

Section I – Items for Board of Directors Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Friday, May 06, 2022 Meeting

FROM: Michael Tolensky, Chief Financial and Operating Officer

RE: PROPOSAL FROM THE CITY OF BRAMPTON TO LEASE THE MCVEAN FARM SITE
9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel, Humber River Watershed (CFN 39900)

KEY ISSUE

Seek approval for a 5-year lease agreement between Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and City of Brampton permitting development and operation of a community garden located north of Ebenezer Road and west of McVean Drive, municipally known as 9376 McVean Drive, in the City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel, Humber River watershed.

RECOMMENDATION

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS THAT WHEREAS TRCA received a request from the City of Brampton to enter into a lease agreement for the development and operation of a community garden located north of Ebenezer Road and west of McVean Drive, municipally known as 9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel, Humber River watershed;

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT TRCA enter into a lease with the City of Brampton for the use of 0.92 hectares (2.29 acres), more or less, said land being Part of Lot 7, Concession 8, municipally known as 9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel;

THAT the lease with the City of Brampton be subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (i) that the term of the lease is for 5 years;**
- (ii) that consideration is \$2 per annum, plus HST;**
- (iii) that the City of Brampton is responsible for all approvals required for construction and operation of the community garden;**
- (iv) that the City of Brampton is responsible for all costs associated with the development and operation of the community garden;**
- (v) that the City of Brampton is responsible for securing and managing a sub-tenant for the community garden;**
- (vi) that the City of Brampton is solely responsible for all costs associated with the removal of any fixtures/infrastructure on the lands under lease, at the end of the term, and will restore the lands to the satisfaction of TRCA;**
- (vii) that the City of Brampton is required to obtain at its cost, all necessary licenses and permits, and comply will all applicable by-laws, rules, regulations, and laws governing the conduct and operation of the community garden or anything in connection therewith; and**
- (viii) any other terms and conditions deemed appropriate by TRCA staff and solicitor;**

Item 7.6

AND FURTHER THAT authorized TRCA officials are directed to take the necessary action to finalize the transaction, including obtaining necessary approvals and signing and executing documents.

BACKGROUND

TRCA received a request from the City of Brampton (the City) to enter into a lease agreement to develop and operate a community garden at the McVean farm site, located north of Ebenezer Road, and West of McVean Drive, municipally known as 9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel, Humber River watershed.

McVean Farm is Brampton's oldest farm and was once owned by early settler Alexander McVean. TRCA acquired the lands from the McVean estate in 1971; urban agriculture began on the site in 2008, as the McVean Incubator Farm pilot project. At the time TRCA entered into a lease agreement with FarmStart to train and support new farmers. More recently, TRCA leased the farm to a new operator. Hence, the McVean Incubator Farm continues to develop and enhance the community by developing the urban agricultural farm program on TRCA land.

Established in 2010, the City's Community Garden Program continues to provide unique opportunities to Brampton's farming residents. These opportunities were enhanced in 2019 when the City and TRCA collaborated to develop community gardens on at the McVean Farm site outside of the McVean Incubator Farm lease area. As a result, community members continue to grow fresh produce and plants while managing and maintaining this plot of land.

The City currently facilitates six Community Gardens, which promote healthy eating, positive social interactions, outdoor activity, cross-cultural connections. These interactions also help reduce crime and vandalism in natural landscapes.

These attributes mirror those that TRCA promotes at the McVean Incubator Farm, and therefore TRCA provided a permission to enter agreement to the City in 2020 for use of 0.34 acres of land at the McVean Farm site, so that the City of Brampton could begin to secure a community group for the site.

In 2021, the City of Brampton, in collaboration with TRCA, established a youth-oriented community garden at the McVean Farm site known as the Black Youth Training Farm. The City's Community Gardens Program extension is operated by the Black Youth Farming Collective, a collaboration between the Asase Institute, and En'tyce Mentorship and Community Services, and UpRooted, which aims to address inequities in the food system by providing employment, education, and leadership opportunities through farming for Black youth in Brampton.

The Black Youth Farming Collective is governed by a Steering Committee, which consists of 17 youth and adult representatives from the partnering organizations, who meet regularly to discuss the development and implementation of the project. The Steering Committee, along with youth participants working on the garden, are involved in agricultural and food system education, employment opportunities, and community-driven research. The project educates students about the transformative and holistic power of farming and growing food, and how the food system around us affects our community, while being introduced to agri-businesses and related careers and provides leadership opportunities to Black youth.

Item 7.6

To provide a sense of security for site development and investment, the City requested a five-year lease agreement for the site, and to increase the size of leased lands from 0.34 acres to 2.29 acres. The City agreed to assume responsibility for the community garden located on TRCA-owned land, said land being Part of Lot 7, Concession 8, City of Brampton, Regional Municipality of Peel, and municipally known as 9376 McVean Drive.

Finally, TRCA would continue to facilitate any coordination between the two lease holders: The City of Brampton, and the McVean Incubator Farm, at the McVean Farm site.

Attachment 1 is a site plan illustrating the location of the subject lands.

Attachment 2 is an orthophoto illustrating the location of the subject lands.

Lease Agreement

The area subject to this lease agreement consists of approximately 0.92 hectares (2.29 acres) of land. The following are the key terms and conditions of the proposed lease arrangement:

1. Lease Payment: \$2 per annum, plus HST;
2. Initial Term: 5 years;
3. Insurance: City of Brampton will provide 5 million in commercial general liability insurance;
4. Expenses: City of Brampton is solely responsible for all costs associated with the operation of the community garden, as well as the removal of any fixtures/infrastructure on the lands under lease at the end of the term, and will restore the lands to the satisfaction of TRCA; and
5. Further Approvals: City of Brampton will comply with any applicable laws, directions, rules, and regulations.

RATIONALE

TRCA supports agriculture on its properties, where appropriate, and aligns its work in agriculture and urban agriculture with partners, to improve the health of watersheds and communities. The City of Brampton's Community Gardens program is one such example, which advances the goals of the Brampton Grow Green Environmental Master Plan, which cites urban agriculture as an opportunity for the City.

Furthermore, TRCA's partnership with the City of Brampton, enables the Black Youth Farming Collective to use TRCA-owned lands at the McVean Farm site, to educate students and youth about the transformative attributes of farming and how the food system around us affects our community, as well as introduce participants to agri-businesses and related careers.

Finally, Community and Allotment Gardens are an important means to empower communities to grow their own food and contribute towards sustainability. As the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened food security awareness, community gardens such as the McVean Farm site have been recognized as an important essential service for continuing Ontario's food supply.

Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

FINANCIAL DETAILS

TRCA's urban farm program is funded through various municipal capital and operating accounts, that are applicable to the region in which the farm resides. In 2021 the Region of Peel contributed \$170,000 towards TRCA's Urban Agriculture Program. Further, the City of Brampton's agreement with the Black Youth Farming Collective is of nominal consideration.

Item 7.6

Given Peel Region's significant financial support to TRCA's Urban Agricultural Program, and in effort to support the City of Brampton's Community Garden Program, this agreement will be for nominal consideration. TRCA currently absorbs the property taxes at an annual cost of \$349 (2021 rate).

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Date: March 21, 2022

Attachments: 2

Attachment 1: Site Plan - 9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton

Attachment 2: Orthophoto - 9376 McVean Drive, City of Brampton