

6. COMMUNITY GARDENS - STAGE 2 PROJECT OUTLINE

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Corporate Plan Output: Solid Waste	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the success of a Stage 1 pilot community gardening trial in reducing waste and engaging the community, and to present a draft Stage 2 project outline which builds on this success. A copy of this report has also been forwarded to the Community Services Committee for its information.

BACKGROUND

The concept of community gardening as a combined waste reduction and strengthening communities initiative was endorsed by the Council in November 1999 as outlined in the report '*Growing Communities – Organic Resources for Social Needs*'. A sum of \$60,000 has been allocated in the Christchurch City Council Draft Annual Plan for this new initiative in the 2000/01 financial year.

Substantial progress has been made since this initial report, as outlined in the '*Community Gardening Update*' report to Community Boards (Attachment A). This included a Stage 1 pilot Community Gardening trial which resulted in an average of 3 - 5 kg per week of kitchen waste being collected from around 50 households and composted in four existing community gardens over three months. (Further information on community composting is contained in Attachment D.)

THE ADVANTAGES OF ORGANICS

Organic (kitchen and garden) waste makes up almost half the waste currently collected in domestic black bags in Christchurch and 65% of the waste collected in wheelie bins and 44 gallon drums. This waste breaks down to form leachate and landfill gas when landfilled. Alternatively, organic material could be easily composted on small areas of land in local communities at a low cost. This is a marked advantage over kerbside recyclable materials such as paper, plastic, glass and tin which need to be collected together before it is viable for them to be recycled or sold.

In addition, composting organic material provides a valuable nutrient-rich resource which can be used locally to grow vegetables, providing a community focus which creates meaningful and rewarding social engagement and employment for local people, with few barriers to participation.

STAGE 2 PROJECT OUTLINE

Community Driven

Community gardening will be most successful if driven by the community it seeks to assist. Indeed the community gardens that were able to divert kitchen waste in the Stage 1 trial existed only because they had already been established by the community for social and other benefits. A substantial amount of goodwill has been generated through the Stage 1 trial, with community gardening groups recognising that they can reap substantial benefits for their own communities by working together with the Waste Management Unit to help achieve waste reduction alongside other social goals. These community groups have already contributed a substantial amount of volunteer time and energy in helping to formulate Stage 2 of this project which seeks to make community gardening sustainable in the long term.

The Waste Management Unit will maximise its waste reduction goals by allowing community groups to “own” the Stage 2 project, using their collective experience, community engagement and ability to attract external funding to realise clear waste reduction goals alongside their strengthening community and other social goals. Community Boards have been asked to consider fostering at least one community garden in their area to help ensure the long term sustainability of the gardens and to enable them to become demonstration gardens/mentor groups for other people wishing to set up a similar initiative in their local area.

Key Performance Indicators

Key stakeholders/funders of the Stage 2 Community Gardening Project will develop explicit key performance indicators, such as those outlined below, which measure the success of the project in meeting those stakeholders’ objectives. The community gardening groups will then be invited to manage the Stage 2 project and control **how** those objectives are met. The stakeholders/funders will monitor the achievement of the “triple bottom line” objectives through three-monthly reports on the following key performance indicators.

Environmental – Waste Reduction

- Quantity of organic waste (kitchen and garden) dropped off at the community gardens
- High quality, well managed, appropriately placed composting operations
- Number of households involved in kitchen waste drop offs
- Number of households utilising the home shredding service
- Number of households taking up home composting
- Number of people attending home-composting demonstrations or seminars
- Number of new community garden initiatives established
- Types and quantities of waste being re-used, reduced and recycled
- Improved consumer purchasing to minimise waste
- Improved understanding of waste issues generally

Social – Stronger Communities

- Number of paid and volunteer hours spent in the community gardens
- Increased community activity eg number of articles in local newspapers
- Number of households receiving community garden newsletters

Financial

- Complimentary funding to the community gardens from other stakeholders
- Assets acquired by the community gardens to enhance their activities

Suggested Actions

Suggested actions to meet the above objectives have been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders and are summarised below:

1. Form a **Community Gardens Advisory Group** with representation from key stakeholders to provide overall direction for the Stage 2 project using a structure such as that outlined in Attachment B.
2. **Apply** for Community Employment Group (or similar group) **Funding**
3. Appoint a **Community Gardens Facilitator** to develop strategies for long-term sustainability (especially financial viability), seek complementary and ongoing funding, co-ordinate efforts across the city, and report to key stakeholders/funders on key performance indicators.
4. Develop an **Annual Action Plan** to achieve each specific environmental (waste reduction), social, and financial objective.
5. Produce **Quarterly Reports** on key performance indicators with recommendations on improvements/continuation of the project.
6. Conduct an **Independent Review** of the project's success in meeting its triple bottom line objectives after 10 months.
7. Develop a **Stage 3 Project Outline** for 2001/02 year.

