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Community Garden

Planning Division
Frequency of Review: Every 3 Years

Community Gardens

Community Garden Policy Statement

Community gardens should be created, where appropriate, within designated urban agriculture areas in neighborhood parks, as well as on tax-forfeited parcels that are acquired to support the activity, and made available to all Minneapolis residents free of charge through a garden plot application process that includes the completion of site stewardship agreements.

Background

Establishing community gardens within neighborhood parks will be consistent with the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, through the following:

- 1) Providing education, access to healthy foods, and economic support for the local food system
- 2) Renewing and developing park facilities to foster urban agriculture activities
- 3) Making food available on parkland to benefit residents, park visitors, and the environment

SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL: _____ **Date:** _____



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1. Definitions

- **Combination Gardens**- Include ornamental plants as well as edible plants intended for use as food
- **Common Area** – a shared space within the community garden that is accessible by all community gardeners and persons visiting the garden
- **Community Garden (“Garden”)** – a site within MPRB owned land in a neighborhood park that is operated and maintained by committed volunteers under a current stewardship agreement for growing ornamental and/or edible plants
- **Edible Gardens**- Includes plants for use as food and as pollinator forage
- **MPRB** – Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board or its representative
- **Community Garden Lead (CGL)** – A person who will act as the main point of contact between MPRB and an individual community garden, its gardeners, and the park staff working where the garden is located. The CGL is responsible for ensuring that the application process is open and available to all residents and park visitors without discrimination, timely responses are made to applications, and that the community garden is accessible to all who wish to garden within it.

2. Implementation

2.1 Community Engagement

MPRB envisions and encourages diverse participation in the design, creation, and expansion of community gardens. As such, MPRB will publish and promote the community garden policy and application process in multiple languages at each of the neighborhood parks within its jurisdiction where community gardening is being pursued.

2.2 Site Selection

For neighborhood parks with designated urban agriculture zones per their service area master plans, optimal sites have been identified within these parks for urban agriculture activities including community gardens. However, soils have not yet been tested within these sites, so before any in ground planting occurs, testing should take place. All testing shall be the financial responsibility of the community gardeners, but can be reimbursed by MPRB. If needed, remediation strategies must be approved by the MPRB Planning Division prior to implementation. In the event that remediation of soils is too costly and poses an equity barrier to community gardeners, MPRB can approve the use of raised beds in lieu of in ground planting or interested gardeners can pursue other urban agriculture activities in partnership with MPRB including community orchards, food forests, designated foraging areas, etc.



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For neighborhood parks that have not yet been designated for urban agriculture activities, sites for community gardens should be sought in underutilized sections of the park that will not interfere with park aesthetics or existing uses. Interested applicants should check with the MPRB Planning Division to ensure the land being considered is on park property, is consistent with the park master plan (or that the master plan could be amended to include urban agriculture activities), and does not conflict with other park activities.

For tax-forfeited parcels that are available either from Hennepin County or the City of Minneapolis, there must be a demonstrated long term community interest in creating and maintaining a community garden on the parcel; insurance of the parcel must be secured by a partner community organization (such as a nearby church, non-profit organization, or some other entity with deep rooted community ties and long term viability) and name MPRB as an “additional insured”; and gardener responsibility for the costs of maintaining the site (water, tools, plants, and other materials) must be accounted for in order for MPRB to consider acquisition.

2.3 Permitted types of community gardens

Permitted types of community gardens include edible gardens and combination gardens.

2.4 Design Standards

Each garden will be designed through a community driven process. MPRB encourages an inclusive design for the gardens, including amenities such as raised beds, wheelchair access along main paths to common spaces, and other similar amenities to welcome gardeners of all abilities.

Each community garden will be unique in its character and style. Gardens may include individual garden plots, larger plots shared by several gardeners, in-ground garden beds, raised beds, etc. Interested gardeners will, in partnership with their Community Garden Leads, create a design for their community garden to be reviewed and approved by the MPRB Planning Division. Regardless of the nature of the garden, the following elements need to be included in each garden:

2.4.1 Garden Plots

Individual plots shall be laid out in an organized and neat fashion to allow fair and equitable assignment. Plots should be visibly defined, such as with corner stakes. Each community garden, if it includes individual plots, must also include community plots for the public benefit. There must be at least one community plot for every four individual plots and gardeners who maintain individual plots will also be required to put in a certain number of hours per month on the community plot to demonstrate their efforts are in support of the public good. These hours must be reported to the Community Garden Lead. **(Note: Interpretation of this section may require an Urban Agriculture Activity Plan amendment.)**



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2.4.2 Signage

Signage will be provided by MPRB to explain the purpose of the community garden, access and use policies, and to provide information addressing how to become a community gardener.

