

Little Mountain/Riley Park Community Garden *Expression of Interest:*

A GARDEN AT THE CENTRE OF THE CITY

Little Mountain
Neighbourhood House



Community Garden - what a significant statement for the city to make at its geographical core! If you share in our vision for this site, you will know that this unique opportunity will create a significant destination landmark as well as have local and broad societal implications. The community garden will be the social anchor for Main Street and make a valuable contribution to the identity of Main Street and the City of Vancouver. A place for Vancouverites to publically congregate, work together, and celebrate the very core of our lives together: SOIL, TOIL and HARVEST.

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Location

The north-west corner of East 23rd Avenue and Main Street (*from year 2005 to present*)



Section One: The Seeds

This Expression of Interest is proposed in response to a call by the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department for Expressions of Interest to develop community gardens.

“We” are a steering committee composed of members of a neighbourhood public agency (Little Mountain Neighbourhood House), members of a city-wide community group (Village Vancouver), and members of the immediate neighbourhood surrounding the proposed community garden site. Should our proposal be accepted, there will be a profusion of participation and collaboration amongst these three sources, not only bringing the plans to fruition, but also in ongoing participation in the project.

The Host Organization: *Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society (LMNHS)*

Established in 1978, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House (LMNH) is an active community hub that provides inclusive programming for children, families, youth, immigrants, and seniors in the Little Mountain/Riley Park neighbourhood of Vancouver. Our diverse clientele and community members include refugees and immigrants, seniors, single parents, families with young children, families at risk, and children and youth. Our mandate is to provide social, educational, cultural, settlement, and recreational services for the different age groups, ethnic groups, families, and the wider community. LMNH actively facilitates the community to participate, and have voice and agency, in the development of a healthier and more inclusive community.

LMNH takes an active role in community development initiatives through collaboration, building strong partnerships, leading community projects, promoting, organizing, and

facilitating activities in the Little Mountain/Riley Park community. LMNH also has a history of coordinating community-based food security programs and initiatives. For these reasons we believe Little Mountain Neighbourhood House is an ideal organization to develop and maintain a collaborative community garden in partnership with supporting and local residents, organizations, schools, and businesses.

The Supporting [co-host] Organization: Village Vancouver

Village Vancouver (VV) consists of several community-based groups who are taking action in the areas of sustainability, community resilience, social justice, and health. Activities consist of connecting people together in their neighbourhoods ("villages") and around common interests. Village Vancouver hopes to help Vancouver, and the whole metropolitan area, evolve from the ground up to a less energy-consumptive, less polluted, more equitable, celebratory and healthier community. Village Vancouver is an entirely volunteer-driven incorporated society of 1500 Vancouver residents, including several hundred already involved in local community gardening. Village Vancouver held 54 urban gardening workshops in 2010, led by professional farmers and master gardeners from the Lower Mainland and Sunshine Coast. Many informal garden mentoring relationships exist in every one of our 12 organized Villages; VV has established or support Neighbourhood Food Networks throughout the City. Village Vancouver members have also spearheaded and organized collaborative permaculture food gardens on private land in Kitsilano and Fairview. The Main Street neighbourhood (MSN) is one of Village Vancouver's member 'villages' and has been active since 2009 with approximately 95 members. MSN has participated in the annual Mount Pleasant Day, the Main Street CarFree Day, and the Sharing-Our-Wealth Festival, and has held dozens of local potluck events, canning workshops, seed-sharing get-togethers, and film nights.

Local Neighbourhood Demand and Interest in Community Gardens

For over a decade Little Mountain Neighbourhood House has been a hub for local food security programs and initiatives. We offer community kitchens, cooking programs for seniors and children, community potlucks, healthy eating programs, Food Skills for Families training, and gardening and canning workshops offered in partnership with local organizations such as Village Vancouver and the Vancouver Fruit Tree Project. Through these initiatives both an interest—and gap—has emerged in the area of *community gardens*.

