

# Woodland Park Community Garden:

Community, collaboration and celebration  
in Grandview-Woodland

## *Application to the Vancouver Parks Board*

### *January 2012*



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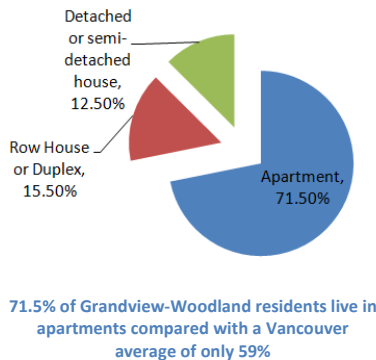
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## The case for a new community garden in Grandview-Woodland

In November 2011, a group of residents in Grandview-Woodland, many affiliated with the Village Vancouver Transition Society's local Grandview-Woodland Village, decided to answer a call from the City of Vancouver to submit expressions of interest for potential new community garden sites. At present Grandview-Woodland counts very few and relatively small community garden sites, and most of these gardens are fully subscribed with long waiting lists. Meanwhile, Grandview-Woodland is home to a demographic that would greatly benefit from more community gardens. According to Statistics Canada, 71.5% of residents in Grandview-Woodland live in an apartment building (compared to 59% for Vancouver as a whole), and only 9.8% of residents live in a single detached home (compared with 19.1% for Vancouver as a whole)<sup>1</sup>. This means that there is a proportionately higher population of residents in Grandview-Woodland who lack yard space in which they could garden.



An additional characteristic of Grandview-Woodland that makes community gardening opportunities all the more important is that it is a relatively lower-income neighbourhood compared with other parts of Vancouver. According to the 2006 Census, 35.2% of Grandview-Woodland residents live in low-income households, compared with an average of 26.6% for Vancouver as a whole<sup>2</sup>. Low-income residents, most of whom live in apartments without access to land, are the most likely to face issues of food insecurity and are also the residents who stand to benefit the most from the opportunity to grow some of their own food and build social capital by gardening alongside their neighbours in the community.



For these reasons, we believe strongly that Grandview-Woodland is a neighbourhood for which new community gardens should be prioritised now and in the coming years.

## The location

During the month of November, we undertook to identify the most promising potential locations for a new community garden site in Grandview-Woodland. We went about this in the following ways:

- Contacting neighbourhood groups including the Grandview-Woodland Food Connection, Britannia Neighbours and the Grandview-Woodland Area Council for advice.
- Creating a questionnaire eliciting ideas and support for a new community garden, which was circulated among many neighbourhood networks, including Village Vancouver's neighbourhood groups in Grandview-Woodland and the adjacent Hastings-Sunrise and Strathcona, Britannia Neighbours, Grandview-Woodland Area Council, and Grandview-Woodland Food Connection.
- Putting up posters in key locations around the neighbourhood, including Britannia Community Centre, the library, shops, parks and the Adanac bike route.
- Touring around the neighbourhood and using Google Earth to identify potential locations for a community garden.

What we found from our search is that there are very few suitable locations for community gardens in Grandview-Woodland aside from parks; there are very few empty lots that are not slated for development, and almost no

<sup>1</sup> <http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/planning/census/2006/localareas/grandview.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



suitable city-owned land (for example, around Skytrain tracks). It quickly emerged that the most suitable location for a community garden in Grandview-Woodland is found in Woodland Park, which is bounded by Adanac to the south, Frances to the north, McLean to the west and Woodland to the east. Of the more than 30 people who responded to our questionnaire and posters, more than two-thirds thought that Woodland Park had the best potential for a new community garden.

A satellite image of Woodland Park and the proposed community garden sites is featured below. The proposed sites for a community garden are marked with blue borders.



