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Submission: Christchurch City Council - Draft Community Plan : 2004/14 1.

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Key issue for Christchurch City Council to consider:

~ The lack of local, accessible greenspaces in the face of increasing urbanisation which provide for the participation of local residents in productive and neighbourhood - enhancing activities and for community well-being.

What action the Council should take:

~ Promote, protect, sustain and support existing and emerging community gardens in Christchurch.

~ Properly recognise the value of community gardens and other land-based projects in the city and their contribution to:- recreation and leisure, waste minimisation, community development, urban sustainability, beautification of neighbourhoods, crime reduction and safer communities, community education, cultural diversity, social services, community and social well-being.

~ Make a commitment to:- ongoing resourcing of community gardening in the form of dedicated funds to this end, the allocation of council land set aside specifically for this purpose, the education of council units as to the contribution of community gardens to a sustainable Christchurch, the further inclusion of community gardening in Council policy.

Why it should be done:

- Christchurch City Council promotes itself as the 'Garden City'.
- There is an increasing desire by community groups seeking to develop a sense of identity, teach self sufficiency skills and to relieve urban isolation within their neighbourhoods to utilise surplus council land for community gardens.
- The disestablishment of the C.C.C. Sustainable Christchurch Unit has potentially set back the progress of the development of community gardening in Christchurch therefore a commitment is required to educate the city council as a whole as to effective processes, policy, resourcing and promotion relating to community gardens development and the resulting contribution to a sustainable Christchurch.
- Community Gardening projects contribute to Community Outcomes (pp 25- 30, Vol.1 CCC Community Plan) in the following areas:

- **sustainable natural environments**: community gardens encourage local responsibility for nature spaces, provide working examples of biodiversity, community education, research and participation in waste minimisation and environmental responsibility, effective engagement with communities due to greater potential for communicating directly with local residents and businesses - (Solid and Hazardous Waste Management plan 2004 - 6.1 Garden and Putrescible Waste 6.1.1(b) and 6.1.6). Efficient recycling of inorganic waste - active demonstration sites - current CCC trial.

- **a learning city**: community gardens operate as a resource for schools programmes (waste minimisation/horticulture/self sufficiency) Community and Polytech garden groups and courses utilise sites for fieldtrips and practical work placements - working examples of community gardening in action, One-One support for special needs students, use of community garden sites by tertiary students (a growing research area) - use of community garden sites for international conferences and tours.

Community gardens provide achievement opportunities for a wide range of abilities, on site training and employment-related skills enhancement (especially for disabled and structurally unemployed), provide for community education and lifelong learning.

- a prosperous city: participation in community gardens' income-generating projects by people recovering from illness or injury contributes to the local economy, group motivation to complete projects is enhanced by commitment to a work ethic and sense of achievement, potential enhancement of employment opportunities and disposable income, substantial voluntary labour hours contribute to the city's well-being, provision of healthy food for low/no cost. Community gardens provide a vision of prosperity and abundance (at a very low cost).

- a well governed city: community gardens offer people the opportunity, often for the first time, to make decisions on their worksite, help plan events and take on roles and responsibilities that they did not previously believe they were capable of. Opportunities exist to become involved at policy level, as advocates and representatives, to attend council meetings and to become more aware of local government processes. Community gardening projects encourage cooperation, leadership, confidence and awareness of environmental, social and economic issues.

- a city of inclusive and diverse communities: Diversity is a feature of community gardening with all ages, cultures, sexes and abilities working cooperatively as they learn and share skills. Community gardens in neighbourhoods contribute to a sense of identity, place and belonging and offer a respite from urban living. They thrive on, and could not survive without voluntary labour. Community gardening occurs in a social context providing opportunities for rebuilding connectedness within neighbourhoods and between people with the resulting reduction in social isolation and improvement in social well-being. Researchers have found that community gardeners have an enhanced sense of "rootedness" in the community, greater social interaction, place a higher value on growing things and access to nature, have an enhanced sense of community, a positive social identity, increased personal identity with their neighbourhood and increased tolerance of difference (Relf, 2002).

- a city of healthy and active people: by its very nature gardening is a healthy activity, both physically and mentally. Occupational therapists and agencies working with disabled people recognise this and actively seek placements for their clients on community gardens. The involvement in producing food crops often leads to an interest in including a greater variety of fruit and vegetables in people's diets - Crown Public Health has provided funding to community gardening projects on this basis.

- safe city: research shows that the presence of a local community garden reduces crime within neighbourhoods. This is largely due to the stake that people have in what often presents as a neighbourhood backyard which is respected as people's own (including the significant presence of adults acting *in loco parentis*). Thus there is generally limited problems with graffiti or vandalism. With respect for diversity a feature of community gardening, this makes community gardens a safe place for new immigrants and ESOL volunteers to work and learn about 'kiwi culture' in a gardening setting. Strickland St. Community Garden received an award in 2000 from the Christchurch Safer Community Council (*Building Neighborhood Trust Through Creative Use of the Land*).

- a cultural and fun city: community gardeners love to celebrate! Especially around food. This creates many opportunities for valuing a wide variety of cultures - e.g. Chinese New Year, Tartan Day, Matariki, St. Patrick's Day. Garden arts and craft occurs at many community gardens with some offering workshops to local residents including utilising and valuing the craft skills of other cultures e.g. poi-making, mosaic paving, ikebana.

- a livable city: community gardens have the potential to provide restorative relief from the built environment and pressures of urban living and are a very accessible key local service.. Community gardens are aesthetically pleasing green spaces which can provide a psychological lift for passers - by, a place local residents can call their own, can walk to easily, and can freely participate in.