

# Growing Community Gardens

# Fact Sheet



## How much is the community garden movement growing?

### In North America

- ☼ As of 2007, in excess of 18,000 community gardens in Canada and the U.S.
- ☼ More than 200 community gardens in Toronto
- ☼ Even with its short growing season, the NorthWest Territories has 19 community gardens and plans to expand the program to all 33 NWT communities.

### In the Region of Waterloo

- ☼ Currently about 40 community gardens with more than 750 participants
- ☼ The gardens are all on a map at <http://maps.google.ca/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&msa=0&msid=115742611682272270293.000467f28a8e8358ed53f&ll=43.491787,-80.500946&spn=0.3487,0.583649&z=10&source=embed>

### This Region has some growing to do

- ☼ Seattle's benchmark is one community garden of 28 plots for every 2,500 residents, or one plot per 89 residents.
- ☼ In the Region of Waterloo, the current ratio is only one community garden per 11,000 residents, one plot per 600 residents, and one allotment plot per 2,300 residents.

## How much land do community gardens need?

- ☼ Individual plots in the Region of Waterloo average 100 – 144 sq. ft. Gardens have from 8 to 90 plots (with a preferred size of 20), plus space for paths, buffers and common areas. The City of Kitchener Allotment Garden has 147 plots of 400 sq. ft. each.
- ☼ In other cities, community garden plots tend to be larger, with more plots per garden.

## With all the benefits they bring, community gardens face problems

- ☼ Lack of a convenient source of water
- ☼ No secure long-term tenure
- ☼ Inconvenient, distant locations
- ☼ Isolated locations prone to theft
- ☼ Poor soil quality
- ☼ Need for large-scale services (soil testing, land preparation, compost, mulch, waste collection)
- ☼ Lack of funding for improvements (raised beds, fences, identifying signs, secure storage)
- ☼ Need for administrative support (annual registration for plots, annual fee collection)

Community Garden Council  
of WATERLOO REGION



"Growing Healthy Communities"

## What will the City gain by supporting community gardens?

### Policy benefits

- Opportune time, with the direction in the 2009 Regional Official Plan that "Area Municipalities will establish policies in their official plans that encourage community gardens..." [3.F.3] and commitment that "The Region will support community gardens ... by granting access to Regional lands, and by providing rain barrels, composting bins, compost, wood mulch or other forms of in-kind support." [3.F.4]
- Advances the intensification and density goals in the province's "Places to Grow" growth plan by providing gardening and gathering space for people in high-density housing areas

### Financial Value



#### Lower city maintenance costs

- City lots cultivated into gardens no longer need to be maintained by city parks staff.
- Surplus produce is occasionally sold to fund improvements such as fences or raised beds.



#### Higher property values and tax base

- Community gardens result in a more desirable place to live, which in turn draws new development into those neighborhoods and enhances nearby property values.
- For example, the net tax benefit over 20 years of 636 New York City community gardens is estimated at \$1 million per garden.



#### Return on investment

- In Cleveland (with 200 community gardens), the city's annual investment of \$100,000 yields a 1000% return by producing \$1 million worth of produce every year.
- An average family can grow \$600 worth of fresh vegetables with just a \$70 investment.



#### Community support

- In the Region of Waterloo, 40% of gardens report donating food to a charity, the most popular of which is the Food Bank of Waterloo Region followed by St. John's Kitchen.

### Environmental Value



Reduced air and water pollution; soil remediation



Lower demand for agricultural resources



Habitat growth

### Social Value



#### Stronger communities

- Food security for residents
- A place for people to gather and a reason for them to collaborate and nurture friendships
- Greener, more aesthetically appealing neighbourhoods
- Opportunities for outdoor exercise and relieving stress
- Gardening opportunities for those without land, in high density housing
- A healthier, less isolated lifestyle for vulnerable populations
- A stronger voluntary sector
- Relationships with food and agriculture-related programs and faith groups



#### Healthier children

- Fresh produce improves their diet.
- Gardens teach children about where food really comes from. They experience hands-on learning about gardening, nutrition, sustainable agriculture and commerce.
- Gardens enable children to have positive relationships with adults in the community.



