



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee
From: Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services
Date: February 23, 2021
File: 06-2345-20-GCIT1/Vol 01
Re: **Agricultural Land Commission Non-Farm Use Application by the City of Richmond for Community Gardens at 5560 Garden City Road (The Garden City Lands)**

Staff Recommendation

That the Agricultural Land Commission Non-Farm Use Application by the City of Richmond for Community Gardens at the Garden City Lands at 5560 Garden City Road, be endorsed and forwarded to the Agricultural Land Commission for approval.

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

Att. 4

REPORT CONCURRENCE		
ROUTED TO:	CONCURRENCE	CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER
Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Community Bylaws	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Policy Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Development Planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
SENIOR STAFF REPORT REVIEW	INITIALS:	APPROVED BY CAO

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to describe the scope of work for installation of community gardens on the Garden City Lands, proposed to be submitted for approval by the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) and to receive a Council Resolution in support of the City's Application. Please see Attachment 1 – Garden City Lands Park Development Plan. If endorsed by Council, this ALC Non-Farm Use Application will be forwarded to the ALC for its consideration. If City Council does not endorse the Application, the Application will not proceed to the ALC for consideration.

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 #4 An Active and Thriving Richmond:

An active and thriving community characterized by diverse social and wellness programs, services and spaces that foster health and well-being for all.

4.3 Encourage wellness and connection to nature through a network of open spaces.

Findings of Fact

The City-owned Garden City Lands (the "Lands") are approximately 55.2 hectares (136.5 acres), located on the eastern edge of Richmond City Centre. The Lands are designated a city-wide park, located in a high-density neighbourhood and are envisioned as an agriculturally productive space and bog conservation area.

The project site is located within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and all activities on ALR land are overseen by the ALC and are subject to the policies and regulations of the ALC. Please see Attachment 2 – Garden City Lands location plan.

The Lands are designated for "Agriculture" in the 2041 Official Community Plan (OCP), which permits primarily farming, food production and supporting activities. The City of Richmond is required to submit a "Non-Farm Use" Application to the ALC for a decision authorizing the City to implement the proposed community gardens as well as allowing the public access onto the Lands to the community gardens and permitting on-site limited parking to community garden members only.

To date, the City of Richmond has submitted the following applications to the ALC:

- 2016: ALC #55588 – Transportation, Utility, or Recreational Trail Uses within the ALR (for permission to build the perimeter trails);
- 2016: ALC #56243 – Dike Structure (to hydrologically separate the bog from the western agricultural portion of the site);
- 2017: ALC #56199 – Application to Place Soil (to create the farm leased to Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU);
- 2017: ALC #56243 – Non-Farm Use Application (Harvest Festival); and
- 2018 and 2019: ALC #57671 and #58812 – Non-Farm Use Application (Farm Fest).

The City of Richmond has received approvals for all these applications.

Subject to Council's endorsement, this Application will be forwarded to the ALC for review/approval. City staff expect to host a site visit by the ALC's South Coast Panel to the Lands as part of its application evaluation process.

Analysis

Project Description

The proposal is to build a community garden on the Lands. This project requires ALC approval through the Non-Farm Use application process. Key features requiring ALC approval includes:

- Building a temporary community garden on the existing gravel area near Garden City Road;
- Permitting public access onto the Lands to the community garden;
- Importing 500 cubic meters of commercially sourced, agriculturally viable soil to fill above ground, self-contained plots; and
- Providing limited parking to community garden members only.

For more information, please see Attachment 3 – Garden City Lands Community Garden Site Plans.

Building community gardens on the Lands will permit local City Centre residents who otherwise do not have access to growing space to grow their own food, help reduce the number of City residents on the wait list for community garden plots and will activate the Lands with agriculture-related activities. The community gardens will be administered and managed on behalf of the City by the Richmond Food Security Society (RFSS), a local non-profit society. Residents pay an annual membership fee for use of the community garden plot. RFSS uses the fees to cover their costs to manage the community garden program, wages of their staff to manage the gardens, liability insurance on behalf of all gardeners and common supplies such as tools and hoses.

This proposal consists of 200 individual community garden plots (divided into four, 50 plot clusters) with construction commencing in summer, 2021 (subject to receiving ALC approval).

Future expansion with an additional 100 plots will be determined by the site's and RFSS's capacity for additional gardeners and ongoing review by City staff. Enclosed by a one-meter tall fence with entry gates at key points, each cluster of 50 plots will be laid out to permit access to individual plots from all sides by way of one-meter wide paths. The gardens will also include:

- Common areas for informal gatherings and socializing;
- Composting areas for garden debris;
- Secure tool storage sheds; and
- Temporary, portable toilets.

