

# Cooksville Mobile Community Garden

**Site Link :** <https://lbeedell.wixsite.com/cooksville-garden>

## ***Executive Summary***

Our project is a website that outlines a community garden design for Cooksville, Mississauga. The garden is intended to be both centrally accessible and also easily transportable, as the site is on a future development site. Visitors to our booth can explore drone footage of the site and before and after visualizations that are intended to generate engagement from both city bureaucrats and the community as future stewards of the garden.

## ***Literature review of gardens in low-income neighborhoods***

As Cooksville is located at the intersection of a rapid-transit station and a future LRT, many of its low-income residents can access jobs without the use of a private automobile. So to avoid green-washing it is important to note that a lack of greenery in this highly-paved neighborhood does not mean it is inherently less sustainable than the visually greener neighborhoods surrounding it. The goal of this project is to deliver the many documented benefits of community gardens, both environmental, in terms of supporting biodiversity and on-site water capture, as well as the mental effects of well-being and education, without contributing to the displacement of low-income residents (Carrus et al. 2015; Nisbet & Lem, 2015).

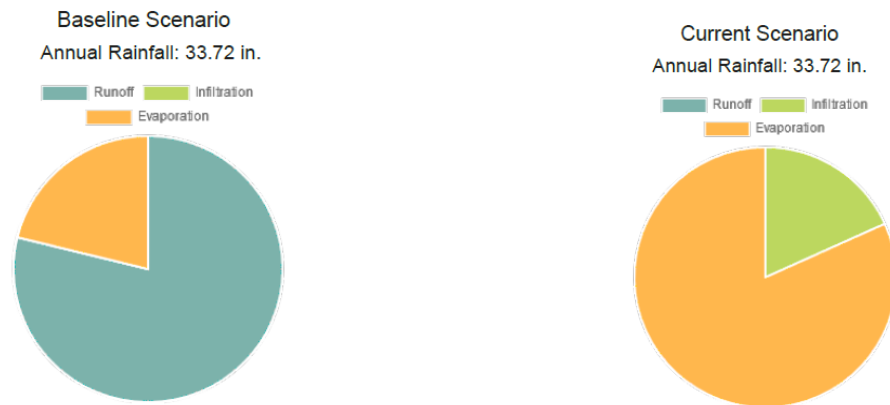
Environmental gentrification, or the phenomenon of an influx of wealthy residents to newly green yet poor neighbourhoods, is an important factor to consider when planning community gardens. Rigolon & Németh (2018) discuss the paradox of how large green infrastructure investments in New York and Chicago have improved the liveability of neighborhoods, but also contributed to rapidly rising rents and displacement of low-income tenants from their homes. Due to the existing rapid transit and an incoming LRT project through Cooksville, residents are also at risk of displacement in what is termed the suburbanization of transport poverty (Allen & Farber, 2020). To avoid this conflict of interests, advocates for community gardens must work across barriers and also be advocates of preserving and creating new affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods (Rigolon & Németh, 2018).

## ***Our strategy***

While this project is focused on the sustainability side, our strategy acknowledges this necessary pairing of housing and greenspace in order to secure buy-in and long-term benefits for the community. Mississauga is currently researching inclusionary zoning, density bonuses, and reducing parking minimums in order to increase the supply of affordable housing (Strategic Plan, 2020). In order to collaborate with these housing initiatives, our community garden is a number of raised beds, designed to be easily movable but always easily accessible, taking advantage of space that is unused and slated for development within the neighborhood. For this reason, our trial location is a parking lot with an active development application. The parking lot is currently underutilized and will remain accessible for a long time before any construction begins. Once construction begins the garden can be relocated to another nearby site. In this sense, the Cooksville garden is both temporary in each iteration and permanent for the neighborhood.



**Figure 1:** Subject site located at 3085 Hurontario Street, Mississauga, Ontario.



**Figure 2:** Baseline scenario of 300m<sup>2</sup> of impermeable surface using and current scenario with 50 planters installed over that same area (EPA, 2021).

The environmental benefits of on-site capture will remain regardless of whether the garden is moved to another impermeable site. For our first site, we recommend using 50 raised planters with specifications of 1 x 2 x 1m giving a total volume of 6m<sup>3</sup>. Soil depth would be 75cm with a 25cm gravel bed. Using these specifications in the National Stormwater Calculator (EPA, 2021), it is estimated that 100% of run-off could be prevented on 300m<sup>2</sup> area of planter coverage, shown in Figure 2.

### ***Why Cooksville?***

Cooksville is a neighborhood located in the City of Mississauga, and it is one of the most diverse areas in terms of population and housing options. According to Cooksville's 2016 census profile, it is home to approximately 120,205 people where 59% of which are first-generation immigrants and 62.9% earn below \$39,999 in annual income. In effort of addressing the Vision Cooksville Report's vision principles and community recommendations, this community garden project will generate avenues that facilitate more a vibrant public realm (see Principle 1, Vision Cooksville Report, 2016), a better connected and engaging public open space (see Principle 2, Vision Cooksville Report, 2016), as well as advance local and unique businesses (see Principle 5, Vision Cooksville Report, 2016).

### ***Our Garden & Governance***

Inspired by the Edible School Project, we are positioning the main beneficiaries of our garden as students in the neighborhood, notably those from T. L. Kennedy Secondary School (Edible Schoolyard Berkeley, 2021). Edible schoolyards are integrated into the curriculum of the school, and students and community volunteers become stewards of the garden, participating as farmers and cooks. As part of the curriculum, Indigenous planting techniques such as *three sisters* - corn, squash, and beans cultivated together, will be taught as part of the ongoing efforts of reconciliation, under Action 62 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Due to the upfront capital costs and legal work required, this project uses a model of governance classified as top-down with community help in the implementation stage. This addresses the issue of low-income residents lacking time and resources to secure the land and initial materials. School administrators would receive start-up funding from developers as part of a new community benefits fund. As the project moves to the management stage, it would ideally transition to a more bottom-up community governance with continued administrative support, as defined by Jacob & Rocha (2021).

### ***Feasibility and Funding***

City of Mississauga → Parks, Forestry and Environment Division (funding) → [Homegrown Mississauga: Urban Agriculture Strategy](#) (pilot launched in 2021, strategy completion aimed for 2022) → (Contributes to) [Climate Change Action Plan](#)

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