

## Grant Application Presentation – Cobourg Ecology Garden

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Deputy Mayor Beatty, Mayor Cleveland and members of Council – thank you for the opportunity to present on behalf of the Cobourg Ecology Garden. Since there are some new members on Council, I'll start with an overview of the Garden, also known as the CEG. Then, I'll do a quick review of our 2023 maintenance budget and I'll finish up with highlighting how your financial support of the Garden benefits the Town.

The Ecology Garden is a Town park that's located immediately north of the boardwalk. It covers 4/10ths of an acre between Hibernia and Durham streets. This large area has been evolved and maintained by volunteers and a variety of community partners since its inception 27 years ago.

The Garden is a valued resource for the Cobourg community.

Very conservatively speaking, we estimate that the Garden hosts between four and six thousand visits each year. Although, given the number of visitors I chat with while working in the Garden, I believe that estimate is understated. Our visitors come to the Garden to relax in a natural setting, to have picnics and family get-togethers, and to attend events. Weddings have been held at the CEG, school groups visit to learn about nature, and artists and photographers come to capture the beauty of the Garden.

Now, if you're strolling through the CEG, you may see us volunteers chatting with a visitor and get the impression that we just putter in the Garden. This is far from the case.

The reality is that we devote an average of 1,200 to 1,400 volunteer hours per year to:

- Planning on-going maintenance and enhancement projects,
- Working in the Garden from the beginning of April through the end of October,
- Running fundraising and community events,
- Raising community awareness via social media, and
- Engaging youth through school group tours or projects.

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Of course, these things take money. Each year, we set a “donations and fundraising” target that funds a portion of the expenses associated with the on-going upkeep of this Town park. Now, being a community group instead of a registered non-profit, we are eligible for extremely few sources of grants. As a result, we rely on the Town’s Community Grant program to fund the balance of basic maintenance costs.

This slide is an extract of our overall Operating Budget. It shows the expense categories that are related to on-going upkeep of the Garden. The line items for these categories are included in our Grant Application and I’ll be happy to answer any questions at the end of this presentation.

The upkeep expense total is in line with prior years. The thing that is different is a one-time reduction in the grant amount that we’re requesting.

We normally ask for a grant of roughly \$2,300...which is the difference between our fundraising target and upkeep expenses. However, many of our fellow community groups have had a difficult time raising funds during the last two years of extended Covid lockdowns. We, on the other hand, experienced an increase in donations from folks who felt that being able to visit the Garden was a blessing during those stressful times. In the interest of community, we’ve reduced this year’s grant request to \$1,800 and are covering the reduction from our 2022 carry forward.

Now, you may be wondering, “What happens to the money when we exceed our fundraising goal?”

In the past, we have allocated these funds to enhancements to the Garden, with examples being the accessible path, the shed in the west end and the creation of new elements such as the hugel and the forest area.

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While we continue to evolve the Garden, we now also have the opportunity to turn our attention to the founders' vision of the CEG being a learning center. In 2022, we received a targeted, multi-year grant from Community Power Northumberland. This first year covers the bulk of the cost of redeveloping our website, with the balance being funded from our carry forward from prior years. The new site will incorporate current design standards to make the Garden more appealing to potential volunteers. It will also include an educational component that initially consists of reference material. Years 2 and 3 of the CPNU funding assists with the development and reinstatement of in-person workshops, along with online equivalents.

Now, I'll finish up with how your financial support of the Garden benefits the Town.

- With its profusion of trees, shrubs, vines and flowers, the Garden contributes to sustainability by being a safe resting place, a breeding area and a food source for many forms of fauna;
- Volunteering or strolling in the Garden contributes to people's physical health and socializing with other visitors improves folks' sense of well-being; and
- School group visits, youth-oriented CEG events and participation in Garden projects help youth develop an appreciation for the need to protect the environment.

To wrap up, I'd like to thank Council for your consideration of our current grant application and for your support of the Garden over the years. It's deeply appreciated by our gang of gardeners and the many members of our community who love the Garden.

Dora Body,  
Chair, Cobourg Ecology Gardeners