



Inclusive Community Gardens

Planning for Inclusive and
Welcoming Spaces in Vancouver

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Thank You,

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Executive Summary



To bolster community well-being through food systems, community food assets must be physically, economically and socially accessible to all citizens. However, participants in Vancouver's community gardens have been, for the most part, under-representative of the diversity in communities that the gardens serve¹.

This document combines current knowledge of inclusivity through the engagement of existing community garden guidelines; dialogues hosted by Can You Dig It (CYDI) Possibilities, and community coordinators and gardeners in Vancouver. The aim is to understand inclusivity in the Vancouver context; investigate current attributes of community gardens and their members; and provide assistance to leaders and gardeners in the creation of more welcoming and inclusive gardens.

Gardens are a common feature in Vancouver neighbourhoods and a hub for fostering neighbourhood cohesion and resiliency through

strengthening of networks, citizen activism, engagement, increased knowledge and capacity building.

Regardless of their demographics, since joining a community garden, respondents were found to:

- Build neighbourhood cohesion by meeting more of their neighbours and building more trusting relationships
- Feel a more meaningful sense of belonging to the community and participate in more community projects
- Experience a higher quality of life, a greater sense of accomplishment and greater physical and mental well-being
- Transform underutilized spaces to grow food as a collective and replace produce they would normally purchase from conventional grocery stores



While not necessarily intentional, community gardens may not feel inclusive and welcoming as a result of differences across social barriers, such as: cultural norms with respect to urban agriculture, food preferences, and preparation; as well as technical barriers including physical accessibility and language².

Dialogues with community leaders and garden coordinators revealed that unless there is intent behind building inclusion, bridging soft and technical barriers, and providing programming around culture, new immigrants, seniors, and those with accessibility challenges are unlikely to participate fully in community gardens.

Participation is important not only because of the many personal benefits experienced by community gardeners, but also in terms of equity around public spaces and creating a broader sense of belonging in Vancouver communities.

The next step for the City is to create a better understanding of what it means to be inclusive and how to create public spaces that are welcoming and respectful, and that celebrate the broader community. This report summarizes research into Vancouver's community gardening culture.

The purpose is to capture the value of gardening as a community and to support garden coordinators in creating inclusive spaces for all citizens; who desire to participate and engage with their community through gardening.

In this report, garden coordinators, gardener coalitions, passionate community champions, and gardeners themselves were asked to share their values, stories, and advice on the value and benefits of community gardening and how to better create more welcoming community spaces.

A comprehensive evaluation of inclusivity in community gardens was accomplished by asking WHAT inclusivity means, WHO benefits from inclusion, and HOW to create inclusive spaces.

The Vancouver Context

Growing in cities

Food as Leverage

Morgan (2009) argues that food planning may be one of the most important social movements of the early twenty-first century due to the multifunctional character of food that enables policies to connect with a wide range of community campaigns³. In the City of Vancouver's Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP) (2011), local food is one of ten sustainability goals, with food as a 'powerful part of a just and sustainable city'—reducing the ecological footprint through decreased use of fossil fuels and protection of food-production lands and related biodiversity⁴.

Cities such as Vancouver are in a unique position to facilitate or hinder the momentum of food policy. Food has the unique power to convene advocates and leaders from diverse perspectives and present solutions to a multitude of urban problems. By capturing positive externalities, food policy can leverage cross-departmental goals including those of economics, arts, culture, waste, safety, education, and energy conservation⁵.

Food Policy in Vancouver

The Vancouver Food Strategy (VFS) (2013) is intrinsically linked to GCAP (2011), aiming to coordinate all aspects of the food system; to link both food policy and community programs; and to grow more food in the City⁶. The VFS (2013) underpins many of the forthcoming goals, currently underway, in the City's Healthy City Strategy (HCS), including: support for access to healthy and nutritional food for citizens; providing opportunities for neighbours to connect; and promoting active living outdoors. The VFS also bolsters the City's commitment to promote neighbourhood food system resiliency through the building of networks and social capital by working cooperatively together to make decisions, fostering civic engagement and combating social isolation⁷.



The Many Roles of Community Gardens

During war time, collections of individual plots were provided to citizens for the purpose of growing food. These allotment gardens, have traditionally been used as the main source for family food production and continue to be spaces for neighbours to connect and work together³. Community gardens are one piece of a broader food movement which is gaining ground in local planning across North America and Europe⁴. Here community gardens are presented as one of many initiatives to support Vancouver's goals through food.

Community gardens are widely recognized as a space for food production, sustainable food practices, and neighbourhood resilience⁸; and are regarded as powerful community food assets and gathering places which promote sustainability, neighbourhood livability, urban greening, community building, intergenerational activity, social interaction, crime reduction, exercise and food production².

Converting underutilized spaces into public forums of interaction and dialogue not only encourages stronger community ties but also supports the creation of complete and sustainable neighbourhoods—where community members are within five minutes of natural space, amenities, green infrastructure and food assets⁴. To be successful, community members must also feel welcome in these spaces. While the VFS (2013) ensures the creation of more food assets such as community garden plots,

urban orchards, farmers markets, and community kitchens etc., the VFS (2013) also recognizes that further research is needed to determine accurate baselines for food access. This is one way to ensure that 'Vancouver's neighbourhoods have equal access to healthy, local food'⁶.

How to Build Inclusivity

As part of a City initiative to investigate inclusion in community gardens, a collection of stories from: gardeners and community garden coordinators; dialogues with the CYDI coalition on collaborative ways to share strategies towards welcoming spaces; and conversations with leaders passionate about food and inclusion, were connected through a framework of inclusivity. From these discussion, themes around intent on building inclusion, bridging soft and technical barriers, and provided programming around culture have emerged. Unless inclusion is deliberate and purposeful, new immigrants, seniors, and those with accessibility challenges are unlikely to participate fully in community gardens. Participation is important not only because of the many personal benefits experienced by community gardeners, but also in terms of equity around public spaces and creating a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood.

Since urban food systems are complex, baseline data are necessary for meaningful and effective evaluation and monitoring of broader socio-economic, cultural and ecological factors. As part of this report, current participants in community gardens were surveyed in order to understand garden-er demographics, motivations, and the benefits they receive from these vibrant spaces.

Garden level guidelines for community based planning are suggested as a bottom up method of integrating food systems into the sustainable community system. Engaging neighbours in the community food project process is the first step in providing food access to a broader range of Vancouver citizens. Guidelines are meant to encourage early building of intent around inclusion before the design of the garden is even considered.

The goal is to provide the foundation from which the City of Vancouver and community garden societies can facilitate cultural engagement and inclusion. The report aims to: encourage an understanding of cultural differences around community food spaces and programming; educate citizens as to the benefits and value of community gardens in Vancouver; and demonstrate how gardening together can enrich and empower the surrounding community.

The Toolkit is divided into three sections:

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|----------------------|--|--|
| Section One | <i>Inclusivity: What does it mean to be inclusive?</i> | WHAT does it mean to be inclusive, and how does this apply to communal gathering spaces and citizen engagement? what qualities were necessary to create inclusive spaces? |
| Section Two | <i>Growing Together: Community Gardening in Vancouver</i> | WHO uses Vancouver's community garden spaces, what motivates neighbours to garden together, and how leaders currently plan to be inclusive. |
| Section Three | <i>Guide to Planning for Inclusion</i> | HOW can current and future Garden Coordinators plan for more welcoming and inclusive community garden spaces in Vancouver? How can the City facilitate inclusivity in Vancouver's public spaces? |

The Vancouver Context

Community gardens may be located on either City or Parks Board property, but not administered by the City of Vancouver or Parks Board. The process for each is outlined below:

Parks Board Land

Definition: A community garden on Parks Board land is defined as a space operated by a non-profit society that provides a community development program. Programs must feature at least one of the following:

- Producing food and flowers for the personal use of society members
- Encouraging the involvement of schools, youth groups, and citizens who do not have an assigned plot in gardening activities
- Increasing the ecological biodiversity of Vancouver through organic principles, and provide increased understanding of local food production

Process: If park land is the most suitable site for a community garden, the following process is followed:

- 1) **Community consultation:** flyering and an online survey must be undertaken to ensure there is neighbourhood support for the garden
- 2) **Site:** Staff will help to identify and develop a garden site to determine the layout of the plots, structures and fences
- 3) **Approval:** Proposal and site plan will approved by the Parks Board
- 4) **Agreement:** As part of the proposal, the society and Parks Board must sign a user agreement license, for up to 5 years, specifying the term of garden use, management responsibilities, user fees and access procedures.
- 5) **Site preparation:** The staff will prepare the site for planting by removing grass, ploughing the soil, providing water hookup, and adding compost
- 6) **Maintenance:** After site preparation the garden society is responsible for garden maintenance, and will be run at no cost to the Board

Full details on Community Gardening on Parks Land can be found here:

More information on City Parks: <http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/parks-board-community-gardens-policy.aspx>





City Land¹⁰ (Streets, Boulevards, Not City Parks)

Definition: A community garden on City-owned land is defined as a place, operated or overseen by a non-profit society, where people grow and maintain ornamental and edible plants. The purpose should serve at least one of the following:

- Produce edible and ornamental plants for the personal usage of the society members;
- Grow food for the garden members' benefit through skill building programs or city approved economic development training opportunities
- Grow food to donate to charitable causes

Process: Once a suitable site has been located, the following process is followed:

- 1) **Community consultation:** Consultation by City and society indicating neighbourhood support for the garden;
- 2) **Site Plan:** A comprehensive plan must be provided showing the layout and dimensions of the plots, proposed temporary structures, fences, and an ornamental perimeter garden between community garden and adjacent land. Gardens must have fully accessible paths and provisions for seniors and/or disabled persons. Two plots must be designated for non-profit, child-care, or charitable donation.
- 3) **Approval:** The site plan must be approved by city staff.
- 4) **Insurance:** The City requires \$2million liability insurance for all gardens prior to issuing or renewing a license.
- 5) **Signing User Agreement:** The society must sign an operating license, up to 5 years, specifying terms of use, management responsibilities, and procedures.
- 6) **Membership Agreement:** The society creates its own membership agreements according to Operating Guidelines.
- 7) **Site Preparation:** the City will prepare the site for planting by removing undesirable vegetation, leveling the land, adding compost and providing a water service to the property
- 8) **Maintenance:** After site preparation, the garden society is responsible for garden development and maintenance at no cost to the City

Full details on Community Gardening on City land can be found here:

More info on City Land, (not Park Land): <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/CommunityGardensGuidelines.pdf>

Section One

What it Means to Be Inclusive

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A. Stories from the Garden: Growing Alongside Industry

When I arrived, the garden was filled with gardeners busy with maintenance projects and personal plot designs. Food is laid out near the shed, a few members are working on a very successful composting project, while another gardener paints signs for the communal plots. All projects are gardener run. A new gardener is shown her plot and Jan runs through the overgrown soil, which hasn't received much care this year.

Digging in immediately, Jan points out all the useful plants that have overgrown, and provides helpful notes on their medicinal properties. She makes special note of the perennial flower in the corner; urging the newcomer to keep a few flowers for the benefit of pollinators.

Jan had started the garden in partnership with Kiwassa Neighbourhood House as part of the Wallstreet Healthy Community Project. The idea was to create a 'positive presence' in the neighbourhood by creating a safer space in the underutilized Park. Fifteen years later Wallstreet Community Garden is experiencing incredible demand from neighbours for more space, but there's not enough support for the administrative resources necessary to maintain an expansion.

Jan moves on to welcome a new couple who simply desire space to grow their own vegetables. While she eagerly helps to prepare the plot, the other gardeners seem more than willing to share their feelings about the community space. 'It's the year of the hops' one gardener says joyfully, as she plucks a small hops seedling out of her garden. Wallstreet sits along the CP Rail line leading into the Port, where trains carry bags of hops into the City to supply the booming local brewery scene. 'in a few months, the entire fence will be covered in hops'. An intimate reminder of how industry and nature are deeply connected in the city.

When asked about inclusivity and community, neighboring gardeners gathered around in a little group, believed that all the plots should be raised, not only for accessibility but as a pest deterrent and to provide for better growing conditions. One gardener mentions the pool of tools that each gardener can borrow whenever they need one, she feels a deep connection with the community even though she'd since moved away, "It's nice to know that there is somewhere you belong, rather just sitting in a park", "and there's something for you to do" another gardener chimes in. Although one gardener hasn't seen opportunity to share her canning skills; knowledge and resources are shared in that moment, as one gardener passes around her bone meal to the others: "Those [rhubarb] are nutrient suckers!".