The community garden is proposed to be located on the existing gravel pad. The pad has been in place for several years and provides a stable base for the proposed gardens. The City is proposing the material used to construct the existing temporary farm service road, extending north from the gravel pad to the farm fields leased to KPU, be deconstructed and the material redistributed along the south edge of the gravel pad. This material has been in place on site since 2016. By locating the project on the gravel pad, much of the area remains open to accommodate future potential Farm Fest or other similar large scale public events.

Public access onto the Lands will be for community garden members only. Signage will clearly indicate restricted public access and the enclosed area is for community garden members only. A water connection to the site is already in place and will be extended to service the community gardens, including hose bibs throughout the proposed garden area. Gates will be installed at key points to limit vehicular access to the rest of the site to only City and KPU authorized vehicles.

Individual raised beds are proposed for this project. The individual plots are envisioned to be raised self-contained, above-ground beds and are projected to be filled with appropriate commercially sourced agriculturally viable growing medium. Existing soil from site will not be used to fill the beds.

Ideally, the gardens would be located on in-ground, soil based sites; these types of plots are part of the long term plans for the Lands. By utilizing movable self-contained units, the proposal is inherently a semi-permanent approach. First, on-site soil contains a low level of contamination based on historic uses on the site. Based on the recommendations of the project's Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP), cultivation of the existing soil for food production is not recommended. The elevation of the water table is at or near the surface for a majority of the year and would limit the growing season. Additionally, farming this peat based soil is not a recommended best management practice from a climate change and greenhouse gas sequestration perspective. Utilizing self-contained plots ensures food grown on site will not come into contact with the existing soil. The commercially sourced soil for each plot will be tested and reviewed by the project agrologist (McTavish) before placement on site.

The proposed community gardens will remain in place until such time it is appropriate to relocate them to a permanent, in-ground based location on the Lands. The timing of this relocation is contingent on the outcomes of the site-wide Soil Management and Remediation Study which will be conducted over the next two to three years (estimated timeline). Once the soils on site are deemed safe for in-ground agriculture, the community gardens will remain in containers. Furthermore, staff anticipate a future Non-Farm Use Application would need to be

filed in conjunction with a site-wide approval to realize the full vision and program for the Lands which includes in-ground based community gardens. Should the temporary gardens be relocated to a permanent location within the Garden City Lands, the self-contained garden plots would be able to be re-used on other sites in the City.

Soil Placement

The proposed community gardens will be located on the existing gravel pad in above ground, self-contained garden plots. The approximate volume required to fill the plots is 500 cubic meters of local, commercially sourced, agriculturally viable soil. ALC staff have instructed City staff to file this application as standard Non-Farm Use activities as a landowner rather than an application for the placement of fill on ALR land due to the modest volume requested to be placed.

Should Council and the ALC endorse the proposal, a soil deposit permit shall be required. Conditions will include, but not be limited to, oversight by a qualified agrologist including confirmation prior to soil importation/placement that the soil to be placed meets an agricultural standard and a Traffic Management Plan.

Drainage & Geotechnical Considerations

Based on the proposed scope of work and the proposed location of the garden beds on the existing gravel pad, Engineering has concluded that there would be no negative impact to the City's utilities, drainage system or any neighbouring properties.

Environmental Considerations

There are no Environmentally Sensitive Areas or Riparian Management Areas designated within the property. In addition, there will be no impacts to trees.

Security Bonds

The following security bonds are typically collected prior to issuance of a soil deposit permit:

- \$5,000 pursuant to s. 8(d) of the current *Boulevard and Roadway Protection Regulation Bylaw No. 6366* to ensure that roadways and drainage systems are kept free and clear of materials, debris, dirt, or mud resulting from the soil deposit activity; and
- \$10,000 pursuant to s. 4.2.1 of the current *Soil Removal and Fill Deposit Regulation Bylaw No. 8094* to ensure full and proper compliance with the provisions of this Bylaw and all other terms and conditions of the permit.

As this is a City project, the bonds may not be collected; however, internal agreements will be in place in order to ensure any costs incurred such as road cleaning, damage to infrastructure, etc., will be covered by the Parks Services.

As a condition of any approval, a performance bond may be required and held by the ALC in a form and amount deemed acceptable by the ALC.

Financial Costs and Considerations for the Applicant

The City will purchase soil from a reputable supplier(s) under the guidance of the qualified professional. The soil will be tested prior to placement on the Lands.