View of proposed site 1 from northeast



View of proposed site 1 from the south

## Why Woodland Park is an ideal community garden location

There are a number of factors that lead us to the conclusion that Woodland Park is the most appropriate location in Grandview-Woodland for a community garden:

### Social factors:

- Woodland Park is located in a part of Grandview-Woodland that contains an especially high concentration of apartment dwellers and low-income residents, who would benefit most from access to community gardening space.
- Woodland Park is located very close to several social institutions which may be interested in getting involved in the garden, including Britannia and Templeton schools, Urban Native Youth and Coast Mental Health's supportive housing at Frances Court.
- Our surveys and posters have in a short space of time identified nearly 50 people who would love to get involved with a community garden at Woodland Park.

### Site factors:

- Woodland Park is located in a calm neighbourhood away from major roads.
- Woodland Park is an underutilised park at present, and a community garden would help to revitalise it.
- The ground at the park is level.
- The park is located at the intersection of the Adanac and Mosaic bike routes, making it easy for gardeners from other parts of the neighbourhood and city to get there safely by bike. Parking is also plentiful in the area for anyone who needs to come by car. Bus stops are located within 2 blocks of the site, making it easily accessible by public transit as well.
- The field house at Woodland Park features an external water faucet that can easily be used to provide water for the community garden. In addition, the roof of the field house has a water catchment system that currently diverts rainwater directly into a sewer. This could quite easily be transformed into a water catchment system for use by the garden. Based on the size of the roof, up to 52,000 L of water<sup>3</sup> could be harvested from this way annually, although the quantity harvested during the summer growing season will only be a portion of this and a cistern may be required to make the best possible use of rainwater.

The particular sites chosen within Woodland Park for the community garden measures approximately 750 m<sup>2</sup> (proposed site 1) and 612 m<sup>2</sup> (proposed site 2), respectively, each of which could provide room for up to 70 or 80 standard-sized community garden plots once paths and other common areas are included – or for several collaborative gardens alongside single plots. The selected areas (especially proposed site 1) can be used for a community garden without interfering with the baseball diamond to the south or the sports field to the north, and indeed, these areas does not appear to have any other competing uses. Both sites have very good southern exposure; proposed site 1 has with minimal shadow

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<sup>3</sup> Calculations based on information found at <http://www.gutterdoc.ca/rain-water-harvesting/>

cast by three spruce trees that live there. They are in close proximity to the field house and the wading pool which are the most likely sources of water (either from the external water faucet, a roof water catchment system, or from the wading pool itself). The sites would be easy to prepare for gardening as they are both level and free from obstructions other than the three trees on proposed site 1. Proposed site 1 has a drainage gutter on the western edge of the site which, together with slightly raised beds, will help prevent the pooling of water. Proposed site 2 has a slight northward slope that would facilitate drainage.

## Water sources

The proposed garden sites boast easy access to three possible water sources:

1. The park's field house has an external water faucet that could be used either on an ad hoc basis or to fill barrels or cisterns.
2. The existing water catchment system on the roof of the field house, which currently diverts runoff to a drainage sewer, can easily be modified to divert rain into barrels or a cistern instead. Rain water is ideal for watering gardens because it is free contaminants such as chlorine that are found in treated city water, and the use of rainwater helps reduce demands on the city's water reservoirs and treatment facilities.
3. During the warmest summer months, the children's wading pool west of the field house is filled with water which is drained and changed every 3 days. Instead of simply draining the water into the sewer, community gardeners may be able to recycle this water in their gardens. Furthermore, a local parent informs us that there has been talk of closing the wading pool. If the decision is taken to close the pool, it could potentially be transformed into a cistern for storing rainwater captured from the field house roof.





## Community garden design elements

The following desired design elements have emerged from members of the community and the present applicants:



**Collaborative garden spaces** in addition to traditional private allotments. We believe that the real magic of community happens when community members work not only side by side, but together for a common purpose whose fruits they'll share. Some of the neighbouring community groups and institutions, such as schools, would benefit from a collaborative garden space where several of their members can work together. Village Vancouver has experience with establishing and managing collaborative gardens in other parts of the city.

The garden should include a number of **wheelchair-accessible** raised beds and adhere to the Accessible Community Gardens Guidelines prepared by the City's Join Subcommittee on Accessible Community Gardens in 2011.