Section One

Current Strategies for Inclusive Community Spaces

The purpose of Section One is to present themes on what it means to be an inclusive garden and demonstrate what inclusive and welcoming gardens might look like. The following two sections will describe who is responsible for creating inclusive spaces, the importance of inclusive community spaces, and how that vision can be achieved.

A framework for inclusion is presented as the foundation for a planning toolkit. Examples of local, national, and international best practices for inclusive engagement strategies and community food projects were investigated for inclusive Vision, strategy, and outcomes based on the framework.

Inclusive Garden Guidelines and Local Strategies

Review of current community garden guidelines on inclusion, dialogues with the CYDI coalition on inclusivity, discussions with food champions, and conversations with coordinators at community garden events informed the current definition of inclusivity.

During visits to community gardens, garden coordinators were asked about their thoughts on inclusivity and the strategies that current gardens use to create more welcoming spaces. They were also asked about: the design of the garden; what strategies they employ for welcoming neighbours and building inclusivity into the garden; and about current programming, projects, and the outcomes they hoped to achieve.

What it means to be Inclusive

The most popular themes that emerge from both guidelines and local community gardens include: Engagement and community, communication and policy, design and location, sustainability, and empowerment.

Engagement and Community

Actively connecting with community organizations and neighbours in person is an essential part of the community gardening process. Almost every garden coordinator felt that the minimum requirement of signage at the site and flyering the proximate neighbours was sufficient for attracting gardeners, with long waitlists as part of the justification.

However, perceptions about the purpose and role of community gardening in neighbourhoods may differ based on cultural norms. Effective communication on the role of Community Gardens in Vancouver, including multiple language and face-to-face engagement is required for successful inclusion of the community.

Communication and Policy

Misunderstandings can arise when perspectives on community work do not align along cultural or physical lines. Clarity on policy and procedures is critical to successful inclusion of diverse community members. Effective communication is important. Coordinators recognized that web based communication



Inclusive Community Gardens



such as social media and email were insufficient for all members, but felt that better alternatives were not currently available.

The Can You Dig It Coalition of gardeners recommend that welcoming gardeners individually; providing personal orientation with clear documentation; and explaining procedures in multiple ways, is important for connecting with a broader range of community members. Coordinators which are understanding and which possess appropriate language skills are important components for successful community gardens⁶.

Empowerment and the Community

A fundamental planning concept, engendered by Jane Jacobs, states that successful community spaces must exist beyond their primary use. For community gardening this means that gardens must also serve as an integral part of the local community, and offer more than a space for growing food. A local champion in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver expressed this need very succinctly: "Gardens can not just exist in and of themselves". Gardens must have multiple elements including a

diverse number of activities (bee keeping, children friendly areas, permaculture gardens, etc.); interesting landscapes (wildflower gardens, art displays, orchards, etc.); appropriate and adequate spaces to gather and socialize (benches, tables, shaded areas, etc.); opportunities to engage with others, and facilitation of neighbourhood resiliency through knowledge transfer and resource sharing.

Design and Location

Best practices typically look at design in terms of most efficient use of light, soil, and water. Plot design is focused almost exclusively on physical accessibility for seniors and those with accessibility constraints. Plots in Vancouver have become very prescriptive in design: occasionally raised, rectangular plots, arranged in rows. Although well designed for physical accessibility, this type of design is conducive to an allotment style of gardening, where the primary purpose is personal crop cultivation. Personal use is only one aspect of community gardening in Vancouver and communal plots, where gardeners plan and grow crops together, are becoming more common (see Map 1 on pg. 31).

Section One



At five separate garden events, coordinators were asked how garden design was decided upon. In only one of five gardens were members free to create and build their own plots. Originally there were some apprehensions that this strategy would create tension over varying sizes, however, this has never been a problem. “People chose as much as they could handle, and often ended up trading for smaller or larger plots.” A variety of plot sizes allows for varying degrees of agricultural comfort and skill sets. Larger plots can be used more efficiently by those with farming experience and allow those with time constraints to manage much smaller spaces.

Sustainability

Sustainability is usually discussed in terms of a garden’s social, economic, and environmental components. Gardeners need to build strong connections and be committed to the maintenance of the garden in order for the garden to succeed over the long term. In Portland, the addition of an economic mechanism which allows for financial self sufficiency has been a major component to sustainability of the project¹¹. Baker (2004) also notes that sustainable funding and support from local municipality are necessary for the success of community gardens².

Garden coordinators placed significant emphasis on sharing resources as a means of connecting garden members and maintaining the quality of the garden space. Many gardeners felt that large projects that allowed gardeners to work exhaustively toward a common goal—such as building plots, fences, and sheds—made relationships stronger. As one gardener stated ‘We share together, we suffer together’.

Best practices almost always emphasize organic growing and sustainable agricultural techniques. Education and capacity building for agricultural skills is consistently mentioned in community gardening guidelines.

Inclusive Community Gardens

Five Components of Inclusion

A framework is presented in order to broaden the scope of inclusivity, to include not just community gardens, but community food projects in general. Table 1 defines Accessibility, Availability, Adequacy, Acceptability, and Agency as they relate to food security^{12,13,14}, and how they translate to inclusivity in community gardening.

A framework is a convenient foundation from which garden coordinators can create inclusive goals for their community garden, while also linking the garden to the broader food system.

Best Practices

Based on the criteria outlined by the five components community gardens run by local, national, and international organizations were selected as examples of best practices.



Best practices were chosen based on how well the vision, mission, and goals reflected at least one of the five components.

Table 1: Five A's of food justice and how each relates to inclusive community gardens

Theme	Definition ¹⁴	Component of Inclusive Community Gardens
Accessibility	Physical and economic access to food for all at all times	In an inclusive garden, all gardeners have equitable access to participate and benefit from the gardening process. Barriers to participation and a sense of belonging are identified and overcome as a community.
Availability	Sufficient food for all people	An inclusive garden is one where participants feel as though a sufficient amount of land, resources and food is available and sustainable; regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, age, or ability.
Adequacy	Access to food that is nutritious and safe, and produced in environmentally sustainable ways	An inclusive garden promotes healthy, safe, and nutritious food of sufficient quality and quantity. This includes adequate education, training, programming, connections and support needed for success from plot to plate.
Acceptability	Access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights	An inclusive garden is one which celebrates diversity. The process of growing food and building community through cultivation, harvest and sharing should be respectful of the entire community and acceptable to all of its members.
Agency	The policies and processes that enable the achievement of food security	An inclusive garden is one where policies are established to enable all of the above. Procedures and organization that facilitate and encourage community building, respects diversity, and creates understanding.

Section One

Accessibility



Farmerson57th

Location: Vancouver, BC.

Created: 2009

Design: Three Sections including Therapeutic Gardens, Market Garden and Growing Eden Garden. Wheelchair accessible

Website: <http://farmerson57th.wikispaces.com/>

Contact: farmerson57th@gmail.com

Managing Organization: BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD)

Goal:

- Changing the culture of long-term care organizations through the *Eden Alternative*; A therapeutic method of care focused on moving decision making closer to elders through companionship and the opportunity to give meaningful care to other living things.

Programmes and membership:

Therapeutic Gardens: Plots for Pearson Residents and Community plots for various groups including Disabled Independent Gardeners Association (DIGA). Agriculture classes in partnership with alternative high school. Volunteers with resident gardeners to help assist in planting, tending, harvesting. Wheelchair accessible.

Market Garden: flower and vegetable market crops grown according to organic principles, by experienced market gardeners, donation of fruit and vegetables for the monthly community kitchen and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, of 30 participating families.

Growing Eden: Priority plots for families who receive a housing subsidy and/or are low income.

Availability



Downtown Intercultural Gardeners Society (DIGS)

Location: Vancouver, British Columbia.

Created: 2006

Garden Design: 100 gardeners in 50 plots including communal spaces and plots for individuals, families and organizations. Raised beds for accessibility. Education arena.

Size: 4,000-square-foot

Website: <http://www.digsvancouver.ca/>

Managing Organization: West End Residents Association

Goals:

- Promote intercultural relations between Canadian-born and non-Canadian-born residents of the downtown peninsula of Vancouver through organic, community gardening in a supportive, healthy and inclusive environment.
- Develop a secure, ecological, organic garden through collaborative learning, teaching and support.
- Include organic gardening, food security, ecology, enjoyment, learning, teaching and socializing (community), respect, support, working together and sharing.

Programmes:

Tasks and challenges are tackled cooperatively. Each member is encouraged to contribute and participate in all activities according to their skills. The rooftop is open and accessible to the public from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm .

Membership:

DIGS facilitates a welcoming, democratic and diverse community of members through a membership requirement for project participants of 40% or more foreign born members which reflect the demographics of the downtown peninsula.

Other forms of diversity respected by DIGS include: race, gender, age, religion, handicap, sexual preference, family and other lifestyle choices.

Section One

Adequacy



Hazelnut Meadows Community Garden Program

Location: Surrey, British Columbia.

Created: 2006

Garden Design: Individual plots, greenhouse to start and grow seedlings, fruit tree orchard.

Size: 80 individual plots

Website: <http://www.dcrs.ca/services/settlement-services-and-community-programs-department/food-security-program/>

Managing Organization: DIVERSEcity

Goals:

- Allow participants to grow food and the ability to feed family and friends supports self-reliance and independence.
- Provide an opportunity to save money and supplement diet with healthy produce.
- Assist with lowering the cost of healthy, organically grown fruits and vegetables.
- Build capacity through education around growing produce suitable for Canadian climates, seed saving, organic gardening, introduction of natural means of pollination and pest control, greenhouse gardening, composting and Canadian growing cycles.
- Provide opportunities for cultural exchange and sharing events, community building and promotes understanding with integration as an outcome.

Program:

DIVERSEcity's Food Security Program is comprised of the Community Kitchen Program and the Hazelnut Meadows Community Garden. The program provides opportunities for immigrant and refugee families to increase their food security through multicultural cooking groups, community garden activities, and food safety concerns, in Canada. Opportunity exists to share some of their agricultural knowledge with other gardeners and feel a greater sense of belonging.

Membership:

The majority of plots in the garden are registered to immigrant and refugee families, with some plots registered to established Canadian families. About 60 per cent of the garden is tended to by new Canadians. The rest are established Canadians

Adequacy



H.O.P.E Garden

Location: Toronto, Ontario.

Created: 2006

Garden Design: 100 gardeners in 50 plots including communal spaces and plots for individuals, families and organizations. Three tier raised beds to offer fully accessible garden areas. Education arena.

Size: 4,000-square-foot

Website: <http://greenestcity.ca/about/>

Managing Organization: GreenestCity

Goals:

- Reduce social isolation and resist homogenization in the rapidly changing neighbourhood of Parkdale.
- Emphasis on growing food, increasing knowledge and skills in organic gardening and food preparation.
- Engage newcomers, visible minorities and mental health survivors in food and community programming.
- Foster a sense of cooperation, community stewardship and individual empowerment in the community.
- Beautification and promotion of pollinators through flowers.

Programs:

Provision of garden space and the materials required for growing food;

Delivery of hands-on workshops and activities that teach gardening and food preparation using fresh, affordable ingredients;

Provision of age and skills appropriate learning materials and instruction;

Creation of safe spaces for sharing food and stories that celebrate community and build relationships. HOPE gardeners take part in evening work parties, workshops, talks, art projects and potlucks in the park.

Membership:

Plots are free. A Garden steering committee supports the management of the garden and plan activities. Gardeners sign a contract to participate and agree to certain principles, from growing organically to respecting fellow gardeners

Section One

Acceptability



Global Roots Garden

Location: Toronto, Ontario.

Created:

Garden Design: Eight plots devoted to particular ethnic communities with large populations in Toronto. Raised beds for seniors to work comfortably. Most of the gardens are wheelchair-accessible.

Size: Eight Global Roots plots 20 x 13 feet

Website: <http://thestop.org/global-roots-gardens>

Managing Organization: The STOP

Goals:

- Education and capacity building.
- Demonstration of the variety of crops that can grow in the Canadian climate given experience and knowledge.
- Ability to grow crops that would appeal to Toronto's ethnically diverse population.
- Demonstrate the amount of food that can be produced in a small space.
- Knowledge transfer from experienced seniors to youth gardeners

Membership:

The garden is tended by both senior and youth gardeners representing Chinese, Tibetan, South Asian, Somalian, Italian, Latin American, Polish, and Filipino communities. Intergenerational partners are usually connected culturally to promote knowledge and skills transfer from senior to youth, and promote participation of seniors through translation by youth.

