

**Neighbour to Neighbour's Hamilton Community Food Centre
Community Garden in Captain Cornelius Park
Community Consultation Report**

August 2017

Prepared for
Hamilton Community Food Centre, Neighbour to Neighbour
and Rolston Community Members



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Introduction

The Hamilton Community Food Centre (HCFC), a project of Neighbour to Neighbour, has secured funding for a community garden in Captain Cornelius Park, both of which are located in the neighbourhood of Rolston. A community garden had been identified as a need and desire by Rolston community members during community consultations that took place in 2016.

HCFC engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to facilitate five community consultations prior to the construction of the garden scheduled for October of 2017. The consultations gathered input from participants at Hamilton Community Food Centre programs in order to identify deliverables and design details of a garden that will respond to community needs. Consultations were completed by August 24, 2017. Approximately 85 community members of all ages offered their input during these consultations.

Method

Five consultations were held during five different HCFC programs and events that catered to varying demographics.

1. Corn Roast, August 16
2. Youth drop-in, August 18
3. Café and Market, August 19
4. Seniors Breakfast, August 22
5. Community Dinner, August 24

An information table was set up at most of the programs with paper surveys, a map of the garden, blank copies of the garden layout, and a volunteer sign-up sheet available for community members.

Paper surveys were available during all consultations, except for the youth drop-in. 26 community members filled out the paper survey.

A blank layout of the community garden was available for community members to design, draw, and write what they would like to see offered in the garden. This map was mainly filled in by children and youth aged 3 – 14, as well as a few adults. A total of 35 maps were submitted.

An informal group discussion about the garden took place at the Seniors Breakfast program. Approximately 16 older adults participated.

Recruitment

Community members who attended scheduled programming when consultations were set up were asked to share their input of the garden by filling out a survey, designing the garden, or through conversations.

Flyers were dropped off at homes on Mountain and Elkwood Drives that line Captain Cornelius Park and that would have a view of the garden. The flyers were an invitation for residents to attend a consultation.

Findings

Suggestions for making the garden welcoming

Accessibility

Community members noted that there are no existing paved paths to and through the garden within the park. They suggested that paved paths would make the garden both welcoming and safe for the community. Older respondents indicated that if Neighbour to Neighbour offered garden stools to volunteers, it would encourage older adults to participate in the garden.

Welcome signs and attitude

Many participants suggested that welcome signs would make the garden inviting to neighbours. Some also suggested posting signs all around the garden, as well as in languages that are spoken in the neighbourhood. It has been suggested that having a positive attitude and engaging in conversations with community by N2N staff would allow community members to get involved.

Workshops and events

Many participants were interested in a *learn and play* area for children and youth, and also suggested workshops in the garden catered to all ages to learn gardening skills as well as ways to use and cook crop. Participants showed interest in community events in and around the garden that incorporates the garden to some capacity. This could be used as a community introduction to the garden, to make it feel accessible and inviting, as well as ongoing events for education purposes.

Educational information

Respondents suggested posting information in the garden about what has been planted and growing. The information can include names in varying languages, how to take care of the plants, and how they can be used in cooking.

Communication and announcements of garden

Participants think that having a community board around the garden is a great idea. Information on the board can include a list of available programming and schedules of the garden, as well as potential events involving the garden. Participants also suggested utilizing *Mountain News* as a way to announce the opening of the garden and ongoing programming.

Making the fence welcoming

As participants were informed about a chain link fence that will go up around the garden, some suggested putting up art on the fence and putting up plants, such as pop-bottle gardens.

Open access, benches, used book library, graffiti wall

Some participants suggested not securing the fence with a lock in order for community members to access the garden any time. Many participants suggested having benches in the garden for the community to sit and enjoy the garden, and suggested that the benches be placed in shady areas. It was suggested that a used book library in or around the garden would encourage community members to regard the site as a learning environment. It would help to make the garden more welcoming to all ages. A designated graffiti wall was suggested as a way to engage the community, create a sense of stewardship, and to help prevent vandalism.

Concerns and suggestions around safety

Concerns

Rabbits, skunks, squirrels, and slugs were considered major concerns by participants to the health and growth of the plants. Participants were also concerned about vandalism of the garden and harvest being inappropriately taken.

Suggestions

Fencing was suggested to help keep the animals away. Raised garden beds and raising the entire garden were suggested as ways to define areas and to reduce potential damage caused by unwanted animals. Automatic closing gates were suggested as a way to ensure that the fenced gate remained closed as community members walk in and out of the garden. This would help the garden be free of unwanted animals.

Signs that indicate what section is for harvest and what section is for community picking will help to ensure that community members have a space for picking, and that volunteers have a space for harvesting crop that is kept intact. Lighting was suggested as a safety measure for community members who might access the garden during dusk, dawn, and overnight.

