

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: URBAN AGRICULTURE POLICY - COMMUNITY GARDENS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT this report be received for information purposes.
2. THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission for information.
3. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mr. Chris Reid, Shifting Growth, at 315-1595 East 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5S1.

REPORT

The Environment Committee, at its meeting held on 2013 June 11, received and adopted the *attached* report outlining Burnaby's urban agriculture policies that support the development of community gardens.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor D. Johnston
Chair

Councillor A. Kang
Vice Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Deputy City Managers Director Planning & Building Acting Director Engineering Director Finance Director Parks, Recr. & Cult. Services
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DATE: 2013 June 05

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

File: 76500 20
Reference: Urban Agriculture

SUBJECT: URBAN AGRICULTURE POLICY – COMMUNITY GARDENS

PURPOSE: To outline Burnaby’s urban agriculture policies that supports the development of community gardens.

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REPORT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

At its meeting of 2012 May 08, the Environment Committee received a delegation from Shifting Growth, a registered non-profit society based in Vancouver that operates a program for the development of temporary community gardens on vacant privately-owned lands. Arising from discussion of the matter, the Environment Committee requested staff to review the proposal and report on Burnaby’s urban agriculture policies, including those related to the development and operation of community gardens.

This report responds to this request by providing an overview of existing civic policies and programs that regulate and promote urban agricultural activities, including community gardens.

2.0 URBAN AGRICULTURE IN BURNABY

2.1 Description and Guiding Policies

Urban agriculture is simply *agriculture* (the practice of cultivating plants and rearing animals for human use) that takes places within or near cities and towns; it may be undertaken on a commercial or non-commercial basis, and on a large or small scale.

Urban agriculture also includes the related transport, processing, marketing and sale of agricultural products, as well as supporting/ancillary industries, for example, farmers' markets and food-related education initiatives that help to encourage healthy eating and sustainable purchasing, and improve the access of citizens to locally-produced food. Through such initiatives, urban agriculture is integrated with urban social, economic and ecological systems.

The City's support of urban agriculture is guided by several key policies:

- Official Community Plan (OCP) - 1998;
- State of the Environment Report (SOER) - 1994;
- Economic Development Strategy (EDS) - 2007; and
- Social Sustainability Strategy (SSS) - 2011.

These civic policies have laid the foundation and framework for the City's past and ongoing support for specific urban agriculture initiatives. The City is currently in the process of developing an Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS), in which urban agriculture has been identified as one of the many activities supporting a sustainable city.

2.2 History and Current Activities

Agriculture has figured prominently in Burnaby's historical and cultural development from a rural community to an urban centre since its initial settlement in the 1860s. The City was developed with a variety of agricultural areas and farm-based industries that have had a significant role in shaping the community. Burnaby's oldest cultural organization, the South Burnaby Garden Club (founded as the Central Park Agricultural Institute in 1897), continues to play an active role in promoting urban gardening and agriculture.

Burnaby's most productive agricultural lands are located in the Big Bend area, formed of alluvial and peat soils deposited as part of the Fraser River delta. The City has protected significant areas of these historic farm lands through community planning policies and zoning of the Big Bend area, and has supported their designation as part of the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), which was established in 1973.

In the 1970s, Burnaby citizens pioneered urban agriculture, with the support of the City, through the creation of a large community allotment garden on City-owned agricultural lands in the Riverside neighbourhood of the Big Bend. The Ministry of Agriculture originally operated the gardens under a pilot program; when this program ceased, the Burnaby and Regional Allotment Gardens Association (BARAGA) was formed by plot holders, and to this day continues to operate the garden, under a lease agreement with the City. Also in the 1970s, Simon Fraser University students established a garden in Naheeno Park, which also continues to flourish. More recently, urban agriculture has been incorporated, in a variety of forms, within more densely-developed areas of the City.

These urban agricultural initiatives have proven to be successful and important community amenities. Urban agriculture in Burnaby currently takes the form of various types of activities, as listed below in *Table 1* and as described in the following section of this report.

