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Community Garden

Planning Division
Frequency of Review: Every 3 Years

Community Gardens

COMMUNITY GARDEN POLICY STATEMENT

Community gardens shall be created within designated urban agriculture areas in neighborhood parks, as well as on newly acquired park parcels, and made available to Minneapolis residents free of charge through a garden plot application process that includes the completions of plot stewardship agreements. MPRB may also purchase land to support the continuation of existing community gardens. The primary purpose of MPRB’s community garden program is to provide space for people to grow healthy food for themselves and their families.

BACKGROUND AND POLICY BASIS

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 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
- 4) Applying a racial equity lens to the plot application process
- 5) Completing an annual racial equity impact assessment to examine how different racial and ethnic groups may be affected by this policy and its corresponding program. This assessment is a vital tool to reduce, eliminate, and prevent racial discrimination and inequities.

Community gardens are authorized under the Park Board Code of Ordinances PB2-2. Locations are designated in adopted Service Area Master Plans.

SUPERINTENDENT APPROVAL: _____ Date: _____



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DEFINITIONS

- **combination garden-** Includes 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 acquired tax forfeited property or in a neighborhood park that is intended for growing ornamental and/or edible plants
- **Community Garden Lead (CGL)** – A coordinator, selected by MPRB, to lead gardening activities in one or more neighborhood parks. The CGL will act as the main point of contact between MPRB and a community garden, its gardeners, and the park staff working where the garden is located. The CGL will work under the direction of the MPRB Staff and ensure their community garden is designed and operated with equity and accessibility in mind.
- **community plot-** a plot that is open to Minneapolis residents who wish to participate in the community garden to garden and harvest
- **edible garden-** Includes plants for use as food and as pollinator forage
- **garden plot agreement-** a stewardship agreement each community gardener will be asked to sign that outlines their individual plot responsibilities
- **individual plot-** a plot that is assigned to an individual gardener for one year at a time
- **MPRB** – Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board or its representative
- **MPRB community garden staff (staff)-** A full-time, racial equity trained MPRB staff member who manages the community garden program. The staff is responsible for ensuring that the plot application process is available to all residents and park visitors without discrimination, applications are reviewed with equity in mind, and timely responses are made to applications. The staff will also select and coordinate the work of Community Garden Leads, including garden designs, plot awards, plot turnovers, and coordination with other MPRB staff.
- **tax forfeited property-** Property that is currently vacant due to tax forfeiture, available through Hennepin County for MPRB’s acquisition as a park, the primary purpose of which would be for community gardening



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PROCEDURES

A. Staffing

A community garden staff member (staff) will manage the community garden program, coordinate the selection of Community Garden Leads, publish and promote the community garden policy and application process in multiple languages at each of the neighborhood parks within the city of Minneapolis where urban agriculture areas are designated, respond to public inquiries, and coordinate the community garden plot application, selection, and notification process with Community Garden Leads. The staff shall be provided with racial equity and implicit bias training and will conduct annual monitoring of the program to identify any gaps in racial equity that might exist, assess potential causes of those gaps, and work to address and eliminate those gaps with assistance from other departments within MPRB as well as community partners. This racial equity impact assessment is consistent with equity strategies set forth in the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan.

Community Garden Leads will be selected by the staff, based on program management or volunteer coordination experience in community gardens, comfort with coordinating a community garden design with interested gardeners, and ability to commit to the program for a minimum of one year.

B. Site Selection

For neighborhood parks with designated urban agriculture areas per their adopted master plans, optimal sites (based on sun exposure, surrounding activities, and community preference) have been identified within these parks for urban agriculture activities including community gardens. In these areas, MPRB will screen soils in designated areas for contaminants and review the need for remediation.

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 deemed too small to be buildable that are available through Hennepin County, there must be a demonstrated long term (at least 3-5 years) community interest in creating and maintaining a community garden on the parcel in order for MPRB to consider acquisition. Available tax



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forfeited parcels will be advertised on MPRB's urban agriculture website so that interested community members may contact MPRB and request acquisition, which MPRB will consider upon request. MPRB will prioritize acquisition of parcels in areas where known fresh food deserts exist and in areas of concentrated poverty. Once acquired, a parcel will be considered a park and it will become subject to all applicable MPRB Ordinances and the entirety of this policy. (See Section I for MPRB acquisition of existing gardens.)

