

Planting the seeds

Halifax West community garden in discussion stage

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By Suzy Teubner – The Weekly News

Imagine being able to pick fresh tomatoes and lettuce after a swim or a soccer game at the Halifax Mainland Common Recreation Centre, once it's built.

A community garden is currently not in the plans for the \$40.5 million facility, which will serve as a venue for the 2011 Canada Winter Games, but some members of the community would like to see one become part of the landscape.

"Living in Clayton Park, in the heart of suburbia, when I looked at the Mainland Commons Project I saw there were fields and trails, the library, but I thought something was missing," said Tamara Lorincz, executive director of the Nova Scotia Environmental Network (NSEN). "In Halifax West there are no community gardens. A big flourishing community garden would create a sense of community."

At a public meeting last month at the Keshen Goodman Library approximately 40 people turned out to brainstorm and discuss the potentials of the project. Ideas discussed included vegetable gardens and growing food for the community and food banks, and accessible paths and plots for seniors and disabled persons.

The facility, which features an eight-lane, 25-metre indoor competition pool, a leisure pool, a field house, an indoor 200-metre track and health, fitness and wellness centre, is scheduled for completion in the fall of 2010. Lorincz said it was important to start on the garden project now, pending city approval, if it's to come to fruition, starting by identifying a site and testing the soil.

"We need to start raising money and recruit more people for a dedicated group of citizens to come together," she said.

Clayton Park West Coun. Mary Wile attended the first meeting, along with District 16 Coun. Debbie Hum and Halifax Clayton Park MLA Diana Whalen. Although Wile said she likes the idea, she has concerns about long-term maintenance.

"It's wonderful, if people follow through with it," said Wile. "I thought that having an accessible perimeter and addressing accessibility issues with wheelchairs were excellent ideas (but) it has to be maintained and people do have to take care of it. Someone needs to weed it and it really has to be the community that maintains it."

Successful community gardens within HRM include Gorsebrook Gardens in the north end of Halifax, the Seymour Green Community Garden and the Urban Farm Museum Society of Spryfield who send their crops to market.

The next public meeting will be held at the Keshen Goodman Library on Saturday, April 11 at 2 p.m. For information, call 454-6845 or go to www.nsen.ca. suzyteubner@yahoo.ca