Programs:

The seniors have also been involved in *New Crop Animation Project*; taste-testing and providing horticultural assistance to Greenbelt farmers who are also raising crops not traditionally grown in the province. The youth gardens are connected through a partnership with CultureLink, a newcomer settlement group in southwest Toronto. Gardeners meet once a week to tend the plots, socialize, and cook food together.

Outcomes: The garden sustains an immensely diverse range of vegetables and demonstrates the range of produce that can be grown in the Province.

Agency



GROW Community Gardens

Location: Belfast, UK.

Created: 2008

Garden Design: Members and local community contribute to design. Three separate gardens based on similar model. No individual plots. Combination of ground plots and raised beds for accessibility.

Size: All communal, variable size

Website: <http://www.grow-ni.org/>

Contact: info@grow-ni.org

Managing Organization: GROW

Goals:

- Support development of healthy, inclusive communities
- Build capacity and empower people of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities
- Promote well being and build community cohesion
- Develop knowledge and skills for organic gardening and healthy eating
- Promote values of food security and sustainable practices for local communities and government

Programs:

Grow actively encourages mutual understanding through specialist workshops on cultural understanding and respect. Grow also runs cooking demonstrations and healthy eating workshops as part of the community gardens. Members decide as a collective what to grow, tending the garden, cooking and running events.

Membership:

Membership is free to all participants. The committee attempts to create a garden that reflects the makeup of the local population. Special reservations are made for seniors programming and the organization actively sought partnership with local asylum seekers and refugee organizations. Local residents are invited to any events, trips or celebrations. Grow and the community actively share, knowledge, plants, seeds and ideas for the garden.

B. Stories from the Garden: Mount Pleasant

In Mount Pleasant, I met with a coordinator at a mid-week work party—an attempt to provide more opportunities for gardeners to participate—as she works away on the compost, sorting out what doesn't belong. The gardeners don't all have a grasp of how the compost operates and the signs seem ineffective at preventing weeds from being tossed in the mix. 'it's like a garden cycle: weeds get pulled, they go into the compost, and they go back into the garden'. They get many members of the community coming through the garden: Students from a local music academy, workers on lunch, local 'park guys' who police the garden when no one is here, rather than steal the veggies as some perceive: '[The park guys] are not going home and sautéing an onion' she explains.

I ask about inclusivity at the garden. She shows me a large plot along the length of the southern fence. She's more of the 'let communal plots be communal' camp, where communal plots are open to whoever wants to garden there. But there were issues of maintenance and harvesting when there was no one to take ownership and no one knew who 'owned' the produce. Now the communal gardens are for the gardeners only, and the harvest is monitored. They had a potato roast in the garden last year, which was a bit hit! As for accessibility, they can't seem to fill their raised plots near the centre of the garden. It was offered to an elderly gardener with balance challenges but she declined due to her attachment to her own plot and the stigma associated with having the 'disability plot'.

A neighbour who hopes to one day have a plot is also helping out at the work party. She speaks about the Japanese Senior's Association that she volunteers with and their connection with community gardening. If there's going to be inclusion there 'needs to be intent towards inclusion', she tells me.

As we walk to the north side, the coordinator points out the orchard which was paid for by the City and that the gardeners agreed to maintain. 'It's a missed educational opportunity... Many people walking by don't know how to take an apple off without damaging the tree'.

I speak to seven year vet of the garden who's described as a 'wealth of knowledge'. He shows me around his plot and boasts about his intentions. How much do you think you can grow in this plot? He asks. I have no idea, I answer. LOTS, he says! He tells me about Italy where his family had lots of land to grow produce. It's great it is to have such a variety of gardeners.

What's the biggest challenge to participation? Turnover and lack of interest: 'Enthusiasm dies down as the season progresses and there is 'too much waste at the harvest' 'No one's looking after the weeds' It's not the first time I've heard about the need to keep the enthusiasm throughout the season. Gardens can't just exist for themselves. Programming is not only an important ingredient for inclusion, but also for community cohesion.



Section Two

Growing together, Opportunities for inclusion in Vancouver

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Section Two

Section Two provides insight into the current demographic of Vancouver's community gardeners and how they benefit from being part of a community food project.

The purpose is to understand who the community garden members are—those that currently utilize community food spaces—and relate their experiences to community garden management within the framework of inclusivity.

Snapshot of Vancouver Gardens

A diversity of cultures, income, and household sizes of participants was represented in the *Community Gardener Survey*. A snapshot of community gardener demographics can be found in Insets One and Two (pg. 31—34).

To further the discussion on inclusivity, it's important to understand who currently utilizes public community garden spaces, based on gardener demographics, and how experiences differ based on three measurable elements of inclusivity: **accessibility, connection to community, and perceptions.**

Time spent in the garden, whether in the communal area or in a personal plot, did not vary by demographics. Time commitments may be more reflective of minimal effort required to maintain a personal plot and to fulfill required membership hours.

Number of new neighbours met and connected with outside the garden were also independent of demographics. Most gardeners met less than 6 new neighbours since joining the garden (55%), and many did not connect with them outside the garden (43%). Most gardens hold work parties where gardeners can connect, but only very occasionally hold neighbourhood events given successful grants to that effect.

Access to Community Gardens

Physical access of community gardens was assessed by distance from community gardens and mode of transportation: active transportation, public transportation, or personal vehicle.

Travel to the garden was dependent on income level, where low income groups were more likely to take transit, middle income groups were more likely than others to bike or drive to gardens, and high income groups were more likely to walk. Gardeners that drove or took transit typically lived further away than those that walk or bike (See Map 2, pg. 34)

These results may be an indication of where parks, and therefore, gardens are typically located. Low income gardeners were, on average, almost a kilometer further away from their gardens than gardeners with high household income. Gardeners born outside Canada or the US also travelled about a kilometer further than Canadians or Americans.



Inclusivity in Vancouver

Community Connections

Connection to community did not depend on age, or income level, however, the number of new gardeners met was dependent on place of birth. With the exception of garden coordinators, gardeners born outside Canada or the U.S. typically met a higher than expected number of new gardeners (10-12), than gardens born in Canada or the U.S. (7-9). Gardens may provide an opportunity for newcomers to connect with their community, while gardeners born in Canada or the U.S. are already connected to other gardeners or have other ways to connect beyond community gardening.

Perceptions and Participation

When gardeners were asked an open ended question about how they found out about the community garden and why they chose to join their community garden, motivations were wide ranging but fell into three broader, and evenly distributed, categories:

- **Personal growth and well-being** (connection to nature, therapeutic, enjoy gardening, personal achievement, skills and knowledge development);
- **Community building and connections** (meeting neighbours, feeling a sense of belonging, sharing in garden culture, beautifying the neighbourhood, helping others); and
- **Food security** (Growing vegetables, access to space, saving money, connection to food).

There was no connection between place of birth and motivation for joining the garden. Lower income individuals mentioned personal growth and well-being significantly more often than higher income households (Fig 1). Low income groups may not have the resources or time to adequately grow and prepare much of the produce they grow, placing more value on health and a sense of achievement than actually growing vegetables.



The significantly high emphasis on growing vegetables may be related to the popularity of community gardening as an activity in and of itself. Avenues for finding out community gardens were overwhelmingly by word-of-mouth from friends, family and neighbours, internet searches including the CoV website, or passing by the garden while in the neighbourhood. The homogeneity in both motivation and connecting to the garden suggests that current community gardeners already have a similar perspective on gardening culture and are already connected and engaged in some way with the neighbourhood.

Section Two

Inclusivity of Vancouver's Community Gardens

Early Intent to Build Inclusion

Twenty community gardens in Vancouver participated in the Garden Coordinator Survey. Each was given a score on structure, policy, intent and outcomes regarding inclusion. Scores were based on inclusivity with respect to:

- The number of structural components that exist in the garden (benches, fences, communal areas, etc.);
- The number of policies and procedures around inclusivity and understanding (welcoming committee, representative membership, education, etc.);
- The level of intention around components of inclusivity coordinators had when creating the community garden; and,

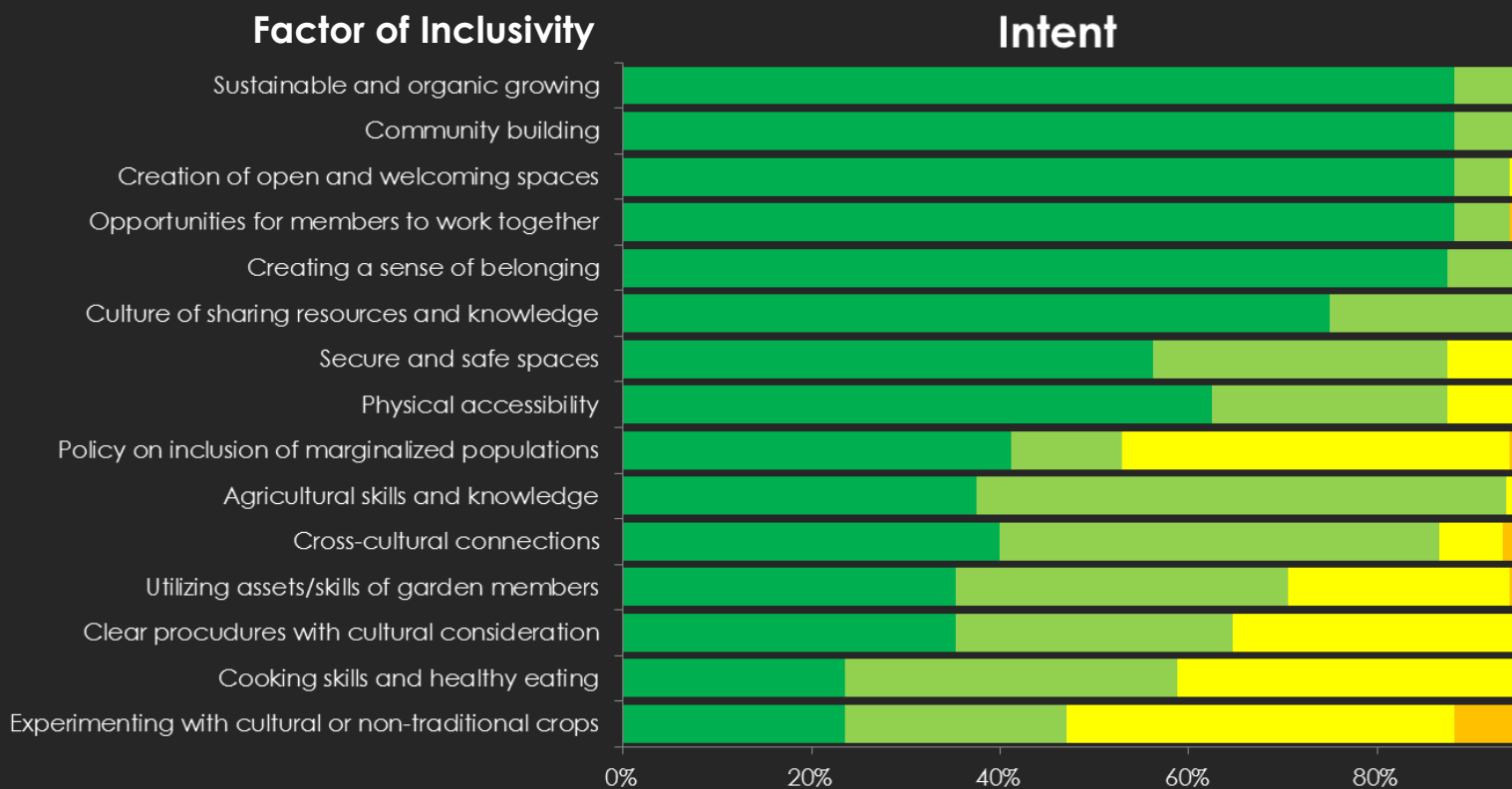
- The outcome or amount of positive change coordinators saw in community members reflective of the components of inclusive gardens.

A clear relationship exists between the level of intent garden management has towards inclusion and the amount of positive change demonstrated by garden members (Fig 1).

The number of structural interventions that garden coordinators included in the space was also reflective of level of intent; however, policies and procedures around inclusivity were less of a priority for most community gardens. Few gardens had a welcoming committee or a requirement to live in the community. None of the coordinators reported having multilingual committee or programming around culture.

