

FAQs

1. Will the garden be an eyesore?

Because of the central location of this community garden, we will make an investment upfront in durable attractive materials for the raised beds that will last 20 or more years. Allotment holders will be required to keep their plots tidy or risk losing their plot. Of course, art and individual expression will still be encouraged!

2. Will the garden be carefully managed and maintained?

We have put a lot of thought into our membership structure to ensure accountability. Experience has shown that commons gardens can be challenging to maintain without a membership base. In this community garden, allotment-holders will be required to help maintain the commons in exchange for the privilege of having a plot. Members without allotments will also help maintain the commons in exchange for access to produce from the communal plots. Failure to fulfill their duties (including maintenance of their allotment) will result in loss of their plot or member access. We will also schedule regular work parties and invite garden users and community groups to participate.

3. Will the garden need to be fenced?

Unfortunately a deer fence is a necessity in this neighbourhood (if your garden has been spared so far you are lucky!). Our deer fence is meant to keep deer out, not people. It will be tall, but see-through, and gates will never be locked. We are doing everything we can to make the garden welcoming—with a wheelchair accessible path linking it to the greenway and the playground, lots of gates from all directions, and beautiful entrance arbours.

4. Will the garden have paths that make access to the rest of the park easy?

Gates will be unlocked at all times, with paths leading in various directions. If you prefer to go around, there will still be a space along the west fence.

5. Isn't an allotment garden privatizing a public space?

The occupancy permit granted by the City is only for three years and does not involve any transfer of land ownership. Instead, a community garden means a shift in the use of this site, much as would the installation of a playground, or a tennis court. The space will continue to be open to the public and provide many benefits to the community, including a portion of harvests going to community organizations. The allotments themselves take up only 6% of the total space requested for the garden, with communal beds taking up another 5%.

6. Is this being paid for with tax dollars?

The construction & maintenance of the garden will be the responsibility of the community garden volunteers reporting to the Oaklands Community Association—we will seek grants from foundations will do our own community fundraising. The City will contribute water (but will no longer have the expense of mowing the whole area).

7. Will the compost bins attract rats?

Many houses in Victoria already have backyard composts, so our contribution to the overall rat problem will be minor. Rats are primarily attracted to food scraps. Food scraps will not be permitted in our general compost bins, but will instead be placed in an onsite 'Green Cone', which is rat-resistant. We have included a small yearly budget for pest management.

8. How will you prevent the garden attracting illicit activities into the Park, as well as campers.

Although we intend for the garden to be welcoming to all people, we also want everyone, especially families, to feel safe at all times. A prerequisite for our permit from the City is to maintain sightlines to deter hidden activities. We have also strategically placed gates throughout so that a quick exit is possible from anywhere.

Public benches will be comfortable for sitting but not sleeping. Because of its location adjacent to a playground, this site does not allow campers, and this is strictly enforced by the police.

9. Why is this the first I've heard of the Community Garden?

We have been doing public consultation since fall 2015, when we sent out a preliminary survey to the Oaklands email list. Since then we've held a walkabout of potential sites, hosted a weekly table at the Sunset Market, the 2016 Garage Sale, and conducted a survey that had 121 respondents. In August 2016, based on survey responses, we chose Oaklands Park as the potential site and since then have held a general public planning session, a design workshop, an open house, and a pop-up info session at the park. We door-knocked all the adjacent neighbours and sent letters twice. We did not deliver letters to mailboxes marked 'no soliciting'.

10. Can I still give feedback on the design?

We are very open to hearing your feedback! We will be submitting our proposal to the City in early June, so there is a little time still to make changes to the basic design. However, the City only needs to approve permanent features such as paths, fences, and shed. For other non-permanent features, we expect the design to evolve as we continue to invite input from many sources.