Survey responses

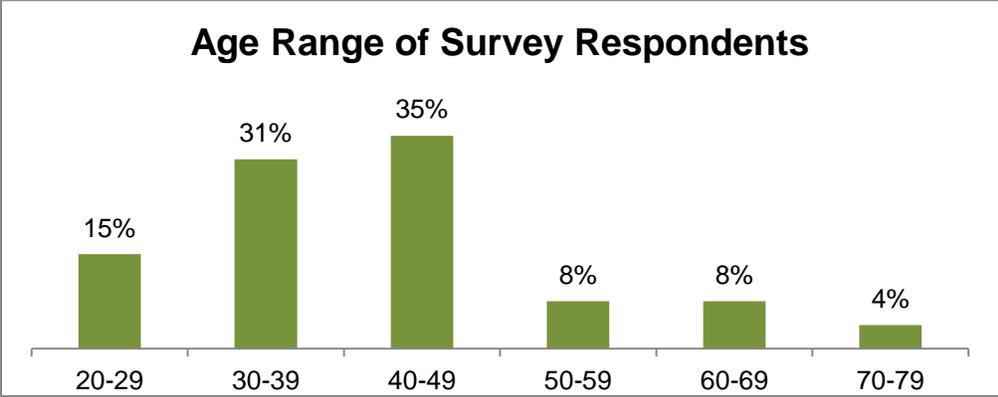


Figure 1: Age range of survey respondents

26 community members filled out the survey. Figure 1 shows that the majority of the respondents fall between the ages of 30 - 49.

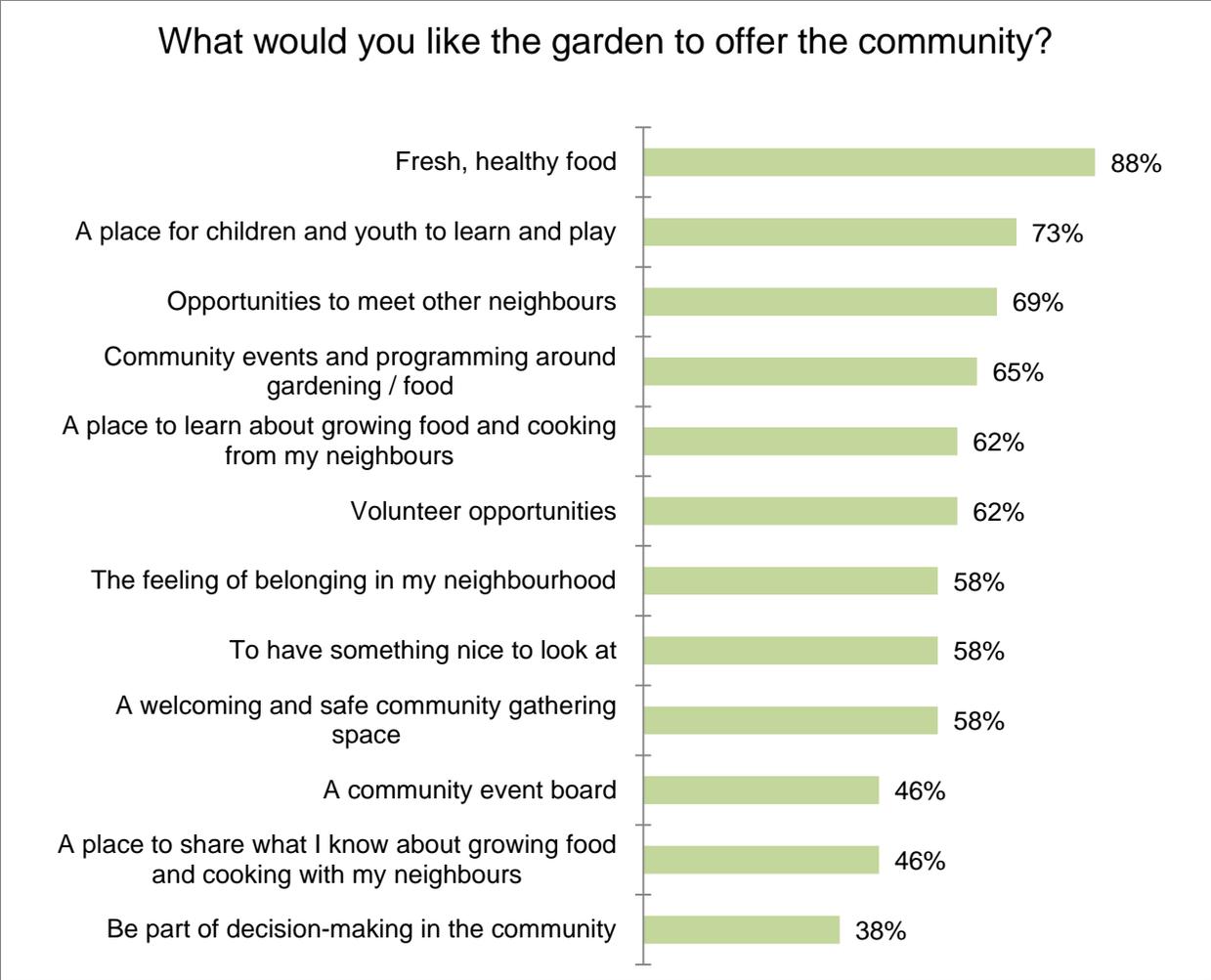


Figure 2: What would you like the garden to offer the community, survey results

A survey question asked respondents what they thought the community garden should offer the community. They were given a list of potential offerings along with an *other* option. 88% of 26 respondents indicated that they wanted the garden to offer fresh and healthy food, shown in Figure 1. 73% indicated that having a place for children and youth to learn and play in the garden was a good idea. Not shown in the survey results was the vast interest in having a place and program for all ages to learn about gardening within the garden. This input was gathered through conversations with community members.