Self-reported responses from the *Community Gardener Survey* revealed that, overall, gardeners were more likely to gain meaningful skills and knowledge in gardening and sustainability, con-

Figure 1: Relationship between strong intent and the outcomes coordinators felt for each factor of inclusivity



Inclusivity in Vancouver

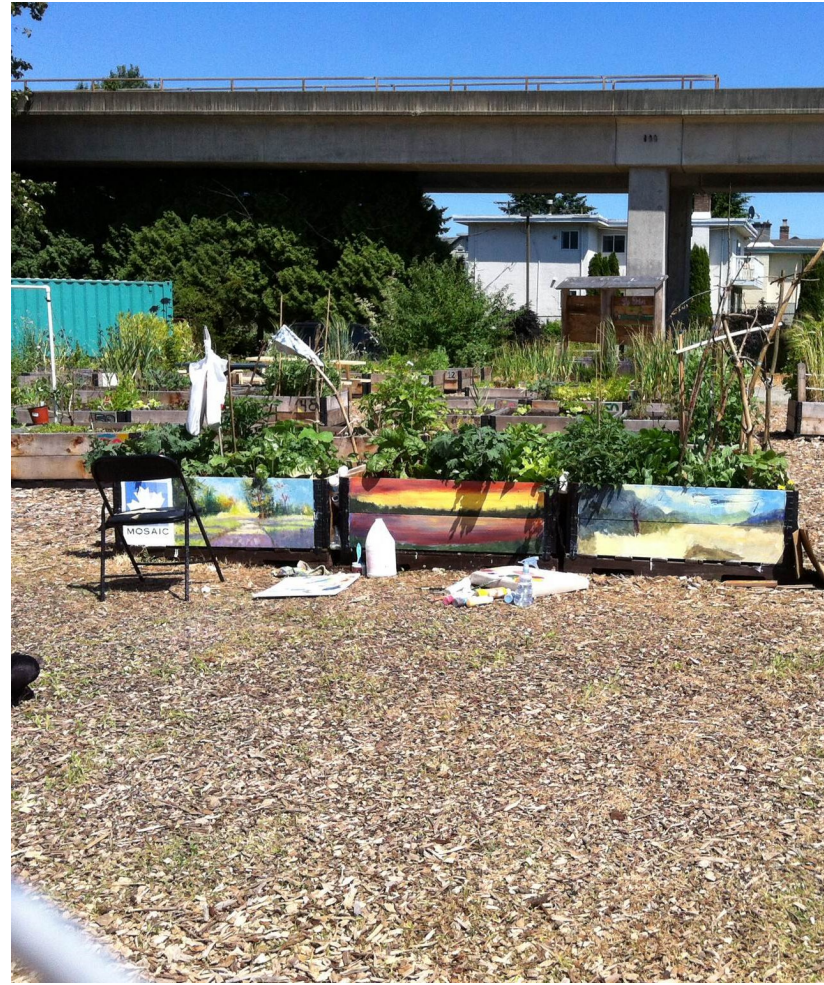
nect around mutual participation in community projects, and improve quality of life, but were much less likely to learn about cultural foods or connect with neighbours from different cultures.

Connection to Gardener Experience

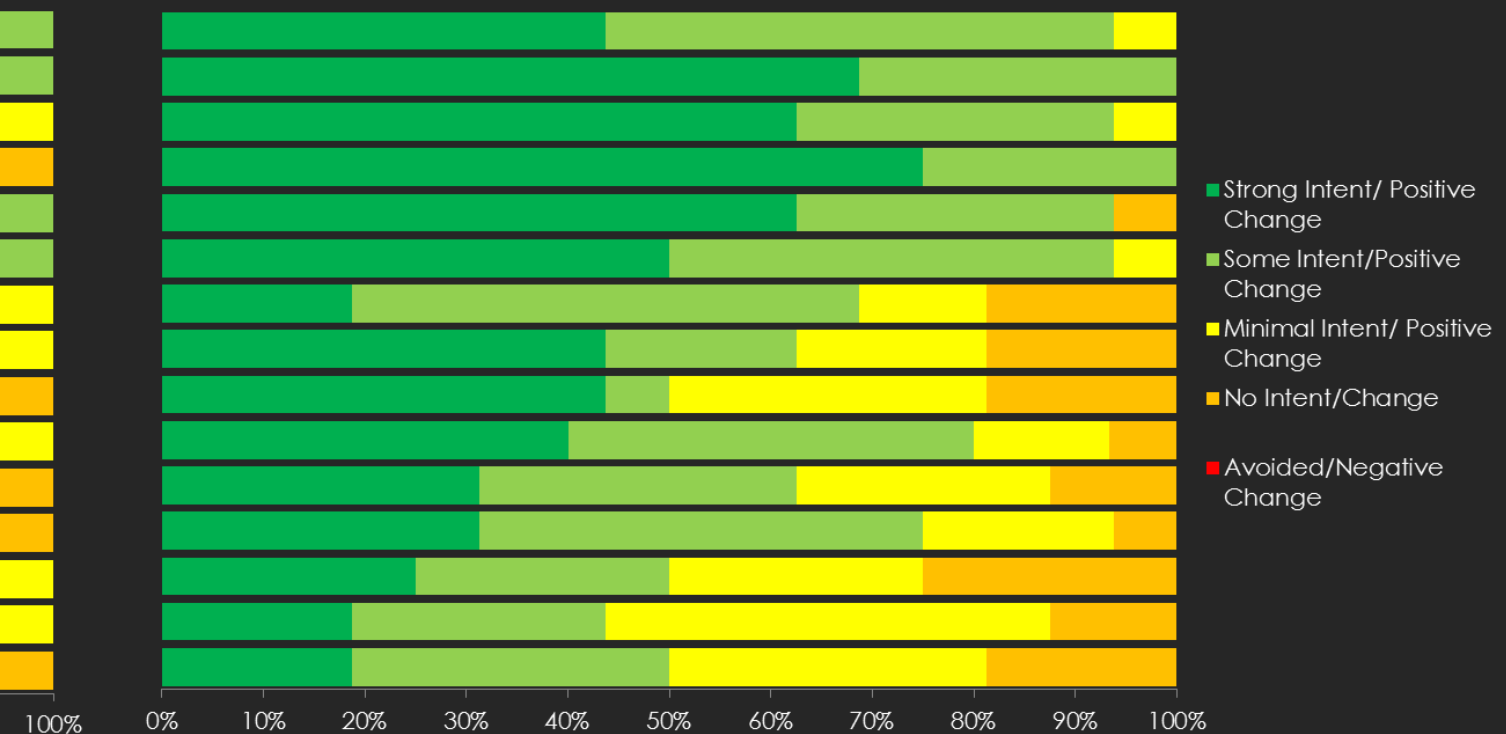
Gardener experience is also connected to the level of effort placed by coordinators on elements of inclusivity and programming. Gardeners belonging to community gardens which expressed strong intent towards inclusion were much more likely to:

- Learn about local food and agriculture;
- Interact with, learn from, and build more relationships with people of different cultures;
- Talk with more neighbours;
- Learn about environmental issues and the importance of community spaces;
- Participate in community projects; and,
- experience a higher level of quality life.

When compared with gardens that expressed weak intent towards building inclusion.



Outcome



Section Two

Challenges of Inclusivity

Perceptions and Participation

Much of the tension within gardens and between neighbours has to do with differing perceptions of what a garden is, a possibility also reported by Seto (2013). Regardless of a person's culture or income, they may believe that food grown in public spaces belongs to the public. In diverse groups, there are many opportunities for miscommunications and misunderstanding over help and garden practices¹⁵. Negative signage addressing theft may be lost on those with language barriers and may also create a sense of attrition between gardeners and neighbours. Although many of coordinators I spoke with recognized that perceptions differed amongst cultures, even within the garden, policy and procedures around cultural understanding were rarely a consideration for garden management (41% cited minimal intent around policy for inclusion of marginalized populations; and 35% for clear procedures around cultural understanding).

Inclusivity of Surrounding Community

All but two community garden coordinators felt that their gardens were representative of the surrounding population. Typically with respect to age and accessibility.

When asked about what makes the community garden inclusive, the most common factors were beautiful landscaping (46%) and communal seating (37%). Having a partially fenced or completely open garden was also noted as a welcoming strategy (31%), along with communal spaces (25%), interesting pathways (19%), community focus, spaces for children and location (12% each). None mentioned programming, collective gardening, or partnerships—many of the recommendations for what makes a garden inclusive.

Most coordinators that were interviewed did not share this sense of garden diversity, particularly towards accessibility. Most conceded that inclusion was an ongoing process, but almost all garden membership was advertised through flyers, internet sites and English language signage. Few partnered with local organizations for membership, and those that did were often short lived partnerships. The most common reasons for group plot abandonment was time commitment or loss of committed staff from partnering organizations.

Commitment to the Community Garden

Eleven of fourteen coordinators also felt that commitment to garden maintenance and participation was a significant challenge from both gardeners and neighbours. Most attempted to resolve issues of neighbourhood respect with discussion and invitations to participate. Attempts to encourage more gardener participation ranged from making events more social to creating more strict policies around participation.

Expectations of community gardening from multiple perspectives is clearly very diverse among community members. Therefore, framing is an important consideration for the both City and organizations involved in community food projects: How community gardens function within the community, expectations of both the neighbourhood and of the gardeners themselves.



Challenges and Opportunities



Support for Inclusion

Partnerships

All coordinators reported having support from external partners which, for the most part, were citizen organizations or private companies. Only two gardens were partnered with an organization having physical or cultural inclusivity as a priority. Funding from partners came largely in the form of operational support (materials, administration, website)(77%), general financial support (61%), and garden maintenance (community events and volunteer honourariums) (46%). Only two gardens dedicated funding toward workshops and learning.

City Support

It's possible that coordinators would like to incorporate programming into the function of the community garden, but do not have the resources to do so. However, when asked to rank the types of external support from the City coordinators felt would be most beneficial to garden management, the demands were very similar to support received from current partners (Table 4). These priority areas are likely seen as the most costly, and best areas in which to invest external funding.

Barriers to participation which coordinators felt could be addressed by the city included providing more space to accommodate demand (41%) and the continued maintenance of the surrounding land (tree pruning, compost services, city garden landscaping) (41%).

Design restrictions were mentioned, on more than one occasion, as a barrier to neighbourhood inclusion. One coordinator felt that by building a trellis to create more shaded areas where 'members and the local community could better utilize the space to meet in, relax in, gather in'.

Because many gardeners find out about gardens through the City of Vancouver webpage, one coordinator felt that the City had a great opportunity to

Section Two



'...do a lot more in promoting that website in different languages and through various community organizations', for example, through the creation of a brochure about community gardens. One coordinator also suggested that the City consider more support for aboriginal programming.

Given all necessary resources to create more inclusive gardens, 61% of coordinators would create more beautiful spaces (including trees and gardens) with communal seating. The second most common strategy was to post more signs in multiple languages (38%). One or two coordinators suggested creating more opportunities to gather, educational workshops, and community notice boards/sharing stations.

Importance of Programming

Programming (activities, education, workshops, etc.) that promote cultural understanding, skills development, and education is a powerful tool for inclusion. The need for intent around inclusion was a strong message from all cultural groups and organization consulted during this project. Those working with isolated populations feel as though programming is one of the most important components for citizen engagement and inclusivity. However, garden programming was low on the list of support needs, according to coordinators.

Doris Chow of Potluck Café and Catering was eager to chat about her plans for a Chinese seniors focused garden in Chinatown. Lack of funding and space meant that she had to partner with a developer for very loose tenureship over two years. Bureaucracy and political battles eventually cause the project to fold, which was truly a loss for the neighbourhood.

Doris explained that there needs to be programming to keep people interested and involved. 'Gardens can't just exist in and of themselves... For seniors this means a space to rest and socialize. For the community this means using the streets and blurring the boundaries so that you feel like you're in the garden, but you're in a public space'.

It may be that coordinators feel that waiting lists are enough to prove that adding more plots is the highest priority and more support to run those extra plots is required. Coordinators may also feel that this is the most costly aspect of running a garden and more support in this area would free up opportunities for programming. It may also not be part of the collective value system.

In any case, the City has an opportunity to partner with groups to increase education for both citizens and coordinators about the benefits of community gardens and the opportunity for inclusion and engagement.

Challenges and Opportunities

Recommendations

Because cities have influence over space, municipalities are in a unique position to shape the environment to favour or hinder the local food movement⁵. After his retirement from the Toronto Food Policy Council, former Chair, Wayne Roberts, reflected on food policy so far, and provided insightful recommendations as to the changes that are required in order to facilitate a second, more institutional movement for local food.

