

16. COMMUNITY GARDENS STAGE 2 UPDATE

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Corporate Plan Output: Solid Waste	

The purpose of this report is to recommend actions this Board could take to consolidate and expand community gardening with triple bottom line benefits in their area.

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*'. Since then a Stage 1 pilot Community Gardening trial resulted in almost 4 kgs per week per household of kitchen waste being collected from around 50 households and composted in four existing community gardens over three months. Partly due to the success of this trial the Council has allocated \$50,000 for Stage 2 of the project in the 2000/01 financial year (see report to Community Services Committee '*Community Gardens – Stage 2 Project Outline*', **Attachment A**).

A joint "Community Gardens Support Group" forum was held on 16 August 2000 to discuss how the Community Boards can best support community gardening in their area. This included the Community Board Champions (listed below), Community Advocates, Community Development Advisers and Community Garden Coordinators and produced many possible ideas (outlined below).

	Spreydon/ Heathcote	Burwood/ Pegasus	Fendalton/ Waimairi	Shirley/ Papanui	Hagley/ Ferrymead	Riccarton/ Wigram
Board Community Gardens Champions	Carole Anderton	Glenda Burt, Caroline Kellaway	Mike Wall, Sally Buck	Ingrid Stonhill, Sally Thompson	Linda Rutland	Alison Wilkie

TRIAL KERBSIDE COLLECTION OF KITCHEN WASTE

In addition to the Stage 2 Community Gardens project, the Christchurch City Council has allocated \$45,000 to trial the kerbside collection of kitchen waste in 2000/01. Because this kerbside collection of kitchen waste trial has potential synergies with the Community Gardens project, in that they both create opportunities for community engagement, the Board is encouraged to consider their response to these two initiatives together. It is likely that the kerbside kitchen waste trial would collect kitchen waste only, given that a number of options exist already for dealing with green waste, including the following:

- Commercial operators are already providing a green waste collection service, although there is a cost for this service.
- Mulching mowers can be used to reduce the quantity of lawn clippings produced, although some people may dislike the lawn clippings these leave behind.
- Green waste can be taken to refuse stations on trailers, although this involves a cost and effort.

However, whether or not green waste is included in the trial is still open to community input based upon the kind of organic waste collection service that is desired.

The kerbside kitchen waste collection trial is likely to promote four variations of a 'bucket based' system, vis:

1. Households could use an ordinary 20 litre paint bucket with the bottom cut off placed in the garden. Kitchen waste can be placed into the top of the bucket, capped with a lid and the kitchen waste will naturally compost and be digested by worms from the garden.
2. A specialised 20 litre bucket with compost activator deposited into own garden (currently being trialled by Garden City Compost Plant Manager). This specialised bucket features a tap at its base to drain away excess liquid and would involve the use of a special sawdust compound containing micro-organisms that accelerate the decomposition of kitchen scraps. The bucket could be kept in the kitchen with a lid and emptied into the garden approximately every two weeks.
3. A specialised 20 litre bucket with compost activator as in option 2 however, where people don't have space in their own garden they could drop off the already decomposed kitchen scraps to a local community garden.
4. A specialised 20 litre bucket with compost activator picked up by kerbside collection. Same as option 2 but with the buckets collected from the kerbside as with the current kerbside recycling system.

WHERE TO FROM HERE

A number of suggestions were made at the August 16 forum, where it was also recognised that Advocacy teams have limited resources. The Community Boards are encouraged to take an active **facilitation** role, matching known needs with resources available both as part of the two trials and with groups in their local areas.

Recommended actions include:

- Forming a **Community Gardens Subcommittee**. This subcommittee could deal with all aspects of community gardens and conduct pilot trials as done by the Burwood/Pegasus Community Gardens Subcommittee (detailed in **Attachment D**):
- Ensuring that the Board **support existing local community garden(s)** in their area to ensure that they are sustainable. These could possibly serve as demonstration gardens and mentors for groups or individuals in the community who are keen to compost at home or set up a new community garden in their own neighbourhood.
- Establishing a **new community garden**. The Board could support interested community groups in setting up a new garden by networking with local employment initiatives, businesses and groups with horticultural expertise.
- Setting up a local **tool library**. This could be based on the same model as toy libraries and could encourage more home gardening.

- Introducing raised bed gardens to Council Housing Units. The Burwood/Pegasus Community Gardens Subcommittee has done this successfully in Concord Place. Raised bed gardens could possibly be constructed by a local business with support and advice from a local community group with horticultural expertise.
- Reducing the amount of organic and other waste put into black bags through educational initiatives that promote home and community composting. This could possibly involve supporting the existing community gardens to run composting workshops and to drop off promotional leaflets in local letter-boxes.

Other possible Board goals suggested at the 16 August forum are included in **Attachment E**.

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

Community gardens have triple bottom line benefits, and can be an effective means of strengthening local communities. The Stage 2 community gardens trial and kerbside kitchen waste collection trial represent an opportunity for synergistic projects in conjunction with local communities. Community Boards are encouraged to recognise this and facilitate action to consolidate and expand community gardening in their areas.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Advocacy team arranges a tour for all Board members of selected community gardens in their area / around the city.

2. That following the above tour, the Board establish a subcommittee to assess and, if appropriate, promote the following initiatives:
 - (a) Ensuring that the Board's existing local community garden(s) be sustainable by June 2001.
 - (b) Establishing one new community garden by June 2001.
 - (c) Setting up a local tool library.
 - (d) Introducing raised beds to selected Council housing units.
 - (e) Increasing community and home composting.
3. That the subcommittee liaises with the Community Board Champion and report local progress back to a joint forum in February 2001.
4. That the Community Board/Subcommittee provide suggestions to the Community Gardens Facilitator on how best to implement any kitchen waste collection trial in its area, if at all.

THE COMMUNITY ADVOCATE COMMENTS:

There is much merit in the Community Gardens initiative, but it should not necessarily be seen in isolation. Rather, the proposal could be seen to be but part of a wider initiative aimed at "sustainability".

At the Council meeting on 24 August a report and recommendations was adopted on a proposed action plan to make Christchurch one of the world's leading sustainable cities. Inherent in the approach was an acknowledgment that "Community Boards already hold relationships with a vast range of community groups, and should play a leading role in not only developing a community vision but making sure it is implemented."

The ultimate task in acknowledging the importance of the issue of "sustainability" is probably the preparation of a 'sustainable plan' for the Board's community. In some ways this could be seen as an exercise similar to that involving the preparation of the Strengthening Community Action Plan (or, is it all part of SCAP itself??).

Having said that though there are likely to be a number of existing initiatives, processes, and groups already contributing to the sustainability of Christchurch. It is important that these are firstly identified before any duplication of effort arises.

The overall process for commitment by the Board will require a strategic approach defining:

- (a) What already exists?
- (b) What initiatives should be championed?
- (c) How can the community be empowered to recognise and continue any opportunities?
- (d) What funding may be required to assist the initiatives?

It is therefore recommended that the matter of “Community Gardens and “Sustainability” be referred to the Community Services Committee to work through with a view to developing a plan for the Board’s later adoption.

Chairman’s

Recommendation: That the matters covered in this report be referred to the Community Services Committee for further consideration.