

Christchurch Community Gardens Association (CCGA)

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To

Christchurch City Council

Submission On:

Draft Long Term Councils Community Plan (LTCCP) 2006 – 2016
“Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16”.

Executive Summary

This submission refers to the document, “*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*” April 2006.

It provides some background to the community gardens of Christchurch and then follows the structure of the draft summary document in its response.

The Council has an existing set of policies and guidelines for supporting community gardens to be implemented.

The community gardens make a worthwhile and direct contribution to the council’s community, environmental, and economic outcomes.

The community gardens have a good fit with the Council’s own “strategic directions”

Therefore the community gardens need adequate support and resources from the City Council

The Christchurch Community Gardens Association wishes to present this submission at a hearing in May 2006, excluding the 25th May.

Background

On 11th December 2003 the Christchurch City Council adopted a policy guideline regarding their relationship with the Christchurch Community Boards and the Christchurch Community Gardens. This was a direct response to the Council's own desire in August 2000 to take *"the opportunity to become an international leader in sustainability and become a showcase example of a good place to live with clear business, social, and community benefits"*.

This submission is primarily a reminder to this council of its previous commitments to the community gardens of Christchurch. At the time there was clear recognition of how community gardens provided a wide range of benefits to Christchurch; social, environmental, and economic benefits. The Christchurch Community Gardens Association has continued to progress the establishment and development of community gardens in Christchurch and Lyttleton.

Recent developments in community gardens

The previous funding allocated by the Christchurch City Council to the Christchurch Community Gardens Association has provided for a Community Gardens Development Worker. This employee has, in the last six months, promoted the community gardens and provided the community gardens with a number of useful resources.

• Brochure & Profiles

- A Christchurch community gardens brochure has been developed to promote community gardening in our city. The brochures have been distributed around the city, including all the Public libraries in Christchurch.
- Brochure inserts for each community garden are in the process of being developed in collaboration with each garden.
- Profiles of the 14 Community Gardens associated with the CCGA (Christchurch Community Gardens Association) are being developed and will provide the Association with a database of information for each site.

• Photographic Exhibition

- An exhibition of Community Gardening (a celebration and promotion of our community gardening), commenced 13th March 2006 and runs through until the end of August. The exhibition opened at the Linwood Community Gallery and has featured at the Christchurch City Council display space, Our City O-Tautahi Gallery, and is now circuiting all the Christchurch libraries.

• Funding

- A funding resource kit has been developed to assist the gardens in sourcing appropriate funding.

• Relationship with Christchurch City Council

There has been a relationship with the city council from the community gardens inception.

- The Community Boards and Council officers are kept informed regarding the gardens activities and contributions to their neighbourhoods.
- Strickland Street has hosted a number of groups referred by the Christchurch City Council. A recent example was a group of Japanese councillors who visited the garden.

Christchurch City Council Support for Community Gardens

Previously the Christchurch City Council identified a number of ways to support the Community Garden initiative (*Growing Communities Together – Community Gardens Guidelines for the Christchurch City Council* – adopted by Council 11th December 2003). This is understood to be within the context of a local community's initiative to establish a community garden and their ongoing support to develop and maintain it.

In summary the Council identified a number of ways to support community gardens, these included:

- peppercorn rentals;

- identification of suitable land;
- to assist with council processes in securing land for community garden use;
- assist with land tenure arrangements;
- assist with the provision of infrastructure, that is, semi-permanent structures and facilities on site;
- endorsement of the gardens, to facilitate the community gardens approaches to other organisations;
- assist with community garden events;
- funding a community garden co-ordinator;
- assist with potential sponsorship of the community gardens.

- **Relationships with Educators and Community Groups**

Each community garden develops its own relationships with other local community groups and organisations. These groups include,

- educational groups - inclusive of kindergarten to postgraduate students, home schools, who participate in the garden
- disability groups – encompassing people with physical, social and intellectual disabilities,
- special interest groups like the WEA, gardening groups, senior citizen walking groups who visit the gardens for recreation and educational interest
- local groups who provide free community lunches and use produce from the gardens.

