is a need to increase the level of service due to new community gardens, the City works with Urban Bounty to address these concerns on a case by case basis.

Community Garden Setbacks

Setbacks for each site are evaluated based on existing context. While there are no specific setback requirements for community gardens when located near adjacent land uses, staff will work with adjacent properties to provide soft landscapes (e.g., trees or shrubs) or fixed site materials (e.g., fencing) to provide buffers.

The existing Railway Community Garden site near Moncton Street and Homma Elementary School is the best example of a garden located near private residents. The fenced-in gardens area is separated by Railway Avenue to the east and a 10 meter (33 feet) offset to residential fencing to the west. In comparison, the proposed Branscombe House garden would have a minimum 10 metre setback offset from the mean fence line.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Following Council's direction, staff will continue to work with Urban Bounty to address the specific garden location needs and the extensive waitlist.



Alexander Kurnicki
Research Planner 2
(604-276-4099)

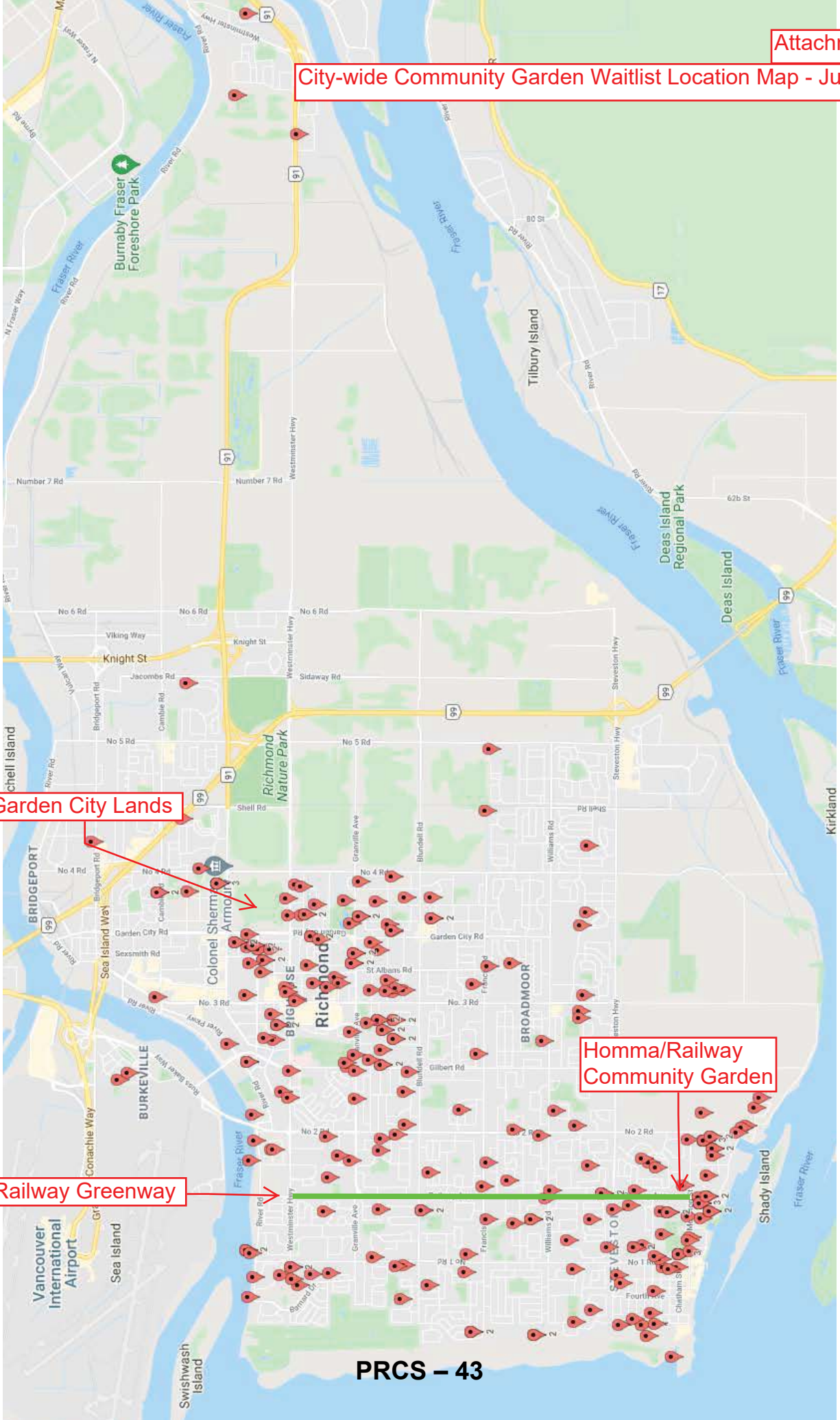
- Att. 1: City-wide Community Garden Waitlist Location Map – June 2021
- 2: Homma/Railway Community Garden Waitlist Location Map – June 2021
- 3: Urban Bounty's Richmond Community Garden Rules and Agreement 2021

