



CITY OF VANCOUVER
POLICY REPORT
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING

Report Date: December 15, 2008
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TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Managing Director of Social Development and Director of Planning in
Consultation with the Manager of Sustainability and the Director of
Development Services

SUBJECT: Urban Agriculture Design Guidelines for the Private Realm

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT Council approve the Urban Agriculture Design Guidelines for the Private Realm, attached as Appendix A;
- B. That Council thank the community gardening experts, the members of the development community, and the Food Policy Council for their contribution to the development of these Guidelines; and
- C. That Council direct staff to report back by March 24, 2009 with a plan for implementing these Guidelines that includes provision for staff orientation and training, communication and orientation in the development community, and design & implementation of a policy evaluation process, including a timeline and budget.

GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The General Manager of Community Services RECOMMENDS approval of A, B and C.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager RECOMMENDS approval of A, B and C.

COUNCIL POLICY

April 23, 2002, Council adopted a definition and principles for sustainability to guide City actions and operations.

December 11, 2003, Council approved the Food Action Plan.

March 11, 2004, Council established a multi-stakeholder Food Policy Council to provide ideas and policy recommendations for how to improve the local food system.

November 3, 2005, Council approved the Green Building Strategy to develop specific guidelines and by-laws to enhance the environmental and human health performance of all Part 3 buildings.

May 30, 2006, Council called for the creation of 2,010 new food-producing garden plots in the city by January 1, 2010 as an Olympic legacy.

February 15, 2007, Council adopted the Vancouver Food Charter which sets out Vancouver's commitment to the development of a coordinated municipal food policy.

May 17, 2007, Council adopted the Building By-law including an objective to "develop guidelines for urban agricultural installations (voluntarily provided) outlining plot design, safety, support facilities, and access."

SUMMARY

This report recommends approval of the Urban Agriculture Design Guidelines for the Private Realm, attached in Appendix A. The Guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with the Zoning and Development By-law, to encourage and assist applicants in preparing, and staff in assessing, Development Permit Applications for private sites where urban agriculture is proposed as part of a consolidated common outdoor amenity space.

PURPOSE

'Urban agriculture' is an umbrella term referring to a range of activities related to growing plants for food, and other related uses, within or surrounding cities and towns. Urban agriculture, under the City's current working definition, includes community gardens, farmers markets, hobby bee-keeping, as well as shared garden plots and edible landscaping.

The intent of these guidelines is to address two components of urban agriculture as they apply to private development sites:

1. shared garden plots, and
2. edible landscaping

Urban agriculture activities on public lands will be addressed in future Council Reports.

DISCUSSION

The City's goals in encouraging urban agriculture include:

- Enhancing the City's food security and reducing the City's ecological footprint by reducing "distance to fork" through encouraging more locally grown, culturally appropriate and affordable food production,
- Encouraging increased social interaction in high density developments,
- Supporting and encouraging an environmentally and socially sustainable activity.

The City of Vancouver has responded to the desire for increased urban agriculture through policy development and other local initiatives. Council has approved several policies, motions and staff directives that relate directly and indirectly to achieving the overall objectives of implementing urban agriculture, including the 2,010 new garden plots by 2010 initiative, a motion in support of Farmers Markets, and the Vancouver Food Charter. The application of these guidelines is focused on urban agriculture in private, primarily residential developments which include consolidated common outdoor amenity space. The Urban Agriculture Design Guidelines for the Private Realm will assist:

- The development community in designing usable spaces for urban agriculture;
- City staff in evaluating proposals for urban agriculture;
- Residents who will be provided with access to well-integrated opportunities for urban agriculture.

A guideline was determined to be the best policy approach so that the principles and objectives of urban agriculture could be provided in a clear, simple document rather than amending all the applicable guidelines of the respective zones and Official Development Plans. In addition, since this integrates a variety of policy objectives from the Green Building Strategy and Food Policy, a guidelines approach was determined to be the most appropriate.

