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City of Colwood

To Whom It May Concern:

REQUEST FOR PAUSE OF THE COLWOOD CREEK COMMUNITY GARDEN HUB PROPOSAL

Context

The City of Colwood is not simply being asked to approval a proposal. It is being asked to enter into a long-term partnership involving public land, public resources, and public obligations. Council's role and responsibility is to evaluate the proposal independently in the interest of the broader community. With over 20,000 stakeholders, it is accountable to The Community,¹ Colwood.

The Colwood Garden Society has operated at City Hall for seven years, but as a separate entity, it has its own interests. Its leadership is accountable to its members. That it is a not-for-profit does not alter the reality that adding an amenity to a park would impact the surrounding neighbourhood, and those impacts must also be considered. If a for-profit developer brought a proposal to the City, it would work with Planning well before its proposal reached Council.

Citizens of Colwood expect Colwood Council to focus, "on listening to residents to understand citizen wants, needs and expectations as they make decisions about our community."² Council must factually examine if actions (not words) would:

- be in accordance with its established guiding plans and strategies,
- deliver meaningful, measurable progress towards its most important goals, and
- respect and be fair to:
 - Colwood Creek Neighbourhood residents, who would be most affected, and existing Colwood Creek Park users,
 - other Colwood residents, and
 - perhaps most importantly, current and future residents of Colwood's Intended Growth Areas who will be its largest groups of stakeholders.

To act strategically and proactively, each member of Council must be guided by, as a minimum, Colwood's Official Community Plan, Climate Action Plan, Strategic Plan, Parks Management Plan, and its Colwood Creek Park Management Plan to assess the suitability of the Colwood

1 <https://www.colwood.ca/media/file/colwood-org-chart-apr2026pdf> retrieved June 3, 2026

2 <https://www.colwood.ca/local-government/insights-statistics> retrieved June 3, 2026

Creek Park Community Garden Hub proposal. Excerpts are shown below; more may be found in Annex A.

OCP Policy 11.2.1.1	...City to “provide continuous, uninterrupted public access....”
OCP 14.1 Overview	“...There are opportunities to improve access to food, as physical proximity to fresh foods is linked to health outcomes. In Colwood, only 13% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a grocery store.”
OCP Policy 14.2.1.1(c)	Encouraging the distribution of community gardens and other food production spaces across the City, prioritizing areas of higher residential density...to maximize the number of residents who live within walking distance of one
OCP Policy 14.2.1.1(d)	Consider allowing neighbourhood residents and/or organizations to manage pocket parks as community gardens
City of Colwood Parks and Recreation Master Plan Figure 3 (p. 19)	Growth is projected primarily in the Royal Bay, Seaside, Colwood Corners and Latoria neighbourhoods with minimal or modest growth in other neighbourhood areas....
Strategic Plan • Strengthen Community + Sustain Nature	Enhance Parks, trails, implementing the parks management plans and expanding recreational opportunities for all ages
	Implement priority actions from the Climate Action Plan <i>“Transportation is responsible for ~57% of all GHG emissions in Colwood and is one of our highest priority areas for climate action.”</i>
Colwood Creek Park Management Plan Feature 11 (p. 20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to improve the trail network including the addition of shade trees and benches • Opportunity to plant additional shade trees to make the walking experience more comfortable in the summer months • Additional recreational amenities are not suggested for this zone given it is distant from the other built park amenities and it is in close proximity to residential neighbours. • Public engagement participants were supportive of limited upgrades to this area of the park.
Colwood Creek Park Management Plan 4.1 Recommendations Overview • Key Considerations	• Ongoing relationships with stakeholders are important. ...Continuing to work closely with stakeholders to seek a good balance of new amenities and flexible spaces, while being realistic and considering solutions that are equitable, will require ongoing discussion and efforts from all those involved.
Colwood Creek Park	• The park’s open spaces are well-loved and there was

Management Plan Recommendations C4 (excerpts)	overall support from respondents for passive recreation opportunities that require less intensive development of park space. • Dedicating areas within the park as multi-purpose open space allows for flexible use....
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A quick scan of that table immediately suggests that a systematic evaluation would be unlikely to support approval of this proposal; a rigorous evaluation might instead lead to a conclusion that a far different placement of community gardens is required.

The Proponent

At City Hall on May 14, 2026, we were among the residents to speak, and stayed afterwards to talk with both neighbours and members of The Colwood Garden Society. Its membership is not limited to Colwood residents; roughly half of its gardeners live elsewhere. We do not suggest that they are doing anything wrong if neither the Society nor the City limits plots to Colwood residents, but that insight is invaluable.

