



MUNICIPALITY OF THAMES CENTRE

REPORT NO. CS-004-24

TO: Mayor and Members of Council
FROM: Director of Community Services and Facilities
MEETING DATE: March 11, 2024
SUBJECT: **Community Garden**

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. CS-004-24 be **RECEIVED** for information;

AND THAT Council **DIRECT** staff to proceed with the development of a new Community Garden outside of the FlightExec Centre in addition to supporting the existing Community Garden at the Thorndale Library within approved 2024 budget allocation of \$15,000.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider hosting a Community Garden pilot project for the 2024 growing season.

BACKGROUND:

At the September 25, 2023 meeting of Council, a resolution was passed, directing staff “to facilitate a proposal to host a community garden pilot project for the 2024 growing season by identifying potential partners, proposing possible location(s) and providing capital and operating cost estimates to be brought forward as a part of the 2024 budget deliberations.”

In December 2023, funding was allocated for this potential initiative as part of the approved 2024 Operating Budget.

COMMENTS:

Since a major cost of creating a new community garden would be servicing the location for water (service line and water meter costs roughly \$10,000), it was decided to focus on municipal properties that already have water. Please refer to the first attachment for a summary of the top recommended locations. Beyond water service, the other main costs would be fencing, storage shed or bin, soil, seeds and/or plants, signage and garden tools.

Based on the attached spreadsheet, staff is recommending the creation of a new Community Garden outside of the FlightExec Centre (within the fenced area that was previously used by the co-op nursery) and supporting the existing community garden at the Thorndale Library. This will provide access to community gardens in our two largest communities with both locations having advantages over other possible sites. The Dorchester location already has fencing, a storage shed, and water, while the Thorndale location is already established.

Various community groups were contacted to inquire as to their potential interest and/or involvement in a community garden project. This included groups such as agricultural societies, horticultural societies, along with Lions, Kinsmen and Optimists Clubs. At the time of submitting this report, ten groups expressed interest in supporting this project. In addition, the Seniors Centre is considering a community garden class/program which could further support this project.

The main anticipated challenge for this pilot project will be obtaining, maintaining and coordinating the desired volunteers to help establish and maintain the gardens. Senior Centre involvement and community group involvement would help minimize this concern.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The 2024 Operating Budget was approved with the inclusion of \$15,000 for a potential Community Garden pilot project as part of Council Initiatives. The main start-up costs for this project will be a potential newly located hydrant for the Dorchester location, along with soil, fertilizer, seeds/plants, signage and tools for both locations. The 2024 approved budget amount is sufficient to allow both locations to be fully operational if approved by Council.

Further, the Canadian Parks & Recreation Association (CPRA) has a “Green Jobs Initiative” grant which Thames Centre has applied to. If successful, this would provide \$5,000 towards hiring one youth this summer to focus on green initiatives, which would include this project, along with maintenance of our hanging flower baskets and involvement in any municipal tree planting initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLAN LINK

Pillar: *Active Living*

Goal: *Increase the accessibility and programming of recreational services, especially to community youth and seniors*

CONSULTATION:

Devon Brown, Parks & Facilities Supervisor
Luke Murray, Parks & Facilities Foreman
Karen Gress, Senior Centre Coordinator
Lindsay Brock, Director of Library Services, Middlesex County Library
Jean Moir, Branch Supervisor, Dorchester & Thorndale Libraries

James Chang, Public Health Inspector, Middlesex London Health Unit

REFERENCES:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

Community Garden – Possible Locations

Prepared by: S. MacDonald, Director of Community Services & Facilities

Reviewed by: D. Barrick, Chief Administrative Officer