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A twelve year lease has been signed with The Green Backyard to secure the charity's future on its current Oundle Road site.

This milestone represents a major investment in the community project by the city council. Council officers have been working with members of The Green Backyard in recent months to confirm the agreement which includes:

- > A 12 year lease
- > Two council appointed members to join The Green Backyard's board of 12 trustees
- > Six months to make improvements to the appearance of the Oundle Road site
- > An annual report to the council's scrutiny committee to measure positive community impact - which will include, for example, the level of volunteering, community learning, activities for the most vulnerable and supporting arts and culture groups.

Councillor Irene Walsh, cabinet member for communities, said "The signing of the lease is a real milestone moment for the future of this important site which provides great social and community value. It's important that we invest in our community assets as this city grows and the success of this site is now firmly part of our vision for the city centre.

"This is a major investment for the council so it's important we are involved in the good work of The Green Backyard. We will be working with the charity to expand the way it works with local residents to encourage more volunteering and community projects as well as promoting healthy lifestyles and engaging with a greater number of children and young people.

"The community benefit of The Green Backyard has always been clear, and through working with a range of local organisations and groups, I believe the future is incredibly bright for the site."

The Green Backyard already works with the city council to support vulnerable and isolated residents and has delivered four programmes of community learning for City College Peterborough.

The charity also works with a number of other organisations including Froglife, arts organisation Metal, Handmade in Peterborough, Peterborough Environment City Trust and the Olive Branch community garden. As part of its collaboration with Metal it has hosted a number of artists in residence. The product of this work with artist Jessie Brennan was featured in the Guardian newspaper earlier in the year.

Sophie Antonelli, The Green Backyard co-founder and vice chair of the board of trustees, said: "We are naturally delighted that the site has been secured after so much hard work from local people, and will be used to benefit the people of the city for many years to come. This is a milestone for community land management both locally and nationally, and we are looking forward to showing the huge value of independent green spaces like The Green Backyard within a city such as Peterborough.

"We have a lot of hard work ahead of us now, but we've never been afraid of that, and are excited to be planning the future of our community green space for the next 12 years and beyond. This is a testament to the many hundreds of people who supported us and we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them."

As part of the agreement the council will retain the frontage of the site onto Oundle Road and will partition The Green Backyard site with a new fence.