For example:

- The Opawa Community Garden
 - has regular visits from the St Martins Kindergarten as part of their environmental and gardening curriculum, and
 - A local home-school group is starting to integrate the garden resources into their educational programmes.
- Strickland Street Garden
 - used by a variety of organisations, including people with brain injuries, intellectual disabilities and other special needs
- City Mission Garden, Governors Bay – “Old Vicarage”
 - caters for people recovering from stress related illnesses and addictions

Relationships with individuals

The individuals include many more people than those who actually participate in the work of the gardens. Those who take produce or deposit green waste often do not have time to participate due to family circumstances. Many who visit the community gardens are very supportive and see themselves one day working in the community gardens.

- volunteers who work in the gardens, some of whom are socially isolated
- local people from the community who use the gardens for passive recreation,
- local people who use the gardens as a source of fresh vegetables, fruit and herbs.
- local people who deposit green and kitchen waste for composting,
- parents and grandparents visit the gardens with their children and grandchildren because the gardens are part of their local community, like the park and playgrounds they are familiar with.

The community gardens are able to contribute to all of the Community Outcomes for the Christchurch City Council. The gardens also fulfil a growing desire among city dwellers to collaborate on land based projects and address increasing concerns about where food comes from and how it is produced. This now sees fourteen community gardens in the Christchurch area, one of which has only got underway in recent months.

All organisations need leaders and co-ordinators and the reinstatement of the funding previously allocated to the Christchurch Community Gardens Association would allow this to continue by way of funding the work of the community Gardens Development Worker.

The Community Gardens are committed to working in partnership with Christchurch City Council to maintain the city's pre-eminent position of the Garden City. Therefore the community gardens can make a significant contribution to the Christchurch City Councils LTCCP 2006 – 2016.

1.0 Introduction

This submission is structured to follow the "*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*". Section one identifies the contribution from community gardens to the Christchurch City Council's intended outcomes. Then the positive inputs of community gardens towards the Council's strategic directions are summarised. The third section itemises each of the council activities to which the community gardens contribute will be addressed. The CCGA believes that it does make a sustainable contribution to making Christchurch a great place to live. Community gardens contribute to the city's prosperity, safety, governance and attractiveness. Community gardens are a long term project and must be catered for beyond; election cycles and annual plans. Therefore the LTCCP must include community gardens as one means to obtain the plans outcomes. Christchurch city desires to be a boutique city and a world leader in its urban development. Aotearoa New Zealand is a world leader in agriculture so why not urban agriculture of which community gardens are an integral part.

2.0 Community Garden Contribution to Community Outcomes

The LTCCP "*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*" pages six and seven identifies a number of key community outcomes which have a natural fit with the goals of the community gardens. The community gardens can be one of the localised vehicles available to the Christchurch City Council to achieve its LTCCP objectives. All community gardens can make a direct and positive contribution to the quality of life within their local community.

2.1 Safety – A Safe City

The community gardens contribute to local neighbourhood safety. The gardens provide a local, safe, context in which people can get to know each other. 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, vandalism or theft. 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 Street Community Garden received an award in 2000 from the Christchurch Safer Community.

2.2 Community – A city of Inclusive and Diverse Communities

The uniqueness of each community garden is a direct expression and celebration of the diversity of the community in which it is located. The community gardens provide a safe place for neighbours to meet and get to know each other. They community gardens can help to strengthen communities and are part of the local matrix of community capacity building

2.3 Environment – A City of People who Value and Protect the Natural Environment

In regard to reducing environmental impacts of urbanisation the community gardens encourage local responsibility for natural spaces, provide working examples of biodiversity, and are places of community education, research and participation in waste minimisation projects. They can demonstrate and therefore encourage environmental responsibility. They provide a place for 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).