#### Reduced crime and improved public safety

- A study done in 1993 by Frank Kuo and William Sullivan called "Green Streets, Not Mean Streets," found that in an inner-city neighborhood, the greener the residences, the lower the crime rates.

Community Garden Council  
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"Growing Healthy Communities"

## How can the City support community gardens?

These recommendations are drawn from common community garden policies in North America and from the “best practices” of successful local programs.

### New development plans

- Require new urban developments to dedicate land with good soil and guaranteed long-range tenure for community gardens, located near multi-residential and rental units.
- Include community gardens in developments for seniors.

### Zoning and bylaws

- Assess zoning and land use policies to determine whether they promote urban agriculture and protect needed resources, particularly usable land of good quality.
- Ensure long-term tenure for community gardens, and provision for them in all zoning types.
- Allow small animal raising, including beekeeping, in urban areas.
- Encourage foraging by distributing fruit tree saplings to residents and planting municipal orchards with public access to the fruit.

### Inventory

- Conduct inventories of existing urban areas (municipal and private land) to locate possible sites for additional gardens, and make the results available to the public.
- Develop criteria to evaluate land to best serve the needs of identified target populations (e.g. low-income families, renters and people in areas with waiting lists for garden plots).
- Provide municipal land with a long-range tenure.

### Incentives

- Offer meaningful incentives to individuals and groups starting up gardens, as well as developers, community centres and faith groups which could provide garden space.
- Authorize contracting with private landowners to lease vacant land suitable for gardens.
- Provide favourable tax treatment for the loan of private land for garden use.






### Startup and maintenance

- Provide for clearing rubble and soil remediation where needed.
- Prepare land for gardening.
- Provide infrastructure support, especially access to water without charge.
- Provide regular trash collection.
- Provide fencing for security.
- Increase accessibility for disabled and elderly gardeners by building raised beds and preparing flat pathways.
- Provide signage to identify community gardens.
- Provide gifts in kind or a grant program for tools, hoses and secure storage facilities.
- Dedicate administrative and planning staff to providing resources.
- Provide liability insurance against personal injury on municipal land.

### Education

- Tap municipal resources for training about gardening, including organic and pesticide-free methods, and consulting about particular garden problems.
- Identify sources of material for educational programs.

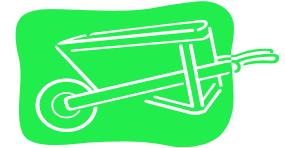
### The seeds of community gardens

-  Allotment gardens in European cities as long as 300 years ago
-  “Potato patch” farms on vacant urban sites in the U.S. during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as an early form of social welfare
-  Herbert Hoover’s “relief” or “sustainable gardens” following the stock market crash of 1929
-  FDR’s “victory gardens” during World War II
-  Growing in the Region of Waterloo for about the past 25 years

## How are other cities helping community gardens take root?

### Canada

- Calgary
  - Approved 12 new gardens on public land (2009) and has a target of 20 new gardens for 2010
  - Provides in-kind support (up to \$5,000 for new gardens, up to \$2,500 for existing gardens)
- Hamilton
  - Proposed (April, 2010) budget of \$20,000 to establish at least five new gardens each year
  - Maintains a list of city-owned land suitable for community gardens
  - Prepares land for new gardens
- Regina
  - Provided 3.5 acres of land for *grow regina* under the city's new community garden policy
- Toronto
  - Identifies and develops sites
  - Partners with faith groups, schools and community organizations to start community gardens
  - Gives technical assistance to groups operating gardens on city-owned land
- Vancouver
  - Helps groups find suitable land (city-owned, government-controlled and private) under its 2005 community gardens policy
  - Helps develop user agreements with private owners
  - Supplies information about developing and operating community gardens
- Victoria
  - Provides city-owned land
  - Designates municipal staff as community garden contacts
  - Assesses land through phase 1 environmental analysis
  - Provides funding and in-kind assistance (such as compost)
- Winnipeg
  - Established a one-stop community garden contact for land availability and educational information
  - maintains an inventory of city-owned land suitable for community gardens



