

May 21, 2021

From: **Brookside + Company**

To: David Piccini MPP, Mayor John Henderson, members of Cobourg Town Council,  
Director of Planning Glenn McGlashon, Members of the Planning Advisory Committee.

Good day everyone!

The following is a second letter that will bring you up-to-date about the progress being made on a detailed Plan to develop the 30 acre Brookside site into a sustainable, comprehensive, inclusive and healthy neighbourhood that will serve not only those who live on the site but also the 600 homes in the surrounding residential area that are within a 5-10 minute walk of its Center.

The first letter dated April 30<sup>th</sup> explained the project in very general terms.

**Brookside + Company** refers to an initial group of citizens who are working to promote the future use of the Brookside site to the benefit of Cobourg as a whole. The process being followed consists of five stages that begin with a Vision Statement and ends with a Plan for Implementation. Along the way we expect that many citizens will become involved. We recognize that public support is key to success.

As of May 21<sup>st</sup>:

- 1) **The list of Challenges** which constitute **Stage Two** of the planning process, has been reorganized and expanded to 22 in all. (A copy is available upon request).
- 2) With respect to **Challenge (Cc) (Ci)** which address the needs of youth and their relationship to the elderly, a first draft Report has been received. (copy attached.)
- 3) With respect to **Challenge (Ce) (Cf)** while the original plan drawings for the Strathmore House are still being sought, an informed guess has been made as to the adaptive reuse of the interior (copy attached).
- 4) With respect to **Challenge (Cg)** and an acceptable use of the 9 acre flood plain as a market garden, 8 soil samples have been collected and sent to the Agricultural College at Guelph for analysis.
- 5) With respect to a final **Site Plan** a preliminary study has been carried out showing the physical relationship of all the buildings, the physical amenities and a circulation system, etc.

**More information will be made available in the next FYI letter.** In the meantime please feel free to contact the Facilitator of the Brookside Project by phone or email.

Facilitator:

Keith Oliver (anytime cell [REDACTED], email [REDACTED])

## Report (Ce): Strathmore House Restoration and Adaptive Reuse (Draft 1)

**Challenge:** *Strathmore restoration, adaptive re-use, shall benefit both the neighborhood and Town.*

### **Elaboration:**

The Strathmore House is a priceless reminder of our history and the wealthy Americans who migrated north from Pittsburgh in the summer of each year to relax, enjoy our healthy atmosphere, socialize and create a thriving summer "American Colony". At the turn of the century Cobourg became known as "the Newport of the North". It included grand balls, yacht and horse races and many palatial homes. For the less wealthy or less committed, a number of fine hotels were built including the Arlington. The limestone Exhibit Hall at the Sifton-Cook Heritage Centre once served the hotels as a laundry. The Colony existed over a period of approximately 50 years and was abruptly ended by WWI.

A more modest home was first built on the Brookside site in the mid-1870s by Judge George M Clark. The estate was bought by Charles Donnelly, a wealthy American who, in 1905-06, rebuilt the house as the Strathmore we see today, a splendid example of the Beaux Arts style of architectural design.

The Province first leased the Strathmore Estate as a facility that served youth-in-need from across Ontario, and then "acquired it" in 1951. In its last iteration as the Brookside Youth (Detention) Center, the interior of the house was extensively reconfigured. The main entrance is now on the west, while the original entrance hall facing south was divided into offices. A two story high structure was added on the north side. The Province appears to have done little over the years to preserve the exterior wood work. A quick wood finish called Kenitex was applied which later was found to have contributed to the deterioration, not prevented it.

There is no question but that the restoration of the Strathmore House and its adaptive-reuse serving both neighborhood, community and Town needs, shall be carried out, regardless of the site's future.

A search is underway for the original floor plans as well as the most up-to-date interior plans. Contact has been established with Infrastructure Ontario, the Scott Library at York University and the Toronto Reference Library. Regulations involving the process to be followed in the dispossession of surplus Ontario Government property, as well as COVID-19 regulations have delayed further access.

**Sources:** Ontario Ministry of Government Services, Heritage Properties Program,  
Historical, Architectural Report, Strathmore House (B10773)