The garden will need a **small shed** for tool storage.

The garden will need a **space for production of its own compost**. We could even encourage residents of surrounding households, especially apartment dwellers, to bring their household compost to the garden. Some nearby businesses such as restaurants and produce stores may provide a supplementary source of compostable material.



**Edible berry bushes** can be planted along one or more perimeters of the garden, providing a low-maintenance and common source of food for all. A few other fruit trees such as apple trees may be considered as well.



We know a number of natural builders who live in the community and love having the opportunity to practice and teach their art. We could consider incorporating aspects of natural building into the community garden, for example cob **benches and/or an earth oven** that could provide the focal point for community celebrations of the harvest.



It would be great to harvest as much of the water that runs off the field house roof as possible, as rain water is healthier for the soil and plants than chlorinated city water. For this reason, a system of **rain barrels or even a water cistern** would be desirable.

The south-facing exterior wall of the field house could eventually be used to host a **vertical garden**. Vertical gardens are gaining popularity as a great way to grow more food in the limited space available in the city, and Village Vancouver counts among its members people who are experienced in vertical gardening techniques.



## Local neighbourhood demand for and interest in community gardening

### Interest in existing community gardens

Demand for existing community garden plots in Grandview-Woodland is very high, as evidenced by the long waiting lists:

- According to Alyssa Hall, co-ordinator of the McSpadden Garden, that garden currently has a one to two-year waiting list. Also, she said that due to increasing demand, they are considering putting limits on who can apply to the garden (rather than have it be open to everyone who wants to join as is its current policy) in order to prioritize membership for those who have no other space in which to garden, such as apartment dwellers.
- Garden of Eatin' at Victoria and 10<sup>th</sup> ave has a waiting list of up to one year.
- Grandview Garden at Grandview Highway and Woodland Drive currently has over 25 people on its waiting list, which the coordinator estimated translates to a wait of up to three years.
- Ladybug Community Garden at 8<sup>th</sup> Ave and Commercial Drive currently has 15 people on its waiting list.

### Interest uncovered from our own outreach

When we became aware of the city's call for Expressions of Interest for new community garden sites in mid-November, we immediately got to work on gauging interest and gather ideas from people in the neighbourhood. We did this by contacting local groups such as Britannia Neighbours, the Grandview-Woodland Area Council, the Grandview-Woodland Food Connection, and circulating an online survey to people in these networks, local members of Village Vancouver and various other networks; by putting up posters in key locations around Commercial Drive, the Adanac bike route, and the area around Woodland Park; and setting up a Facebook page that people could join to take part in the discussion and stay in the loop. We quickly heard back from nearly 50 people (and growing!) who are interested in community gardening in Grandview-Woodland. Of these, almost all would like to garden at Woodland Park, and more than half have even offered to take an active role in the establishment of a new community garden in Grandview-Woodland, including certified permaculture instructor Erin Innes (see <http://passionatepermaculture.ca/>), a local urban farmer, and several other experienced gardeners.

The results of our (still live) survey can be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AqE6M80wp3C2dFlfZWUwVXNMYUNyVjBYcTNqR2ZlaIE>

The Facebook page that we created can be found here: <http://www.facebook.com/groups/272079689507663/>

### Interest from community groups

We have been in touch with a number of local community groups with regards to this proposal, and have generated a lot of enthusiasm in a very short period of time. Some of the groups we are in touch with include:

- Grandview-Woodland Food Connection (see attached Letter of Support)
- Britannia Neighbours (see attached Letter of Support)
- Urban Native Youth's Aries School (which also has a meals program for its students)



- Eastside Family Place (Letter of Support pending)
- Purple Thistle (see attached Letter of Support)
- The Templeton Culinary Arts program
- PosAbilities (see attached Letter of Support)
- Coast Mental Health (their Frances Court supportive housing is located near Woodland Park)
- Vancouver Native Housing

Many of these groups would benefit from the opportunity to access collaborative garden space, grow food that can be used personally or in the context of their food programs, and meet and engage in mutual learning with other community members.