While Roberts' (2014) recommendations to food policy advocates relates to the citywide food system, they still resonate strongly at the community level as well. Here, I present his five fundamental recommendations for food policy⁵ adapted for the promotion and encouragement of diverse and inclusive community gardens in Vancouver:

- 1) **Advocate:** Empower and educate citizens. Promote the benefits of community food projects and influence external policies to allow for more creativity in design and structures that promote inclusivity, and the efficient use of limited space in Vancouver.
- 2) **Coordinate:** Take a more proactive approach to identifying spaces for coalitions, and dialogues between community champions and gardeners. Facilitate partnerships between cultural groups and organizations with the capacity to run programming and maintain the space.
- 3) **Support:** The high cost of operations and infrastructure may be one reason for the low prioritization of programming. Coordinators already spend a significant amount of time applying for grants and competing with other community food groups. The City may consider dedicated funding or incentives for programming, for both community garden groups that have the materials and partners that have the facilities, such as neighbourhood houses.
- 4) **Innovate:** Take a more active role in finding spaces (particularly in lower income neighbourhoods)

and champion the creation of communal spaces in creative ways, for example, underutilized parking areas or rooftops. This recommendation is particularly relevant given that Parks Board and City land are generally more stable, yet increasingly more limited.

- 5) **Facilitate:** Make it easier to create animated and welcoming spaces in communal gardens. Utilize the Expression of Interest application process to influence the design and programming for community garden spaces. For example, ensure that applicants have programming potential through a neighbourhood house, community kitchen or cultural group. Ensure that there is a minimum area set aside for communal growing, harvesting and socializing. Expand the requirements for neighbourhood support to include multiple languages and contact with local civic organizations.

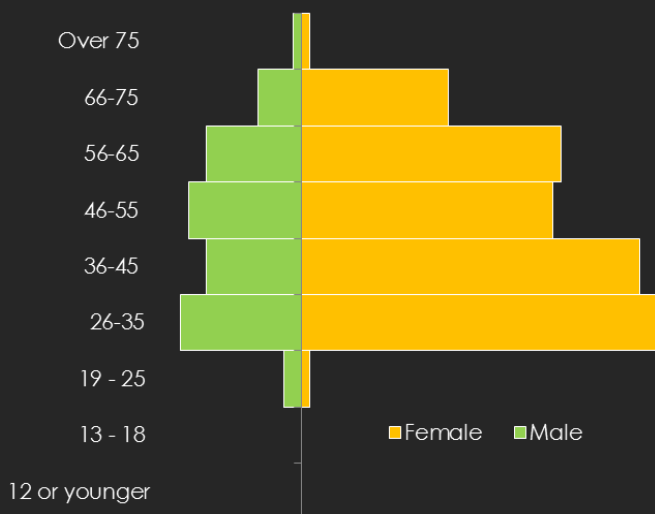


Inset One: Community Spaces and

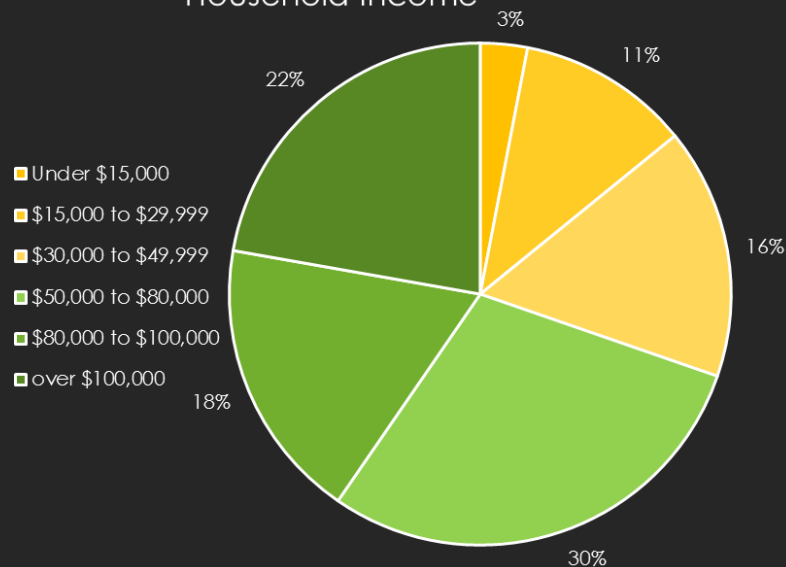


Map 1: Location of Community Spaces and Parks in City and Parks Block. The map shows the amount of space dedicated to communal plots was reported in the *Coordinator Survey*. It shows a trend toward larger space for communal gardens where cultivation is shared amongst everyone, which is more intense growing space is

Age & Gender



Household Income



Community Demographics

of gardens on board property for amount of growing ed to communal ed in the Garden ey (n=12). There is dedicating more unal growing, n and harvest are t the community ace is shared by n allows for better ive use of limited n the City.

Most popular reasons for Community Gardening:

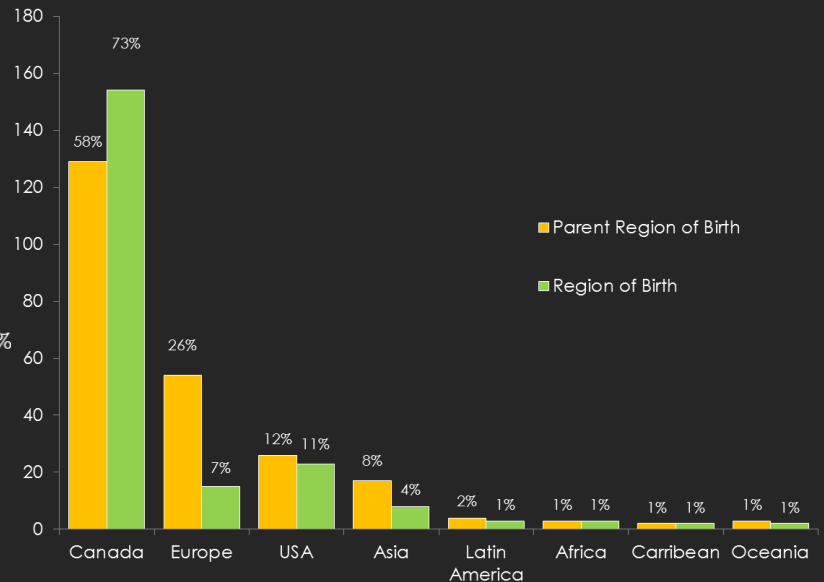
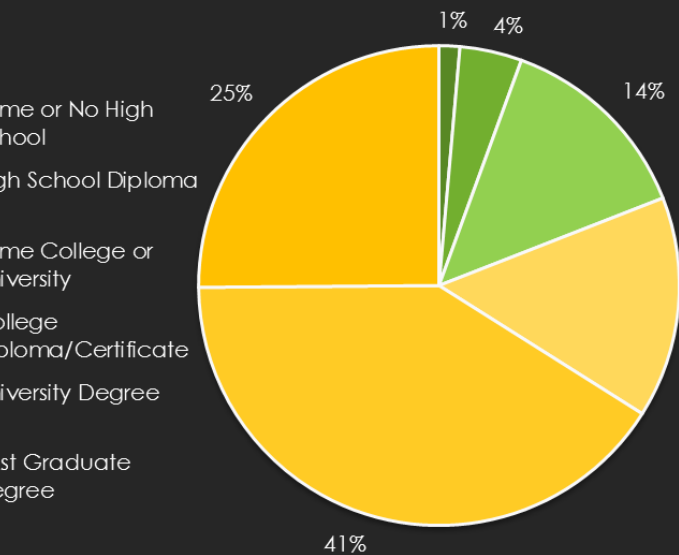
- Share in the culture of gardening and build a sense of community (60%)
- Desire for more/adequate space for gardening (46%)
- Desire to grow my own fruits and vegetables (42%)
- Sense of empowerment and achievement (28%)
- Well-being and the environment (19%)

Community gardens located on City and Parks Board land remain part of the public realm. However, maintenance of community gardens are the result of community effort

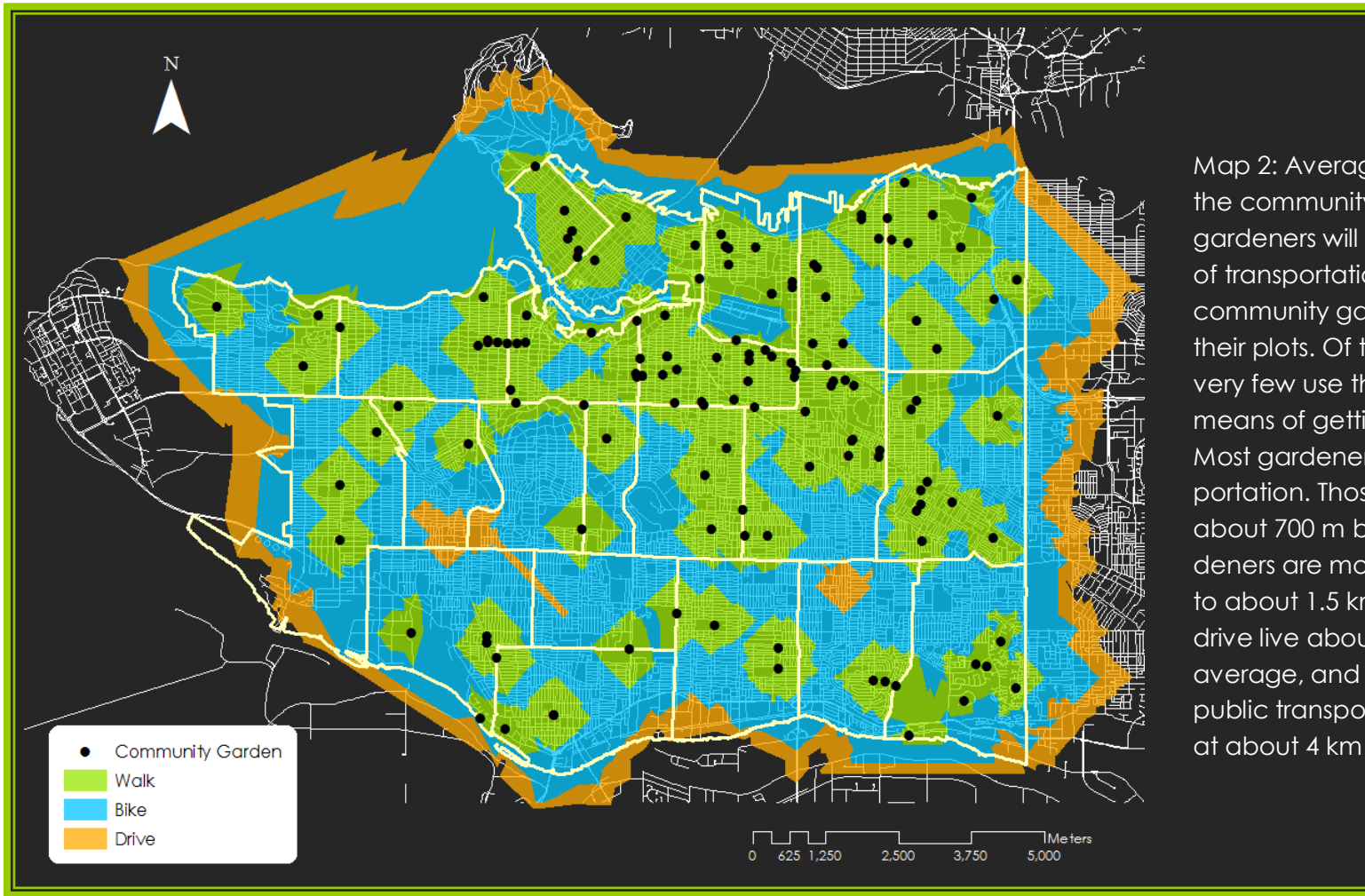
Most community gardeners ask for contributions in time or money to share in the harvest and the use of the plots and compost

Plots are often in high demand from neighbours familiar with the gardening culture. Membership is on a first-come-first-serve basis and waiting lists can be 3 years.