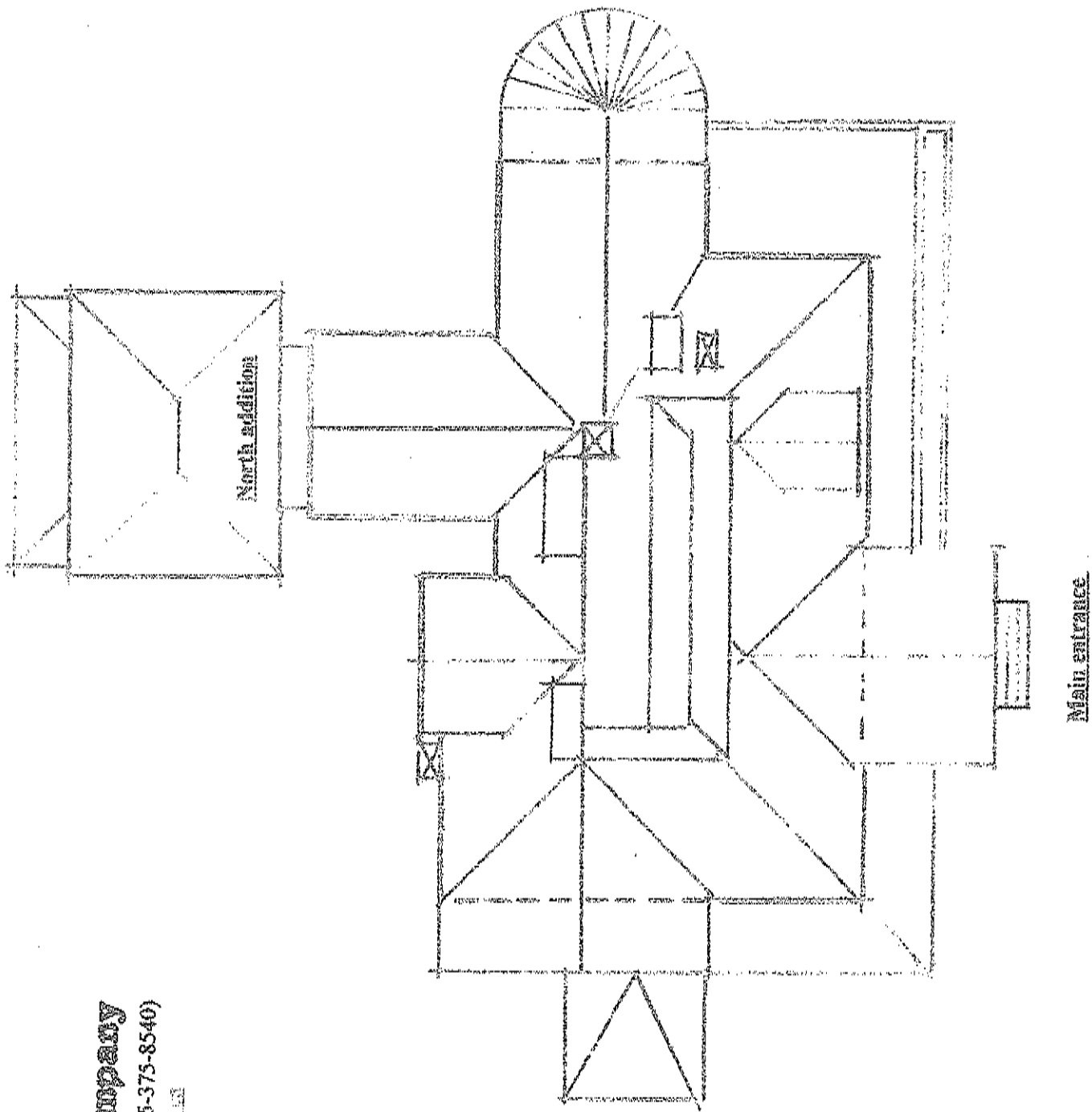
### **Proposal Details:**

- 1) The Strathmore House shall be restored to the satisfaction of the local chapter of the ACO.
- 2) The vista from King Street shall be preserved.
- 3) The House shall be the cultural centre of the neighborhood and an addition to such Town amenities
- 4) It shall be operated as a stand alone facility by the Town which will manage its scheduling.
- 5) Northumberland Art Gallery shall relocate to Strathmore using its storage, and 115 ft of wall space
- 6) Relocate Citizen's Forum and public use of Victoria Hall Committee/Board Rooms to Strathmore
- 7) Vacated spaces in 5) and 6) shall be made use of by the Town Government for its offices.
- 8) No plans exist at present for the 3,600 sq ft of useable space on the second floor of Strathmore.
- 9) Strathmore use as a Community, intimate Business Retreat and Small Convention Centre.
- 10) Use of rental facilities through the Brookside Neighborhood Association shall be without charge

