



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee

Date: September 23, 2022

From: Todd Gross
Director, Parks Services

File: 06-2345-20-GCIT1/Vol 01

Re: Garden City Lands Project Update

Staff Recommendation

That the staff report titled "Garden City Lands Project Update," dated September 23, 2022, from the Director, Park Services be received for information.

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

Att. 1

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

Staff Report

Origin

The purpose of this report is to provide project updates on activities on the Garden City Lands (the Lands) to follow-up on the staff report titled “Garden City Lands Project Update,” dated September 8, 2021 where staff committed to providing regular project updates to Council.

Analysis

Project Activities

The following is a summary of current activities related to this project:

Planting

Planting proceeded in winter and early spring 2022 in the planting zones along the perimeter path adjacent to the frontage along Alderbridge Way and No. 4 Road. While staff planted the majority of the plant material, trees and shrubs were also planted by volunteers participating in successful Earth Week activities at the Lands.

The second phase of the perimeter path planting project (along Westminster Highway and Garden City Road) is scheduled for fall 2022 and winter 2023 once soil meeting Agricultural Land (AL) standards (that is, soils determined by Provincial environmental standards to be suitable for food production) has been placed. In keeping with the future agriculturally focused activities planned for the western half of the site, some non-native, fruit bearing trees will be planted along the Garden City Road frontage as a demonstration for residents of flowering and fruit bearing trees which support beneficial insects, pollinators and birds in the home landscape. Final species selection will be dependent on nursery stock availability.

Community Gardens

After Council officially opened the Community Gardens this past spring, residents occupied all 200 plots and based on reports from Urban Bounty, the City’s community partner operating the community gardens, it has been a successful first season. Urban Bounty observed that gardener led initiatives such as picnics, painting and art gatherings naturally evolved over the summer.

Sphagnum Moss Relocation

In spring 2022, KPU staff, in cooperation with volunteers from the Garden City Conservation Society (GCCS), began transplanting sphagnum moss from an area identified for preservation and relocation to areas of the bog east of the central Dike Farm Road (Attachment 1). The project, led by GCCS, was supported by funding from the City’s Environmental Enhancement Program and staff from the KPU Sustainable Agriculture Farm Program who provided technical, mechanical and scientific support. Phase 1 of the project was completed this spring with phase 2 expected to be completed this fall once the rainy season commences. Once the transplanting has been completed, KPU staff (as the project’s advisors) will advise City staff that backfilling with imported soil material may proceed.

Soil Remediation

Throughout summer 2022, extensive testing via bore holes and monitoring wells has been conducted on the site. Based on the results from this initial testing phase, it was determined that the soil in the proposed planting beds in the perimeter path median along the Westminster Highway and Garden City Road frontages must be removed as these soils do not meet provincial standards for AL soils (Attachment 1). The impacted soil will be relocated to a regulated soil facility. To date, these are the only soils identified by the City's Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) which do not meet AL soil standards. Once removed from the site, additional testing of the excavated areas will be required to ensure standards are met. Once soil testing is completed, the soil meeting AL standards can be imported in preparation for future planting, which is expected to proceed in late 2022 and early 2023. Depending on the test results and methods of remediation required, staff still expect the site-wide contaminated soils study to be completed within the three year time period initially identified.

Soil Placement

Several deposits of soil have occurred on the Lands in 2022 in accordance with applicable provincial standards, City bylaws and industry best management practices. These included the placement of soils sourced from two Richmond farm sites and a third from a City-owned site currently under construction. All three sites were extensively tested and approved by the City's QEP prior to importation.

At present, a contractor is completing the physical screening of previously imported material to remove inorganic and other debris prior to it being spread. The expected completion date for this work is this fall prior to the rain events typically associated with this time of year. Staff are also expecting another importation of soil this fall.

All of these aforementioned soil placement activities are occurring on the portion of the site occupied by the KPU's north field area (Attachment 1).

Staff continue to seek and identify appropriate soil source sites in Richmond, as approved by Council. The City has received approval from the ALC to place soil in the area that the City has leased to KPU for its teaching and research farm. Staff will ensure that soil test results are received and meet provincial contaminated sites standards prior to the importation of any soil material into the site in order to secure soil with the best quality are received for agricultural purposes. Soil placement results in revenue for the City as per the Soil Fee Bylaw.

Agricultural Land Commission Presentation and Site Visit

On September 22nd, the City hosted Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) staff and two members of the South Coast Panel (the approving body reviewing all Non-Farm Use Applications submitted to the ALC) in support of the City's pending Comprehensive Non-Farm Use Application for the Lands. The meeting involved an in-person presentation providing supplementary information about the City's proposal for the site, as contained in the Application. Staff then conducted a site-tour which included an inspection of the community gardens, the

perimeter path and Kwantlen Polytechnic University's (KPU) farm activities. The ALC is currently evaluating the City's Application and staff expect a determination by the end of 2022.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) Farm Area

With the planned soil deposits and final grading of the north field (Attachment 1), KPU will be preparing the site for agricultural production in 2023. Site preparation includes installing drainage infrastructure and planting cover crops. KPU continues with planning and design of the proposed barn structure to support farming and educational activities on the Lands for which they have secured provincial funding.

Financial Impact

None.

Conclusion

Staff will continue to develop the Garden City Lands and provide periodic updates to Council as requested as work proceeds.



Alexander Kurnicki
Manager, Park Programs
(604-276-4099)

Att. 1: Garden City Lands Site Plan Fall 2022