Education

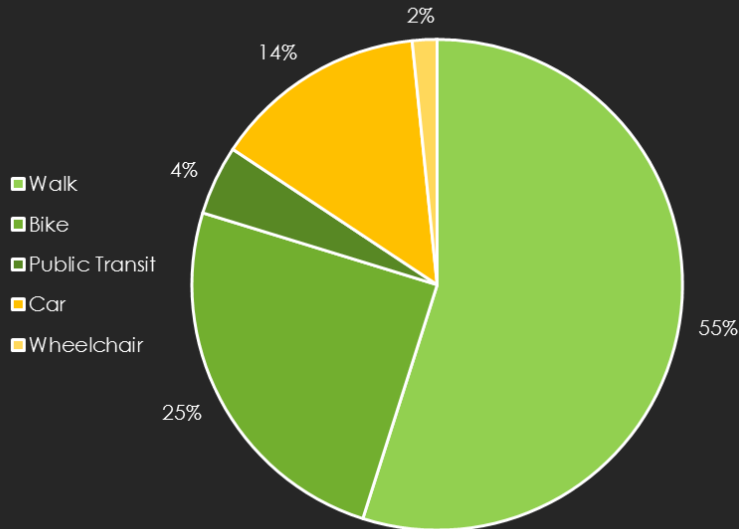


Inset Two: Gardens and The Green

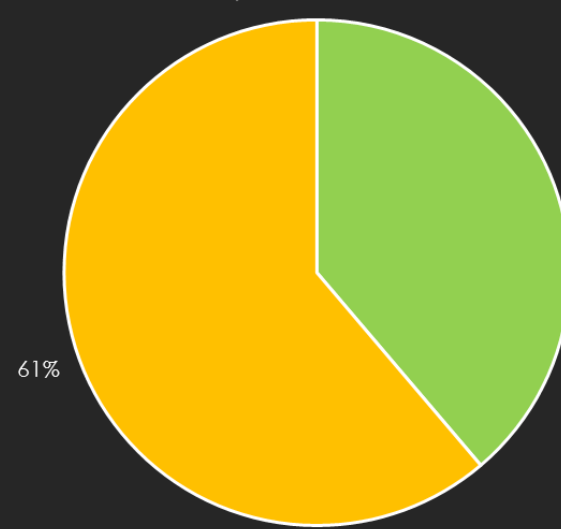


Map 2: Average distance from the community gardens to homes by mode of transportation. Most gardeners will walk to their plots. Of the very few who use other means of getting to their plots, most gardeners are more than 1.5 km away. Those who drive live about 4 km away on average, and those who use public transportation live about 4 km away.

Mode of Transport



Garden Space at Home



ge distance from
y garden for which
use a given mode
on. Only 14% of
ardeners drive to
those that drive
ne car as their only
ng to the garden.
rs use active trans-
se that live within
eyond which gar-
re likely to bike up
m. Gardeners that
ut 2 km away on
those that take
rts are even further

39%

Greenest City Goals

- **Local Food:** 82% of gardeners reported that the food they grow in the garden replaces produce they would otherwise purchase at the store. Gardeners also support many other food projects such as farmer's markets, green grocers, and healthy corner stores.
- **Zero Waste:** Most gardens have a self managed composting system which is also frequently used by members of the neighbourhood. Some gardens also partner with food procurement charities, such as quest, which gardeners can donate personal crops towards. This further reduces the diversion of fresh and healthy organic foods from the waste system.
- **Green Transportation:** Very few gardeners travel to their garden by car (14%). Most travel is active walking or biking.
- **Access to nature:** Many gardeners are within a five minute walk to their garden. Gardens add interest and a connection to the Earth, providing participants with access to physical and mental well-being and a sense of personal achievement and empowerment. 78% of gardeners report that being part of a garden has made a meaningful difference in the amount of time they spend outdoors, 60% report that they get more physical exercise.
- **Lighter Footprint:** All community gardens use only organic and sustainable cultivation practices. Lower food miles also mean that gardeners are reducing consumption from the globalized food system. Each gardener is taking a personal role in the action plan by creating, supporting, and maintaining urban food systems. Pollinator gardens are a feature of many community gardens which serve to increase biodiversity and pollinator abundance.

C. Stories from the Garden: The East Side

As I sit on one of the old lawn chairs in a well used gathering space, the gardeners gradually come together and casually start chatting about the day, recipes, projects and people in their lives. Fresh cinnamon buns and hotdogs are on the menu today: if only the gardeners can work out her discount grill. I already feel welcome here.

The lot was transformed from a neighborhood dumping ground to a beautiful space that neighbours wanted to be a part of. There were no complaints about converting the space to a garden. Many of the gardeners mention a 'wildness'. It's not sterile, there are different sections to just sit and gather. There's also a native garden that adds a richness to the space.

In their first year, the coordinators had \$750 dollars in grants, not a lot to put a garden together. Soil was free, and the wood for plots and shed was all found. It brought people together. 'We suffer together' one garden says of their many projects. Everyone built and designed their own plot. The coordinators did have a plan to make them all the same size, but when everyone came together, folks were building their own plots in all different sizes to suit their needs— adding interest to the garden. There was a concern that people would take issue with size, but gardeners generally took what they could manage; people still swap to this day. There's lots of experience in this garden, even a few farmers, and everyone is willing to teach and share in the cultivation and harvest.

Another garden arrives, with family in tow, and the conversation is begins to carry itself. She had never gardened but wanted to teach her children about plants and how they grow. Now she comes to the garden for peace, meditation, and community. 'one of the most basic human needs is a sense of belonging.. and you can feel it in this garden... It feels like a family'. 'We also get vegetables' her husband pipes in.

The gardeners really strengthened their connection through yoga in her living room. They have a few yoga teachers as members and they miss the ones that leave. 'The more times we meet, the stronger the sense of community'. They also hold potlucks, and movie nights for neighbours to join. A multi-cultural meal night in one of the gardeners kitchens features a new cultural dish every month. 'Breaks are important. We take a lot of breaks in this garden'.

There's a strong sense of trust among the gardeners and many children are brought to play as the gardeners keep watch as a group. 'There's a different kind of quiet in the garden'. One gardener enjoys the passive listening of stories and a quiet laugh. 'The effort I put in... and everything I share comes back to me in multitudes'. 'Everyone has aphids so we all have to talk about it and solve it together. The gardeners continue their meeting and discuss the many projects they have this year. Most importantly, how to create a seating area that doesn't disrupt the openness and inclusion they have now.



Section Three

How to Plan for Inclusivity

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Section Three

Section Three provides insight into why programming for community projects is so valuable and the opportunity that community gardens provide for creating welcoming spaces and engaged citizens. This section then provides recommendations for how garden coordinators can create more inclusive and welcoming community garden spaces.

Garden Culture in the City

Connection to Community

According to a recent survey conducted by the Vancouver Foundation (2012), one-third of residents find it difficult to make new friends in MetroVancouver and one in four say they are alone more often than they would like to be. People who felt alone and isolated experienced poorer health, lower trust and a hardening of attitudes toward other community members¹⁷.

The Vancouver Foundation identifies several key weaknesses MetroVancouver's community connectivity:

- We only know the names of at least two of our neighbours;
- We typically have never visited a neighbour's house or invited neighbours over;
- We seldom see our neighbours;
- We prefer to keep to ourselves, or have little interest in getting to know our neighbours;
- Most of us do not do simple favours for our neighbours; and,
- Barely a majority of us think that the ties in our neighbourhood are growing stronger.

While being cordial is a start, more interaction is necessary for developing greater trust, greater commitment to community and the willingness to work together in the neighbourhood's interests.

The *Community Gardener Survey* revealed that most gardeners have met at least four or more new neighbours since joining their community gardens (62%), most of whom connect with at least one of these neighbours outside the garden (55%). One third of gardeners have met and maintained relationships with at least four or more new gardeners outside the community garden.

At one garden party in East Vancouver, neighbours gathered around a grill and chatted openly about each other and their strong sense of belonging. The more time they spend together the more strongly connected they feel. One gardener felt like fellow gardeners were more like a family and invited them over to cook and stretch together regularly. Trust and sharing were mentioned frequently.

While the Vancouver Foundation report found that metroVancouverites were participating less in neighbourhood and community activities¹⁶, 78% of the community gardeners surveyed felt more involved in community projects and 96% felt a strong sense of belonging since joining a community garden.

The most often-cited reason for not participating in neighbourhood and community life is a feeling that oneself has little to offer¹⁶. An East Vancouver garden coordinator felt that one of the reasons their community garden felt so welcoming was the opportunity for gardeners and neighbours to contribute to projects that suited their interests, skills, and abilities.

Diverse projects provide opportunities to build a diverse set of personal and communal assets, achieved through communal participation working toward a common goal. There is an opportunity for community gardens to encourage capacity building while also building valuable connections with neighbours.

Connection to Diversity

When asked about their connection to the community since joining a community garden, most community gardeners felt gardening had provided and



Growing Together



meaningful and positive change in their sense of belonging in the community, their participation in community projects, their ability to connect and talk with neighbours, and their interaction with other generations.

Although the Vancouver Foundation found that most people believed that newcomers would feel welcome in their neighbourhood, they discovered limits to diversity as an opportunity to build meaningful relationships with those from different cultures. Over one-third of people in metro-Vancouver reported that they have no close friends outside our own ethnic group and generally believe that people prefer to be with others of the same ethnicity. Similar to our survey, less than 50% of gardeners that felt they had connected with, or built strong relationships with people from other cultures.

Why Does Inclusion Matter?

Creating community gardens that are inclusive and welcoming from the start, is the foundation to creating food projects that ensure all community members have access to benefits of community gathering spaces¹⁷. A focus on inclusion creates gardens which are: safe and secure for everyone; productive for growing appropriate crops; more easily self-managed and maintained; and more engaging and animated

Gardener participation may be a result of cultural preferences for food procurement and socialization^{1,2}, it's important to ensure that participation is not solely based on the perception of belonging or informal community networks. Each community member should have equal opportunity to engage in citizen programming based on an informed choice. Beyond flyers and surveys, No deeper level of engagement is performed by coordinators or required by the City; which further separates neighbours with differing perceptions of what that space means to them.

A Can You Dig It gardener said it best: "...Like permaculture, it is important to plant different types of plants in one plot. It enriches the soil, it replenishes nutrients and it prevents erosion. Like permaculture we will have successful gardens that represent the diversity in our communities"

By creating gardens where everyone belongs and can contribute based on their skills, interests and abilities - we build more resilient communities and assure the development of strong, sustainable, fun and beautiful community gardens.

Section Three

Benefits of Growing Together

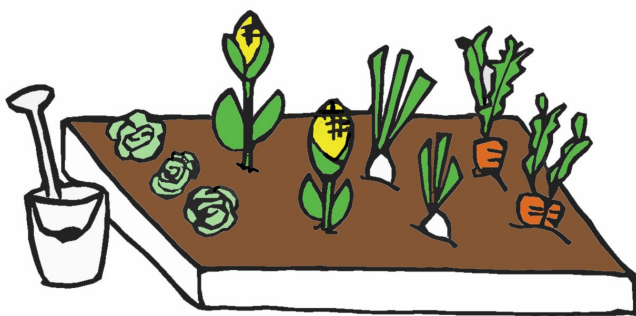
More than just growing food, community gardening gives you the opportunity to be part of a meaningful network, share your skills, celebrate your abilities & give back to those in need. No matter what your background, culture, politics, or salary: everybody needs to eat. It's the one thing we all need, consciously think about and enjoy. It bonds us together as people and creates an opportunity for positive interaction with both our community and the earth. The following benefits from the Can You Dig It Dialogues are illustrated below^{16,17}.

Healthy Food

What's great about growing your own food is that choices no longer become about what's affordable but rather what's delicious. Growing food together broadens the community palette, shares cultural dishes, and invites stories around the kitchen table. Growing together connects you with neighbours who know what's good to grow, when you should grow it, and how you can eat it. Inviting neighbours to come together in the garden with their favourite foods ready to throw into a stone soup event can make for some creative and delicious communal meals.



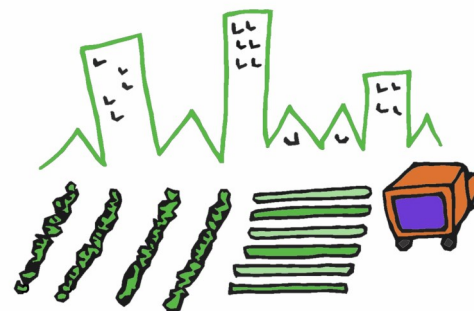
Healthy People



Conventional food is often grown with health damaging pesticides and travels long distances, losing nutrients before it reaches your plate. Lack of quality food can result in a poor diet leading to mental and physical illness and a lower quality of life¹⁹. Growing fresh food in you garden, or in the community is the best way to ensure high quality, organic food at it's peak nutritional content. People with home gardens tend to eat more fruits and vegetables and express a preference for those foods compared to people who don't have the chance to grow their own food²

Healthy City

Growing food in the city turns underutilized land and poor quality soils into beautiful, productive spaces. Planting native plants alongside crops helps to beautify neighbourhoods, encourage pollinators, and increase biodiversity of plants and animals in the city. Growing together encourages sharing of land, tools, and knowledge. Sharing decreases the amount of resources needed to grow food, and food waste from and over abundant harvest. The creation of a community garden usually involves the transformation of a negative, polluted, and unsafe piece of land.