C. Permitted types of community gardens

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

D. Garden Design

The MPRB Planning Division will create a Community Garden Design Standards Guide for use in the design of community gardens, emphasizing inclusive design for the gardens and addressing features such as raised beds, wheelchair access along main paths to common spaces, and other similar amenities to welcome gardeners of all abilities.

Each garden that is located on parkland will be designed through a community driven process and will be unique in its character and style. Interested gardeners will, in partnership with their Community Garden Lead, create a design for their community garden to be reviewed and approved by the MPRB Planning Division, to ensure design standards are followed, accessibility concerns are addressed, and space is well utilized.

The following elements should be addressed in each garden:

- 1. Garden Plots:** Individual plots shall be laid out in an organized fashion to allow fair and equitable assignment. Plots should be visibly defined and easy to navigate around. Each community garden, if it includes individual plots, must also include at least one community plot for the public benefit.
- 2. 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 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, which will construct community garden spaces to ensure consistency with current park design standards and compliance with all applicable ordinances.



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- 3. Garden Borders, Fences, and Gates:** Garden borders may be defined through many different means. The use of natural materials (stones, timbers, wood planks) 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. Gates are permitted at points of access, but locks are not permitted, and the gates must be operable by all people, regardless of ability. Gates should be designed in a way that makes the garden feel open to the public.

- 4. 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. These structures must be approved by the Staff and installed in coordination with the Community Garden Lead but are the sole responsibility of the community gardeners.
- 5. Tool Storage and Tools:** While tool sheds and storage chests will not be permitted near community gardens for safety and security reasons, in-ground tool lockers and fixed storage benches may be installed if desired within the garden. These structures must be installed by MPRB but are the sole responsibility of the community gardeners. Community gardeners will release MPRB for any liability relating to theft or vandalism and all tools needed for community gardening activities shall be the sole responsibility of community gardeners. Further, community gardeners must follow existing MPRB policy and procedures regarding tool use by volunteers and refrain from the use of power tools.
- 6. Signage and Posted Communication Strategy:** Signage will be provided by MPRB in up to three predominant neighborhood languages to explain the purpose of the community garden, access and use policies, and to provide information addressing how to become a community gardener. Signage will include the web address (and url redirect) so people can find details and subscribe to email updates.

Additional communication strategies that MPRB will undertake to inform the public about designated urban agriculture areas and community garden opportunities will include multiple methods, such as web-based information, email updates, flyers in recreation centers and other park buildings, news updates through community partners and their



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chosen communication paths, collaboration with advocacy groups and community organizations, and promotion at MPRB hosted events.

E. Application Process

1. Applications to create a community garden in parks with urban agriculture in master plans:

Interested Minneapolis residents should contact the MPRB Staff with the request for MPRB to create a community garden in an area identified for urban agriculture in the park's master plan. Following application approval, a community driven design must be created and approved for the community garden's layout.

2. Applications for plots in existing community gardens in parks: Anyone interested in becoming a community gardener at an existing community garden is required to complete a garden plot application, available through the MPRB website and at park recreation centers. Applications will be due by February 1 of each year and will initially be scored by the MPRB Staff. Points will be awarded based on:

- 1) City of residence (preference will be given to Minneapolis residents)
- 2) Connection with the garden of choice (Preference will be given to those who have some connection with the park in which they will garden. For instance, applicants may live, work, attend school, or spend time nearby, visit, or walk past the park with some sort of regularity.)
- 3) Intended garden use (preference will be given to edible gardens)
- 4) Land access (preference will be given to gardeners with no other available space in which to grow)

After scoring is complete, the top scoring applications will be shared with a group of reviewers (a combination of MPRB staff and interested community members with training in racial equity) to determine which will be accepted, based on responses to open ended questions. This group will conduct their review with Urban Agriculture Activity Plan goals and strategies in mind.

Once the committee has conducted their review and made their selections, the Staff will notify all applicants of the outcome, and plots will be assigned for a one year term by a specific park's Community Garden Lead prior to gardeners beginning their activities. Plots



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will be limited to one plot per household. Those applicants who are not selected for an individual plot will be welcome to garden in a community plot and will be waitlisted in their gardens of choice. Any unassigned plots will be awarded to waitlisted persons or in the absence of a waitlist, subject to the same application and review process as those previously assigned. Once assigned, plots may not be transferred to others without the consent of the staff.