2.4 Governance – A Well Governed City

The community gardens, for some people, are a way to introduce people to be active participants in public decision-making. They become direct stakeholders in an aspect of local body affairs that they can relate to. They get to know their representatives and gain confidence in discussing their community's needs with decision-makers.

2.5 Prosperity – A Prosperous City

The community gardens are a positive and innovative use of land resources. They are an investment in the future. Urban agriculture is a growing trend as people become increasingly concerned about the safety, and sources of their food.

2.6 Health – A Healthy City

Community gardens promote healthy lifestyle choices. They provide a safe place for people to be physically and socially active. The gardens, like parks and open spaces create environments for people to relax and unwind it, to get away from the bustle of every day life. The production and availability of fresh fruit and vegetables to all people also contributes to a healthy city.

2.7 Recreation – A City for Recreation, Fun and Creativity

Not every one participates in sport or the arts (much of the participation in the arts is passive). The community gardens provide leisure and recreation space that is both passive (to look at and admire) and active. Gardening is a major leisure pursuit in New Zealand. Some people do not have their own personal garden so use the community gardens supply a recreational outlet for them. Or they live alone and wish to participate in their leisure activity with a group of people. Community gardens add to the recreational opportunity spectrum within Christchurch City. The community gardens are places to express creativity and have fun while focused on a shared activity.

2.8 Knowledge – A City of Lifelong Learning

The community gardens provide for both participatory and observational learning opportunities. They add to the learning opportunities within Christchurch. People come and observe what is being planted, how it grows, and how to look after particular plants. Local schools and kindergarten use the community gardens as part of their environmental education programmes. As people participate in the garden tasks they both learn new skills and pass on their skills to less experienced gardeners.

2.9 City Development – An Attractive and Well-Designed City

Community gardens can be the centre of a community's expression of its own creativity to develop attractive well integrated public spaces that are used by the community in a multiplicity of ways. Community gardens potentially provide visual and psychological relief from the built urban environment. Well presented community gardens create visual diversity and add interest to streetscapes and provide safe meeting places for people from diverse backgrounds.

3.0 Community Gardens Contribution to the Strategic Directions

The “*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*”. identifies a number of strategic directions to achieve the community outcomes. As outlined above, the community gardens can specifically aid the: strong communities; healthy environment; liveable city strategic directions. In particular:

Strong Communities

- provide a place for lifelong learning about horticulture, the environment, life and employment skills
- provide an opportunity to increase people’s physical activity and thereby encourage a healthy and active lifestyle
- help to celebrate community diversity and provide a safe place for people to meet
- building strong neighbour networks improves individuals social well being, reducing isolation and alienation
- create opportunities for people to learn how to get involved in democratic processes

Healthy Environment

- community gardens directly strengthen the “garden city” image
- provide a local domestic response to green waste management
- improve air quality with the creation of green space and plants
- enhance the urban ecosystem with visual improvement to streetscapes and provide for biodiversity

Liveable City

- the community gardens will help to balance the needs of people and the environment
- if the community gardens are part of urban renewal then they can enhance the cityscape
- community gardens can provide fresh produce at times of emergency.
- new approaches to urban renew includes communal spaces of which community gardens can form an integral part of the neighbourhood

Prosperous Economy

- add to the attractiveness of Christchurch city as a place to live and work
- demonstrate how individuals and consequently businesses can operate in a more environmentally sustainable way

4.0 Community Garden Contribution to Council Activities and Services

In regard to the specific activities outlined in the Long Term Council Community Plan; “*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16* the community gardens can and do make the following contributions.

4.1 City Development - An Attractive and Well Designed City

The existing car-dependant model of urban design is no longer working. This model of urban design is wasteful of energy, of land resources, and it requires high infrastructure costs. Its spatial patterns of development tend to isolate people from their neighbours and communities by fragmenting them.