## The hosting organisation, Village Vancouver

Village Vancouver Transition Society (VV) consists of several community-based groups who are taking action in the areas of sustainability, community resilience, social justice, health and the environment.



Activities consist of connecting people together in their neighbourhoods ("villages") and around common interests. VV hopes to help Vancouver, and the whole metropolitan area, evolve from the ground up to a less energy-consumptive, less polluted, more equitable, celebratory and healthier community. Village Vancouver is

an entirely volunteer-driven incorporated society of more than 1500 Vancouver residents, including several hundred already involved in community and private gardening. Village Vancouver holds dozens of urban gardening workshops each year, led by professional farmers and master gardeners from the Lower Mainland and Sunshine Coast. Many informal garden mentoring relationships exist in every one of our 12 organized Villages; VV has established or supported Neighbourhood Food Networks throughout Vancouver. Village Vancouver members have also spearheaded and organized collaborative permaculture food gardens on private land in Kitsilano and Fairview. The Grandview-Woodland Village is one of Village Vancouver's member Villages and has been active since January 2011 with nearly 70 members.

## The applicants' experience with volunteers

**Jordan Bober** is an economist and sustainability activist. He is a director of the Village Vancouver Transition Society and is the initiator and leader of the Village Vancouver project to establish the Dunbar Dollar, a community currency. More than a dozen volunteers are or have been involved in this effort, and Jordan's role has been to recruit volunteers, connect them with the project in a way that best makes use of their skills and time availability, and to coordinate the efforts of different volunteers towards common ends.

**Carolyn Shaffer** is a Registered Nurse with a strong interest in health and food security. She has extensive gardening experiences ranging from wwoofing to establishing a garden from forest on Lasqueti Island to transforming the back yard of her co-op house into a garden. She has previous experience in managing volunteers as a Heritage Tourism Development Officer.

**Corin Browne** is a parent, community engaged artist and filmmaker living and working in the Commercial Drive neighbourhood of east Vancouver. As an art-based community developer, Corin has directed or managed many dozens of projects ranging from small scale neighbourhood screenings, to province-wide long-term community art projects. She regularly recruits and mentors volunteers and interns. Corin is a new gardener, but genuinely interested in how community gardens create the opportunities for neighbors to build deep connections that move beyond growing food together.

The sponsoring organisation **Village Vancouver** has a great deal of experience in recruiting and coordinating volunteers. A people-powered organisation, Village Vancouver organises over 100 events and workshops and has an organised presence at many more each year, not to mention several projects and working groups – all on volunteer power!

### Potential funding sources for the garden

Once we have Parks Board approval to build the community garden on the site, there are a number of potential sources of funding that we will apply for:

- a) Greenest City Neighbourhood Grant - The Greenest City Neighbourhood Grants encourage groups to assist the City of Vancouver in reaching its goal of becoming the Greenest City on Earth by 2020.
- b) Neighbourhood Matching Fund -The Neighbourhood Matching Fund supports projects by neighbourhood-based groups who want to make creative improvements to local public land. It supports projects which that actively involve people in developing community and building neighbourhood connections while improving parks or other public spaces.
- c) The Vancouver Park Board – The Board will supply funds of up to \$10,000 to match the contribution that the community makes through other funds raised, donated supplies, or and/or volunteer labour.
- d) Neighbourhood Small Grants – Neighbourhood Small Grants provide up to \$500 for a community project.
- e) Evergreen Foundation – Evergreen’s Common Grounds Grants are offered to support community groups in protecting and restoring urban green spaces. All proposed projects must be open to the community, should have a strong volunteer-involvement component, and must be located entirely on publicly accessible lands. Community groups must be working in partnership with their local municipality or other institutional partner such as federal or provincial government agencies, crown corporations or publicly funded institutions (such as a university or hospital).
- f) Fido – Evergreen Quick Start Grants - For local groups working on restoration and stewardship initiatives or community development in Canadian cities. The grants also support community gardening projects involving native plants and food gardening. Grant amounts are \$1,000–\$2,000.

g) Vancity Community Project Grants and Community Branch Grants – A variety of grants ranging from \$500 to \$10,000 are made available each year for community projects that enhance community well-being, improve inclusivity of marginalised groups, and promote sustainability.