The MPRB Staff will ensure this application and plot award process is consistent with MPRB's Community Engagement Policy and MPRB's racial equity goals. The MPRB Staff, in coordination with MPRB's racial equity guidance team, will also complete an annual assessment to determine whether any gaps in equity exist, assess potential causes of those gaps, and work to address and eliminate those gaps with assistance from other departments within MPRB as well as community partners. This assessment will include tracking the number of food-producing gardens, analyzed by geographic area, including RCAPs.

- 3. Waitlisted Applications:** When all individual plots are assigned, a waitlist system will be used based on application criteria to determine individual plot allocation if plots are vacated. If an applicant declines a plot offer from a requested garden they will be removed from the garden's waitlist. Waitlists will clear on September 1 of each year, though waitlisted individuals will be contacted to see if they would like their plot application to be considered again the following year.
- 4. Plot Renewals and Turnover:** Because equity considerations are a key driver of the plot application process, automatic plot renewals will not be permitted. All community gardeners will be required to reapply for plots, though they may use previous applications for the following year. Plot holders must leave their assigned garden space clear of all structures and plant materials at the end of each growing year.
- 5. 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 discuss the possibility of a master plan amendment with the MPRB Planning Division to permit the creation of a community garden. All master plan amendments shall follow MPRB's Community Engagement Policy and procedures set forth in applicable plan documents.



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6. Applications to create community gardens on tax-forfeited parcels: Available tax forfeited parcels will be advertised on MPRB’s website so that interested community members may contact MPRB and request acquisition, which MPRB will consider upon request. If MPRB acquires a tax-forfeited parcel for the purposes of establishing a community garden, it will be considered a park under MPRB jurisdiction and all MPRB Ordinance requirements and procedures within this Community Garden Policy shall be followed, except when a garden is already established when the lot is purchased (see Section I).

F. Garden Management

Community gardens will be co-managed by the MPRB Staff, Community Garden Leads, and community gardeners, in cooperation with park staff. Community Garden Leads will administer all aspects of garden plot assignments, garden maintenance, and general garden oversight in keeping with this policy. To ensure equity considerations are incorporated into this work, CGLs will receive racial equity, implicit bias, and universal design training through MPRB in advance of beginning their work. CGLs will ensure that garden plots, pathways, and common areas are well maintained and that only approved plant life is growing organically within the garden.

While MPRB will complete necessary site improvement and construction work to create community gardens on parkland prior to gardeners beginning their activities, community gardeners will complete the physical planting and maintenance work in the garden, including pruning, weeding, and keeping pathways and common areas free of obstructions and 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.

G. Insurance, Utilities, and Maintenance

1. Insurance: MPRB will not require individual community gardeners to carry liability insurance for their gardening activities on MPRB park land (except when MPRB purchases existing community gardens, under Section I). As part of the application process, however, MPRB will require all community gardeners to release the Park Board, its staff, CGLs, and all park employees from all liability associated with the garden and the activities and structures therein.



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2. Utilities: MPRB will provide water service for community gardens in neighborhood parks where water utilities already exist. Where water utilities are out of reach of the designated urban agriculture area, MPRB will work through its Capital Improvement Program to fund basic infrastructure improvements on parkland. MPRB will employ neighborhood park equity metrics, which have been incorporated by ordinance into its Capital Improvement Program, to prioritize the order in which water utilities are added to requested areas. Should community gardeners like to install their own temporary rainwater harvesting system at their own cost, they may do so with approval from the 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.

In the case of tax-forfeited properties, special water arrangements will need to be made through the City of Minneapolis or neighbors who are willing to make water hookups available on their property

3. Maintaining Areas near Garden Plots: Community gardeners are 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.

4. Prohibition of Chemicals, Pesticides, and Fertilizers: Community gardeners are required to garden organically and maintain consistency 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.
- Changing the habitat to make it incompatible with pest development.
- Using alternate plant species or varieties that resist pests.
- Limiting monoculture plantings where practicable.

No chemical herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers may be used unless the specific use is approved by the Board of Park Commissioners.



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- 5. Compost:** Organic compost may be used in community gardens, so long as it does not create an odor issue for park visitors.

H. Public Access and Use

Community gardens on MPRB property shall be considered open to the public during normal park hours. Community gardens may not bar, restrict, or discourage access to the general public from entering the garden, sitting or otherwise relaxing in the garden, nor from harvesting for personal use from the community plot.

