

Racial Equity Evaluation: Community Gardens

2022



Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board
www.minneapolisparks.org

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Background

In 2018, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board passed a Community Garden Policy, allowing for plot-based community gardens on park land. The first garden was installed at Franklin Steele Square in the spring of 2019. By 2022, the program had grown to 9 locations, which included the Cepro Site, Sibley and Powderhorn (South), Lovell and Sumner Field (North), Dickman and Towerside (East of the River), and Loring Park and Franklin Steele (Downtown).

Garden site selection was based on community interest, partnership opportunities, neighborhood need, direction from park Master Plans, and feasibility. Neighborhoods with a high density of apartments, concentration of public housing, RCAP's (Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty), lack of existing community garden space, and/or food deserts have and will continue to be prioritized. For a community garden to be established at a park, it's Masterplan (MP) must have a designated urban agriculture zone. Urban agriculture zones are limited, and immediate implementation is not always feasible.



Racial equity is at the heart of the plot application process at MPRB. It is common practice for community garden spaces to be awarded on a first come first served basis. This has been problematic at other community gardens in that too often, the folks with first access to information, and thus access to land, are older, whiter, and more affluent.

MPRB's application process attempts to alleviate this problem by prioritizing Minneapolis residents who don't have access to land outside the parks, plan to grow food, and have a connection to the park the garden resides in through an application process. Plot applications are promoted through flyers at nearby businesses, schools, and apartment buildings, articles in neighborhood newsletters, community events, GovDelivery e-mails, signage, paper applications/drop boxes in garden spaces, and community partners. All applications are due by February 1st and are reviewed and scored to reflect these priorities by a group of MPRB staff and community members. Gardeners must reapply for a plot each year so that there is always space for new participants.

Introduction

This annual Racial Equity Evaluation is a key part of MPRB's Community Garden Policy. The purpose of this evaluation is to "examine how different racial and ethnic groups may be affected by this policy and its corresponding program". The assessment will examine the demographics of applicants and gardeners. It will identify potential barriers to success at each step of a person participating in the community garden program: from applying, to being awarded a plot, to getting their hands in the soil. This examination as well as included qualitative information collected from participants will be used to suggest program improvements.