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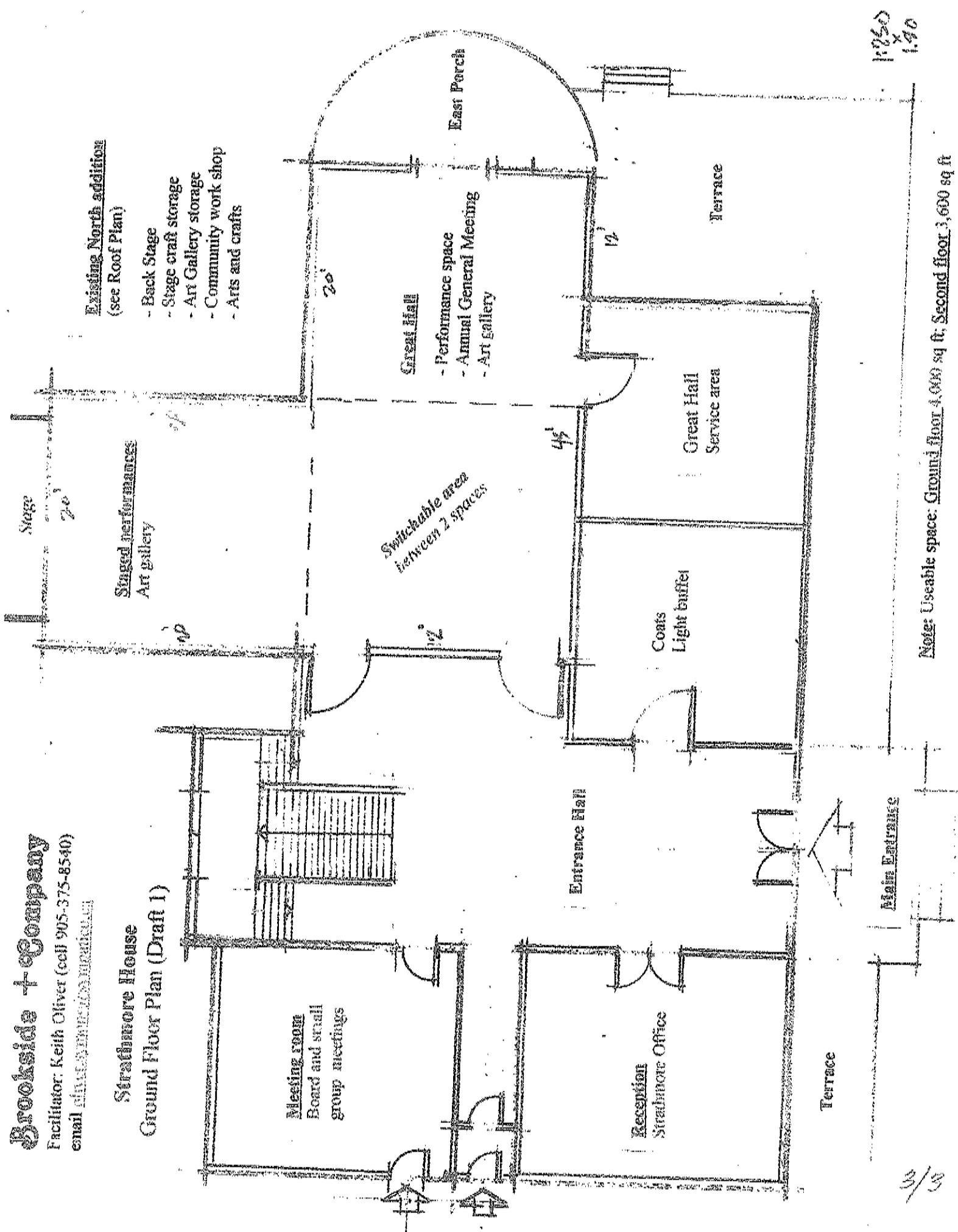
## Strathmore House Roof Plan



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## Strathmore House Ground Floor Plan (Draft 1)



**Report (Ci): Intergenerational problem solving and relations**

**Challenge:** *The needs of the young and elderly shall be provided for and promote their interrelationship.*

**Elaboration:**

Many of the issues facing today's youth are unique from past generations during their formative years, as such, new and innovative ideas must be put into place. This proposal will follow the PERMA (Positive emotion, Engagement, Meaning, Positive relationships, Accomplishment) model of wellbeing<sup>1</sup>. Creating solutions which promote these five universal necessities will ensure all Neighbourhood residents are kept in mind. The threats to the younger generation's PERMA are often blamed on individual "laziness" and the rise of technology however, there are larger communal factors for which the Neighbourhood can combat. Despite being the most educated generation in history, Millennials (25-40 yrs) are the first to face more economic uncertainty than their parents<sup>2</sup>. As GenZ (9-24) matures into a post-Covid economy, it is expected they will face even greater boundaries to financial security and independent living<sup>3</sup>. As wealth inequality rises, it is difficult for young people to engage in activities due to cost barriers, working multiple jobs<sup>4</sup>, or just a rise in perfectionist thinking due to a multitude of social factors<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the existential threat of climate change has made it difficult for youths to plan their future accomplishments and find meaning in life. This issue is referred to as climate anxiety and can have lasting mental health impacts<sup>6</sup>. Lastly, newer generations report an epidemic of loneliness, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. Research shows the main factor is

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<sup>1</sup> Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish*. New York, NY: The Free Press.  
<http://dci.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/04/Seligman-Martin-Flourish-Ch-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Allison, T. (2017). Financial health of young America: Measuring generational declines between baby boomers & millennials. *Young Invincibles*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Swasey, C., Winter, E. A., & Sheyman, I. (2020). The Staggering Economic Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. *Data, Data for Progress*,  
<https://www.dataforprogress.org/memos/coronavirus-economic-impact>

<sup>4</sup> Sherman, E. (2019, June 6). *Almost Half of Millennials Hold Down Side Jobs in Addition to Their Regular Ones*. *Fortune*. <https://fortune.com/2019/06/06/gig-economy-part-time-jobs/>.

