

## 7. COMMUNITY GARDEN CHAMPION

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Corporate Plan Output: Sustainable Christchurch	

The purpose of this report is to recommend the nomination of a Community Garden Champion(s) to support and promote community gardening in the Community Board area and its integration with other Board initiatives.

### BACKGROUND

Community gardens have existed in the city for many years, but are increasingly being recognised for their valuable role in not only encouraging waste reduction, reuse and recycling, but also strengthening communities, raising self-esteem, education, employment skills training, participation and a sense of belonging in communities, increasing self-determination and empowerment.

The November 1999 report “Growing Communities – Organic Resources for Social Needs” proposed the expansion of community gardening in Christchurch in an effort to reduce the amount of organic waste entering the landfill, while simultaneously meeting a range of social needs. Organic material (currently comprising almost half the waste in domestic black bags in Christchurch) can be used as a valuable nutrient-rich resource to grow vegetables on plots of land in local communities, providing a community focus which creates meaningful and rewarding social engagement and employment for local people, with few barriers to participation.

Community Gardens also demonstrate clearly one way in which Christchurch can become a “showcase example of a good place to live with clear business, social, and community benefits”, as resolved by the Council in August 2000 when it received the report, “Let’s Dream a Little – Building a Sustainable Christchurch”. The Council “recognise(ed) the opportunity for the city to become an international leader in sustainability” in August 2000 and “committed itself to leading a process to build a sustainable Christchurch”.

### CHRISTCHURCH COMMUNITY GARDENS ASSOCIATION

Garden co-ordinators in the city have consolidated their work through the Christchurch Community Gardens Association, formed in 2000 to take community gardens to a new level in the city. This group secured Council funding which enabled them to employ two workers, a Community Gardens Advocate and a Field Worker. A public community gardens tour and development of a joint business case for community gardens are two examples of projects growing out of the strengthening of networking and relationship building following formation of the Christchurch Community Gardens Association.

Following their early success in a pilot kitchen waste minimisation trial with the Council in 2000, the Association is looking at opportunities for further collaboration to help the Council to meet its education and waste reduction goals as well as collecting a valuable nutrient resource sought after by the gardens.

In return for Council funding the Christchurch Community Gardens Association is:

1. Providing a single contact/referral point for community groups or individuals who are interested in establishing new community gardens.
2. Providing assistance to existing community gardens, including providing and developing networks, promoting sharing of information and resources, seeking alternative sources of funding and increasing community understanding and awareness of community gardens.
3. Encouraging the development of new community gardens across Christchurch.

### THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY BOARDS

Community Boards have been involved from the outset, each nominating an elected member as a Community Garden Champion for their area, with one Community Board even setting up a special Community Gardening sub-committee. Increased interest in community gardens is expected from a range of Units within the Council as the gardens’ ability to meet a wide range of mutual goals are recognised. Community Boards are ideally placed to oversee the co-ordination and integration of work by various Units, Advocacy Teams and community gardens in local communities.

It is suggested therefore that the Community Board consider whether it wishes to:

1. Appoint up to two Board members to “champion” community gardens in the Board area and act as a contact for information both locally and for networking with other community gardening initiatives across the city;
2. Provide support for existing local community gardens/groups, especially those which are able and willing to act as a demonstration garden for other groups wishing to establish a similar initiative.
3. Where appropriate, provide support for selected new groups to establish local community gardening initiatives.
4. Integrate the above support with the Board’s Strengthening Community Action Plan and other initiatives.

#### SUMMARY

Community gardens are increasingly being recognised for their valuable role in not only encouraging waste reduction, reuse and recycling but also strengthening communities, raising self esteem, education, employment skills training, participation and a sense of belonging in communities, increasing self determination and empowerment. The Christchurch Community Gardens Association was formed in 2000 to consolidate the work of individual gardens. Community Boards are ideally placed to oversee the co-ordination and integration of work by various Units, Advocacy Teams and Community Gardens in local communities and appointment of one or two “Community Garden Champion(s)” from the Community Board will help the oversight of this work.

#### NATURAL + PEOPLE + ECONOMIC 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.

#	CONDITION:	Meets condition ✓/✓0*	HOW IT HELPS MEET CONDITION:
<b>The Natural Step</b>			
N1	<b>Reduce non-renewable resource use</b>	✓	Reduced diesel required to collect and process kitchen waste.
N2	<b>Eliminate emission of harmful substances</b>	✓	Reduced carbon dioxide generated in collection and processing of kitchen waste
N3	<b>Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems</b>	✓	Encourages increased gardening and improves ecosystems in city.
N4	<b>People needs met fairly and efficiently</b>	NA	NA - See People Step + Economic Step
<b>The People Step</b>			
P1	<b>Basic needs met</b>	✓	Free/cheaply available fresh vegetables
P2	<b>Full potential developed</b>	✓	Education by participation, increased understanding of natural cycles, improved social skills, improves employment skills and experience
P3	<b>Social capital enhanced</b>	✓	Promotes social contact and community participation
P4	<b>Culture and identity protected</b>	✓	Locally based initiatives can promote sense of identity
P5	<b>Governance and participatory democracy strengthened</b>	✓	Improved confidence and engagement with range of governance groups

<b>The Economic Step</b>			
<b>E1</b>	<b>Effective and efficient use of all resources</b>	✓	Many recycled materials and huge volunteer input as well as ability to target and meet diverse individual needs locally maximises effectiveness and efficiency
<b>E2</b>	<b>Job rich local economy</b>	✓	Improves employment opportunities
<b>E3</b>	<b>Financial sustainability</b>	✓	Huge volunteer input & use of low cost resources minimises cost to Council

**Staff**

**Recommendation:** That the Community Board appoint a “Community Garden Champion” to promote community gardens and to help oversee the co-ordination and integration of initiatives with similar aims in the Board area and across the city.

**Chairman’s**

**Recommendation:** That, with future demands for this role, a ‘champion’ from both wards could be nominated.