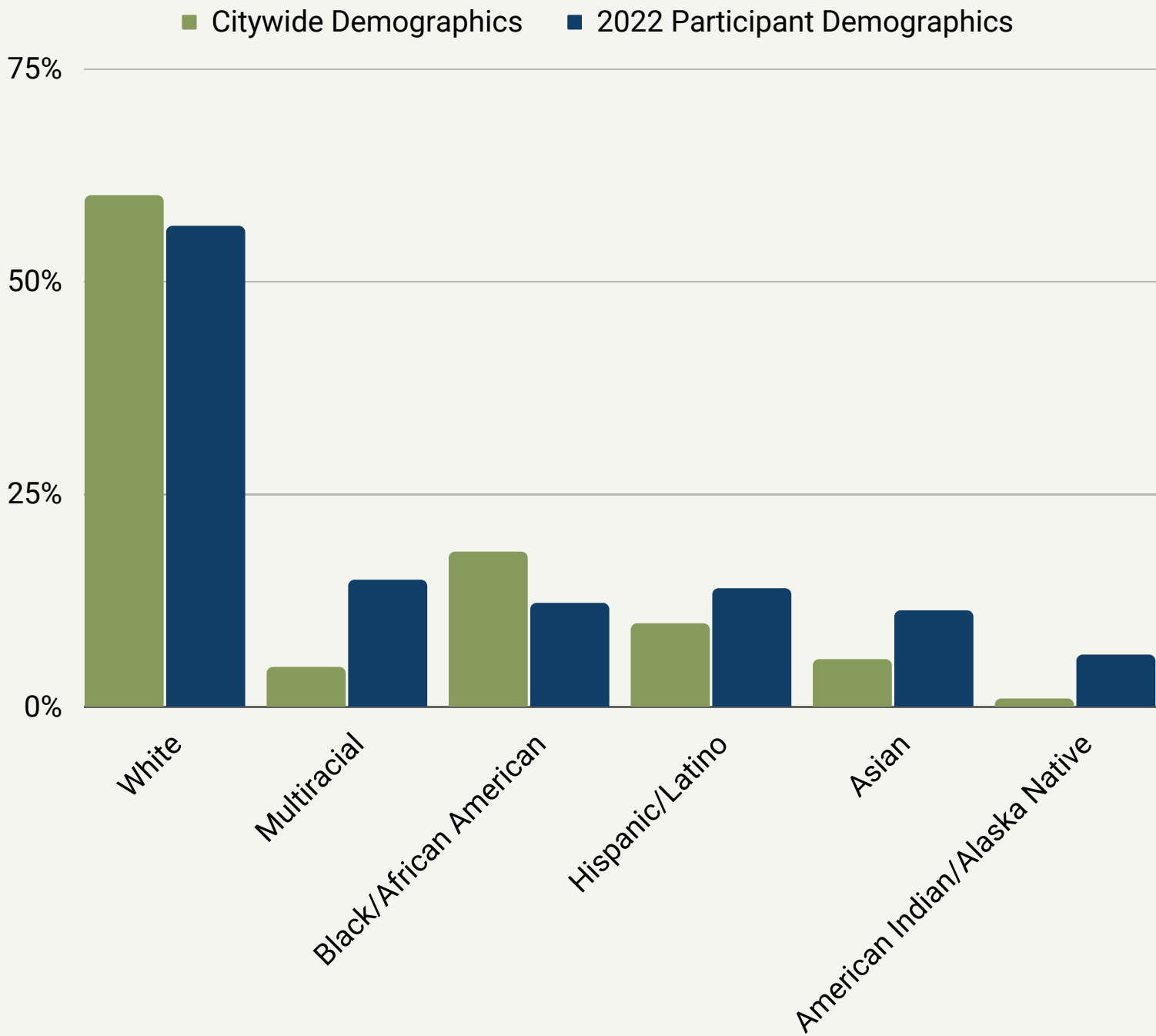
The Community Garden Plot application asks applicants this voluntary question: "How do you identify your race or ethnicity?". The application also asks "Why do you want to garden in a Minneapolis Park?" and "What will you do with that you grow?". At the end of the garden season, participants were asked "What can MPRB do to engage more racially diverse communities in our parks' community garden spaces?".

Answers to these questions as well as staff insight provide the basis for this evaluation. Neighborhood and citywide demographics information is from Minnesota Compass, led by Wilder Research (mncompass.org) from 2014-2018.



RESULTS: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF 2022 COMMUNITY GARDENERS

