



2024-2027

Multi-Year Budget

City of London



Business Case #P-26 - Community Gardens Program Expansion to Support Food Security

Primary Strategic Area of Focus: Wellbeing and Safety

Primary Outcome: London has safe, vibrant, and health neighbourhoods and communities.

Primary Strategy: Increased focus on addressing food security in priority neighbourhoods.

Business Case Type: Additional Investment

Description: Expand the London Community Gardens Program in priority neighbourhoods

Service(s): Community Development and Grants

Lead: Cheryl Smith, Deputy City Manager, Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services

Business Case Tax Levy Impact Table (\$ Thousands)

Tax Levy Impact Detail	2024	2025	2026	2027	2024 to 2027 Total
Annual Tax Levy Impact	\$12	\$162	\$45	\$195	\$414
Annual Incremental Tax Levy Impact	\$12	\$150	-\$117	\$150	\$195
Estimated Annual Tax Levy Impact %	0.00%	0.02%	-0.02%	0.02%	0.01% Average
Estimated Annual Taxpayer Impact \$ ¹	\$0.05	\$0.73	\$0.20	\$0.87	\$0.46 Average

Subject to rounding.

1) Calculated based on the average assessed value of \$252 thousand for a residential property (excludes education tax portion and impacts of tax policy).

What is Included in the Base Budget?

Base Budget Table (\$ Thousands)

Community Gardens	2023	2024 to 2027 Total	2028 to 2033 Total
Total Tax Levy Funded – Operating	\$203	\$812	N/A
Full-Time Equivalents	2.5	10.0	N/A
Total Capital	\$0	\$0	\$0

Subject to rounding.

Base Budget Summary

The current London Community Gardens Program provides over 500 Londoners access to twenty-one (21) community gardens where they are able to grow food and improve their physical and mental health. The program contributes to gardeners' overall wellbeing and addresses food security for residents across the city.

The Program coordination, engagement and community development is supported by Neighbourhood and Community-Wide Services. Environment and Infrastructure support the maintenance of the gardens, including provision of compost and mulch, water, supplies, repairs, opening and closing. The yearly cost to operate the program is just over \$200,000.

Business Case Summary

In April 2020, the Ontario government recognized the importance of community gardens as an essential source of fresh food for some individuals and declared them an essential service that was to remain open during the pandemic. Since 2020 the demand for garden plots increased to the point that the program reached capacity and a yearly waitlist was established. In 2022, the waitlist had approximately 66 individuals that were not able to access a plot. As prices of fresh food continue to increase, more and more individuals are planting gardens and for those that do not have access to private green space in yards, community gardens provide an option for them to grow their own food. In order to meet the high demand for this program, civic administration is looking to build one new community garden every other year starting in 2025.

In addition, Council identified improved health equity as an expected result in the 2023 – 2027 City of London Strategic Plan. To further this expected result, Council included a strategy to increase focus on addressing food insecurity in priority neighbourhoods. This investment will support this strategy by providing opportunities for more gardeners to access municipal space to grow their own food through the expansion of existing community gardens and creating new community gardens.

The investment outlined in this Business Case will be used to expand the London Community Gardens Program, by creating more plots and gardens. The expansion will focus on those neighbourhoods where residents are at a high risk of food insecurity and lack access to

private greenspace for gardening. Priority neighbourhoods are determined using the Social Risk Index (SRI). The SRI is comprised of nine indicators that when combined show the socioeconomic framework of a geographic area¹. The expansion will include:

- development of 30-35 more plots in existing gardens that are in areas of high social risk or see high demand, through accessibility improvements, standardization of plot size, and expansion where feasible; and,
- two new fully accessible gardens with 25 plots each, located in priority neighbourhoods with high social risk and lack access to private green space.

Residents and community partners will be engaged to help identify locations for new gardens and expansion of existing gardens. Community input and participation is vital to ensure the success and sustainability of and expanded London Community Gardens Program.

Financial and Staffing Impacts

Operating Budget Table (\$ Thousands)	2024	2025	2026	2027	2024 to 2027 Total
Expenditure	\$12	\$162	\$48	\$198	\$420
Revenue: Grants	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Revenue: User Fees	-\$0	-\$0	-\$3	-\$3	-\$6
Revenue: Savings from Existing Budget	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Revenue: Other (Specify funding source)	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Net Tax Levy	\$12	\$162	\$45	\$195	\$414

Subject to rounding.

Capital Budget Table (\$ Thousands)	2024	2025	2026	2027	2024 to 2027 Total	2028 to 2033 Total
Expenditure	\$12	\$162	\$12	\$162	\$348	\$522
Capital Levy	-\$12	-\$162	-\$12	-\$162	-\$348	-\$522
Debenture	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Reserve Fund	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Other	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0
Non-Tax Supported	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0	-\$0

Subject to rounding.

Environmental, Socio-economic Equity and Governance (ESG) Considerations

Environmental, Socio-economic Equity and Governance Relevance Profile for this Business Case:



Environmental:

Further investment in the London Community Garden Program will support the City's resilience to climate-change impacts, by:

- increasing productivity of public park spaces increasing overall sequestration of carbon
- increasing local production of food thereby decreasing greenhouse gas emissions of transport and production of food elsewhere; and,
- increasing pollinator plantings alongside food crops in support of biodiversity.

This business case does not include any new greenhouse gas emission sources or increased emissions from existing sources.

This business case is expected to avoid, reduce, or help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the community.

This business case is expected to improve or increase community adaptation and resilience in the community.

Socio-economic Equity:

Participation in the London Community Garden program is open to all Londoners and provides access to affordable, barrier free spaces to grow food. The gardens are vibrant places that have the ability to mirror the diversity and needs of the neighbourhoods they serve. They are important meeting spaces for social interaction and promote healthy lifestyles contributing to physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Enhanced intergenerational and cross-cultural connections can be found at many of the garden locations and reflect the makeup of the local communities in which they are found. The gardens provide opportunities for volunteering, leadership capacity building, and create a sense of neighbourhood identity.

Gardens can be found across the city and fifteen (15) of the twenty-one (21) gardens (71%) are located in high to somewhat high social risk areas. Many residents within these high social risk areas of the city are also prone to greater food insecurity which is alleviated somewhat by the ability to grow their own fresh food.

The location of future gardens will take into consideration the social risk index of an area as well as the type of housing in the immediate area, acknowledging that those who live in high and medium density residents do not have access to their own private yards.

Social Risk Index indicators: % of population one year and over who moved in the previous year, % of the population who do not speak one of the official languages, % of the population living under the low income measure-after tax, % of the population who immigrated to Canada between 2006-2016, % of income from Government Transfer Payments, % of families led by a lone parent, % of the population unemployed, % of the population without a high school diploma, % of household who own their own home.

Governance:

An increase in annual funding will result in more Londoners being able to participate in the London Community Gardens Program and grow their own food. Further enhancements to existing gardens will also allow greater accessibility and improvement to overall operations of the program. The risk of not proceeding is that the waitlist will continue to grow and there will be no new opportunities for Londoners in neighbourhoods of high social risk to participate in the community gardens program.

Additional Details

The purpose of the London Community Gardens Program is to provide Londoners with the opportunity to enhance their wellness and quality of life through involvement in the program. Community gardens serve as a welcoming and safe environment for Londoners to grow their own food, spend time in nature, exercise and socialize. While providing access to green space for those who may otherwise not be able to garden. More information can be found at <https://london.ca/living-london/community-services/neighbourhood-programs-funding/community-gardens>.