If approved, the guidelines will become a component of the City's proposed Green Building Strategy (GBS). The May 2007 GBS report recommended "develop[ing] guidelines for urban agricultural installations (voluntarily provided) outlining plot design, safety, support facilities, and access." Working with the GBS Technical Team, the Urban Agriculture sub-group, in consultation with the landscape development processing staff, drafted the following Urban Agriculture Guidelines for the Private Realm.

Consultation

Following the drafting of the guidelines by the GBS Technical Team, developers, landscape architects, urban gardeners and the Vancouver Food Policy Council were consulted with the intent of improving their functionality. The guidelines attached in Appendix A reflect the input received.

In addition, as part of the broader GBS consultation, staff sought feedback on the guidelines through a public open house held on December 10, 2007. The open house was attended by over 115 members of the public. The purpose of the open house was to inform members of the public on the development of initiatives related to the GBS and to receive feedback on those initiatives. No negative feedback was received on the topic of urban agriculture.

The Guidelines attached in Appendix A outline key considerations for both shared garden plots and edible landscaping in these topic areas:

Shared Garden Plots

- Siting and Access
- Co-locating with Other Amenities
- Design of Garden Plots

Edible Landscaping

- Stewardship
- Design Considerations

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Increasing opportunities for food production for urban residents will have positive social and environmental impacts through reducing “distance to fork” and through creating common recreational space.

CONCLUSION

Cities and municipalities are increasingly looking to develop innovative policies that address food-related issues in urbanized areas to create more equitable and sustainable food systems. The Urban Agriculture Guidelines for the Private Realm will be a key example of Vancouver’s leadership in the area of food and urban agriculture policy.

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City of Vancouver

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URBAN AGRICULTURE GUIDELINES FOR THE PRIVATE REALM



1.0 Application and Intent

At the time of adoption of the guidelines two adopted Official Development Plans (Southeast False Creek and East Fraser Lands) contain provisions encouraging urban agriculture. Subsequent rezonings and development applications are anticipated to include urban agriculture proposals. In future, City policy encouraging urban agriculture may be adopted in other areas. Beyond City policy, many residential development and rezoning proposals are also voluntarily incorporating urban agriculture into their development and landscape plans.

These guidelines are intended to provide guidance to proponents on the design of urban agriculture installations where they are proposed, and to be used by city staff in assessing these proposals. The use of numbered specifications is subject to interpretation and discretion by City staff.

Urban agriculture is a broad term referring to a range of activities for the growing of plants for food and other related uses, within or surrounding cities and towns. The goals for encouraging urban agriculture are to reduce “distance to plate”, encourage social interaction, and allow more locally grown food production.

These guidelines address two components of urban agriculture as they apply to private development sites:

1. shared garden plots, and
2. edible landscaping.

The provision of the features described in these guidelines should be compatible with other objectives for common outdoor amenity space and general landscaping needs.

2.0 Uses

Shared garden plots and edible landscaping are most appropriate where residential uses are proposed in multiple dwelling developments but could also be used for herb gardens associated with restaurants, and in common outdoor amenity spaces for other uses such as offices, schools or community centres.

3.0 Design Considerations

3.1 Shared Garden Plots

Shared garden plots can best be provided as part of consolidated common outdoor amenity space. Where this is not generally provided, opportunities for gardening could be considered in private outdoor spaces: patios, balconies and roof decks. The incorporation of garden plots should enhance the overall design of that common outdoor amenity and should be considered as one of the variety of programmed uses of those spaces.

3.1.1 Siting and Access

- (a) Garden plot areas should be located to maximize sunlight access; this may include locating garden plot areas on rooftops, where possible.
- (b) Where garden plots are located on higher rooftops, they should be located in wind screened areas and without negative impact to views and building heights.
- (c) There should be direct access via elevator from loading areas at grade to garden plots located on a roof or podium, in order to provide easy access for wheelbarrows and hauling larger items, such as soil.
- (d) Some garden plots should incorporate enhanced universal accessibility features to accommodate wheelchairs, strollers and senior gardeners who have mobility restrictions.
- (e) Plots should be located as far away from vehicle traffic as possible, when located in a ground level courtyard.