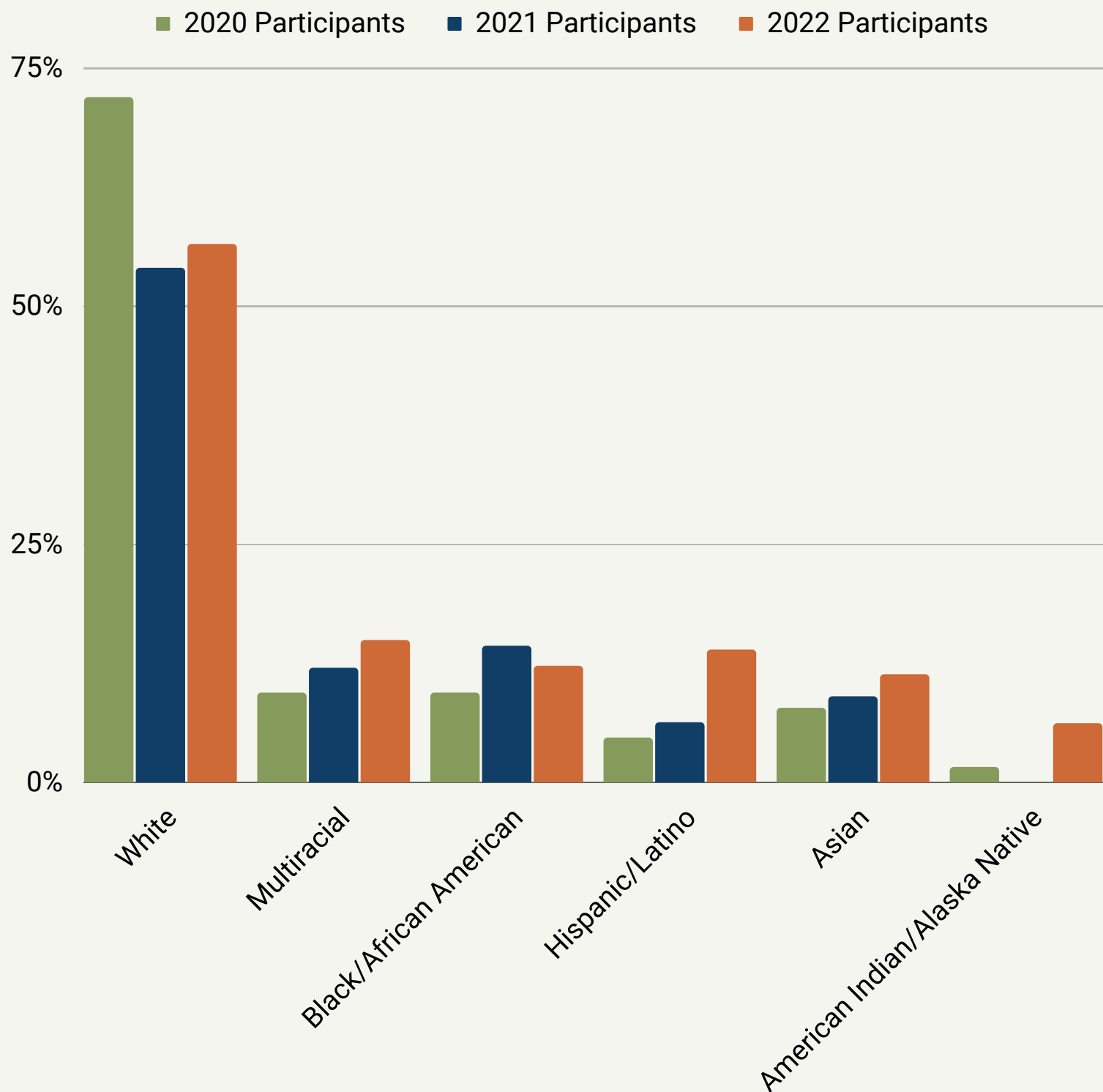
How do the racial demographics of Minneapolis Park Community Gardeners compare to the population of Minneapolis?



Minneapolis Park Community Gardeners are diverse and largely reflect the demographics of the City of Minneapolis. Work remains to be done, primarily in outreach to the Black/African American Community in Minneapolis. While 18.2% of Minneapolis residents identify as Black or African American, only 12.2% of Minneapolis Park Community Gardeners identify as Black or African American.

RESULTS: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF COMMUNITY GARDENERS 2020-2022