### **In summary...**

Our research has uncovered a high level of interest in community gardening in Grandview-Woodland – and yet we have barely scratched the surface. The relatively high proportion of apartment dwellers and scarcity of community gardening plots has resulted in waiting lists of up to three years in some cases.

Consultation with community members together with physical and satellite-aided searches reveal that Woodland Park is one of the most ideal locations in Grandview-Woodland for a new community garden; this neighbourhood otherwise has very few suitable empty spaces, and other neighbourhood parks are mostly unsuitable due to competing uses that cannot easily accommodate a community garden in the same space. Furthermore, Woodland Park is located in a part of Grandview-Woodland with an especially high proportion of apartment dwellers and low-income families, and a community garden in their midst would constitute a welcome amenity and a meaningful contribution to the food security of area residents. Several community groups and institutions working with vulnerable or marginalised groups including aboriginals, physically and mentally handicapped people, low-income people and youth are based within mere blocks of the park, putting them in a good position to participate in the garden in ways that further their missions. By combining private garden allotments with collaborative garden spaces, we believe that the Woodland Park Community Garden can become a neighbourhood centre of community, collaboration, and celebration; a place where people of diverse backgrounds meet, learn from one another, and are united in the common tilling of the soil.

By transforming a small piece of under-utilised park space into a community garden, the gardeners will incidentally play a powerful role in Vancouver's Greenest City goals in addition to enhancing their community and improving their food security. The Greenest City Action Plan calls for a reduction in the carbon footprint of food by 33% by 2020, and this can only be achieved by giving more city dwellers the opportunity to grow their own food close to home rather than importing high-carbon, industrially produced food from much further afield. The Woodland Park Community Garden will demonstrate leadership in environmental sustainability in many other ways as well, by diverting local compost away from the landfills and into food production, making efficient use of rainwater, and eventually also by showcasing techniques in vertical gardening and natural building.

## Letters of support

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Grandview Woodland Food Connection  
1661 Napier Street  
Vancouver, V5L 4X4  
604-718-5895 / gwfcnetwork@gmail.com



Nov. 29, 2011

To Whom It May Concern,

As coordinator of the Grandview Woodland Food Connection (GWFC), I am writing to express our fullest support for the proposal being submitted by Village Vancouver to create a community garden in Woodland Park. I am excited by the potential that this project has to engage the community in increasing their accessibility to locally produced food.

The Grandview Woodland Food Connection is a community organization dedicated to supporting and promoting an accessible, just and sustainable food system by addressing social concerns of inclusion, health and economic well-being of those living in the Grandview Woodland neighbourhood of East Vancouver. GWFC works to build capacity of the neighborhood through grassroots initiatives to address food security issues.

We work principally with community members who are struggling to access healthy and affordable food. Connecting with these members, including many low income residents who live in the area, can be challenging due to the many barriers faced. As such, food security projects that are easily accessible, hands on, fun and meaningful are critically important to develop. Community gardens easily achieve this goal.

The Woodland Park Community Garden proposal, located in a medium density rental and low income housing neighbourhood contains the possibility of meeting the need for a number of low income residents, with little space for personal food growing, to grow their own food to help offset the rising cost of food. We recognize that Village Vancouver and the community are working to engage and include such residents and nearby community organizations in this project.

In closing, the promotion of population health along with food security is identified goals within the City's Greenest City Action Plan. Community gardens play an important role in an urban food strategy and are an established best practice that not only provides food growing opportunities but also help to promote good health, physical activity, and social inclusion. For this reason, we look forward to helping with this project and wish it all the success in becoming reality.