Draft Budget

The following draft budget has been developed, in conjunction with key stakeholders, suggesting collaborative funding by three key stakeholder groups representing the project's environmental (waste reduction), social and financial benefits as outlined in Attachment C. This will be finalised in consultation with appropriate Canterbury Development Corporation advisers and other potential funders.

Table 1
DRAFT BUDGET

ACTION	FUNDING / PROVIDER		
	Community Board	Community Employment Group, Work and Income New Zealand or other group	Waste Management Unit, Christchurch City Council
1. Community Garden Co-ordinator, salary for one year contract (subject to funding). Overhead/vehicle costs to be provided by employer or from additional funding sought.	-	\$40,000 (Notes 1&2)	-
2. Part funding for composting/garden coordinators, running costs for community garden, \$5,000 per garden per year x 7 community gardens.	Support as needed	Seek funding	\$35,000
3. Local training seminars at gardens, community newsletters.	As needed	Seek funding	\$5,000
4. Local tool library, wheelbarrow, composting bins.	As needed	Seek funding	-
5. Establishment of one new community/school garden in each Community Board area.	As needed	Seek funding	\$10,000
6. Wider community projects, eg hire or purchase of chipper/shredder to provide home chipping service.	-	Seek funding	\$10,000
TOTALS	As needed	\$40,000	\$60,000

Notes:

1. Initial discussions with the Community Employment Group of Work and Income New Zealand indicate that funding could be available, however, a formal funding application will need to be submitted by the Advisory Group or a similar group.
2. A facilitator is critical to the success of the project. If this funding is not forthcoming the budget will be revised to accommodate a facilitator's salary.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

Key stakeholders are likely to formalise their existing network and will be encouraged to apply for funding from a range of groups, in conjunction with the Waste Management Unit where appropriate. On confirmation of the Christchurch City Council Annual Plan and Community Employment Group funding, the Stage 2 project can commence.

NATURAL STEP ASSESSMENT

The Council resolved on 22 July 1999 to use the Natural Step to guide an assessment of the sustainability of activities in the city. The assessment for this initiative is as follows.

the Natural Step assessment				
Conditions:	1. Reduce mining and fossil fuel use (extraction rate not greater than redeposit rate to earth's crust)	2. Eliminate hazardous substances (production rate not greater than treatment rate)	3. Protect biodiversity and ecosystems	4. Efficient and equitable resource use
Meets condition	✓	✓	✓	✓
How it helps meet condition	Reduces fossil fuel usage to collect and centrally compost organic material and reduces mineral fertiliser and fossil fuel usage for food production and distribution	Increased organic food production reduces need for pesticides and herbicides	Increased planting especially in the City, and heightened awareness and understanding of natural ecosystems	Benefits targeted specifically to those most in need, those on limited incomes and those most likely to derive social benefits

SUMMARY

Organic waste still forms over half of the domestic waste stream in Christchurch and generates leachate and landfill gas when disposed of at the Burwood Landfill. A successful Stage 1 pilot community gardening trial has already demonstrated that community gardens can divert this organic waste, especially kitchen waste which cannot currently be accepted at the Garden City Compost plant, to home and community gardens where it provides significant additional nutrient benefits. In addition the community gardens have been able to engage with people in their local area to provide employment and other social benefits. This Stage 2 Community Gardening Project trial has been developed in conjunction with key stakeholders in the community and is likely to attract funding from groups other than the Council. Building on a wealth of experience, volunteer efforts and goodwill already in local communities, the Stage 2 project represents an excellent investment to significantly reduce one of the most problematic waste streams in domestic waste, while also providing a range of social benefits educating and strengthening local communities. The Stage 2 project trial will provide valuable information on the extent to which community gardens can become financially viable, reduce waste and strengthen communities.

- Recommendation:**
1. That this Committee endorse the above project proposal for Stage 2 of the Community Gardening Project trial.
 2. That progress on the Stage 2 project be reported back to this Committee in due course.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.