City-wide Community Garden Waitlist Location Map - June 2021

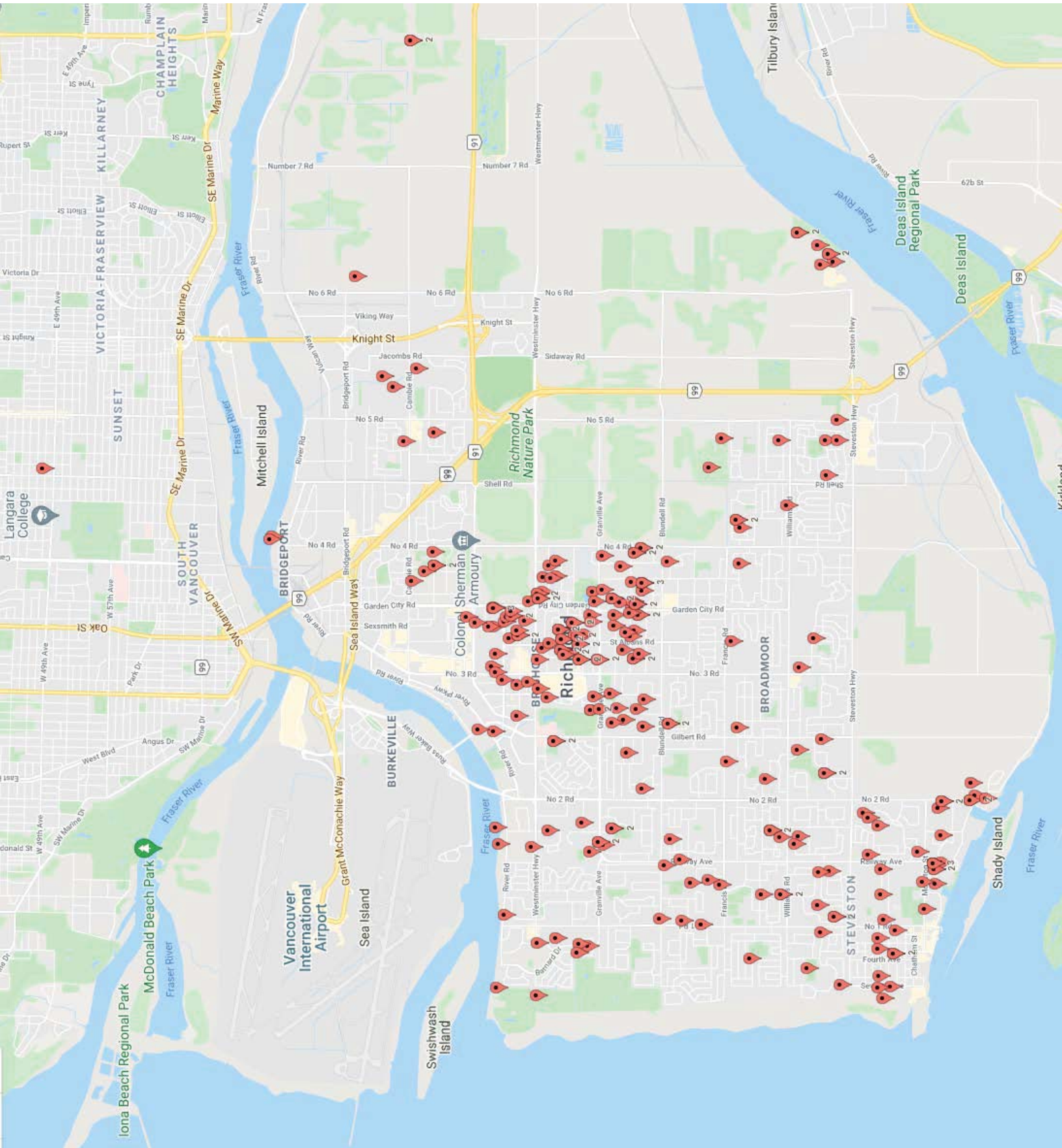
Garden City Lands

Homma/Railway
Community Garden

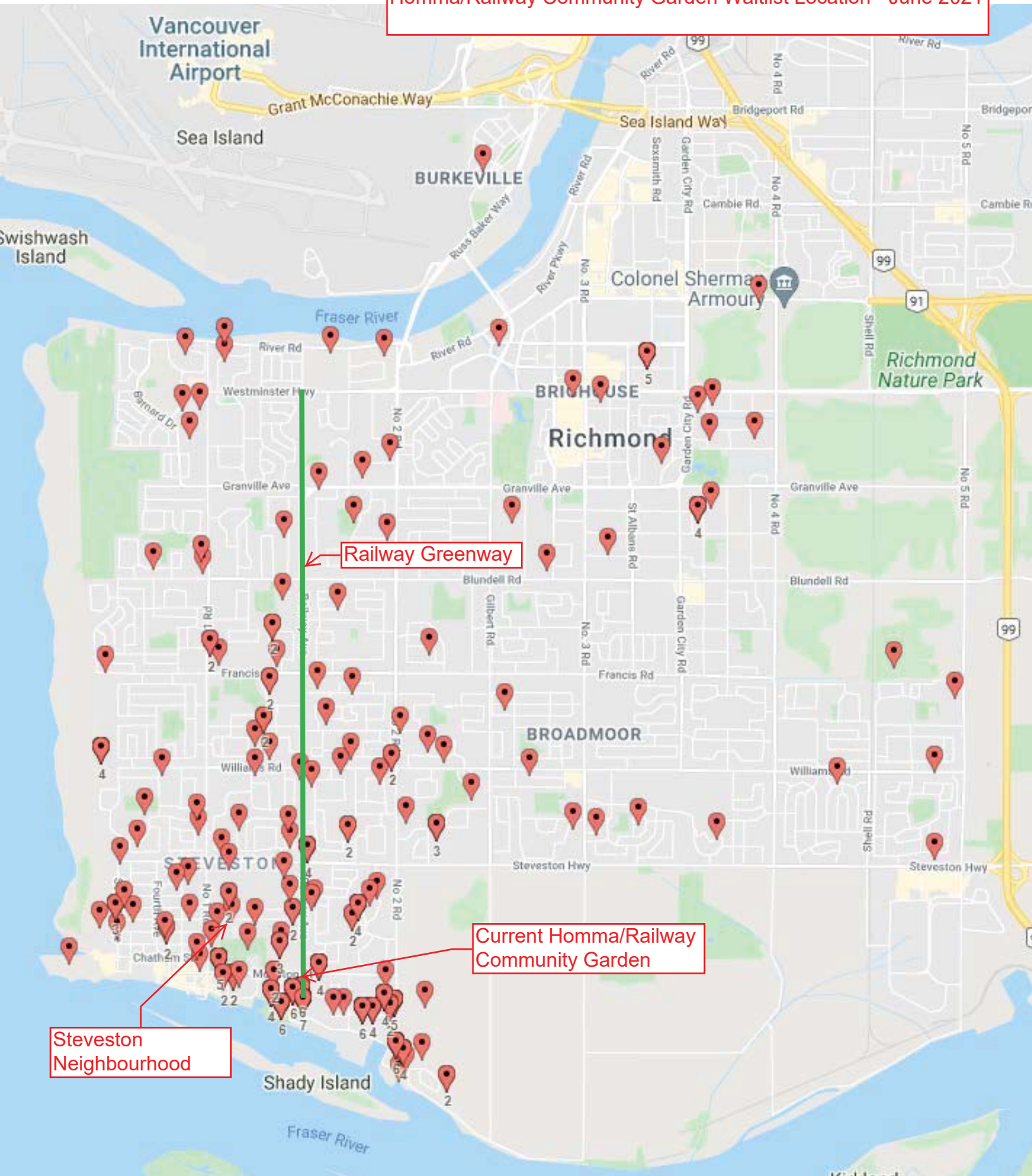
Railway Greenway



City-wide Community Garden Waitlist Location Map - June 2021



Homma/Railway Community Garden Waitlist Location - June 2021



Richmond Community Garden Rules and Agreement 2021

The Community Garden Rules & Agreement ensure that the community gardens are maintained as vibrant, shared, green spaces within the City of Richmond. Garden members are required to agree to and honour the rules in exchange for the privilege of gardening on public land. We reserve the right to make exceptions to these rules in extenuating or justified circumstances.

The following is a bullet-point summary of the Community Garden Rules & Agreement that must be followed by all gardeners at any community garden site in Richmond. For a full description and to understand their application and interpretation, please see the expanded section below.

Community Gardeners must:

- Follow all rules as outlined in these Rules & Agreement;
- Pay their plot fee on time;
- Volunteer time in the gardens (beyond time spent working in their personal plot) to contribute to the general operations and maintenance of the garden site shared spaces;
- Rent only one garden plot per household;
- Use the garden plot for personal gardening only, and not for any commercial business;
