



Town-Led Community Garden Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide and support community groups in establishing and managing community gardens on Town-owned property. The policy ensures gardens are developed sustainably and equitably, while promoting community engagement, healthy living, environmental stewardship, and local food production. Additionally, the policy clarifies the objectives and responsibilities of the Town and its departments, as well as the obligations of the organizations managing the gardens, to ensure clear roles, accountability, and successful program delivery.

Scope

This policy applies to all Town-owned land proposed for community garden use. It provides local organizations, community groups, and their volunteers the opportunity to operate a community garden while leveraging Town-provided support, including site access, soil, plants, and basic tools. It provides guidance for:

Town Responsibilities

- Provide pre-identified municipal land for community garden projects.
- Lead the design, development and construction of the gardens, including site preparation, soil installation, raised beds, pathways, and any necessary structures.
- Provide and supply in-kind gardening resources, such as soil, seedlings, plants, and basic tools/supplies (garden gloves, pruning shears, stakes, trellises, garden trowels, hand rakes, hoes, weeding tools, wheelbarrow, shovels/spades, watering cans, sunscreen, first aid kit, compost bins)
- Provide education and training for volunteers on planting, harvesting, maintenance, and safe garden practices.
- Support organizations and community groups with grant applications and letters of support where appropriate.
- Assign a Town Staff Liaison to coordinate with community groups and facilitate approvals, inspections, and ongoing communication.

Appendix 1 - TOFE Community Garden Policy

- Make the Community Garden Program application available online and in paper format upon request.
- Identify and pursue potential sponsorships, partnerships, and community donations to support the development and maintenance of the community gardens.
- Coordinate across relevant departments (e.g., Infrastructure Services, Community Services, Planning, Building and By-law Services, Finance) to review and approve applications.
- Review and approve or deny proposals from organizations to manage pre-identified Town-owned garden sites, ensuring each site is properly managed and operated in accordance with Town policies and safety standards.
- Conduct periodic inspections (Infrastructure Services), approximately every 6-8 weeks during the growing season, as well as pre-season and post-season reviews, to ensure gardens meet operational, safety, and health standards and/or on a complaint/request basis.
- Provide communications and marketing support, including graphic design for signage, promotional materials, social media posts, and other outreach to raise awareness and encourage participation in the gardens.

Community Group Responsibilities

- Complete and submit the Community Garden Program application, including:
 1. Organization background.
 2. Description of proposed project (where the harvest will go, and the anticipated community benefits).
 3. Management plan, including volunteer recruitment and maintenance schedule.
- Manage and operate the garden via a volunteer network, including planting, watering, maintenance, and harvesting of produce.
- Maintain records of garden operations, volunteer activity, and harvest for Town review.
- Restore the site to its original condition upon decommissioning or termination of the garden.
- Follow all local health regulations accordingly.

Proposal Submission and Review

- Proposals will be accepted upon site availability through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process announced by the Town, based on the availability of pre-identified Town-owned garden sites.
- Town Staff will review proposals to ensure alignment with safety and Town policy requirements, provide final approval or denial, and inform Council of the recommended organization(s) or proposals that best meet the outlined criteria.

Community Garden Locations

1. The Town will designate suitable municipal sites based on factors such as:
 - Access to water and parking
 - Soil quality and sunlight exposure
 - Compatibility with existing uses and future planning
2. Available garden sites will be posted on the Town's website and updated upon availability.

Agreement and Terms

- All approved organizations must enter into a lease or use agreement with the Town prior to assuming management of the garden.
- Initial agreements will be granted for a two-year term, with inspection and review following the first year to ensure proper garden management and maintenance.
- Agreements outline responsibilities, maintenance expectations, procedures for termination or decommissioning, and insurance or liability requirements for volunteers and garden operations.
- Organizations are responsible for all volunteer-led garden activities, including planting, watering, maintenance, and harvesting. The Town provides the site, garden infrastructure, and supplies but does not oversee day-to-day operations.
- All gardening activities are conducted at the organization's and volunteers' own risk. The Town is not responsible or liable for any injuries, property loss, or other incidents that may occur during gardening activities, or from consuming food grown in the garden. All lease or use agreements will be reviewed and prepared by the Town's Legislative Services to ensure appropriate protections.

Garden Operation

- Organizations are fully responsible for day-to-day operations, including managing volunteers, planting, watering, maintenance, and harvesting.
- Organizations may develop internal policies for volunteer management and harvest distribution.
- If the garden site is secured with fencing, the organization is responsible for ensuring the fence remains intact and locked as appropriate throughout the growing season, including during volunteer activities, closures, or periods of inactivity. Any damage must be reported to Town Staff.

Decommissioning or Termination

- Either party may terminate the agreement with 60 days' written notice.
- Upon closer at the end of the growing season, the organization is responsible for returning the garden site to a clean and safe condition. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Removing all plantings.
 - Clearing organic waste, compost, and debris from garden beds and pathways.
 - Ensuring tools, equipment and supplies provided by the Town are cleaned and returned to designated storage.
- The Town may conduct a post-season inspection to verify that the site has been properly decommissioned and provide feedback to the organization for any corrective actions.

Prohibitions

- Commercial cultivation for sale, cannabis, or illegal substances is prohibited.
- Raising animals or livestock on Town-owned garden sites is prohibited.

Periodic Review and Reporting

- Town Staff will inspect gardens periodically to ensure compliance with operational, safety, and health standards.
- Organizations must maintain records of volunteer activity, garden maintenance, and harvest for Town review.
- The Town reserves the right to revoke agreements if gardens are not properly maintained or managed according to the agreement.