Clarity

For years, the Community Garden at Colwood City Hall has been presented and perceived by the public as a Colwood success story although at some point, it became a regional garden. To the best of our knowledge, Colwood is the only municipality that lets plots be rented by non-residents; Langford, for one, does not.

Consequently, certain statements on which the proposal is based are true but misleading. There may be a need for more community garden spaces, but if no Langford resident had a plot at our City Hall, there would not be a waitlist of 25 people. The Garden Society uses its shortage of 25 garden beds for leverage, but from a Colwood perspective, the shortage is overstated.

The Need
25 person waitlist for current garden – build it and they will come!

The City and Society indicate a successful City Hall model will apply to the Colwood Creek Park Community Garden: If it operates the same way, Colwood will meet some regional demand at taxpayers’ expense without actually effectively addressing the needs of its most densely populated neighbourhoods. What evidence does Council have that shows otherwise?

The issue is not whether community gardening is beneficial; it is whether benefits to Colwood would be optimized and we would make maximum progress towards our climate action goals, by implementing the proposal. Placing anything somewhere that would routinely require Colwood gardeners to drive from remote parts of their City, will raise GHG emissions. The climate action goal is to reduce them.

Langford’s community garden in Porcher Park³ is only open to Langford residents. It is small (33 beds, most 4’ X 4’, in a footprint of about 280 m²) and within a small park near large residential buildings — just what is recommended in Colwood’s Official Community Plan, and

3 Brian White spoke of it on April 13th, and Carol Brown on April 13th and May 14th. We note Langford’s initial outlay of \$40K and questions about operating costs reported in <https://goldstreamgazette.com/2026/01/07/langford-community-garden-looking-to-grow-operating-budget/> retrieved June 2, 2026. Most beds are 4’ X 4’, and Langford’s Five Year Plan allocates \$10 K annually for maintenance; advocates argue that even more funding is needed to manage the garden. Annual cost for a 4’ X 10’ bed is \$60; in Esquimalt, it is \$50.

in contrast to the proposal Colwood is considering. Only Esquimalt residents can get plots in Anderson Park; the [Esquimalt Garden Society's criteria](#) in Annex B may be a good model for Colwood.

Colwood's political leadership, City staff, and the Colwood Garden Society repeatedly reference the Agricultural Land Reserve and Agricultural Land Commission as important factors. A Freedom of Information request reportedly found no correspondence between the City and the ALC over the past four years, and no application appears in the ALC Public Search portal.⁴ For transparency, residents need to know the basis upon which assumptions about ALR exclusion and agricultural uses are being made.

An exact number and size of community garden plots at the proposed site will not be known until such time as planning, design, and implementation progress. We see different figures in source documents, so ours might vary. Council gave approval in principle on April 13, 2006 based on a staff report, written submission, and presentation, so it is logical to use a range from 108 to 152. For neighbourhood impacts, it is prudent to assume a figure on the high end.

Recommendation

The foregoing are sufficient reasons for Council to pause advancement of the proposal to the Committee of the Whole pending a rigorous review and extensive public consultation: That is my request.

Such review and consultation is essential because questions persist regarding governance, consultation, site selection, infrastructure requirements, traffic, and neighbourhood impacts that are further discussed below.

Inconsistency with the Colwood Creek Park Management Plan

- The proposal would introduce a major new amenity into an area where the Plan specifically advises against adding recreational amenities due to proximity to residential neighbours and concerns regarding parking impacts.
- Notwithstanding a stated goal of inclusion, it would convert open public parkland into fenced zones from which others would be excluded; instead of an open grass area, others would be left to pass through a more narrow corridor defined by high fences;
- Should new fences deny pedestrians access to the most direct pathway connecting to the Galloping Goose Trail, our City will become less walkable, although our official position is that we encourage active transportation;
- The proposal argues it would create community in the future; it does not acknowledge and address the fact that such gains would require losses by competing communities that exist in the present, and
- It would entail removal of a mature drought tolerant Ponderosa Pine rather than add shade trees per the Plan.