Community gardens potentially provide visual and psychological relief from the built urban environment. Well presented community gardens create visual diversity and add interest to streetscapes. Community gardens are public spaces that provide a unique form of green space for local residents to visit and freely participate in. The community gardens provide open, attractive green spaces within the urban environment. These spaces differ from parks and other open spaces because of the range of activities that they facilitate. Community gardens in local neighbourhoods are within easy walking distance.

The need for good urban design that includes the protection of heritage items and creates a vibrant city can include the development of urban agricultural spaces. The growing of fruit and vegetables in public spaces helps to maintain and pass on an important aspect of our domestic and urban heritage to the next generation. The community gardens will improve the diversity of public spaces and the streetscape.

4.2 Community Support - A City of Inclusive and Diverse Communities

Diversity within the context of community gardens happens at two levels.

- each community garden is unique to its location and the associated neighbourhood, and
- within each community garden there is a mix of cultures, ethnicity, religion, gender, education, economic status, age and abilities.

This diverse group of people work cooperatively, as volunteers, to create their community gardens. They are concerned with the greater good of their neighbourhood and are keen to learn and share skills and knowledge. Therefore the community gardens contribute to a sense of identity, place and belonging. The hope to connect with people in their neighbourhood, for some, overcomes their social isolation. Researchers have found that community gardeners have a greater sense of connection in their community, a higher degree of social interaction, greater personal identity with their neighbourhood, and an increased tolerance of difference. There is the potential to integrate community gardens with City Council housing projects. The community gardens create an open and safe space for groups to work together and socialise so strengthen the local community. The community gardens need to be recognised as a key ingredient in community support and be funded appropriately.

4.3 A Cultural and Learning Services – A City of Lifelong Learning

The community garden provides a unique readily accessible resource to enhance lifelong learning for people from many and varied backgrounds. They are a resource utilised by home schoolers, kindergartens, primary, secondary and tertiary students (University and Polytechnics). The range of the educational use of the community gardens ranges from field trips for garden and environmental programmes, practical work, composting workshops and postgraduate research projects. There is also a high degree of informal learning happening in community gardens whenever people work together. The sharing of horticultural, culinary, environmental information and skills occurs. For some there is also the extra benefit of developing relational and interpersonal skills as they learn to work alongside other people, or they learn how to share the knowledge and skills they have. Life and employment skills are also provided for through opportunities that ensure success for a wide range of abilities and age through onsite training. Access to information throughout the city can be aided through community gardens. The Christchurch City Council's provision of land to community gardens is a direct way of achieving the goal of O-Tautahi being a venue for community learning because community gardens promote lifelong learning.

4.4 Democracy and Governance - 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;
- to start to understand how a city and its community are governed and the local government processes;
- become involved as representatives and advocates in community and local body issues;

These experiences and the associated skills give them confidence to start participating in local body issues because community garden projects encourage cooperation, leadership development, confidence and the awareness of social, economic and environmental issues.

4.5 Economic Development - A Prosperous City

People recovering from illness or injury who participate in community garden projects gain a sense of achievement. They regain, or learn, a positive work ethic making them more suitable employment prospects. The gaining of skills and confidence may lead to better employment prospects so increasing a person's income. The substantial number of volunteer hours contributes directly to the cities wellbeing with low cost healthy food.

Whilst the community gardens are not a business they do add another pull factor by making Christchurch an attractive place to live. This will help businesses recruit staff from other regions. Community gardens provide a vision of prosperity and abundance at a very low cost.

4.6 Parks Open Spaces and Waterways

The provision of land for community gardens adds to the matrix of open urban space. The added advantage for the city council is that these open spaces are maintained by the local community. The community gardens can contribute directly to maintaining the open space pre resident ratio. They also provide an alternative recreational opportunity that is not provided by either the public or private sectors. The community gardens help to create attractive urban/city landscapes and protect natural resources.

4.7 Recreation and Leisure - A City for Recreation, Fun and Creativity

Recreation and leisure also happens outside public and private recreation facilities. Gardening is a significant recreational activity in Aotearoa/New Zealand and this can be promoted through the community gardens.