- Treat fellow gardeners, community members, and Richmond Food Security Society employees with respect;
- Supervise all guests in the garden, especially children;
- Clean and return the common tools to the storage area and help to keep the shed tidy and organized;
- Not remove communal garden tools from the garden site;
- Not drive vehicles on the pathways, plaza, or within the community garden area;
- Not use abusive or obscene language while in the garden;
- Not bring dogs or other domestic animals into the gardens;
- Follow all City of Richmond public parks bylaws; and
- Contact and receive permission from the garden coordinator prior to making any structural changes to the plot;
- **Keep in contact with the Urban Agriculture Program Coordinator, either by responding to phone calls or emails, or reaching out if circumstances prevent you from gardening at**

anytime;

While gardening at your community garden you should:

- Have fun!
- Actively cultivate your garden plot to grow food and other plants;
- Only use organic growing methods;
- Receive training and approval prior to using weed-eaters in the community gardens, and to not use any other power tools in the community gardens;
- Take responsibility for garden waste by composting in the garden plot, taking compost home, or using the on-site green bins;
- Not leave garbage or useless gardening materials at the garden site or in the garden shed;
- Not dump green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden areas;
- Not harvest or remove anything from garden plots other than the garden plot to which the gardener has been assigned;
- Follow water restrictions when in effect and conserve water by hand watering and using mulch to reduce water evaporation; and
- Not use any pesticides, herbicides (weed killers), insecticides, chemical fertilizers, animal poisons, and non-organic materials including pressure treated wood in the garden plot, and comply with the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw #8514 and Public Health Protection Bylaw # 8969

Important dates:

May 1st: Last day to prepare your garden plot for the growing season (plot is cleaned, doesn't have to be planted)

November 1st: Last day to have your garden bed cleaned for the winter. A clean garden bed can include cover crops, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants.

Garden Plot Reviews

Garden reviews are done three times each year, in spring, summer, and fall. Reviews may also be done outside of these times if necessary. Garden Review Volunteers will visit each site, and thoroughly review each garden plot to ensure plot holders are following the rules set out in the Community Garden Rules & Agreement. During reviews, the rules will be defined and enforced according to their expanded definitions below. If you have received an infraction notice and have any questions or concerns about it, please contact the community gardens program coordinator.