Consultation

The Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee reviewed the proposal on January 28, 2021, and passed the following motion (Attachment 4):

That the Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee support the Non-Farm Use Application for Community Gardens at the Garden City Lands (AG 21-922645) subject to Staff giving consideration to the following:

- 1. Soil testing of all imported soil to ensure it is free of contaminants; and*
- 2. Work with the Richmond Food Security Society to consider options for ensuring the garden plots are being utilized on a regular basis to allow more people access to the gardens.*

Carried Unanimously

Financial Impact

Project related costs will be covered through capital budgets previously approved by Council.

Conclusion

Throughout the planning and design process, Council and the public have expressed their support for community gardens throughout the City and, in particular, on the Garden City Lands. As a result of the comprehensive planning and design that has occurred in the last five years, there is broad public interest and support to use the Garden City Lands for both agriculture and recreation.

With Council's endorsement, staff will be authorized to submit an Application to the ALC for approval to construct community gardens on the Garden City Lands. A successful application will help further activate the site and bring us one step closer to realizing the City's vision for the Garden City Lands.



Alex Kurnicki
Research Planner II
(604-276-4099)

- Att. 1: Garden City Lands Park Development Plan
2: Garden City Lands Location Plan
3: Garden City Lands Community Garden Site Plans
4: FSAAC Meeting Minutes Excerpt, January 28, 2021

Garden City Lands Park Development Plan



LEGEND

THE AGRICULTURAL LANDS

- 1 Multi-Functional Building and Parking
- 2 Rainwater Storage for Agricultural Irrigation
- 3 Farm Drainage Ditch
- 4 Agricultural Fields
- 5 Orchard
- 6 Demonstration Orchard
- 7 Community Gardens
- 8 Hedgerows & Beetle Banks
- 9 Sliding High Tunnels
- 10 Farm Fields
- 11 Soil Amendment Trials

THE BOG

- 12 Bog Conservation Area
- 13 The Fen
- 14 Boardwalk with Rest Points

THE RISE

- 15 Meadow / Informal Recreation
- 16 Children's Play

THE NODES

- 17 Garden City Lands Main Entrance
- 18 Entry Node
- 19 Entry Allée
- 20 Viewing Platform
- 21 Crosswalk
- 22 Parking Lot with Accessible Stalls
- 23 Parallel Parking with Accessible Stalls

THE DYKE

- 24 Multi-use Path with Farm Access

THE PERIMETER TRAILS

- 25 Native Forest Plantings
- 26 Street Trees
- 27 Perimeter Trails - Separated Paths
- 28 Rain Garden