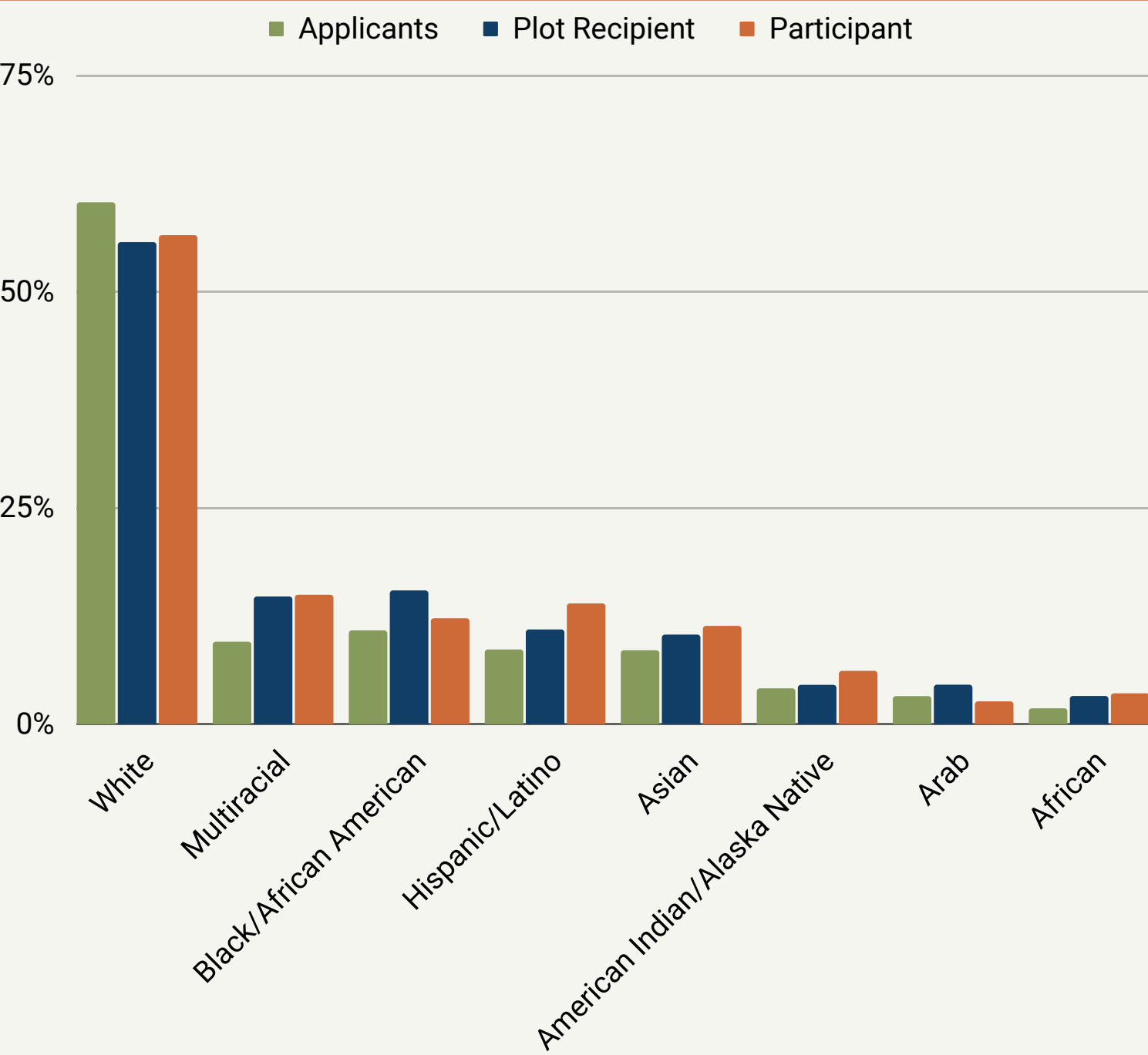
How have the racial demographics of Minneapolis Park community gardeners changed over time?



Over the past three community garden seasons, more racially diverse gardeners have participated in the Minneapolis Park Community Garden Program. The change over time also reflects the need for more outreach in the Black/African American community.

RESULTS: RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF 2022 MINNEAPOLIS PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN APPLICANTS, PLOT RECIPIENTS, AND PARTICIPANTS

Where do barriers exist in the Minneapolis Park Community Garden Program that limit participation, especially for BIPOC gardeners?