3.1.2 Co-locating with Other Amenities

- (a) The design of garden plot areas should encourage social interaction by balancing a variety of different uses in the common outdoor amenity space.
- (b) Consideration should be given to co-locating with:
 - a covered outdoor space for shelter;
 - an outdoor children's play area;
 - an indoor amenity room with kitchen, washroom and an eating area; and,
 - outdoor seating areas for rest and social interaction.

3.1.3 Number and Size of Garden Plots

- (a) Where a consolidated common outdoor amenity space is provided, garden plots should be provided for 30% of the residential units that do not have access to private outdoor space of more than 100 square feet.
- (b) Garden plots should be a minimum of 24 square feet (ideally 3 feet by 8 feet), not including plot dividers, for maximum growing potential.
- (c) Large, undivided planting areas equal in square footage to individually separated plots may be provided in cases where individual plots are not desired or suitable.

3.1.4 Design of Garden Plots

- (a) There should be a maximum reach of 18 inches from the perimeter to the middle of the plot.
- (b) Garden plots should be integrated into the overall landscape design and could be accommodated in flexible, non-rectilinear forms.
- (c) Soil depth should be a minimum of 18 inches and should be made up of soil appropriate for growing a variety of food plants.
- (d) Soil should be tested for toxins (heavy metals, salinity and hydrocarbons) prior to being used in garden plots.
- (e) The height of garden planters should be a maximum of 2 feet for easy reaching into planter beds. Plots with enhanced universal accessibility features should have a height of - 2.5 feet.

- (f) Toxic materials, such as pressure treated wood, should not be used where they will come into contact with soils that are growing food.
- (g) Protection of the roof membrane and soil drainage issues should be taken into consideration.

3.1.5 Support Facilities

- (a) Hose bibs should be provided within 20 feet of any garden plot.
- (b) A storage room or shed should be provided for tools; consideration should be given to providing smaller, personal storage for individual gardening tools.
- (c) A composting facility that is rodent-resistant, provides the ability to turn compost, and is of sufficient size to match garden capacity should be provided.
- (d) Consideration should be given to providing:
 - a potting bench,
 - an electrical outlet,
 - area lighting,
 - a greenhouse, of minimum 9 x 12 feet, if provided.

3.2 Edible Landscaping

Edible landscaping, the use of ornamental plants that also produce edible fruits, nuts, etc., is encouraged in areas that are easily accessible for harvesting, and that are protected from potential contamination. Edible landscaping can be incorporated as part of any landscaped areas.

A list of Edible Landscaping Plants is attached in Appendix A.

3.2.1 Stewardship

- (a) Edible landscaping that may drop fruits and berries, should be conveniently located in high pedestrian traffic areas fully accessible to residents, and not over public property to ensure that food is harvested without delay and to avoid attracting rodents and pests.

3.2.2 Design Considerations

- (a) The chart in Appendix A should be used to guide how and where edible landscaping is used on private development sites.

Appendix A

Edible Landscaping - Quick Reference Summary List

Note: Listed below is a quick reference summary of some recommended edible plants commonly used for landscaping purposes.