### U.S.

- Berkeley
  - Locates long-term gardening sites under the community gardens section of its city plan, in effect since the late 1990s
- Chicago
  - Transfers city-owned vacant lots for \$1 to neighborspace, a non-profit group that receives funding and leadership support from the city's Planning & Development Department
- Cleveland
  - Created a special zoning code of "urban garden district"
  - Invests \$100,000 of City Block Grant Funding annually in 200 community gardens, most of them on city-owned and Cleveland Municipal School District property
- Seattle
  - Builds, preserves and protects community gardens under the Department of Neighborhoods through a special P-Patch Trust

## What support do the Region of Waterloo and area municipalities already provide?

### City of Cambridge

- ✿ Provided a Grants for Groups grant to the Giving Garden (at the Marantha Christian Reformed Church on Elgin St. S.)
- ✿ Donated land for the UW School of Architecture Community Garden (south of School of Architecture building, beside the Grand River)

### City of Kitchener

- ✿ Provided land in Chandler Park for the Chandler Mowat Community Garden
- ✿ Provided land on Fisher Hallman Rd. behind the Williamsburg Cemetery for the City of Kitchener Allotment Garden; plows the land twice a year
- ✿ Helped prepare the garden and provided compost and top soil for Eden's Gate Community Garden (on Seventh Day Adventist Church land on Williamsburg Rd.)
- ✿ Supported the 2002 startup of George Lippert Community Garden (in George Lippert Park on Weber St.)
- ✿ Provided organizational support for the Kingsdale Community Garden (at the Unity Centre of Practical Christianity on Kingsway Dr.)
- ✿ Supported the startup of the Peace and Carrots Labyrinth and Community Garden (at St. James Rosemount United Church on Sherwood Ave.)
- ✿ Provided financial support to help residents build the Queen's Greens Community Garden (at the corner of Queen and Mill Streets, across from Joseph Schneider Haus)
- ✿ Provided a grant for the startup of the Trinity Village Community Garden (at Trinity Village Care Centre on Kingsway Dr.)
- ✿ Provided park land for the Victoria Hills Multicultural Community Garden (on Victoria St. W.)
- ✿ Established a Community Garden Grant to assist with new garden startups
- ✿ Dedicated a staff person in the Parks Department for liaison with community gardens and the City of Kitchener Allotment Garden

"Participation and local government support are critical ..."  
*Preserving Community Gardens in Cleveland: Sustaining  
 Long-term Financial, Social and Environmental Value*  
 Adele DiMarco Kious Consultant for EcoCity Cleveland  
 April 15, 2004

### City of Waterloo

- ✿ Included community gardens the City of Waterloo Draft Policy Framework: "Supporting access to locally-grown food by planning for community gardens..." [9.3.2.6]
- ✿ Provided land preparation and water hookup for the Christ Lutheran Community Garden (at Christ Lutheran Church on Anndale Ave.)
- ✿ Prepared the land for the Good Earth Garden (at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church on Willow St.)

### Region of Waterloo

- ✿ Provided a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Community Grant for the startup of the Christ Lutheran Community Garden (at Christ Lutheran Church on Anndale Ave., Waterloo)
- ✿ Provided compost for the Giving Garden (at the Marantha Christian Reformed Church on Elgin St. S. in Cambridge)
- ✿ Supported the startup of the Peace and Carrots Labyrinth and Community Garden (at St. James Rosemount United Church on Sherwood Ave. in Kitchener)
- ✿ Provided a 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Community Grant for the startup of the Regal Acres Community Garden (on Union St. in Kitchener)
- ✿ Sponsors the Waterloo Regional Police Services Garden (on Hespeler Rd. in Cambridge)

- ☼ Sponsors the Weed'um and Reap Community Garden (at Waterloo Region Housing on Paulander Dr., Kitchener)
- ☼ Dedicated a part-time staff person in the Region of Waterloo Public Health to work with community gardens and the Community Garden Council
- ☼ Distributes free compost to individual and community gardeners

**Woolwich Township**

- ☼ Donated land for the Woolwich Community Garden (at two locations in Elmira – First and Arthur Streets, and South Street and Snyder Ave.)