Table 1 Urban Agriculture Currently Practiced in Burnaby

Activity	Use/purpose	Typical size/type of operation	Typical land use context (Zoning)
Commercial agriculture (farms, greenhouses, livestock)	Commercial production and sale	Plot(s) greater than 15m x 15m; usually 2 acres or more	Lands zoned for agriculture (A1, A2, A3)
Community garden	Communal personal or household use	Multiple plots each less than 5m x 5m	Public lands (P3)
Learning garden	Educational and institutional use	Multiple plots each less than 5m x 5m	Schools, universities, public facilities (P3, P6)
Strata/co-op garden (e.g., courtyard or rooftop)	Communal personal or household use	Multiple plots each less than 5m x 5m	Multiple family and mixed use (CD, RM, R8, C)
Bee keeping (apiculture)	Personal or communal use and/or commercial sale	Individual or multiple hives	Agricultural and residential areas ¹
Edible landscaping (e.g., fruit trees, berry bushes, herb garden)	Commercial (e.g., restaurant) or personal/household use in strata	Individual trees, bushes and herb plants located throughout landscaped areas	Multiple family, mixed use or commercial sites (CD, RM, R8, C)
Backyard gardens and balcony planters	Personal or household use	Single plot less than 15m x 15m (backyard) or planter(s) less than 1m x 2m (balcony)	Single-, two-family and multiple-family districts

2.2.1 Commercial Farming

Burnaby’s agricultural lands are located in the Big Bend area, and include 234 hectares within the ALR, as well as lands outside the ALR that are zoned for agriculture, such as the Riverside neighbourhood. Among these lands, 129 hectares are currently (as of 2011) in production². The City also has many commercial outlets for food and ornamental plants in the Big Bend which further support the business viability of these farm properties. Cranberries are one of Burnaby’s best known crops, including Mayberry Farms which has 69 hectares of fields in production.

As of 2011, 43 farms were in operation in Burnaby. The average farm size was 12 hectares, with 70% of farms in Burnaby less than 4 hectares in size. The main crop in Burnaby was field vegetables, produced by 26 farms, followed by greenhouse products produced by 13 farms. In 2010, Burnaby’s gross farm receipts averaged \$269,000 per farm, close to the regional average of \$279,000 per farm, and significantly greater than the provincial average of \$149,000 per farm³.

¹ Beekeeping (apiculture) is permitted in the following residential districts (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R10, R11) and agricultural districts (A1, A2, A3).

² City of Burnaby GIS analysis, 2011.

³ Metro Vancouver Sustainable Region Initiative (2012).

2.2.2 Community Gardens

Community gardens are shared lands where local residents grow food or ornamental plants for personal or household use or for donation. As a local community amenity, they provide social and recreational benefits including local beautification, providing an informal community gathering place, promoting interactions between neighbours, increasing access to local food, strengthening environmental awareness, and providing an opportunity for physical exercise. Other health and social benefits documented in studies include social therapy, community building, encouraging healthy eating habits and positive social engagement for community members.

Community gardens may be established on public or privately-owned lands under a variety of governance structures; in Burnaby to date, all community gardens are located on City and School District lands, and are managed by non-profit organizations. Community gardens are typically open to all citizens; subject to the availability of garden plots.

Over many years, community gardens have been actively established and supported throughout the City, including both long-term and temporary community gardens, as further described below.

Long-term Community Gardens: “Long-term” in this case refers to community gardens that have been developed with the expectation of operating on a permanent or long-term basis, as distinguished from temporary community gardens, which are explicitly an interim land use. There are four long-term community gardens in Burnaby, providing approximately 563 individual garden plots, as listed in **Table 2**.

Temporary Community Gardens: Temporary community gardens are established explicitly as an interim land use, are usually established on vacant land under City approval and agreement. Their approval is based on an understanding that the property will eventually revert to another approved land use, at which time the garden will be decommissioned. Burnaby currently has one temporary community garden, the Heights Community Garden, which was approved in 1996 as an ‘Interim Community Garden’ on two vacant City-owned properties (3885 & 3897 Pender Street), which are designated in the adopted Community Plan for future redevelopment.

Initiated by the Heights Neighbourhood Association, the Heights Community Garden was subject to a rezoning and Public Hearing process to provide information and gauge community support. Following the completion of this public review, Council approved rezoning of the site to the Comprehensive Development (CD) District based on the C8 Hastings Village Commercial District and the P3 Park and Public Use District. The Heights Neighbourhood Association then entered into a lease agreement with the City, which is subject to annual review and monitoring of terms and conditions by the City.

To date, there have been no temporary community gardens established on private land in the City. It is noted that the Shifting Growth delegation to the Environment Committee proposed a specific model for temporary community gardens on private vacant land; this approach is reviewed in Section 4.0.

Table 2 Existing Long-term Community Gardens in Burnaby

Community Garden & Operator	Year Established	Land Owner	Number of Plots	Address	Zoning District
Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden - BARAGA	1974	City of Burnaby	373	7450 Meadow Avenue	A1
Northeast Burnaby Organic Community Garden – N.E. Burnaby Community Association	1993	Burnaby School District	74	2740 Beaverbrook Crescent	P3
Stride Community School Garden - Stride Community School Association	2009	Burnaby School District	16	7014 Stride Avenue	P3
Naheeno Park Community Garden - Sustainable SFU	1975	City of Burnaby	100	8888 University Drive	P3

2.3 Learning Gardens

Learning Gardens are typically established on a permanent basis by schools or universities for the purposes of research and learning. In Burnaby, these gardens include:

- Simon Fraser University Learning Garden, established in 2012;
- BCIT Community Garden, established in 2010; and
- Forest Grove Elementary School Edible School Garden Program, established in 2011.