SPECIES NAME	COMMON NAME	OTHER LANDSCAPE VALUE
Perennials & Herbs		
<i>Cynara scolymus</i>	Globe artichoke	Dramatic accent plant in perennial borders and containers. Interplant with late-flowering perennials to hide foliage when it dies back
<i>Mentha spicata</i>	Spearmint	Can be invasive, therefore plant large areas where plants can be controlled by mowing in containers or fill in and be controlled by mowing.
<i>Origanum marjorana</i>	Sweet marjoram	In perennial borders, among annual plantings, along edges, and in containers.
<i>Origanum vulgare</i>	Oregano	In borders, among annual plantings, along edges, and in containers
Climbers		
<i>Actinidia arguta</i>	Chinese gooseberry	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences and cover pergolas or walls
<i>Actinidia chinensis</i>	Common kiwi	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences and cover pergolas or walls
<i>Vitis labrusca</i>	Grape	Climb up trellises, arbours, or fences, and cover pergolas or walls
Evergreen Groundcovers		
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Kinnikinnick	Along edges and as barriers
<i>Cornus canadensis</i>	Bunchberry	Along edges, as barriers, and as understory
<i>Thymus praecox articus</i>	Creeping thyme	Along edges and banks, in borders, and between cracks in pathways and walls
Deciduous Groundcovers		
<i>Fragaria chiloensis</i>	Coastal strawberry	Along edges and open sites near ocean
<i>Fragaria vesca</i>	Woodland strawberry	Along edges, in open sites, and as understory
<i>Rubus chamaemorus</i>	Cloudberry	Along edges, trailing over walls, and as understory
<i>Rubus ursinus</i>	Trailing blackberry	In borders, along edges, and in open sites and disturbed areas
Evergreen Shrubs		
<i>Mahonia nervosa</i>	Dull-leaved Oregon grape	In borders and along edges
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>	Rosemary	In borders, barriers, and container
<i>Salvia officinalis</i>	Sage	In borders, barriers, and container
<i>Vaccinium ovatum</i>	Evergreen huckleberry	In borders and as hedges
Deciduous Shrubs		
<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	Saskatoon berry	In borders and as hedges
<i>Corylus cornuta var. californica</i>	Hazelnut	In borders and as hedges
<i>Oemleria cerasiformis</i>	Indian plum	In parks and borders and as hedges
<i>Ribes divaricatum</i>	Coastal black gooseberry	in borders as hedges
<i>Ribes laxiflorum</i>	White-flowered currant	In borders and as hedges
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry	

<i>Rubus leucodermis</i>	Black raspberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Rubus parviflorus</i>	Thimbleberry	in borders and as barriers
<i>Rubus spectabilis</i>	Salmonberry	in borders and as barriers
<i>Sambucus cerulea</i>	Blue elderberry	in borders and as a screen or barrier
<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i>	Soapberry	In borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i>	Highbush blueberry	in borders and as a screen or hedge
<i>Vaccinium membranaceum</i>	Black huckleberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium ovalifolium</i>	Oval-leaved blueberry	in borders and as hedges
<i>Vaccinium parvifolium</i>	Red huckleberry	in borders and as understory
<i>Viburnum edule</i>	High-bush cranberry	in borders and as barriers
Evergreen Trees		
<i>Arbutus unido</i>	Strawberry tree	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and as barrier or screen
<i>Laurus nobilis</i>	Sweet bay	Street tree, barrier or in containers
Deciduous Trees		
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut	
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	European filbert	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and as barrier or screen
<i>Cydonia oblonga</i>	Quince	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and espaliered as barrier or screen
<i>Ficus carica</i>	Fig	Shade trees in parks and espaliered as barrier or screen; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Juglans regia</i>	Persian walnut	Shade trees in parks
<i>Malus fusca</i>	Wild crab-apple	Accent plant along edges and near entries, in borders, and espaliered as barrier or screen
<i>Malus species</i>	Apples	In parks and borders and espaliered as screens and hedges
<i>Morus nigra</i>	Mulberry	Background tree in borders, as a screen, and weeping varieties as accent trees
<i>Prunus dulcis</i> var. <i>dulcis</i>	Almond	Small shade trees and along streets; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Prunus cerasus</i>	Sour cherry	Beautiful accent tree in park, yard, or border; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Prunus salicina</i>	Japanese plum	Accent trees in borders; dwarf varieties in containers
<i>Pyrus communis</i>	Pear	Shade trees in parks and espaliered as barrier or screen; dwarf varieties in containers