<sup>5</sup> American Psychological Association. (2018, January 2). *Perfectionism among young people significantly increased since 1980s, study finds* [Press release].  
<http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2018/01/perfectionism-young-people>

<sup>6</sup> Wu, J., Snell, G., & Samji, H. (2020). Climate anxiety in young people: a call to action. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(10), e435–e436. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(20\)30223-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30223-9)

one's level of community interaction<sup>7</sup>. The rise of car oriented developments and suburbs have left fewer communal spaces and living in such an area is associated with less community interaction<sup>8</sup>. It is clear that the standard community model has failed to fulfil the needs of the 21st century. Keeping the PERMA model in mind, The Neighborhood can promote the well being of its residents of all generations.

#### Proposals:

This proposal is trifold, firstly a community space for growing vegetables and fruit using compost will address youth's climate anxiety, provide a sense of agency while connecting to nature, and serve as a place for older and younger residents to work together. Secondly, to ensure housing affordability and accessibility, coop housing must be prioritized over individual landlord ownership of rental properties. This will also give the community flexibility as they can vote on changes to address their own needs and see themselves as a collective rather than individual units. Thirdly, high traffic communal spaces and accessible recreational equipment will promote engagement, interaction, and physical health for Neighborhood residents.

#### *Communal Greenhouse/Community Garden*

Millennials and Gen Z are very concerned with climate change which, as previously mentioned, can lead to a state of climate anxiety<sup>9</sup>. Carbon neutrality has already been established as a goal for The Neighborhood, this will attract many young people already. A large contributor to climate anxiety is feeling helpless and alone when making personal eco friendly decisions. As such, providing an opportunity for individuals to gain more control of their consumption will be especially beneficial. According to a report from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization 15% of all global carbon emissions are due to livestock alone<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps for this reason, Canadians under 35 are 3 times more likely to take on a plant based diet than those of previous generations<sup>11</sup>. Younger generations are also more likely to have concerns over how ethically their food is

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<sup>7</sup> Trinko, K. (2018, May 3). *Gen Z is the loneliest generation, and it's not just because of social media*. USA Today. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2018/05/03/gen-z-loneliest-generation-social-media-personal-interactions-column/574701002/>.

<sup>8</sup> Leyden KM. Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighborhoods. *Am J Public Health*. 2003;93(9):1546-1551. doi:10.2105/ajph.93.9.1546

<sup>9</sup> Wu, J., Snell, G., & Samji, H. (2020). Climate anxiety in young people: a call to action. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 4(10), e435–e436. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(20\)30223-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30223-0)

<sup>10</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations . (n.d.). *Key facts and findings*. FAO. <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/197623/icode/>.

<sup>11</sup> Thomson, A. (2018, March). Most vegans and vegetarians in Canada under age 35: survey. *Global News*. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4080165/most-vegans-and-vegetarians-in-canada-under-age-35-survey/>.

collected and its freshness, both concerns would motivate individuals to maintain a garden for the benefit of themselves and other community members<sup>12</sup>. A vegetable garden would help reach The Neighborhood's eco-friendly ambitions and encourage community members to work together. Working towards a collective goal increases "positive altruism": a type of altruistic behaviour which benefits both the recipient and giver<sup>13</sup>. This type of behaviour has been shown to increase positive emotions and build relationships faster<sup>14</sup>. A garden would be of interest to older members of the Neighborhood who have the time to contribute and younger members interested in keeping an eco-friendly space with access to ethically sourced food.

**Example worth learning from:**

**The Vancouver Compost Demonstration Garden, Vancouver, B.C, 1978**

eg: This successful urban community garden has run for over 39 years and its founding organization, City Farmer, provides resources online for other communities looking to start their own gardens. Volunteers transform vacant lots in Vancouver into gardens using compost from locals<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Idem

<sup>13</sup> Irani, Anna S., "Positive Altruism: Helping that Benefits Both the Recipient and Giver" (2018). Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) Capstone Projects. 152. [https://repository.upenn.edu/mapp\\_capstone/152](https://repository.upenn.edu/mapp_capstone/152)

<sup>14</sup> Idem

<sup>15</sup> City Farmer. (n.d.). <https://www.cityfarmer.eco/>.