Growing Together

Empowerment



Gardening allows you to learn new skills and knowledge, and offer a “hands-on” learning opportunity. It can be an occasion to become an expert and a leader in your community; providing a chance for you to share your skills and celebrate your abilities. Growing together also creates bonds between neighbours from different generations and provides an opportunity to keep food knowledge alive.

Most gardens also dedicate communal plot harvest to local food organizations to provide nutritious options to families who otherwise would not have access to fresh produce. Giving back part of your produce to those in need places you as a contributing and valued member of the community.

Community Building

Garden coordinators almost unanimously agreed that gardens created safer spaces in their communities. Community gardens increase community security through community involvement, a sense of mutual respect among community members, and increasing the number of eyes of the street.

Gardening is a universal language that brings people together. Conversations and common activities melt differences between people. Community gardens are a valuable social venue where neighbours can get to know one another, and build a sense of community and belonging. By working together for a common purpose, community gardeners learn to make communal decisions, solve problems and negotiate with one another.



FUN!



Garden culture and growing food are why people join community gardens. They grow food because they want to. They most certainly do not have to. Many gardeners also perceive gardening as therapeutic exercise, providing a natural space to escape in your own thoughts.

Gardeners enjoy working together, gaining skills, meeting neighbours and creating beautiful spaces in their community. There's no better feeling than planting a seed, watching it grow, collecting the harvest and coming together to share food, stories, and entertainment. So go on, dig your hands in the earth and get dirty!

Section Three

Planning for Inclusion

A process for creating strategic and sustainable plans is presented through six steps from Vision to Action; the process has been adapted for creating inclusive and welcoming gardens. The planning process is summarized in a *Quick Guide* for core garden planning groups to reference when coming together to openly discuss expectations, goals, desires, and values. Some elements to consider for the planning process are recommended on the following page.

The Five broad goals for creating inclusive and welcoming spaces are presented as a central theme from which a strong and sustainable plan can be developed. The goals include: Accessibility, Availability, Adequacy, Acceptability, and Agency.



Accessibility

Physical, social and economic access to food, space and resources for all community members



Availability

Sufficient food, space and resources for all community members



Adequacy

Access to food that is nutritious and safe, and produced in environmentally sustainable ways



Acceptability

Access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights



Agency

The policies and processes that enable the achievement of inclusive food spaces

Supportive material on these five goals of inclusion, as related to community gardens, are also provided, and include: considerations for planning and creating inclusive spaces, examples of actions and projects for creating inclusive spaces, and activities inspired from both City of Vancouver Food Champions and the Can You Dig It Coalition Dialogues.



Building Inclusion

Elements to Consider^{17,18}

Organization +
Trust (Comfort)

Team +
Community
Champions

What Already
Exists?

Resources +
Capacity

Removing barriers
to planning

- **Group Size**—Determine the size of a group gardeners will work best in. A group of less than 3 is unlikely to capture the values of the community and more than 12 may prevent quick resolutions and decisions.
- **Build Trust and Relationships** — Meet with neighbours and organizations before bringing them into the larger discussion to create comfort, confidence, and trust
- **Partner Up** —Find partners which reflect a dynamic group of representatives from the community to meet and advise on programming and design
- **Connect with the Community**—Find community champions that are in tune with community needs. Ask what opportunities or goals exist in the neighbourhood that could be enhanced by a community garden. Would other food projects be a better fit?
- **Neighbourhood**— take time to assess the feel and function of the neighbourhood and how a community garden fits in that context
- **Research**— Explore existing resources on engaging with diverse groups
- **Volunteers**—Provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers to use their skills in completing projects. Focus on building skills and knowledge through training.
- **Be Realistic**—Be creative but keep in mind what is possible given current and potential resources
- **Share**—Map and utilize resources which gardens have or can access
- **Timing**—Schedule planning events so that a diverse group of neighbours can attend
- **Communication**— Make sure language of notices and policies are multilingual, positive and encouraging
- **Space & Location**— Choose locations which are familiar, central, close to transit, and easily accessible
- **Ask for Feedback** — Allow members to provide feedback on benefits and needs. Be sure to also celebrate project trials and successes.

Section Three

Process of Inclusive Planning

Assessment

Opportunities and possibilities can be more readily assessed with a clear picture of who's involved, how connected the core group is to the neighbourhood and what resources are available.

1

Task 1: Identify physical and social resources that exist in the community. Reach out to community champions and organizers that will take on a main role in the community garden planning process.

Task 2: Create a neighbourhood map of local business, community spaces, and resources. Identify neighbours with special knowledge, skills, and interests by surveying the neighbourhood. Don't be afraid to knock on doors.

Vision

The visioning process creates opportunities for open dialogue, understanding, and building trust and relationships. The vision also provides a foundation from which to build community through gardening and provides an expectation when members join.

2

Task 3: As a group, begin to create a clear vision based on values and principals your share.

Task 4: Agree on a one to two sentence statement that captures the values and direction of you garden.

Objectives

Task 5: Define key challenges and opportunities that the garden wishes to address for each goal of inclusion; e.g., Acceptability of cultivation practices for newcomers

3

Task 6: Evaluate the issues together and determine the direction of change; e.g., there are a group of elders which love to garden but have no family to share agricultural knowledge and recipes.

Task 7: Identify objectives and actions to accomplish and prioritize objectives and set timelines for achievement e.g. we would like see more seniors in the garden within the year

Strategy

Task 8: Create potential projects to address the objectives of the community garden. Be creative and open to all suggestions. Encourage as many different ideas as possible; e.g., Accessibility - building only communal plots with benches or one learning plot and individual benches

4

Task 9: Group the projects into strategies that based on objectives and goals.

Task 10: As a collective, select the strategy that serves the community the most given the vision and available resources. Determine how you will make decisions beforehand; e.g., majority, consensus, leadership etc.

Action

Task 11: Identify champions for each action and work together to outline the process on implementation. Assign tasks, identify resources and create a timeline that works for everyone.

5

Task 12: Agree on governance structure and establish a way to coordinate and monitor community commitment to the garden and its members

Evaluation

Task 13: Agree on who and how the group will evaluate the success of the garden plan in achieving its vision and objectives.

6

Task 14: Track metrics and compare with vision and objectives. Make sure evaluations are documented and transparent.

Task 15: Feedback from gardeners and the community is a great way to develop trust and build relationships.



Building Inclusion

Five goals for inclusion

Below are the five goals for inclusion developed specifically for community gardens. Consider how each decision affects how the garden welcomes and includes members of the neighbourhood, what the garden's role is within the broader community and how the vision for the garden will be achieved.

The following pages expand on each goal and provide a foundation for group discussion and planning.

Accessibility



In an inclusive garden, all gardeners have equitable access to participate and benefit from the gardening process. Barriers to participation and a sense of belonging are identified and overcome as a community.

Availability



An inclusive garden is one where participants feel as though a sufficient amount of land, resources and food is available and sustainable regardless of culture, class, ethnicity, age, or ability.

Adequacy



An inclusive garden promotes healthy, safe, and nutritious food of sufficient quality and quantity. This includes adequate education, training, programming, connections and support needed for success from plot to plate.

Acceptability



An inclusive garden is one which celebrates diversity. The process of growing food and building community through cultivation, harvest and sharing should be respectful of the entire community and acceptable to all of its members.

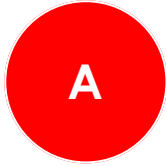
Agency



An inclusive garden is one where policies are established to enable all of the above. Procedures and organization that facilitates community building, respects diversity, and creates understanding.

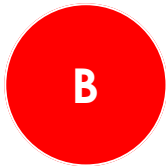
Planning for Accessibility

Physical, Mental, + Cultural Accessibility



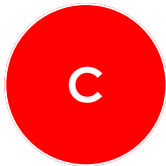
- The design of each element will determine who can access the garden. Invite a diverse group of neighbours and local organizations to participate in the design process.

Cultural Connection + Sense of Belonging



- Seek out neighbourhood champions to discover the needs of the surrounding community and determine how the community garden can fill that role.
- Create a process around celebration and fun that reflects the talents and skills of the gardeners and the community

Comfort + Resources



- By being actively involved in the planning and building process, neighbours will have a sense of ownership and feel more welcome in the space
- Ask neighbours what they'd like to see in the garden, what skills or resources they have, and show them how they can contribute to the space

Activity **Draw Your Food Space**

TO BRING: large sheets of paper and coloured markers/crayons

A 'food space' can be any physical place where participants engage with food, like a garden they had in the past, their current garden, or their dream garden. Community food asset, such as a community kitchen, farmers' market, or local eatery are also food spaces.

Ask participants to choose and draw a food space. Encourage creativity and imagination, and make sure everyone feels comfortable. Their drawings can be detailed or simple, or they can ask to have someone else draw it for them. Share the gardens and their experiences with the rest of the participants.

Discuss how the current garden space might be improved and any barriers that might prevent the garden from being the 'perfect' space. For example, discuss what types of plants they would grow and why? Why is it a 'dream' garden and not a real garden?

Write down important points, hopes, and expectations as you go through the activity. Summarize the dream garden and create a poster or document that can be easily shared with gardeners. Sit down as a group and discussion actions and champions that can make expectations a reality in the garden.

Creating Accessibility



CONSIDERATIONS

Proximity to pedestrian friendly streets, transit, and gardeners

Access to shared resources and tools

Creating a sense of belonging for all gardeners

“Just because you can't grow here, doesn't mean it can't be your space too”

Doris Chow, Potluck Café and Catering

1

Design for Access



- **Rest**— proximity of seating and tools to plots
- **Mobility**—Layout of plots and path size/material in relation to garden entrance
- **Physical access**—Plot seating and raised beds
- **Technical**—Access to communal tools

2

Cultural Groups



- **Form Bonds**—Gardener socialize in diverse ways. Facilitate the formation of bonds and groups based on interest, ability and culture to create a sense of belonging and comfort.
- **Language Barriers**—Overcome language barriers by making creative pictures and multilingual signs together

3

Blending with Streets



- **Creative Boundaries**—Consider different materials and strategies to distinguish the community garden from public space, like trees and pathways instead of fences
- **Open and Interesting Spaces**—Open the space to non gardeners through multiple entrances, pathways, and communal seating and gathering spaces

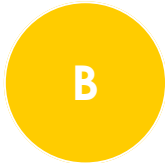
Planning for Availability

Strategic + Sustainable



- Neighbours and garden members are likely to feel more welcome and be more committed to a project when they are part of it. Involve the community in every step of the planning process from vision through construction all the way to programming.

Encourage a culture of sharing



- Create spaces in which gardeners and neighbours can share resources
- Ideas, passions, skills, knowledge, and tools can be shared in common spaces, in secure sheds, at communal plots, social webpages and even neighbourhood kitchens.

Secure + Welcoming



- Incorporate values of the community by celebrating the history, design and culture of the surrounding neighbourhood.
- A creative and vibrant space that feels more personal and is well visited, creates interest for neighbours while deterring theft

Activity **Growing Together**

TO BRING: Large paper, Markers, Large Pot, Potable Stove

Before you begin planting the garden, organize a stone soup event in the garden space. Invite neighbours through posters, knocking on doors and word-of-mouth. Ask each invitee to bring their favourite vegetables and upon arrival introduce everyone to the space and talk about what everyone brought and why, and then discuss what everyone would like to see in the garden.

Throw all the vegetables into a large pot and cook them together. As the soup cooks, walk around the garden and talk about light, soils and map out areas which will have the most sun, where the drainage is.

Come together and map out the garden layout and invite each neighbour to write what they would grow and what would be the best spot to grow it.

Finalize the plans and invite neighbour back to help plant the communal garden spaces. Build boxes together. Invite children in the neighbourhood to create beautiful signs that clearly differ-

Creating Availability



CONSIDERATIONS

Creating secure and open spaces that facilitate sharing

Determining the role of the community garden in the neighbourhood

Creating interest for neighbours and gardeners alike

'You have to meet, and sit together, and share together. My problems, I always share my problems. My happiness, I always share.