To pass a review you must ensure that:

- Your plot and pathways are weed free;
- Your plot has been planted and is being actively used;
- There are no trees, non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, raspberries, blackberries, or invasive species according to provincial regulations;
- There are no materials in or around garden plots or in common areas;
- There are no objects including but not limited to chairs, containers, pots, planters, pieces of wood, bricks, cardboard, or plastic lumber wrap in common areas or pathways;
- There are no structures of any kind in the garden plots, including greenhouses;
- You do not grow plants or erect any structures including trellises and bean poles over 6 feet;
- You have a compost bin, and it is within your plot; and
- There is no treated or painted lumber in your garden plot.

Infractions

By reading these rules & agreement, you indicate that you understand and agree to follow all rules set out by Richmond Food Security Society. This is further agreed upon by paying for and registering as a tenant of an assigned garden plot.

Volunteer Reviewers will look at all plots 3 times per year: in case of an infraction the first notice will be a written (paper or email) notice with explanation. **Plotters will be given 14 days to correct the identified issue(s).**

If there are no significant changes, we may resort to sending a second notice (only by email) with a date that the plot rental is cancelled and you must forfeit your plot.

Forfeiting plots is done on a case by case basis. Our intention with this process is to ensure that people gardening at the community gardens are using the land to grow food for themselves and their families. We understand that circumstances change throughout the growing season and if something has come up please let us know by [contacting the community gardens program coordinator](#) to explain your specific situation. We can often find resources to help!

Community Garden Rules and Agreement – Expanded

Community Gardeners must:

Follow all rules as outlined in these Rules & Agreement:

This includes all of the rules outlined in the rules & agreement above and detailed below, as well as respecting deadlines regarding plot renewals.

Pay their plot fee on time:

When current gardeners pay late, it slows down the renewal process. It is hard for us to know if someone isn't going to renew, and that we can then allocate a plot to the next person on the waitlist. Having this done earlier in the season allows us to proactively ensure all plots are being used.

Volunteer time in the gardens (beyond time spent working in their personal plot) to contribute to the general operations and maintenance of the garden site shared spaces:

All members of the Richmond Community Gardens are required to maintain the shared spaces at the garden sites, to the best of their ability. We have developed new volunteer positions for gardeners to contribute to their garden site including mulch monitoring, communications coordinator, and tool coordinator, among others. If you are interested in one of these positions please contact us.

Rent only one garden plot per household.

To allow more of Richmond households to have access to a garden, we only allow one plot per household.

Use the garden plot for personal gardening only, and not for any commercial business:

Commercial business includes, but is not limited to, the sale of produce grown in the garden plot.

Treat fellow gardeners, community members, and Richmond Food Security Society employees with respect:

Being respectful of all people at the community gardens allows for the gardens to become the safe and shared space that they were intended to be.

Supervise all guests in the garden, especially children:

Family members and friends are more than welcome to join garden members in the community gardens. Just like gardeners, they are required to follow these rules and it is the responsibility of the individual community gardener to make sure this happens. Please ensure your guests do not pick produce or make changes to any garden plot but your own. The gardens can be educational and engaging green spaces for children to enjoy, but also have tripping hazards and sharp tools. Please keep a close eye on young children in the gardens.

Clean and return the common tools to the storage area and help to keep the shed tidy and organized:

We hope that every community gardener is proud of the community garden sites and will maintain them in a way that reflects this. Maintenance of these community spaces is a shared responsibility of all of the community gardeners at each garden.

Not remove communal garden tools from the garden site:

Garden tools are provided for gardeners to use at the garden sites and must be kept in the locked sheds. If you can't remember the code for the tool shed and need to return a tool, please [contact the community garden program coordinator](#) to request the access code.

Not drive vehicles on the pathways, plaza, or within the community garden area:

Please park in designated parking areas outside of the community gardens. If needed, wheelbarrows are available at the garden sites to carry heavy materials into the gardens.

Not use abusive or obscene language while in the garden:

The community gardens are safe, welcoming, and shared spaces where all community members are

treated with respect at all times.