These gardens, established on lands in the P3 and P6 zoning districts, are an integral part of the educational institutions and the community of students that they serve. This type of use is encouraged and supported by the City through its existing policy framework.

2.4 Strata and Cooperative Housing Gardens

Several strata and cooperative housing gardens in the City have been established on the privately-owned common spaces associated with multi-family residential complexes and mixed-use developments, including within courtyards and on rooftops. These gardens are often established primarily or exclusively for the use of residents of the development, and may be administered by a strata corporation board and its association, or a cooperative housing society. In some cases, the strata or cooperative may provide access to the gardens for the use of other members of the surrounding community. As these gardens consist of minor site landscaping uses, they are considered an accessory residential use, and do not require specific regulatory approval by the City, provided that they do not conflict with the approved plan of development, the Zoning Bylaw or other regulatory bylaws.

Some strata and cooperative housing gardens have been supported and established as an amenity through the City’s development approvals process. The location, design and management structure of these strata gardens are often established as part of a comprehensive design plan which takes into account potential conflicts of use within the site and with adjoining sites. Examples of existing strata/co-op gardens are listed in **Table 3**.

Table 3 Examples of Strata/Co-Op Gardens

Type of Strata Garden	Examples
Multi-Family Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Haven, 4250 Marine Drive • Lakepark Village Co-op, 8580 Cumberland Place • The Firma (roof garden), 4562 Hastings Street • Affinity, 2232 Douglas Road • Jewel, 6188 Wilson Avenue • Cranberry Commons Co-Housing, 4272 Albert Street
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Vista Care Centre, 7210 Mary Avenue • Seton Villa Retirement Centre, 3577 McGill Street • George Derby Care Centre, 7550 Cumberland Street • Hall Towers, 7264 Kingsway
Single-Family Residential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnaby Association for Community Living – group home, 7731 Wedgewood Street (‘Edmonds Community Garden’)
Industrial/Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burnaby Association for Community Living, 2702 Norland Avenue

2.5 Apiculture (Bee-Keeping)

In 2009, City Council approved modifications to the Zoning Bylaw to permit beekeeping (apiculture) in seven residential districts (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R10, R11) and within the three agricultural districts (A1, A2, A3) for domestic and commercial purposes. The City promotes bee-keeping through educational materials and outreach. It is noted that all honeybee colonies must be registered with the Province of BC.

2.6 Edible Landscaping

Property owners often incorporate food plants in landscaping, for example fruit trees. This type of landscaping is encouraged and supported by the City. There may be additional incentives and opportunities for the City to encourage food plants in common spaces of new developments. However, the management and maintenance of such landscaping requires careful consideration by property owners and managers.

2.7 Home Gardens and Balcony Planters

Many residents in Burnaby are avid gardeners and successfully cultivate a wide array of food plants located on both land and on balconies in planters. Garden sharing is an emerging trend which brings together residents to collaborate in order to actively cultivate residential yards, and develop social connections in the community. As noted in Section 2.8.2 below, the City supports the activities of a community program called “Can You Dig It!” which facilitates backyard

sharing, as well as the Burnaby Food First Inter-Agency Committee, which (among other activities) hosts workshops for balcony container gardening.

2.8 Other Related Urban Agriculture Initiatives

In addition to urban agriculture, as described above, the City also supports related activities including farmers markets and food security programs, as described below.

2.8.1 Farmers' Markets

The Burnaby Farmers Market is held at Burnaby City Hall on Saturday mornings between May and October. The market provides a range of locally-grown produce, as well as products, such as jam, salsas, baking and the works of local artisans. The market is run by a non-profit society, Artisan Markets, through a license agreement with the City. As well, Sustainable SFU, a student-operated campus group, operates a 'pocket farmers market' every Wednesday afternoon from May to October on the SFU campus.

2.8.2 Food Security Programs

The Burnaby-based non-profit organization 'posAbilities', a community living service provider for persons with disabilities, has established a community initiative known as "Can You Dig It!" which facilitates shared food gardening experiences to address social isolation. The program includes home garden sharing, which is an arrangement between people who live in homes with yards, and those who do not, to share this land resource for gardening. The City advocates and supports the work of this program through in-kind donations of advertising, and providing compost and other materials.