Neighbourhood residents have approached LMNH on several occasions asking why we do not organize community gardens; we have come to recognize a demand for an external community garden space that would serve as a practical and community-building initiative: 1) to increase beautification of our neighbourhood 2) create educational opportunities for local residents by allowing them to partake in gardening and outdoor food workshops, learning from garden experts and each other; 3) build and maintain a safe, welcoming, and inclusive space where local residents could meet, greet, garden, and strengthen the community spirit that is a trademark of Little Mountain/Riley Park neighbourhood.

Applicants experience with volunteers

Little Mountain Neighbourhood House facilitates people's ability be involved with the community, gain new skills, and have a voice through volunteerism. For many decades, volunteers have played a leadership role in identifying community needs, opportunities, program development; and in welcoming others and bridging community members into our programs. LMNH trains, screens, places, and supports approximately 300 volunteers each year. Volunteers receive ongoing recognition and appreciation, as well as opportunities to further their involvement with the Neighbourhod House and community.

LMNH will train, supervise, and support volunteers to maintain a community garden space. LMNH will involve volunteers in the planning and building of the garden, and enable them to facilitate gardening and food workshops. In partnership with Village Vancouver, we have access to dozens of seasoned and avid gardeners who will contribute their time and gardening expertise in order to make the community garden an enjoyable and educational space for the community.

Additional Supporting Partners:

- British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT) –Community Nursing Program
- Vancouver Fruit Tree
- Alliance for People's Health (APH)
- Food Action Collective for Transformation and Sustainability (FACTS)
- Metro Vancouver Alliance (MVA)
- Little Mountain Settlement Services
- Local elementary and high schools
- Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS)
- Little Mountain/Riley Park Community Service Providers Network
- Local businesses*

*** See attached list of letters from supporting businesses**

Additional Funding Sources

Once we have city approval to build the community garden on the site there are a number of potential sources of funding that we will apply for:

- a) *Greenest City Neighbourhood Grant* - The Greenest City Neighbourhood Grants encourage groups to assist the City of Vancouver in reaching its goal of becoming the Greenest City on Earth by 2020.
- b) *Neighbourhood Matching Fund* - The Neighbourhood Matching Fund supports projects by neighbourhood-based groups who want to make creative improvements to local public land. It supports projects that actively involve people in developing community and building neighbourhood connections while improving parks or other public spaces.
- c) *The Vancouver Park Board* – The Board will supply funds of up to \$10,000 to match the contribution that the community makes through other funds raised, donated supplies and/or volunteer labour.
- d) *Neighbourhood Small Grants* – Neighbourhood Small Grants provide up to \$500 for a community project.
- e) *Evergreen Foundation* – Evergreen’s Common Grounds Grants are offered to support community groups in protecting and restoring urban green spaces. All proposed projects must be open to the community, should have a strong volunteer-involvement component, and must be located entirely on publicly accessible lands. Community groups must be working in partnership with their local municipality or other institutional partner such as federal or provincial government agencies, crown corporations or publicly funded institutions (such as a university or hospital).
- f) *Fido – Evergreen Quick Start Grants* - For local groups working on restoration and stewardship initiatives or community development in Canadian cities. The grants also support community gardening projects involving native plants and food gardening. Grant amounts are \$1,000–\$2,000.

Section Two: The Soil



Growing community and growing food are closely intertwined activities important to a healthy and sustainable neighbourhood. This project will introduce an innovative and collaborative farming solution to a sunny urban lot located directly on Main Street—a site where it belongs and where it will contribute significantly to Vancouver’s food security, human and ecological health, and neighbourhood resilience. This project will not only raise several thousand pounds of healthy, local, zero-carbon, and cost-free food; this project will also focus on teaching everyone--young, old, and all in between—how to create food gardens on land throughout the community.

The Site Location: The north-west corner of East 23rd Avenue and Main Street

We are aware of a plan to build a Burn Unit on this site, and therefore realize that we are ‘borrowing’ the site on a strictly time-limited basis. The site is located at nearly the exact geographical epicentre of the City of Vancouver, equidistant from Boundary Road to the east, UBC to the west, Marine Drive to the south and Downtown to the north. The site is on the North-West corner of East 23rd Avenue and Main Street (site of the former 3867 – 3869 and 3891 Main) (see appendix 1/diagram 1). The location of this site on a major thoroughfare provides a unique visibility advantage that will make it a popular landmark and destination location. We believe that the presence of this very high visibility community garden will have an impact on those who view it as one drives, buses, or cycles past. Embedded amidst storefronts, the site will enhance the pedestrian and vehicular experience. The site itself, and the presence of activity on the site, will draw notice and encourage curiosity and increasing participation.