2.5 Application Process

2.5.1 Applications to create a community garden in neighborhood parks approved for urban agriculture

Interested applicants should apply to the MPRB Planning Division to create a community garden in an area the park's master plan has identified for urban agriculture. Following application approval, a stewardship agreement must be completed for creation and care of the garden space.

2.5.2 Applications for plots in existing community gardens

Anyone interested in becoming a community gardener at an existing community garden is required to complete a garden plot application, available through the MPRB Urban Agriculture Activity Plan website and at park recreation centers. Applications must be approved on a first come first served basis and plots assigned by the specific park's Community Garden Lead prior to gardeners beginning their activities. Preference for plots will be given to neighborhood residents living within two miles of each park to encourage diverse participation in this shared community resource.

2.5.3 Applications to create a garden in parks not yet identified for urban agriculture

Should the park in question not have urban agriculture included as a permitted activity in its master plan, interested applicants may apply to the MPRB Planning Division to request a master plan amendment to permit the creation of a community garden. All master plan amendments shall follow MPRB's Community Engagement Policy.

If two or more groups of interested community members wish to create a community garden in the same park, the Community Garden Lead will work with applicants to develop a proposed plot layout that accommodates multiple groups. If more than three groups are interested in the same site, the Community Garden Lead will work to see if interest might be directed to an alternate site and if not, applications will be directed for review by a special committee established by representatives from the neighborhoods within two miles of the park and a recommendation will be made to the MPRB Planning Division regarding the decision of access.



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2.6 Garden Management

Community gardens will be co-managed by Community Garden Leads and community gardeners, in cooperation with MPRB planning and park staff. Community Garden Leads will administer all aspects of the garden application process, garden creation and maintenance, plot assignment, and general garden oversight in keeping with this policy, gardener applications, and stewardship agreements. Further, CGL's will ensure that garden plots, pathways, and common areas are well maintained and that only approved plant life is growing organically within the garden.

Community gardeners will complete the physical planting and maintenance work in the garden, including pruning, weeding, and keeping pathways and common areas accessible to all garden users and visitors. Should community gardeners delegate someone else to perform gardening activities on their behalf, the names of designated persons must be shared with the Community Garden Lead in advance of the delegate beginning work in the garden.

2.7 Insurance and Maintenance

2.7.1 Insurance

MPRB will not require individual community gardeners to carry liability insurance for their gardening activities on MPRB park land (except on properties that have come into MPRB ownership as tax forfeited property), but as part of the application process, MPRB will require all community gardeners to release the Park Board, its staff, and all park employees from all liability associated with the garden and the activities and structures therein.

2.7.2 Utilities

The MPRB will provide water service for community gardens in neighborhood parks where water utilities already exist. However, the MPRB will not fund new infrastructure improvements for the sole purpose of establishing a community garden, so where urban agriculture areas are not within reach of a recreation center hose bib, special arrangements for water will need to be made through the City of Minneapolis.

Should community gardeners like to install their own temporary rainwater harvesting system at their own cost, they may do so with approval from MPRB park staff, provided that the harvesting system stays within the boundaries of the overall community garden space, is not aesthetically displeasing, and does not interfere with any other gardener's plot or surrounding park activities.

2.7.3 Pathways

A clear circulation system needs to be provided to easily access community garden plots. The selection of pathway and paving materials should allow equal access for people with limited mobility and for



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people who use wheelchairs to participate in programs and to access plots within the garden. All pathway and paving materials must be approved by the MPRB Planning Division and installation monitored and checked by MPRB park staff to ensure it is consistent with current park design standards and compliant with all applicable ordinances.

2.7.4 Garden Borders, Fences and Gates

Garden borders may be defined through many different means. The use of natural materials (stones, large timbers, etc), unobtrusive fencing, or, chain link fencing are permitted, but the material of choice must be agreed upon by the majority of community gardeners in the same garden.

If fences are to be used, at least two points of access must be provided. Fencing material and installation methods must be approved by MPRB but are the sole responsibility of the community gardeners. Locks will not be permitted on fences.

2.7.5 Structures to Support Plant Growth

Pergolas, arbors, trellises, and other structures to support plant growth may be used if agreed upon by the majority of community gardeners within the same garden. As in the case of 2.7.4, these structures must be approved by MPRB and installed in coordination with the Community Garden Lead but are the sole responsibility of the community gardeners.

