

Newman Field Proposal
Submitted by Pieta VanDyke,
Past President, Rotary Club of Sidney by the Sea
April 22, 2024

Nature of Request – The Rotary Club of Sidney by the Sea (RCSbS) would like to enter into an agreement with the District of Central Saanich to develop the Newman Field as an “All Abilities” accessible allotment garden.

Description - This proposal would have RCSbS take the lead in creating an allotment garden on Newman Field. The field is well suited to this use as it is easy to reach by car, bicycle or on foot, has a parking lot, and a water line running the full length of the field. RCSbS will take the lead on raising the funds and many of the physical aspects of the garden project. The garden will consist of raised beds, with wide paths that are designed to allow easy passage for persons using wheelchairs or other assistive devices. There may be a paved area with “tabletop” gardens that will be easy for wheelchair users to reach. A small greenhouse, tool shed and compost bins will be included. As well as an occupancy license, a Memorandum of Understanding will be developed between all the parties involved, including the District, RCSbS, an accessibility consultant, a horticulturalist/garden designer (possibly from the Horticultural of the Centre of the Pacific) and possibly the BC Farmlands Trust, Sandown Garden or the Power to Be organization.

Background – With rising food prices, food security is an issue that is becoming increasingly to the forefront. Recent studies have shown that persons with disabilities are particularly challenged in finding affordable food. The proposed garden fits in with the Newman Farm legacy, which requires the land to be used for agriculture. The District has already supported an allotment garden on municipal land, on Clarke road. New housing forms on the peninsula are primarily multi-family, where residents do not have access to land for gardening. More such buildings are nearing completion within walking distance on Lochside road. There is an existing demand for allotment gardens. An informal group worked with the Town of Sidney two years ago to review possible sites and they were all found to be inadequate or inappropriate. For the Newman Garden, priority will be given to Central Saanich residents, particularly, but not only, persons with disabilities.

Financials – A detailed budget is yet to be created and will be based on details provided by the garden designer. RCSbS will take the lead on raising funds and sourcing goods and services in kind. They have access to grants and to persons with relevant skills.

Governance – Ideally a nonprofit society will take on the management of the garden once it is completed. RCSbS has nonprofit society status which will be useful during the design and build stage, but for day-to-day operations the gardeners will need to work together either forming their own society, or coming under the umbrella of an existing society (possibly the BC Farmlands Trust?) Another model, found at the Greenglades Garden, is to have a staff member oversee the garden.

Contact – the contact person for this project is Pieta VanDyke, [REDACTED] (cell)
[REDACTED]