**What other support have the Region's community gardens earned?**

**Local businesses**

- ☼ Clemmer Industries – donated a water tank for Regal Acres Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Grand River Property Management – sponsors Nature's Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Home Depot – donated a garden shed for the Chandler Mowat Community Garden in Kitchener; Team Depot sponsors the Christopher Champlain Cultivating Community Garden in Cambridge
- ☼ Regal Financial Planners – supported the startup of the Regal Acres Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Trinity Village Care Centre – sponsors the Trinity Village Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Victoria Park Community Homes – sponsors the Weed'um and Reap Community Garden in partnership with the Paulander Community Group



**Churches**

- ☼ Avenue Road Baptist Church - sponsors the Fiddlesticks Farm Community Garden in Cambridge
- ☼ Christ Lutheran Church – sponsors the Christ Lutheran Community Garden in Waterloo
- ☼ Marantha Christian Reformed Church – sponsors the Giving Garden in Cambridge
- ☼ Mount Zion Lutheran Church – provided land for the Mount Zion Community Garden in Waterloo
- ☼ Reformation Lutheran Church – provided land for the Rosemount Millennium Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ St. Mark's Lutheran Church Community Ministry –supported the startup of the Regal Acres Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ St. James Rosemount United Church – sponsors and provides financial and in-kind support for the Peace and Carrots Labyrinth and Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church – sponsors the Good Earth Community Garden in Waterloo
- ☼ Seventh Day Adventist Church – provided land for the Eden's Gate Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Trinity Lutheran Church – sponsors the Wilmot Community Garden in New Hamburg

**Community centres**

- ☼ Chandler Mowat Community Centre – provides free water for the Chandler Mowat Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Popcorn House Community Resource Centre – sponsors the Popcorn House Community Garden in Cambridge; provides compost, wood chips and seeds for the garden

**Community organizations**

- ☼ Fiddlesticks Neighbourhood Association – sponsors the Fiddlesticks Farm Community Garden in Cambridge
- ☼ Food Bank of Waterloo Region – supports the Christ Lutheran Community Garden in Waterloo, supported the startup of the Regal Acres Community Garden in Kitchener

- ☼ Kinbridge Community Association – sponsors the Christopher Champlain Cultivating Community Garden (CCCCG) in Cambridge
- ☼ Woolwich Community Services – sponsors the Woolwich Community Garden in Elmira
- ☼ The Working Centre – sponsors GROW (Green Rural Opportunities for Waterloo Region) Herbal Gardens in Kitchener, and supports May Place Community Garden in Kitchener
- ☼ Youth Safer Community Kingsdale Project – provides organizational support for the Kingsdale Community Garden in Kitchener

**Educational institutions**

- ☼ Elmira District Secondary School – woodworking class made permanent signs for 11 community gardens in the Region of Waterloo
- ☼ University of Waterloo, Waterloo Environmental Studies Endowment Fund – donated land for the University of Waterloo Community Garden in Waterloo

**Province of Ontario**

- ☼ The Ontario Trillium Foundation - provided funding to buy soil for the Christopher Champlain Cultivating Community Garden (CCCCG) in Cambridge; provided funding for a Community Garden Capacity Builder for 18 months

**Local examples of special purpose gardens**

- ☼ **Grand River Hospital's Freeport Health Site in Kitchener and Homewood Health Centre in Guelph** - Gardens especially designed for patients with limited mobility
- ☼ **Kingsdale Community Garden in Kitchener** - Community building project with organizational support from Youth Safer Community Kingsdale Project, the City of Kitchener and the Unity Centre of Practical Christianity in Kitchener
- ☼ **Luther Village in Waterloo** - Retirement community with a flourishing garden with 45 plots.
- ☼ **rare Charitable Research Reserve in Cambridge** - Here We Grow! Springbank Farms Community Gardens project, developing a series of demonstration gardens that will occupy the space adjacent to the community garden plots
- ☼ **The Working Centre in Kitchener** - GROW Herbal Gardens, a non-profit project that provides mental health survivors with a garden for therapy and enterprise
- ☼ **Trinity Village Community Garden in Kitchener** - A community building and crime prevention effort by the Safer Community Group in Victoria Hills, on City park land
- ☼ **Waterloo Police Services in Cambridge** - New garden to build relationships between the community and the police, with the longer-term aim of helping at-risk youth
- ☼ **Wilmot Community Garden in New Hamburg** - A cooperative effort to help low income single parents to feed their families