Site Opportunities: The site area is just over 7500 square feet, offering significant space for multiple raised beds in addition to open space for community use (see appendix/1 photo 1). The presence of a large south-facing wall also offers a unique opportunity for vertical gardening through the application of Green Wall technologies (see appendix 2/photos 1-4); the available and accessible wall area offers another 900 square feet of shadow-free and perfectly-oriented growing space.

There are no current tree canopies overshadowing the site in any significant way. Two street trees on Main Street of 20 to 30 feet in height are to the east of the site and will only throw early-morning shadows. No buildings overshadow the site at any time of year from 9:30AM until 3:30PM (standard time).

The topography is nearly level, with a 15cm fall-off from the SW corner highpoint to the NE corner low point. We can use this gentle slope to capture water incident on the site, and puddling will be limited, except in a few areas.

All in all, this sunny, south-oriented site has both significant solar exposure, heat-retaining thermal mass on-site, and protection from the weather afforded by buildings to the north and west. A planned hedgerow on the eastern side can offer weather protection from this direction.

The current site is encapsulated with concrete in both skim-slab and thicker treatments, all of which we would leave in situ. The ground is smooth enough for comfortable walking, but a light ground cover of pea gravel or similar permeable path material might be used in some areas where the ground was less smooth.

Section Three: The Tool



Village Vancouver is actively collecting and reclaiming lumber from all over the city, and where this lumber is no longer construction grade, we expect to use it to build raised garden beds on this site. Volunteer labour will be used to construct the features of the site. We will use almost exclusively reused materials and are also committed to constructing the beds and small garden implements and supplies shed of approximately 100 sf using fasteners (screws and bolts) to ensure easy disassembly and further life-cycle use for decades to come.

We will install simple wooded raised beds from reclaimed local demolition lumber and line the bottoms of each bed with plastic or other impermeable material to ensure no historical pollutants in the ground beneath the site could leach upward into the soil and roots of the food plants grown in the beds. We will make sure most raised beds can be reached by a wheelchair, so gravel coverage will be used sparingly. Site preparation for the essentials of the large food garden would take no longer than a week using volunteer labour only. More complex installations, such as the green wall, might take more time, and could be implemented as an ongoing educational project. A small garden tool-sharing shed will be built after the beds were prepared and planted. We expect to utilize City services to supply surplus compost and/or dirt.

The Village Vancouver Main Street Neighbourhood Seed Bank will be the source of all plantings and represents a locally-produced community asset of adapted seed stock tracked and saved by dozens of people who live around this site. The use of such local seed stock will vastly improve the hardiness and yield of both what is planted on site, as well as what is expected to be shared from this Seed bank within the wider community.

Section Four: The Harvest



Collaborative Community Garden:

One of the reasons that we have such a strong belief in the widespread popularity of our plan is that we propose a community garden with a unique quality. We propose a garden that is truly community-oriented. We propose a ‘collaborative community garden’ by which we mean that the entire site will remain open to public use within the parameters of a community garden/public performance and visual art space. The functioning of the site will evolve out of the needs, imagination, desires, skills and abilities of the community. The garden beds will be developed, maintained, gardened and harvested by groups and not occupied by any one individual. The food produced in the garden will be for the widespread benefit of the community. For example the food could be utilized in social programs operating out of Little Mountain Neighbourhood House and Cityview Baptist Church as well as distributed to those in need. The public spaces between the raised beds will be available to the public on a casual recreational basis and as a site for hosting public educational and arts events.

Zero Waste

Healthy Soil is the foundation of agriculture, and building this soil will require the entire neighbourhood to contribute organic matter of all types. From food waste to yard clippings and cardboard and paper to fallen leaves, all biodegradable matter has a place in the permaculture circle of life that will feed our soil restoration effort. We plan to source or construct a large, 3-5 cubic metre, animal-secure, and properly-ventilated composting facility that will be of sufficient capacity to absorb at least one and a half tonnes of

organic waste per year. The rich soil created from this effort will be used on site or given freely to gardeners in the community.