Not bring dogs or other domestic animals into the gardens:

While we encourage gardeners to invite family and friends with them to the gardens, please leave your four-legged and other domestic animals at home.

Follow all City of Richmond public parks bylaws:

The City of Richmond [Public Parks and School Ground Regulations](#) apply to all public parks, which includes community gardens. For everyone's safety, public parks (including the community gardens), are closed from 11:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., unless otherwise posted.

Contact and receive permission from the garden coordinator prior to making any structural changes to the plot:

Structural changes include, but are not limited to, building, replacing, or extending plot borders, or building any type of significant trellising or fencing structure.

While gardening at your community garden you should:

Have fun!

Community gardens are spaces to grow food and help build a more food secure Richmond but also they are a space to meet new neighbours, forge friendships, and strengthen community.

Actively cultivate your garden plot to grow food and other plants:

Garden plots must be used to grow plants, with a focus on food production, throughout the summer season and cannot be left vacant. This supports the intention for the community gardens to be vibrant green spaces that are used by community members to grow food, flowers, and other useful plants.

Only use organic growing methods:

No synthetic fertilizers or pesticides are allowed in the gardens. If you are unsure if a product is okay to be used in the community gardens, please contact the community gardens program coordinator.

Receive training and approval prior to using weed-eaters in the community gardens, and to not use any other power tools in the community gardens:

No power tools of any kind are allowed to be used in the community gardens, except for by garden members who have received training and approval by Richmond Food Security Society to use weed-eaters. If you are interested in operating a weed-eater in the community gardens, and would like to know more about receiving this training, [contact the community garden coordinator](#).

Take responsibility for garden waste by composting in the garden plot, taking compost home, or using the on-site green bins.

Green waste should only be put into the compost bin that is inside your plot. If your compost bin is full, you can put your compost into the communal bins at your garden site. These are provided by the city and get picked up weekly.

Not leave garbage or useless gardening materials at the garden site or in the garden shed:

Please practice the “pack out what you pack in” principle. Garbage bins are not provided at the garden sites for gardening materials, and any significant garden-related garbage or other gardening materials must be taken home. The garbage cans are provided for wastes associated with use of the community gardens as a public, shared park, and can be used to dispose of a small amount of waste, such as food wrappers, seed packages, or other small debris.

Not dump green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden areas:

You should never dump any green waste into bushes and/or surrounding garden area. Dumping green waste around the garden site could spread weeds to neighbouring plots and throughout the garden, this is unacceptable. If your compost bin in your plot is full, you can either take the compost home with you or use one of the communal green bins at your garden site.

Not harvest or remove any plants or items from garden plots other than the garden plot to which the gardener has been assigned:

Taking plants from any plot that is not your own is considered theft. Changing or altering any plot other than your own is also not acceptable.

Follow water restrictions when in effect and conserve water by hand watering and using mulch to reduce water evaporation:

Automatic watering is not permitted in any of the Richmond Community Gardens. More information regarding Richmond water restrictions can be found on the City of Richmond [water restrictions website](#).

Not use any pesticides, herbicides (weed killers), insecticides, chemical fertilizers, animal poisons, and non-organic materials including treated wood in the garden plot, and will comply with the Pesticide Use Control Bylaw #8514 and Public Health Protection Bylaw # 8969:

Please [contact the community gardens program coordinator](#) if you have any questions regarding products that are allowed in the community gardens. Pressure treated wood is treated with chemical preservatives, and is not suitable for use in organic food producing gardens. Wooden plot borders are not mandatory, and are not supplied; they must be added and maintained by gardeners at their own expense. When choosing a wooden border, please consider using cedar which is naturally rot resistant.

Important Dates:

Prepare the garden plot for planting by May 1st at the latest:

The plot must be actively cultivated beginning May 1st and through the duration of the gardening season.

