Town celebrates opening of Community Garden

Written By **Paula Brown**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

While seeds took root and fresh produce grew all summer, the Town of Shelburne was officially able to celebrate the opening of the Shelburne Community Garden last week.

Town leaders, staff, and donors gathered at Fiddle Park in Shelburne last Thursday (Sept. 30) to mark the opening of the local community garden with a ceremonial ribbon cutting.

?For staff this is definitely a remarkable achievement. We started with the design idea and to see all the garden full of life is amazing,? said Carol Maitland, Shelburne's economic development and marketing coordinator. ?We've had a lot of positive feedback from the community with not only the fact that the garden has been incredibly successful, with every garden bed being used, but also it being a place for people to just relax and visit.?

The Shelburne Community Garden has been in the works for around two years, with construction breaking ground in September of 2020 and completing in April. First, developed as a way to address food insecurity in the community following the release of a study commissioned by Dufferin County and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, the garden has also become a safe and healthy space for community members to socialize.

The Shelburne Community Garden is located at the north-eastern section of Fiddle Park. Nestled on two acres of green space, the garden occupies approximately 1.05 acres.

The garden includes 12 garden beds, eight raised beds, two wheelchair accessible beds, a utility shed, covered pavilion and relaxation/meditation gardens. Shelburne Community Garden is also surrounded by a cluster of apple, plum, and pear trees as well as wildflowers to encourage pollinator populations.

Maitland said when the fruit trees begin fully producing they will be open to all to pick from.

?It's just a remarkable gather place and I think that's the biggest comment I've heard from people ? is just how beautiful and amazing a place it is,? said Maitland.

The cost of building the community garden was around $28,000, with corporate donations and community partners helping cover the cost.

The price of using a gardening bed for a full year ranges between $10 to $40 depending on the beds size and what you are getting. Maitland said the pricing falls in line with what other community gardens are charging, but also added that they looked at making sure the garden was affordable and accessible to as many people as possible.

One user of the community garden, Maitland noted, has been to the local food bank, Shepherd's Cupboard.

?The food bank had two fairly large beds and they grew a substantial amount of food for members that are using their services,? said Maitland.

Future plans for the growth of the Shelburne Community Garden are already in the works, but most of the expansion will be focused on outside of the garden.

Maitland said they'll be working on expanding the wildflower garden to benefit insects and pollinators as well installing houses for swallows and bats.

?We want to improve the environment for beneficial insects, pollinators and wildlife for 2022,? said Maitland.