Trees/Greening

We envision raising crops year-round on this site including perennial plants that will keep the site tidy, green and productive year round. A full permaculture restoration of the site with native plants is a longer term goal which will help to create shade areas for some crops and ensure that community meeting spaces within the Commons will be inviting and comfortable.

Community Garden Education Space

Village Vancouver has extensive experience in facilitating 70-80 gardening-related workshop topics. The organization will post information regarding workshops on the cob bulletin board and run the workshops in the open spaces on the site. We expect to use this site intensively as a training ground and model garden for many workshops on a wide range of topics in collaboration with LMNH. Workshop topics will include worm and drum composting, seed planting, apartment gardening, soil composition and nutrient balancing, winter crops, vermiculture, soil preparation, small container gardening, raised bed design, beekeeping, seed saving, permaculture design and companion planting. In addition, we see it as a compelling public space for other community-building activities such as public art displays, public poetry or drama performances, neighbourhood meetings, potluck events, swap fairs, and many other festive gatherings.

Active Transport

While not a direct focus of the project, we expect that all volunteers and users of the site will be local enough to walk or cycle there. We will provide cycle parking within the site, promoting greater security from theft and demonstrating the importance of active transportation options. We are also fortunate to be located directly on the Main Street bus line and only two blocks from the King Edward route.

Inclusive

We strongly believe that the community garden needs to reflect the diversity of the community it is home to. Many of our ethnic minorities and newcomers have extensive agrarian experience in their countries of origin and we intend to actively encourage and facilitate their participation/contributions in the garden through LMNH. The garden will be wheelchair accessible. Site events and activities will be designed to be attractive to individuals of all ages.

Giving back to the community

The give and take relationship established through the volunteer-driven work on this site and volunteer-bound food production establishes a close and nutritive bond of significant health and economic value to a broad cross-section of the Main Street community. We expect this site to remain volunteer-staffed for the foreseeable future. We expect that all production from this site, will be enjoyed by LMNH programs, community groups tending plots and for community education and celebrations.

Access to Green Space

There is only one community garden (City View Baptist Church at Sophia & E. 28th) that exists in the Little Mountain Neighborhood. Our community garden would help the city reach its Greenest City Access to Nature Goal, Target 1: All Vancouver residents live within a five minute walk of a park, greenway, or other green space by 2020.

Summary

Our proposed community garden would meet the diverse needs of people living in this community, while serving for practical reasons of health, education, beautification, education, and community building. A collaborative and sustainable model, it will be supported and sustained by local residents, neighbours, businesses, and organizations.

Section Five: Appendices

Appendix 1
Diagram 1



Appendix 1
Photo 1

Map - Aerial Apr 2009



Scale: 1:200

Data Quality not Guaranteed

Aug 29, 2011 22:06

Appendix 2
Photo 1



Appendix 2
Photo 2



Project Name: Urban Farming Food Chain - Los Angeles Regional Food Bank Green Wall
Year: 2008
Owner: Urban Farming
Location: Los Angeles, CA, USA
Building Type: Non-Profit
Type: Living Wall, Test/Research
System: Single Source Provider
Size: 188 sq.ft.
Slope: 100%
Access: Accessible, Open to Public
Submitted by: George Irwin, Green Living Technologies

Designers/Manufacturers of Record:
Project Visionary: Joyce Lapinski, Director, Urban Farming
Guardian Wall Architect: Robin Osler, Emily Osler Architects (EOA)
Designer / Manufacturer / Implementation / Education: George Irwin, Green Living Technologies (GLT)

Photo 3



Appendix 2
Photo 4



Edible vertical gardens can easily be established by using the Elmich Green Wall System utilising VGM® (Vertical Greening Module) Modules which contain a geotextile fabric bag holding the planting media. To start a garden, plants (vegetables/herbs like mint, chicory, rosemary and sage) are inserted into the planting media through slits made in the fabric. After about eight weeks, the plants have filled out and anchored themselves. The Modules are then ready to be fitted with mounting brackets and anchored onto pilasters mounted to a wall.