The percentage of applicants identifying as white is comparable to the percentage of Minneapolis residents who identify as white (60.3%, 60.1% respectively). Diversity among participants increases from the diversity of applicants, showing that the application process is having its intended impact. There was some drop-off in participation of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) gardeners from being awarded a plot to actually gardening in the space. Factors that may limit participation include access to plants and tools, transportation concerns, communication barriers, and lack of gardening experience.

Results

Participant feedback: What can MPRB do to engage more racially diverse communities in our parks' community garden spaces?



"Flyers, newsletters, newspaper advertisements, social media presence, and in-person presence are very important. I think it'll also be beneficial to reach out directly to schools for ways to collaborate directly with these communities."

"Donate some plots to community centers to teach kids how to grow a garden using an urban space."



"More education in more parks!"



"Spotlight on indigenous foods or cultural foods of historically under represented groups."



"Conduct programming in different languages."

Results

Participant feedback: Why do you want to garden in a Minneapolis Park? What will you do with what you grow?

- "I will treat and manage my illnesses and mental health. I will learn about how to grow herbs for medicinal purposes, and will help feed my community through donating some of what I grow."
- "I hope to practice indigenous food preservation methods and share any excess produce."
- "We share with students and their families. If food is ready during our summer program, we incorporate it into the lesson plan and cook with it. There is always pesto and kale salad to be created!"
- "I would like to normalize land back by normalizing indigenous gardening."
- "We are a small Hispanic church. Most families live in apartment buildings and don't have access to garden space. Many of the parents of the families come from rural roots. Tending a garden and sharing that with their families has been a healing experience for families. We have enjoyed the interaction with other gardeners, and appreciated the different learning experiences provided by Minneapolis Parks."
- "This year was my first time gardening and it was very fun, enjoyable and exciting for me and my 13 year old daughter to learn together, I would love to keep learning and teaching my kids."
- "I am passionate about food justice and have positive memories of gardening with my family as a child. I'd like to continue learning how to grow my own food and I feel like the community and shared spaces element is important to me. I live in an apartment and can't have my own garden and love that this program brings neighbors together."
- "I would love to learn so then I can teach my little ones to use these free resources. I live right in front of the park and we've never used the community garden. I also want to be more involved in the community."
- "For me, gardening has become a therapy that affords me the smallest rays of light and hope- an avenue to 'feel' productive."
- "We are able to lead intergenerational garden sessions in our plots - a time for residents living with dementia and children to work together in the garden, it's so great to see the residents share their knowledge with the kids and for all of us to see our garden grow."
- "Access to fresh fruits and vegetables and grow things not found in the store like certain Asian vegetables- perilla and galangal."
- "It connects me to my grandma, starting to garden convinced her to teach me a lot of our old food traditions and subsistence, and I feel connected to nature when I grow food."
- "I have not been able to garden for a couple of years. I live with my grandchildren across from the park and would like to teach the value of growing food. I live on a fixed income and it would be beneficial to my budget."
- "All of the women in my family have embraced growing inside and outside. I haven't ever had access to growing space, though it's my dream to follow in my family footsteps. I truly believe in the healing powers of soil and connection to the land."
- "I want to learn more about gardening because I did not grow up planting/gardening and I want to teach my toddler about gardening."

Goals and Strategies

1

Expand inclusive and culturally relevant programming

- Work with new Recreation Program Lead to provide intergenerational programs at community garden sites.
- Identify external partnership opportunities focused on providing culturally relevant programs.
- Contract translation services at all MPRB sponsored events.



2

Distribute culturally specific foods in garden spaces

- Select plants for shared beds that reflect the surrounding communities food preferences.
- Include recipe cards on shared beds.
- Host cooking demonstrations of culturally relevant meals.
- Provide healthy, culturally diverse food at events.

3

Improve outreach strategies for the garden application process

- Extend application period to align with county and city garden programs and times of higher park usership.
- Table at more in person community events (schools, health fairs, etc.).
- Focus outreach efforts on garden sites in North and South Minneapolis.