Clean up the garden plot by October 31st, except for a planted cover crop, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants:

Besides a planted cover crop, mulch, perennials, and overwintering plants the plots should be cleaned up and tidy for the winter. This includes organizing and tidying any trellising materials and the removal of dead plants and weeds. Plot holders are responsible for their plot 12 months of the year and therefore are required to ensure that the plot and pathways are kept reasonably weed free, even during the winter months. Using a mulch, such as straw or leaves, or planting a cover crop to protect the soil and suppress weeds during the winter is highly recommended but not mandatory. However, using a

mulch or cover crop will significantly reduce the amount of work required during the winter months in keeping the plot weed free and tidy.

During a review you must ensure that:

Your plot and pathways are weed free:

The plot and the pathways surrounding the plot are the responsibility of the plot holder to maintain. Depending on the garden site, the pathway may be maintained as either mulch, gravel, or dirt. If bark mulch is used, the weeds need to be dug up and removed prior to adding bark mulch. The plot must be kept reasonably free of weeds at all times of the year, and gardeners must make sure that weeds do not go to seed.

Your plot has been planted and is being actively used:

During the growing season you must have your plot planted with vegetables and herbs before May 1st. You must actively harvest from your plot to ensure that plants do not go to seed and spread to neighbouring plots. There is a long waitlist and we want to ensure that the community gardens are being actively used and are thriving. If something comes up throughout the growing season and you are unable to attend to your plot, please contact the community garden coordinator to discuss your specific situation in more detail.

There are no planted trees and non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, raspberries, blackberries, or invasive species according to provincial regulations:

No trees, non-edible shrubs, Jerusalem artichokes, blackberries, or invasive species can be planted in the community gardens. Edible shrubs such as blueberries or rosemary are accepted plants in the community gardens. Edible shrubs must follow all other garden rules, such as not growing taller than six feet or overhanging into pathways. Garden members must choose plant species/varieties that are appropriate for raised-bed, small-space gardening, and that have growth patterns that will allow them to abide by all other garden rules.

There are no materials in or around garden plots or in common areas:

A reasonable amount of gardening materials, such as planting pots and trellis structures, which are currently being used, may be kept in the plot. However, items that are extra, unused, or unrelated to gardening cannot be stored in or around the garden plot or in common areas.

There are no objects including but not limited to chairs, containers, pots, planters, pieces of wood, bricks, cardboard, or plastic lumber wrap in common areas or pathways.

All items must be stored within the plot borders, and pathways must be free of tripping hazards. As of 2018, Gardeners agreed to not use plastic lumber wrap in pathways to keep down weeds. Lumber wrap does not help with weed control, the best weed control is persistence! If your plot already had lumber wrap around it prior to 2018, it can stay until it deteriorates but no new lumber wrap will be allowed at the gardens moving forward.

There are no structures of any kind in the garden plots, including greenhouses:

As of 2017, no new garden structures may be built in the community gardens, including greenhouses. **If you wish to build a structure in your garden, you must contact us first to make sure that it is in line**

with our rules. We will ask you to take it down if you do not check with us first.

You do not grow plants or erect any structures including trellises and bean poles over 6 feet:

All plants and trellis structures must be no taller than six feet. This measurement is taken from the top of the garden plot border. In the absence of a garden plot border, this measurement will be taken from the surface of the soil at the base of the garden structure. The occasional tall plant is okay if it is an annual such as sunflowers.

You have a compost bin and it is within your plot:

Green waste must be composted within the garden plot, taken home, or disposed of in the on-site green bins. Green waste cannot be piled next to the garden plot or anywhere else in the garden. Green bins are provided at the community garden sites for materials that cannot be composted within individual garden plot composts. Gardeners should compost green waste on their plot as much as possible, but may use the on-site green bins for excess plant matter, or challenging green wastes such as:

- Weeds with seeds
- Diseased plants
- Invasive plants (such as horsetail, buttercups, knotweed, etc.)
- Large plants or stalks that will not break down quickly (such as brussel sprout stalks)

There is no treated or painted lumber in your garden plot:

Lumber that is treated with chemicals to preserve the wood from weather damage is not suitable for organic growing. Wooden borders are not required for your garden plot but if you would like one we suggest using cedar as it is naturally rot resistant and will last a long time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please email coordinator@richmondfoodsecurity.org