No community garden within a neighborhood park or other Park Board owned space shall be managed as fee for access, though donations may be accepted to support the construction or maintenance of the garden. Further, no product of a community garden may be sold unless previously discussed and approved in writing by the Staff. In these limited instances, any proceeds generated from the sale of garden produce or flowers must be redirected back to the garden to support its maintenance.

I. MPRB Purchase of Existing Gardens

Upon request, MPRB may consider the purchase of land on which an established community garden exists. Such a purchase would take place only when an existing and established garden is threatened with elimination or loss of land access due to taxation, ownership change, or other land matters. Purchases of existing community gardens require approval by the Board of Commissioners. Because the intent of such a purchase would be to preserve an existing garden and the important food production it provides, MPRB will enter into a stewardship agreement with the existing garden management. These gardens will be considered parks under MPRB jurisdiction and will be subject to all applicable MPRB Ordinances. These garden sites, however, will not be subject to the provisions of this policy, except for G4 (Prohibition of Chemicals, Pesticides, and Fertilizers), but will be encouraged to implement the application, design, and evaluation procedures outlined herein.

At which time such an existing garden ceases operation or is determined by MPRB to be no longer gardened or maintained to good standard, MPRB may notify garden management that the garden will transition to an MPRB community garden. In this case, the garden will begin to follow this policy in its entirety.



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J. Decommissioning Community Gardens

Should an existing MPRB community garden be no longer desired by the community, as evidenced by lack of gardeners after repeated and broad-ranging efforts to solicit interest, MPRB may decommission the garden and remove any improvements associated with the garden. MPRB will attempt to return any materials, personal property, tools, or other items to their owners, but may take full possession of these items if owners cannot be found. MPRB will determine the future use of the community garden space through a planning process in line with its Community Engagement Policy.



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IMPLEMENTATION

After Board approval, the primary implementation step is to authorize and hire a Staff, which is dependent on a successful budget request for 2019 and thereafter.

Once the Board approves the policy, an agency-wide notification will be prepared that announces the existence of the new policy and provides a written overview of its content. It will be the responsibility of the Staff to provide ongoing promotion and education to staff as appropriate.

Initiation of garden implementation will rise from the community, but opportunities will be promoted by the Staff.

A capital improvement fund will be proposed in the 2019 CIP to allow for improvement of garden areas according to this policy.

Per this policy, the community garden program will be evaluated annually with a racial equity lens. The Staff will prepare this evaluation and make it public either by submitting as a Petition and Communication to the Board or presenting it as a Board Study Item.

The community garden application and agreement—both of which were created in collaboration with community and staff stakeholders—are attached as implementation items to this policy.



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COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOT APPLICATION for (YEAR)

Applicant Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Park that Gardener is Applying To: _____

Second Choice Park? (If first choice is unavailable): _____

If assigned an individual plot, what is the intended use? Edible or Ornamental Plants

Do you have access to any other growing space outside of the parks? YES NO

Why do you want to garden in a Minneapolis park?

What connection do you have with the park you are applying to? Do you spend time nearby? Is it a park you visit or walk past regularly? Anything else?

What will you do with what you grow?

Have you read and do you understand MPRB's community garden policy? YES NO

Policy Number 9/11/2018
/2018

**MINNEAPOLIS PARK &
RECREATION BOARD**



PUBLIC POLICY

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Please note: Preference will be given to Minneapolis residents with some connection to the park in which they will garden, those who will grow edible plants, and those who have no access to other growing space. Applications will further be weighted on the open-ended responses.

OPTIONAL: How do you identify your race or ethnicity (check all that apply)?

- White
- Black or African American
- African
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Arab
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino
- Multi-racial
- Other: _____

Please note: MPRB is committed to creating a community garden program that ensures racial equity in fresh food access. The responses to the voluntary question about race will be used for the public benefit, as a measurement tool to understand the diversity of interested applicants and help ensure diversity among selected gardeners.



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GARDEN PLOT AGREEMENT

I, _____, HEREBY APPLY TO BECOME A COMMUNITY GARDENER AND REQUEST ACCESS TO A COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOT IN _____ PARK 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. SHOULD I FAIL TO UPHOLD MY PLEDGE, 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

Printed Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Community Garden Lead Approval _____ Date