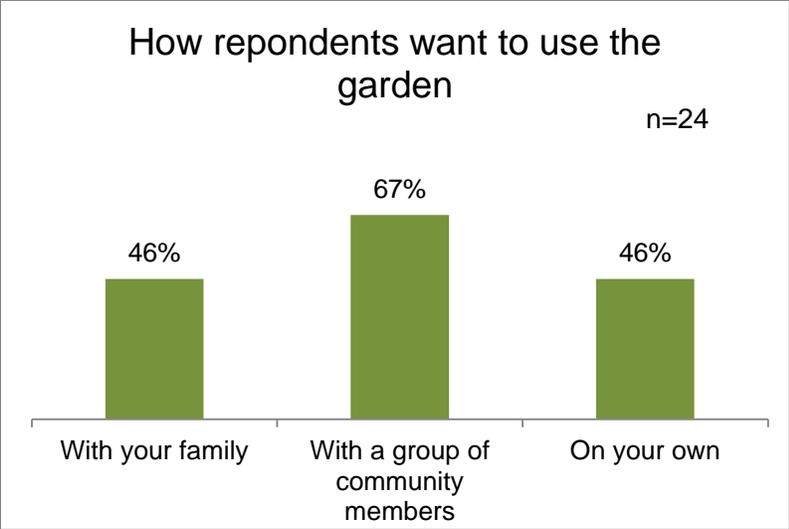


Figure 3: How respondents want to use the garden

24 respondents answered a question on how they want to use the garden. 67% indicated that they would like to use the garden (whether through volunteering, programming, leisurely use, etc.) with other community members. 46% responded that they want to use the garden with their family and 46% responded that they want to use the garden on their own.

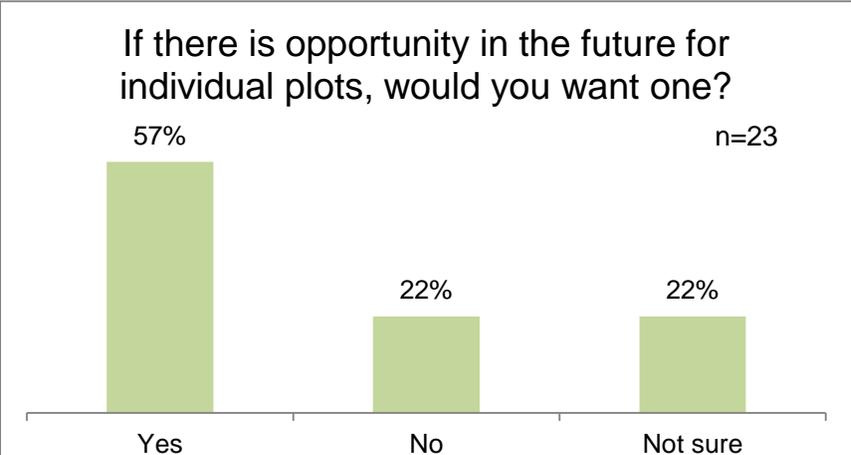


Figure 4: Individual plots

57% of the 23 respondents who answered this question said that they would like to have individual plots available in the garden. All participants were informed that the community garden will be available as a communal space for communal usage and will not include individual plots, however there may be an opportunity in the future.

The garden itself

Participants indicated through discussion and garden designs that they want the following flora in the garden:

Fruit

- blueberries
- strawberries
- apples
- pears
- watermelon
- cherries
- grapes
- black currants
- raspberries

Vegetables

- carrots
- broccoli
- lettuce
- radish
- tomatoes (hang the 'upside down')
- planters from poles)
- cucumber
- corn
- 3 sisters demo garden (corn, squash, beans)
- potatoes (a variety, including purple)
- rhubarb
- peppers
- mushrooms

Herbs and spices

- wild sesame
- jalapeno
- oregano
- parsley
- rosemary
- thyme
- molokhia (found in Middle East)

Respondents indicated that it would be a good idea to grow in the garden what they cannot find in their local stores. Respondents requested flowers as well as colour coordinated sections. One respondent shared the idea of splicing (or grafting) as a way to diversify any fruit tree and to utilize space. Some garden designs indicate ponds and sandboxes.

In conclusion

The majority of community members who participated in the consultations were already aware of the upcoming community garden and were already familiar with Captain Cornelius Park. Respondents are generally looking forward to enjoying the garden, in volunteering, in having their children learn about gardening and having a new opportunity to meet other community members.

Some respondents indicated that they live in apartment buildings and have not been able to grow their own garden because of the lack of land space. Some of these respondents used to enjoy their own gardens in their previous homes and are now looking forward to spending their time in N2N's community garden, either by themselves, with their children, or with friends in the neighbourhood.