The *Burnaby Food First Inter-Agency Committee*, a coalition of agencies and community members, was established in 1999 with a focus on food security. The Committee's goal is to ensure *everyone in Burnaby has enough food to eat – food that is healthy, enjoyable, and safe for people and for the planet*. A City representative has actively participated in the Committee, with governmental agencies, including Fraser Health and the Ministry of Children and Family Development. The Committee provides a variety of free educational workshops for Burnaby residents on topics including container-based food gardening and food preservation (e.g., canning, pickling, drying). The City also supports the work of the Committee through the in-kind provision of space for community workshops.

2.9 Summary

As outlined, urban agriculture has played, and continues to play, an important role in Burnaby's community character and development. A variety of urban agriculture activities exist throughout the community, and the City's policy framework supports their further development as a component of a sustainable city. The City's process for considering new opportunities for urban agriculture, including community gardens, is described in the next section of this report.

3.0 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND PROCESS FOR COMMUNITY GARDENS

Establishment of new community gardens within the City is supported by existing civic policy, programs and staff resources. Members of the public and community groups interested in establishing a community garden or other urban agriculture initiatives can meet with City staff to discuss how the City might support their efforts, on either private or public lands, in the context of adopted Community Plans, bylaws and civic policies and programs.

3.1 Private Lands

Burnaby's Zoning Bylaw allows for urban agriculture *as a primary land use*, on a commercial or non-commercial basis (for example, commercial farms/greenhouses or large-scale community gardens), in the A1, A2, and A3 Agricultural Districts, P3 Park and Public use District, and in the M1, M2, M3, and M5 Industrial Districts⁴.

Urban agriculture consisting of commercial operations that are an accessory or secondary land use (e.g., commercial rooftop gardens), may also potentially be incorporated into existing or new development, subject to a review to ensure consistency with the Zoning Bylaw and other applicable regulations, to ensure that safety, health and visual impacts are appropriately managed.

Urban agriculture in the form of community gardens that do *not* constitute the primary land use can usually be incorporated as an accessory land use (i.e., landscaping) in most zoning districts, where the activity is consistent with applicable regulations and policies. This may include community gardens, strata gardens, learning gardens or edible landscaping. A request for such an amenity may be brought forward as part of existing or proposed new development, and would be considered by City staff, subject to a review of site-specific factors, community support and Council approval through rezoning, if applicable.

3.2 City and School District Lands

As outlined above, community gardens are a permitted use within several zoning districts including the P3 Public and Park Use District, which includes parks, public open space and public school sites. However, the management of these public sites, for a variety of community uses, recreation and conservation purposes requires careful consideration and management. An application to establish a community garden on City and other P3 District lands would be subject to City and/or School District review, and may include public consultation, to ensure that the garden does not conflict with other uses and features of the site, and is supported by local residents. The review would ensure that the garden complies with established criteria and conditions for use, operations and management. A license agreement may be established with a registered non-profit society, subject to the necessary approvals.

⁴ Urban agriculture as a primary land use may also be undertaken in a Comprehensive Development (CD) District, based on a sub-zoning designation of the these "A" or "M" districts listed above, subject to review of site specific factors through the development review and permitting process.

3.3 Summary - Community Garden Opportunities in the City

As described above, there are many opportunities available to citizens who wish to establish a new community garden. Community garden proponents are encouraged and directed to meet with City staff as required to discuss and examine potential opportunities for urban agriculture in the City. Staff would work with proponents to investigate opportunities for appropriate establishment of a garden to meet demonstrated community needs.

4.0 ‘SHIFTING GROWTH’ TEMPORARY COMMUNITY GARDENS

As noted in Section 1.0, the Environment Committee received a delegation from Shifting Growth, a non-profit society that facilitates the development of temporary community gardens on private vacant lands. The approach seeks to establish gardens as an interim use of land that is otherwise zoned or designated under the community plan for a prevailing or planned use. The gardens are created using movable raised beds to facilitate their relocation and to physically isolate food plants from any potential soil contamination (e.g., on former gas station or other previously developed lands). In some cases, establishment of such temporary community garden, as the primary land use on a site awaiting development or completion of remediation, results in a reduced applicable property tax rate that arises from the change in land use and reassessment of the property tax class by BC Assessment⁵.

Shifting Growth seeks to obtain funding for its program by securing funds from the property owner based on a share of the savings the property owner receives from any tax reduction. Shifting Growth is paid by the land owner to develop, manage, maintain, and decommission the temporary community garden. As determined by the property owner, when the property is advanced for use under the prevailing zoning or community plan designation, Shifting Growth would decommission the community garden. Following the removal of the temporary community garden from the site, the land would be assessed by BC Assessment based on its current use to establish its property tax class.