Community gardens create unique green space for participation in both passive and active recreation. They provide an environment that enables communities to celebrate, particularly around food and harvest times. In valuing cultural diversity they provide a place for the creative expressions of different cultures. Gardening "arts and crafts" are fostered at many community gardens. Some community gardens offer local residents workshops on the crafts of other cultures, for example flax weaving. One community garden has a scarecrow made for it by the children from a local kindergarten.

4.8 Refuse Minimisation and Disposal

The community gardens can be part of a city wide strategy to help people take the next step in removing green waste from the waste stream. Community gardens are the collection and processing points for domestic putrescibles and green waste. Community gardens use worm farms, bokashi, or composting to deal with green waste. They become centres of learning so people can implement these systems at home and work to achieve real waste minimisation. Past experience through pilot programmes have shown that these initiatives do make people more conscious of what they put into the waste stream. These waste minimisation programmes could be extended with council funding and support. Much of the labour requirement would be voluntary if a paid waste co-ordinator was employed so that the waste systems were managed properly.

4.9 Streets and Transport

Community gardens are meeting places for "living-streets" open space. They make a strong positive visual impact on streetscapes and enhance the landscape values of the area in which they are located.

4.10 Water Supply

Community Gardens help people to understand how to minimise their water consumption and how they can protect our valuable and limited fresh water resource. These gardens provide a real and local demonstration of efficient watering techniques, water conservation techniques through better soil management and the use of mulch etc. The use of artificial, high analysis fertilisers, herbicides, pesticides and fungicides in domestic gardens is poorly managed. This urban chemical cocktail can potentially find its way into waterways and aquifers. Community gardens demonstrate the alternatives to using such toxic chemicals in their gardens; for example, encouraging predatory insects, organic treatment alternatives, crop husbandry techniques. The environmental implications of using such chemicals and where they end up is not always clearly understood by home gardeners

5.0 Recommendations

To achieve the potential synergies within the community garden movement their direct contributions to the Long Term Council Community Plan: "*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*" needs to be fostered by the Christchurch City Council. The Community gardens provide a direct low cost opportunity to assist the Council achieve its goals of a healthy and vibrant city. This is not an expensive budget item, and could be funded through the community boards to maintain local/neighbourhood levels of accountability.

Because the community gardens already make a small but significant contribution to the intended community outcomes of the Long Term Council Community Plan: "*Our Community Plan 2006-16 Draft Summary: Christchurch O Tautahi 2006-16*" it is prudent for the Council to:

1. recognising the contribution the community gardens already make
2. promote the potential of community gardens in their Planning
3. revise the budget to providing adequate funding based on targets or milestones to be achieved
4. provide the appropriate administrative support community gardens may require to build strong communities
5. initiate a working group to upgrade Council's policy on community gardens

Therefore in analysing the services and activities provided by the Christchurch City Council there needs to be due recognition of the unique place of community gardens and how they contribute to many of the community outcomes in a coherent and holistic way.

These Recommendations can be Achieved by

1. funding a community garden development worker at \$60,000 per year (salary and associated costs)
2. fund the CCGA for garden co-coordinators at \$10,000 per year each
3. increase the community waste minimisation fund to utilise community gardens as domestic green waste collection centres \$250,000 per year (offset by removal of green waste from the general waste stream)
4. reactivate the Solid & Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2004 regarding the Garden and putrescible waste
5. every community board to budget for each garden in their respective wards for reasonable annual operational and wage expenses; for example the Strickland Street model
6. revisit the community gardens policy and guidelines document; December 2003
7. provide for community garden representation on each community board through a board member as an advocate for community gardens
8. to develop a clear process to enable the community to establish community gardens on surplus council land. The council could help by identifying and recording potential sites for community garden development.

9. Council to assist with planning process and regulatory requirements for the establishment of community gardens.
 10. provide access to resources like City Care large machinery from time to time and tree chip mulch
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