2.7.6 Tool Sheds, Storage Chests, and Tools

Tool sheds and storage chests will not be permitted near community gardens. All tools needed for community gardening activities shall be the sole responsibility of community gardeners as will any property loss or liability. Further, gardeners must follow existing MPRB policy and procedures regarding tool use by volunteers.

2.7.7 Maintaining Areas near Garden Plots

Community gardeners will be responsible for maintaining the areas around garden plots, including pathways, common areas, and areas bordering the exterior of the community garden. Each community gardener will be responsible for maintaining the immediate edge of their garden plot to ensure plants do not overgrow or extend into common areas, pathways, or fence lines and will agree, as part of the garden application process, to also maintain these other areas.

2.7.8 Prohibition of Chemicals, Pesticides, and Fertilizers

Community gardeners are required to be consistent with MPRB's Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy, which emphasizes:

- Encouraging naturally occurring biological control.
- Adoption of cultural practices that include cultivating, pruning, fertilizing, maintenance and irrigation practices that reduce pest problems.



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- Changing the habitat to make it incompatible with pest development.
- Using alternate plant species or varieties that resist pests.
- Limiting monoculture plantings where possible.

Further, no chemical herbicides, pesticides or fertilizers may be used on community garden plots unless the specific use is approved by the Board of Park Commissioners.

2.8 Public Access and Use

No community garden within a neighborhood park or other public space shall be managed as fee for access, though donations may be accepted to support the health and maintenance of the garden. Access shall be granted, free of charge, through a garden plot application process. Further, no product of a community garden may be sold unless previously discussed and approved in writing by Park Board staff. In these limited instances, any profits generated from the sale of garden produce or flowers must be redirected back to the garden to support its health and maintenance.

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COMMUNITY GARDEN APPLICATION

Contact Name: _____

Is Contact a Representative of a Neighborhood Group? (Circle one) YES NO

If yes, which one? _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Park that Gardener is Applying To: _____

Is the Park Approved for Urban Agriculture per Master Plan? (Circle one) YES NO

Description of Existing Conditions at Proposed Garden Site:



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GARDEN PLOT APPLICATION

I, _____, HEREBY APPLY TO BECOME A COMMUNITY GARDENER AND REQUEST ACCESS TO A COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOT IN _____ PARK FOR THE GROWING SEASON WITHIN THE CALENDAR YEAR ____.

ONCE APPROVED, I PLEDGE TO MAINTAIN THE PLOT I HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO THE STANDARD SET BY MPRB REGARDING PLANTING, WEEDING, PEST CONTROL, WATERING, HARVESTING, AND SEEDING AND/OR REPLANTING FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR. I UNDERSTAND THIS STANDARD INCLUDES MAINTAINING A GARDEN FREE OF CHEMICAL PESTICIDES AND HERBICIDES AND THAT I MAY NOT PERSONALLY PROFIT FROM PRODUCE HARVESTED FROM THE COMMUNITY GARDEN.

I ALSO PLEDGE TO MAINTAIN AREAS SURROUNDING MY PLOT, INCLUDING PATHWAYS AND COMMUNAL AREAS, AS DIRECTED BY THE COMMUNITY GARDEN LEAD FOR THE PARK IN WHICH I AM GARDENING AND, IF I AM ASSIGNED AN INDIVIDUAL PLOT, TO DONATE AT LEAST THREE HOURS PER MONTH TO TENDING A COMMUNITY PLOT IN THE SAME GARDEN. SHOULD I FAIL TO UPHOLD MY PLEDGE OR LOG MY DONATED HOURS WITH MY COMMUNITY GARDEN LEAD, I WILL BE GIVEN ONE NOTICE BY THE COMMUNITY GARDEN LEAD AND I WILL HAVE TEN DAYS TO RESPOND. IF I DO NOT RESPOND OR UPHOLD MY PLEDGE, I RECOGNIZE MY PLEDGE WILL BE CONSIDERED ABANDONED AND MY PLOT REASSIGNED TO ANOTHER GARDENER.

I ACKNOWLEDGE AND ACCEPT THAT THE MINNEAPOLIS PARK & RECREATION BOARD ASSUMES NO LIABILITY FOR ACCIDENTS OR INJURY TO PARTICIPANTS OR OTHERS EITHER ON OR ADJACENT TO THE GARDEN AREA. NEITHER DOES THE PARK BOARD ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTS OF VADALISM OR LOSS OF CROPS OR PERSONAL PROPERTY.

I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THESE CONDITIONS SET FORTH FOR THE COMMUNITY GARDENER.

Applicant's Signature Date

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Community Garden Lead Approval Date