4 <https://portal.alc.gov.bc.ca/public> searched on June 3, 2026

Consultation and Governance Concerns

- December 8, 2025 • Council directed staff to explore removal of 80% of the Park from the Agricultural Land Reserve and to seek a partnership for community gardening and educational programming in the portion of the Park not removed from the ALR.
 - Any limitations on access and additions of amenities to the Veterans Memorial Area of Colwood Creek Park, would be significant departures from the Colwood Creek Park Management Plan, which should trigger review.
 - Adding a “destination” amenity without parking infrastructure is not advisable for it creates conflict between park users and local residents. As plans evolve, consistent with the Colwood Creek Park Management Plan, affected stakeholders should be identified and targeted for engagement.
 - Greater progress toward Climate Action and congruence/compliance with the OCP would be achieved if community gardens were situated near densely populated areas of Colwood, not in a “destination” area. The vast majority of large residential buildings nearly are in Langford; buildings’ inhabitants don’t pay Colwood taxes.
 - Council directed staff to seek a partnership, but there are no indicators that:
 - any partner but the Colwood Garden Society was considered, nor
 - critically important lessons that could be learned from the Colwood City Hall community garden, were learned, and as a result,
 - the Colwood Garden Society is selling something that is not what City plans and policies indicate we need.
- The Let’s Talk Colwood Survey is unbalanced: it appears designed to raise support for implementation of the community garden hub, rather than neutrally assess whether residents support the project and it meets their needs. At first glance, local residents would think this doesn’t apply to me, and their voices have largely been left out until very recently. The survey just did not adequately reach or represent the most affected residents.
- Seedy Saturday engagement catered to food gardeners. It does not equate to engagement with people in the immediate neighbourhood who tend long-established gardens and will be disproportionately impacted.
- April 13, 2026 • Just two Colwood Creek residents expressed concerns because their neighbours hadn’t yet learned of the proposal. Various members of the public (some from Langford), community groups, the Parks and Environment Committee, and Council, all had a head start to voice support. A Key Consideration in the Colwood Creek Park Management Plan shown in the table on p. 2 above is:

Ongoing relationships with stakeholders are important. ...Continuing to work closely with stakeholders to seek a good balance of new amenities and flexible spaces, while being realistic and considering solutions that are equitable, will require ongoing discussion and efforts from all those involved.

- May 5, 2026 • Neighbourhood residents start to learn of the project after a news release. Still no prior notice to or consultation with affected residents despite a Key Consideration of the Colwood Creek Park Management Plan.
- May 14, 2026 • Information and Planning Session hosted by the Colwood Garden Society. The Society and City staff have been in contact for months, and Park plans call for stakeholder engagement, yet *Questions to Consider* (Annex F) show local residents are low priorities.

Financial Accountability

The Colwood Garden Society is said to be, “connecting Colwood to the food we eat”⁵ and its May 5th press release reads in part that, “the collaborative effort demonstrates how municipalities and community organizations can work together to create lasting benefits for residents.”⁶ One might well conclude that all benefits have been and would be in Colwood until one discovers that only about half of the current membership of the Colwood Garden Society are residents of Colwood. The City of Colwood is accountable to Colwood residents, to whom it has a fiduciary responsibility: No part of Colwood Creek Park should be closed to Colwood residents to benefit a non-resident constituency.

Site Selection and Community Need

My analysis of Colwood Garden Society figures is that if 35 of 70 plots are used by Colwood residents, and half the people on the list live here, it implies a Colwood surplus of 23 plots. As data for the Society’s members are unavailable, a range of estimates is charted in Annex B.

Society Minutes express disappointment on the part of gardeners in Royal Bay at hearing that there would be no promised community garden in their area.⁷ Because the Official Community Plan specifies that community gardens should be within walking distance, a corollary is that they should not be in “destination” parks (unless for residents of the neighbourhood). In any case, Colwood Creek residents do not need a community garden.

The only park in a neighbourhood, Colwood Creek Park is residents’ neighbourhood park as well as a longstanding destination widely used for passive, informal recreation by people from the Westshore and beyond. Proponents, supporters, City staff, and elected representatives cite justifications for a community garden without disclosing why a Colwood Creek Park site must be the only site (except Colwood City Hall).

Neighbourhood Impacts

- Character of Colwood Creek neighbourhood. Overview:
<https://www.colwood.ca/community-services/neighbourhoods> On the ground, the Sunridge Valley Drive side can only be driven to from other parts of Colwood by passing through Langford to Brittany Drive or Sunridge Valley Drive. Aside from a townhome complex opposite Brittany Park (to which many senior residents have downsized), it consists of detached single-family homes, nearly all owner-occupied. It is not an Intended

5 <https://colwoodgardensociety.org>

6 <https://www.colwood.ca/news/colwood-garden-society-receives-federal-grant-98k-community-garden-colwood-creek-park>

7 City of Colwood Liaison Report at <https://colwoodgardensociety.org/agm-2025/>