City of Richmond

Garden City Lands Location Plan



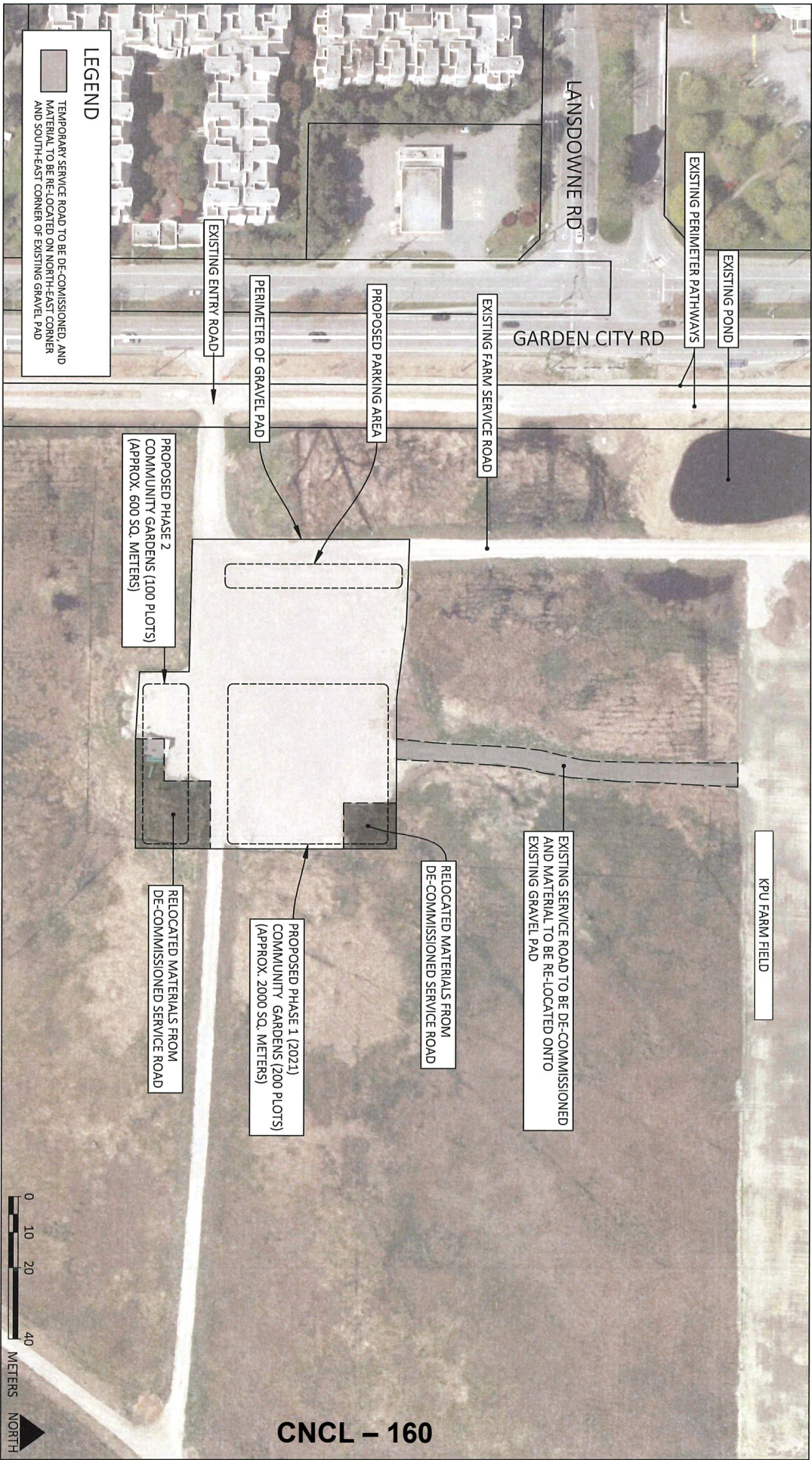
AG 21-922645
Garden City Lands
Community Gardens