Shifting Growth, through their presentation to the Environment Committee, requested that the City consider making any necessary regulatory or policy changes to allow for the establishment of its community gardens, on lands in the City, in order to allow the land owner to achieve the change of their property tax class assessment through the BC Assessment Authority which provides for the indirect funding of the activity. The net result is a lower municipal tax payment for the affected property. In effect, the program becomes funded by a shift of the municipal tax burden to other property owners in the City without the necessary direct City approval or involvement in the review and establishment of the garden.

The City’s current policies do not support this approach for a temporary community garden being established on lands where the use would be contrary to an approved Community Plan. Doing so may impede the planned development of lands, result in the establishment of gardens in locations that are not well suited to the use, and may result in gardens being developed that do

⁵ BC Assessment assigns a property tax class based on zoning, unless a change of use has occurred, in which case the prevailing use may be used to determine the applicable class. When a property zoned for commercial use (for example) is vacant, and temporary community gardens are established as the predominant land use, the class may be changed to a “Recreational/Non-Profit” class, which typically has a lower applicable tax rate.

not respond to a demonstrated community need or desire for a community garden. The approach also, by its nature, is an interim use, meaning that if it was established in a location that met community needs, there is no certainty that the garden will remain to meet this need in the future.

The City's approach to urban agriculture, as articulated in the policies described in this report, is to support developing community gardens on sites that would provide the amenity on a more permanent or long-term basis, that are integrated into the adopted community plans, and that serve a demonstrated community or neighbourhood need as expressed and supported by residents in an area, and with the specific approval of the City. In summary, the City's approach seeks to provide the best opportunities possible for this type of community amenity within an approval framework that involves public input, City review of specific circumstances, and reflects the needs of citizens.

In conclusion, Burnaby's land use and financial policies have been developed over many years to guide the community's development and to ensure fairness and equity for all property owners. Urban agriculture in general, and community gardens in particular, are well supported under current City policies under a variety of land uses. On this basis, it is not proposed that the City pursue changes to existing regulations/policies to facilitate the tax-shift financing model of temporary community gardens, as proposed by Shifting Growth.

5.0 FUTURE CITY URBAN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

In order to build on Burnaby's urban agriculture legacy, and as directed by existing strategic plans and policies, City staff will continue to support Council's adopted existing programs and plans for additional opportunities to support urban agriculture in Burnaby. At this time, this work is being undertaken with existing staff resources. Further direction and recommended actions in support of urban agriculture are anticipated under existing and other new initiatives currently in progress, and would be brought forward for Committee and Council consideration, as appropriate.

Some current opportunities that staff have identified for further enhancing the City's urban agriculture policy and program framework include:

- Producing educational guides and resources for members of the public and landowners who may be interested in establishing a community garden on public or private lands, which would be made available on the City website and in printed form at City Hall and other facilities.
- Continuing to support and facilitate opportunities for consideration of the future expansion of established community gardens with interested members of the community.
- Continuing to encourage the provision of community gardens and strata/co-op gardens in new development through existing development planning and review processes.

- Continuing to work with local agriculture-based businesses to develop a 'farm circle tour' in the Big Bend, similar to those currently active in other Fraser Valley communities. A farm circle tour is a self-guided route for the public to locate and interact with a variety of local food and plant producers.
- Continuing to support the City's existing Farmers' Markets, and considering opportunities for expanded or new markets, as well as other food security initiatives.

As appropriate, future reports would be prepared on any specific new initiatives or directions for supporting urban agriculture identified as a result of this ongoing work, and any new initiatives identified.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Urban agriculture has played, and continues to play, an important role in Burnaby's community character and development. A variety of types of urban agriculture exist throughout the community, including community gardens, and the City's policy framework supports their further development as a component of a sustainable city. There are a number of opportunities available to citizens who wish to establish a new community garden, including in conjunction with existing uses, as amenities of new development, and within neighbourhoods and communities.

Staff will continue to advance the City's vision and goals regarding the protection and support of agricultural land, citizen access to community garden opportunities, and food security initiatives. Any specific new programs, directions or proposed policies arising from these ongoing initiatives will be advanced to Council through the appropriate Committee and/or Commission, for consideration.

On this basis, it is also recommended that a copy of this report be sent to Mr. Chris Reid of Shifting Growth, as background to the City's response to their proposal, and that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission for information.


Lou Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

LT/JW:sa:je

cc: City Manager
Deputy City Managers
Acting Director Engineering
Director Finance
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
Acting City Clerk