Community Gardener

1 Design for Acceptability



- **Conversation**—Social seating in open spaces
- **Sharing**—Secure and accessible spaces to share resources and skills
- **Safety**—High visibility and community presence
- **Security**—Personalizing plots

2 Cultural Groups



- **Fun**—Hold fun and educational events to create connections between neighbours
- **Skills**—Encourage gardeners to contribute based on their skills, abilities and interests
- **Contribution**—Open dialogues with gardeners on the various way they can contribute

3 Blending with Streets



- **History** - Focus on the history and culture of the neighbourhood
- **Mapping**—Map community assets and spaces of interest to animate local businesses
- **Blending**—Blur boundaries between public and garden space with creative fencing
- **Partner**—Host community activities and partner with local artists

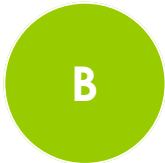
Planning for Adequacy

Capacity Building



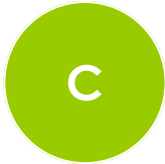
- Building regular programming into the growing season builds skills and confidence in community gardeners
- Programs in partnership with local neighbourhood houses and food networks can expand the gardener skill set and improve confidence

Knowledge + skills Development



- Encouraging member-member skills transfer can help to create a culture of trust and strengthen the community
- Building the capacity and confidence of gardeners promotes a healthy garden for both plants and people.

Health + Well-being



- Events that incorporate organic growing and healthy eating provide a great health benefit to the community
- Encouraging opportunities for gardeners and neighbours to contribute and be part of garden maintenance and renewal provides a sense of purpose and activity in outdoor spaces

Activity **The Community Board**

TO BRING: Large calendar, sticky notes with three colours, lots of markers, ideas!

Provide everyone with a few sticky notes of each colour. Assign a colour for something to learn, something to share, and an idea for socializing. Ask gardeners and neighbours to write down one thing they want to learn, one thing they'd be willing to teach, and one event they'd like to see happen in the garden using the appropriate colour. Ask the participants to place the stickies on the calendar for a date that works well for them.

Work through the calendar as a group and set down a garden schedule for the season. Each event should have a host (or more), some enthusiastic participants, and a firm date & time.

Display the calendar in a clear spot in the garden. Follow up with hosts and send reminders to gardeners about events.

Creating Adequacy



CONSIDERATIONS

Creating comfortable spaces to rest and socialize

Developing the skills and knowledge of the community over time

Improving the health of gardeners and the environment.

Like permaculture it is important to plant different types of plants in one plot...to have successful gardens that represent the diversity in our communities.

CYDI Coalition and Dialogues

1

Design for Acceptability



- **Training**—Spaces to facilitate workshops and education
- **Comfort**—Number and size of shaded and covered areas for socializing
- **Food**—Surfaces for communal cooking and eating

2

Community Groups



- **Engage**—Encourage gardeners to engage with each other in the garden and outside, for example cooking together
- **Assets**—List gardeners' gifts and wishes: Skills they are willing to share and things they wish to learn. Provide space and opportunity for gardeners and neighbours to share their gifts

3

Blending with Streets



- **Assets**—Engage with local schools, kitchens, and markets to hold events at the garden
- **Funding**— Explore opportunities to generate funding for your garden through local business and neighbours. Trade skill building or funds for fresh vegetables in a CSA or with a local restaurant.

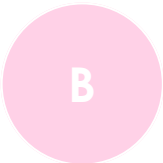
Planning for Acceptability

Experiment and Experience



- Space dedicated to cultivating and cooking cultural foods creates interesting and welcoming spaces for newcomers
- Empower seniors to pass on valuable cultivation, harvesting, and preparation knowledge to younger generations

Skills + Asset Mapping



- Create opportunities for recognition and demonstration of the skills and knowledge each gardener possesses
- Encourage members to identify their own goals and abilities to contribute as a member and to learn from one another

Collaboration Contributions



- Creative spaces where members can experiment can foster excitement and collaboration between cultures, status, and generations

Activity Feedforth and Feedback

Leadership should meet each new gardener in person, welcome them into the space, and introduce them to the community.

Create a package for each gardener that provides a clear picture of expectations and responsibilities. At the same time, ask each gardener what their expectations are for the garden and what they would like to give and what they would like to receive.

Throughout the season, revisit those expectations and ask for feedback from gardens. Ask what they learned, what they achieved, how they felt, and what could be done differently.

At the end of the season, Celebrate! Be sure to recognize gardeners for the hard work. Acknowledge and highlight achievements and projects that were successful and even those that weren't. Most importantly have fun!

Creating Acceptability



CONSIDERATIONS

Shared spaces to be creative and connect to culture

Leverage community assets and resources to build garden capacity

Building networks among gardeners and neighbours

In our gardens we grow more than food, we cultivate relationships.

CYDI Coalition and Dialogues

1 Design for Acceptability



- **Farming Techniques**—Spaces dedicated to growing or experimenting with culturally acceptable crops
- **Networking**— Seating and demonstration plots/ accessory activities such as bee keeping to allow for interaction with neighbours.

2 Community Groups



- **Flexible**—A well planned garden is adaptable and responsive to changing needs. Try incorporating cultural and physical opportunities in your garden.
- **Cultural Crops**—may require different shapes, structures, or growing conditions. Think about a garden plan, ask what gardeners would like to grow and what they require to grow it.

3 Blending with Streets



- **Character**—Focus on the identity and design of the neighbourhood when designing the garden. Ask neighbours what they would like to see in the garden.
- **Neighbours**— invite contributions of resources and skills. Invite children to paint signs and fences.
- **Events**—Schedule regular neighbourhood events, potlucks, and artists.

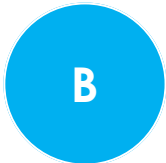
Planning for Agency

Fair + clear Policy



- A Community Garden Plan that describes community gardener objectives, expectations and responsibility will help to create a sustainable organization
- Members that understand and feel part of garden governance are more likely to participate fully

Governance + Partnership



- Partnering with local organizations and non profit groups ensures a broader inclusion of the surrounding community
- Planning and maintaining a garden in full partnership with the community creates a sense of ownership and commitment

Culture of Understanding



- Partnering with local organizations and non profit groups also adds diversity to the planning process and helps to generate creative ideas from different perspectives
- Working together as a group to create policies builds trust and understanding among members

Activity *Say it in Many Ways*

TO BRING: Policies, blank sheets, creativity

Not everyone will have perfect understanding of procedures, or will interpret policies in the same way. Once the members have agreed on structure of governance, and the policies to guide them toward their vision, sit down as a committee, or team, or collective, with your words laid out in front of you.

Take each procedure, expectation, and responsibility, and find at least three different ways of expressing it. Use colours, pictures, language, pictograms, drawings, sayings, and/or colloquialisms. Encourage creativity, clarity, and understanding.

Create a clear and organized document that can be emailed, posted and distributed to each gardener. Hold an orientation at the garden and walk through the policy and the garden together. Ask for one comment from each member to ensure they've read through and understood.

Creating Agency



CONSIDERATIONS

Multiple perspectives of community groups and isolated populations

Community governance and collaboration throughout the process

Building trust and commitment from the beginning

Finding and maintaining a sense of home and belonging is dynamic, delicate and requires nurturing. It is difficult to maintain and is on-going.

CYDI Coalition and Dialogues

1

Design for Agency



- **Signage**— Create signs in multiple languages with the help of the community. Include pictures wherever possible.
- **Policy**—Space to post easily accessible documents on site. Orient new gardeners at the site and provide a welcoming package to take home.

2

Community Groups



- **Participation**—Explore various governance models that encourage participation in all activities, for example, open committees or cross-committee membership.
- **Perceptions**—the role and use of a community garden may be viewed different across participants. Create a policy with clear vision, objectives, and expectations with participation from all gardeners. Use less formal and more positive language.

3

Blending with Streets



- **Open membership**—Consider opening the membership to neighbours without plots. Communal growing, composts, bee keeping, workshops and events are just some of the excellent chances neighbours have to participate.

Section Three

Assessment

1

Core Group

- Identify community champions and organizers

2

Assets

- Create a neighbourhood assets map of local groups, neighbours and businesses

Vision

3

Community

- Create a clear vision based on values and principals your share.

4

Openness

- Building trust and relationships.

Objectives

5

Challenges

- Define key challenges and opportunities that the garden wishes to address

6

Direction

- Evaluate the issues together and determine the direction of change

7

Prioritize

- Identify + prioritize objectives and actions

Strategy

8

Projects

- Create projects to address objectives

9

Packages

- Group projects into strategies

10

Selection

- Select the most appropriate strategy

Action

11

Champions

- Identify champions, assign tasks, identify resources and create a workable timeline.

12

Governance

- Agree on a structure and method of coordinating and monitoring achievement

Evaluation

13

Metrics

- How you will evaluate the success of your garden

14

Monitor

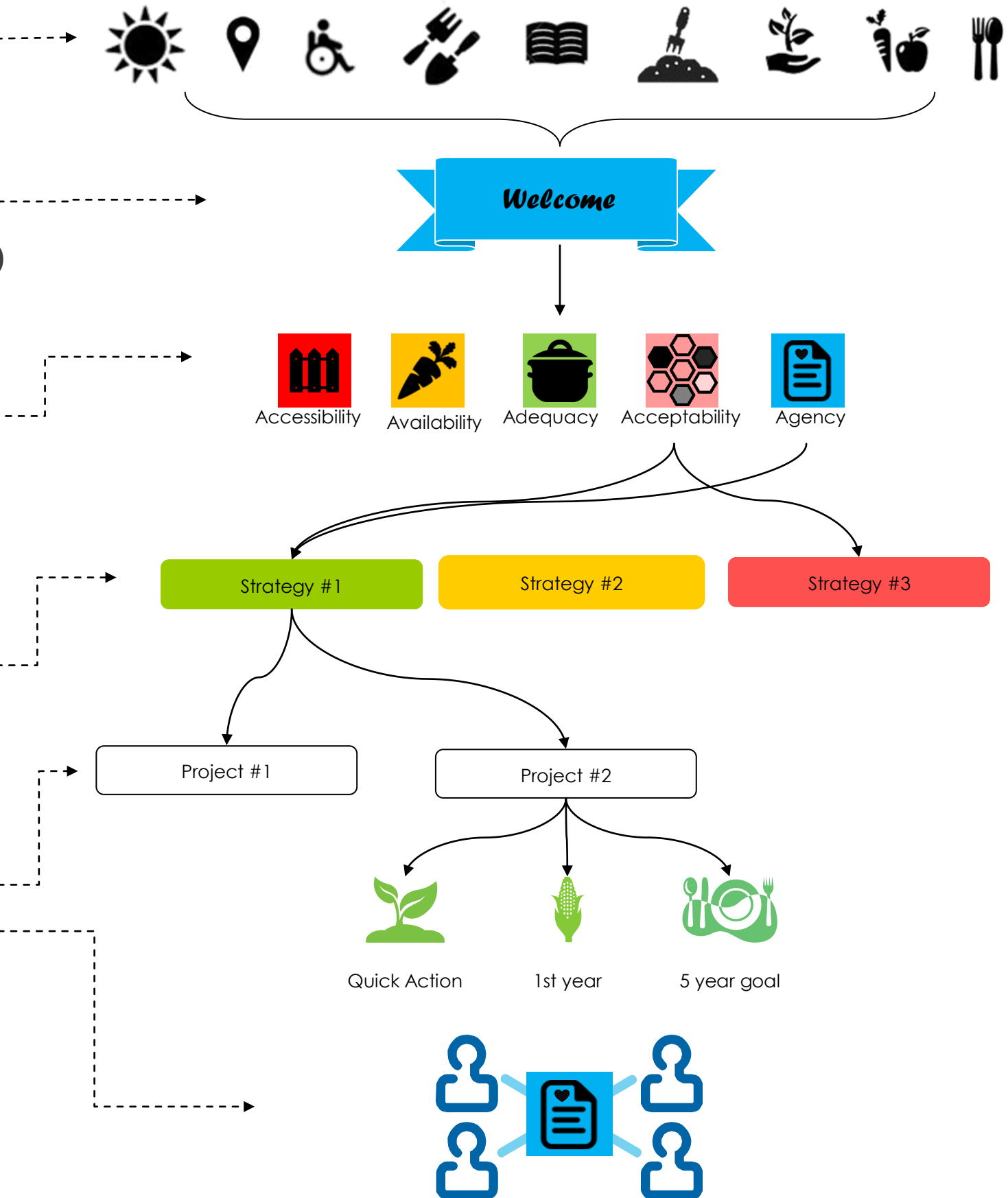
- Compare achievements with vision and objectives..

15

Feedback

- Continuously assess expectations from both the garden and its individual members

Quick Guide



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