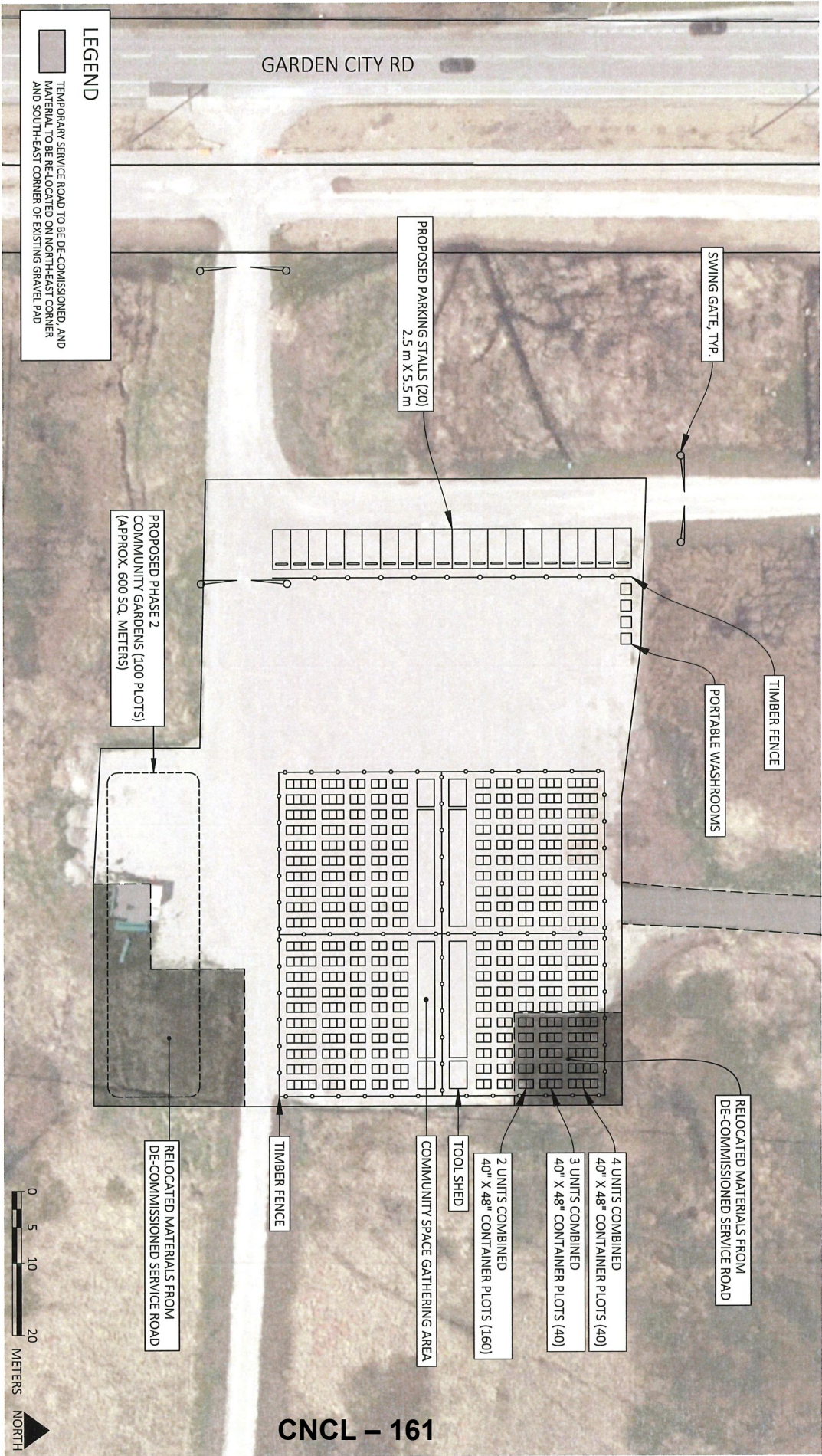
CNCL - 159

Original Date: 01/18/21

Revision Date: 01/19/21

Note: Dimensions are in METRES







Excerpts of Minutes from:
Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee (FSAAC)

Held Thursday, January 28, 2021 (7:00 pm)
Webex

In Attendance:

Members: Laura Gillanders (Chair); Mike Bomford; Erzsi Institoris; Lynn Kemper; Ian Lai; Cory May; Chris Pereira; Miles Smart

Non-Members: Councillor Harold Steves (Council Liaison); John Hopkins (Policy Planning); Steven De Sousa (Policy Planning); Todd Gross (Parks); Jason Chan (Parks); Alex Kurnicki (Parks); Mike Morin (Community Bylaw); Nadia Mori (Ministry of Agriculture)

Regrets:

Members: Sarah Drewery; Allen Rose

Non-Members: Shannon Lambie (Agricultural Land Commission)

Non-Farm Use Application – Community Gardens at the Garden City Lands

Alex Kurnicki, Research Planner 2, introduced the Garden City Lands Non-Farm Use Application, provided a summary of the site history and previous approvals, and provided the following comments:

- The purpose of the application is to allow public access to the site for community gardens;
- 200 temporary community garden plots are proposed on an existing gravel pad, including associated amenities, parking, and importing approximately 500 m³ of soil for the garden plots;
- Container beds are proposed for food safety reasons and the ability to easily relocate the beds when needed; and
- Relocation of existing material on-site from a decommissioned farm road will be utilized to complete the gravel pad for the community gardens area.

In response to questions from the Committee, the following additional information was provided:

- Commercial soil sources are proposed, however, other options may be considered;
- Number and orientation of parking has not been finalized, but may be restricted to community garden use only;
- Irrigation will be provided via hose bibs throughout the community gardens area;
- There is a substantial demand for community gardens City-wide; and
- Farm Fest is currently not being considered in the near future and Council has identified the implementation of additional community gardens as a priority.

As a result of the discussion, the Committee recommended the following considerations:

- Alternatives to commercial soil sources due to potential contamination and soil testing;
- Alternatives to plastic container beds (e.g. wood material);
- Management of the community gardens to ensure beds that are not being used regularly are provided to others;
- Space for Farm Fest or equivalent events at the Garden City Lands to promote local farmers and local produce; and
- Use of rain barrels for irrigation purposes and other options for water recycling.

Discussion ensued regarding the soil conditions on the southwest portion of the Garden City Lands and the comprehensive non-farm use application for the entire site. Staff noted that soil investigation is ongoing and Council has directed staff to move forward with the community gardens to activate the site.

The Committee passed the following motion:

That the Food Security and Agricultural Advisory Committee support the Non-Farm Use Application for Community Gardens at the Garden City Lands (AG 21-922645) subject to Staff giving consideration to the following:

1. *Soil testing of all imported soil to ensure it is free of contaminants; and*
2. *Work with the Richmond Food Security Society to consider options for ensuring the garden plots are being utilized on a regular basis to allow more people access to the gardens.*

Carried Unanimously