



Interim Policy for Tenant Community Gardens

Policy Owner: Operations

Approval: ELT

First Approved: May 2024

Effective Date: May 2024

Policy Statement

Community gardens support the development of healthy living and improve the quality of life for tenants by increasing physical activity, providing food security and offering meaningful tenant engagement opportunities.

Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) encourages tenants to participate in gardening activities at community beautification, and gardens allocated to grow fresh produce.

The purpose of this interim policy is to set out the terms, conditions and objectives for tenants and tenant-led groups use of community garden space at TCHC.

This policy:

- Establishes eligibility criteria, conditions and restrictions applicable to the establishment and use of community garden space;
- Ensures that use of community garden space serves the needs of tenants and supports TCHC's strategic objectives; and
- Promotes accessibility, equity, transparency, inclusivity, respect and accountability with the use of community gardens.

This is an interim policy until a formal policy approach is adopted, which may include an amendment to the Non-Residential Use of Space Policy for Tenants



and Tenant-Led Groups, and the Non-Exclusive Use of Space Procedure for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups.

Scope

This policy applies to community gardening activities by tenants or tenant-led groups. Gardening activities not approved in accordance with this policy and related procedures are prohibited.

All TCHC staff and tenants must comply with this policy.

This policy does not apply to:

- gardens established and maintained by TCHC staff;
- gardens established or maintained by third party agencies. (Third party agencies must follow the terms of their agreements with TCHC and/or the Non-Residential Use of Space Policy for Agencies as applicable);
- gardening activities that are located on a leaseholder's premises (e.g. within a unit, on a balcony);
- other activities in gardens including, but not limited to, educational activities connected to garden-based projects, hosting of events or areas for exercise in garden spaces, etc. (Refer to TCHC's Use of Non-Residential Space Application Form for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups or TCHC's One-Time use of Space Application Form to apply for permission to carry out such other activities).

Definitions

Community Gardening Agreement: an agreement between TCHC and the tenant or tenant-led group participating in gardening activities that outlines the terms of use, roles, and expectations of membership in the community garden space.

Community garden space: community garden space is outdoor space on TCHC property that TCHC determines from time to time can be used for tenant gardening activities. This includes but is not limited to, gardening spaces outside of buildings and townhouse complexes, garden plots, and designated rooftop spaces.



TCHC supports two types of community garden spaces for tenants and tenant-led groups:

- community beautification (flowers, shrubbery, etc.); and for
- growing produce for consumption by the community (vegetables, etc.).

Garden plot: a defined area within a community garden space that a tenant can use for authorized community garden activities.

Tenant: for the purposes of this interim procedure, a tenant is a person who, pursuant to a residential lease agreement with TCHC or a TCHC-approved sub-landlord, lives in a TCHC building.

Tenant-led group: A formal or informal group of tenants who gather to advocate on behalf of tenants and/or organize activities to support and/or engage tenants within the community.

Policy Details

Eligibility Criteria for Tenants/Tenant-Led Groups

To be eligible to participate in gardening activities, tenant gardeners must meet the following criteria:

- The gardener must be a TCHC tenant or someone that the tenant has declared to be living with them at their TCHC rental unit and that TCHC has accepted is living with the tenant at the rental unit
- The gardener must be 16 years old or older for independent gardening.
Exceptions:
 - a parent or guardian may co-sign the gardening agreement and accompany the gardener to the community garden; or
 - where the gardener is part of a tenant-led (gardening) group, if other gardeners in the group are aged 16 or older and are supervising the child under 16 with a parent or guardian's consent when in the community garden space, the parent or guardian does not need to be present.

Priority will be given to interested tenant gardeners residing within the building or development. Additional spots, space permitting, may be allocated to other tenants residing within the TCHC portfolio on a first-come first-served basis.



Plot Assignment & Participation in Community Gardens (Produce or Beautification)

TCHC is responsible for allocation and decision-making for the use of community gardens, including plot assignments for procedure gardens and participation in beautification garden activities.

All participating tenants must sign the Community Gardening Agreement, confirming terms of use, roles, and expectations of membership in the community garden space.

Tenant use of all or any part of community garden spaces is at will by TCHC. This means that TCHC can revoke authority to use the community garden space at any time with or without notice.

Where there is no breach of any TCHC policy, TCHC will try to give 7 days' advanced notice if a tenant's use of community garden space is being terminated.

Site Selection Criteria for New Gardens (Produce or Beautification)

Tenants can ask for new community garden spaces to be created by TCHC. TCHC staff is responsible for assessing and approving new garden sites.

Operations in consultation with Facilities Management and Risk Management are tasked with the assessment and approval of community gardens.

Proposed community garden spaces should support the development of healthy living and improve the quality of life for tenants and not negatively impact other community functions, facilities or site operations. The use of a community garden cannot create a risk to neighbouring residential spaces and/or to neighbouring property.

Tenants may not create or occupy a garden space without prior authorization and approval from TCHC – including, but not limited to, an approved Gardener Application form and Community Gardening Agreement. TCHC may chose to allow or not allow a community garden space at its sole discretion.



Use of Community Garden Spaces

TCHC will set the guidelines to the use of community garden spaces. This includes requirements and expectations for all tenant gardeners and tenant led-garden groups.

All community gardens must be used and maintained by the tenant gardeners as assigned and in compliance with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws, bylaws, codes, etc.

Community garden spaces will not be maintained by TCHC's grounds maintenance program.

TCHC can restrict any use of community garden spaces at its sole discretion. Any restrictions to the use of TCHC community garden spaces will be communicated to all tenant gardeners and tenant-led garden groups in the Interim Procedure for Tenant Community Gardens.

Signage

All community gardens governed by this policy will be posted with signage advising the area is governed by applicable TCHC policies and procedures.

Compliance and Monitoring

This is an interim policy until a formal policy approach is adopted.

All TCHC staff and tenants must follow this policy and the requirements set out in the Interim Procedure for Tenant Community Gardens.

Operations will assess, review, and monitor this policy and its associated procedure. This includes the development of a formal policy approach to assist staff in implementing the community garden program.

Failure to comply with this policy or the Community Gardening Agreement may result in removal or disqualification from participating in community gardening programs at TCHC.

Operations, in consultation with Facilities Management and Risk Management is responsible for monitoring staff activity to ensure compliance with this Policy and related procedures.



Related Policies and Procedures

- Interim Procedure for Tenant Community Gardens
- Non-Residential Use of Space Policy for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups
- Non-Exclusive Use of Space Procedures for Tenants and Tenant-Led Groups
- Garden Manual
- Appendix A: Sample Garden Signage
- Appendix B: Gardener Application Form
- Appendix C: Community Gardening Agreement

Commencement and Review

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Approval
First approval:	May 2024	New	ELT
[Revision #]		[List change as major or minor and describe nature of change]	
Last review:			

Use the table above to reference ALL versions of the policy, when the reviews were completed, what level of approval was sought, and the nature of the change. Consult the policy framework for details.

Next Scheduled Review Date: February 2025

This is an interim policy and a long-term policy approach will be developed for the 2025 gardening season.