Sincerely,



Ian Marcuse  
Coordinator, Grandview Woodland Food Connection





c/o 1661 Napier Street  
Vancouver, BC V5L 4X4

24 Nov 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing on behalf of Britannia Neighbours, a volunteer group in the Commercial Drive area of East Vancouver. We undertake projects that help to make our neighbourhood greener and more neighbourly. Among our projects are the development of Mosaic Creek Park and the development and ongoing maintenance of the Napier Square Greenway at the entry to the Britannia Community Centre. We are a group of people who love plants, gardening, and our community.

We enthusiastically support the concept of expanded opportunities for community garden plots in the neighbourhood. There are many people in Grandview-Woodland who love gardening and would like to grow some of their own food but who do not have yards of their own. We are aware also that demand for community garden plots in Grandview-Woodland greatly outstrips supply, and that we believe that the neighbourhood surrounding Woodland Park would be well-served by a community garden. A particularly high proportion of the residents near Woodland Park live in apartment buildings. A large proportion of the residents in that immediate area are also low-income; providing them the opportunity to grow even some of their own food would enhance their food security and would also strengthen their ties to their community.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Penny Street'.

Penny Street  
for Britannia Neighbours  
britneighbours@gmail.com

<http://britannianeighbours.blogspot.com/>  
<http://eastsidegardentour.blogspot.com/>



Carla Bergman  
Purple Thistle Centre  
1-1670 E 10th AVE  
Vancouver BC  
V5N 1XN  
604.723.7849

November 28, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of the Purple Thistle Centre to give our full support for the proposal for a community garden at Woodland Park. To date, it is in our opinion that Woodland Park is a very underutilized park space and a community garden is a fantastic way to bring people to the park.

The Purple Thistle Centre began doing community gardens near the centre on Parker street and Vernon drive. Over the past two years these community (mostly youth-run) gardens have not only brought us a lot of knowledge and food, it also has been an amazing way, probably arguably one of the best ways, to build community. Seeing people of all ages come together to grow food is a wonderful way to deepen and root our connections and have a real sense of community that is long lasting.

We have numerous examples in Vancouver to show that community gardens enliven a park and public space. This will no doubt be the outcome for Woodland Park. Food security is a growing concern for many and this also will ensure that people can engage locally with each other around these issues. Lastly, I believe because the surrounding area of Woodland Park has a high level of renters/apartments and families, this will ensure that the people will come and join in.

Carla Bergman

Co-Director/Purple Thistle Centre



January 06, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to endorse the proposal being submitted by Village Vancouver to create a community garden in Woodland Park.

As coordinator of the Can You Dig It Initiative, I have seen first hand the tremendous benefits of gardening in your community. Can You Dig It has been launched in 2009 by the community living agency posAbilities as a way to create opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to experience social and economic inclusion through the building and coordination of community gardens. In 2 years we have established 20 gardens, including 3 community gardens in partnership with the City of Vancouver. We have involved more than 700 people including 160 individuals with disabilities and more than 100 newcomers, immigrants and refugees. The project also results in economic inclusion for persons with developmental disabilities trained in woodworking and gardening and getting paid minimum wage to establish gardens throughout the Lower Mainland. A percentage of the yield is also donated to food programs to assist economically disadvantaged persons.

Community gardening is a critical element to the well-being and social inclusion of citizens. Urban and modern life has had a profound effect on social organization. Increasingly, people are living alone, and this isolation is compounded for people living with stigma. The margins of society are expanding. Community gardens offer a site of convergence, a place for coming together. Gardens and agriculture have historically been seen as ways in which communities are strengthened. We strongly believe that today they offer not only environmental alternatives, but serve as vehicles to promote positive social change and community development in local neighbourhoods.

We are very excited by Village Vancouver's proposal to create a new community garden in the Woodland Park, and we strongly endorse this project. Please feel free to contact me at 604.728.1725 or [canvoudigit@posabilities.ca](mailto:canvoudigit@posabilities.ca) if you have any questions.

Regards,

Cinthia Pagé  
Can You Dig It Coordinator

[www.cydi.ca](http://www.cydi.ca)

[www.posAbilities.ca](http://www.posAbilities.ca)