Center for Civic Partnerships (CCP) emphasizes food production as a means to other goals

"'Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice' (Pothukuchi et al., 2002). … One aspect of food security is that people can acquire food in socially acceptable ways, without having to resort to relying on emergency food supplies, scavenging or stealing. *www.civicpartnerships.org/docs/tools_resources/food_security.htm*

CCP's two top tenets:

- Promote policies that support urban agriculture. When inner-city residents gain the ability to grow and consume or market their own food, results may include improved health, economic development and community revitalization. Supportive policies may include free or low-cost water, simplified permitting requirements or interim land-use agreements.
- Transform vacant lots, rooftops, or designated areas of schoolyards or parks into community gardens. Community gardens not only provide access to fresh, nutritious food—they also serve as a place to build supportive relationships among people of all ages and backgrounds.

agency representatives "from the top down." However, grassroots leaders invariably need to enlist wider public support to secure land, funding, and volunteers. Such support waxes and wanes, depending on recurring crises of war or economic uncertainty to renew public interest (Lawson, 2005).

Starting a Community Garden

Positives

Related ATTRA publications and resources

Start a Farm in the City

Local and Regional Food Systems
www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food

The objectives of community gardening today go beyond food production. In fact, contemporary community-gardening manuals such as the American Community Gardening Association's (ACGA) *Growing Communities Curriculum* often downplay food production for its own sake to emphasize activist organization of the projects as a means of community-building—of contributing to the just sharing of resources. Along with building a sense of community, the ACGA advocates major community-gardening goals of promoting health and developing aesthetically pleasing urban spaces.

Similarly, California's Local Government Commission sees community gardens as integral to "creating healthy, livable neighborhoods."

There is evidence that the public is in tune with such community-minded attitudes toward community gardens. For example, one survey found that the public visited community-garden areas of public parks much more than other areas in the parks (Lawson, 2005).

Most community gardens also contribute to meeting environmental objectives by setting aside natural areas and by mandating sustainable or organic growing methods. Several metro Atlanta community gardens, for example, preserve stream sides, native plants, and old-growth trees. An appreciation of nature is an implicit part of such environmental concerns.

Today's gardens offer opportunities for education, as well. Dunbar Gardens in Little Rock, Arkansas, is a good example, holding regular classes for children in nearby schools and neighborhood teaching demonstrations on making compost, chicken husbandry, and wind power.

Some gardens such as Berkeley Youth Alternatives' Garden Patch tout youth educational programs as their prime purpose (Lawson, 2005). This goal also was evident in the Hartford Food Project's Holcomb Farm.

Public policy has long favored encouraging diversified farming on the outskirts of major population centers, as well as professionally managed market gardens within cities, as a means of reaching the goal of food security during times of insecurity and change. Even so, community gardening can be a minor, but significant, part of building local food systems—an "important non-market source" (Martinez et al., 2010). In order for local institutions to be supplied with local food, a major greenhouse industry will need to be reestablished in most parts of the country to supply the winter vegetables now shipped in from opposite-season parts of the world.

Such a change also implies building storage and handling facilities close to the point of sale—such as the once-ubiquitous climate-controlled apple cold-storage facilities—rather than the prevalent "just-in-time" shipping. And warehouses for local produce are indeed springing up in a number of states. Such a shift in policy may also entail changes in the public's expectations of year-round availability and low prices for produce.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges associated with starting and maintaining community gardens. Some of the more serious include ensuring security, being accepted by the wider community, co-existing with wildlife, ensuring land tenure, securing labor, addressing self-sufficiency, addressing zoning issues, and securing such gardening inputs as water, tools, garden supplies, and compost.

Security

In the early days of urban gardens, police in many parts of the country actively patrolled in the areas around them to discourage theft and vandalism. More recently, however, garden security is of increasing concern, although the seriousness of the problem varies from place to place. Vandalism, for example, is endemic in some areas but barely a problem in others.

The American Community Gardening Association grew out of a 1978 national conference in Chicago with 150 participants (Lawson, 2005). By 2010, the ACGA's 31st conference reportedly attracted more than 400 participants to Atlanta (Wilson, 2010). The ACGA website recently began featuring a national map of community gardens. The ACGA provides many other services, including a five-page outline of steps necessary in starting a community garden. The ACGA also offers, both in print and on disc, a community organizing manual, the *Growing Communities Curriculum. www.communitygarden.org/acga-store.php*

The ACGA's website and the University of Missouri Cooperative Extension (UMCE) recommend steps for organizing community gardening (McKelvey, 2008):

- Talk with friends, neighbors, and local organizations about the idea.
- Hold a meeting with anyone interested to determine the feasibility of starting a garden.
- Form a planning committee and subcommittees.
- Identify local resources and be sure to involve media from the outset to build public support.
- Find and evaluate potential garden sites.
- Hold a second meeting to discuss progress and hear reports.
- Draft a lease agreement if necessary.
- Develop a site plan.
- Establish gardener guidelines and draft the gardener application and other forms.
- Prepare and develop the site.
- Organize the garden.
- Address the question of insurance.
- Set up a new gardening organization.
- Manage your community garden.
- Develop a plan for troubleshooting in the event of such problems as vandalism, children's plots, angry neighbors, and bad gardeners.
- Compile resources.
- Celebrate your success.

In addition, the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) offers *Building Community Gardens in Montana* (AERO, 2007), which includes sample forms and letters. It also describes how AmeriCorps workers began a community-garden program in Helena, Montana.

Kaki persimmons at Dunbar Gardens are an uncommon perennial planting. Little Rock, Arkansas. Photo: Katherine Adam, NCAT

Community-garden organizers employ a wide range of security measures, from fencing to discourage vehicular traffic to approaches like those of the Dunbar and Felder community gardens in Little Rock, Arkansas, which seek to promote neighborhood "ownership" of the garden through a variety of programs.

Public acceptance

Public support is crucial to most community-garden programs, especially when it comes to matters of land tenure, volunteers, and funding. Most parts of the U.S. have both a growing season and a dormant season, and the uncertain land tenure of community-garden sites discourages organizers from making permanent improvements and gardeners from choosing perennial plants. So organizers must take care to ensure that community gardens are presentable to the general public—especially during the off-season. Since contemporary gardeners do not depend on their plots for basic sustenance, untended and unharvested plots are not all that rare. When garden sites become unsightly, neighbors may have concerns about property values declining.

Wildlife

Many publications promoting community gardening make no mention of wildlife predation on unprotected gardens. However, burgeoning deer herds are a major problem in all kinds of agricultural production.

In 2009, for example, plots located in an Urbana, Illinois, community garden on city park land had to be fenced, along with receiving a liberal application of deer repellant.

Birds, rabbits, possums, turtles, rats, and raccoons also have a taste for fresh garden produce. Such predations, as well as insect pests and diseases, often discourage the effort needed for year-round garden-plot maintenance. They may account in part for the fact that many community garden plots are filled with damaged and unharvested produce in late summer. Such problems may also account for a shift toward ornamentals in community garden plots, and they may highlight the shift in focus in community-garden organizing toward nature preservation, education, and hosting public events.

Water

Water is rarely free and must usually come from a public source. Often, a garden-plot fee must be charged to cover water use.

Tools, seeds, plants, fertilizer, compost

The need for tools, seeds, plants, fertilizer, compost, and other gardening inputs may be met in a variety of ways. Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for example, provided Community Development Block Grant seed money to establish a funding mechanism for receiving donations and making small grants to gardeners. Also, organizers often solicit in-kind donations, and compost may be produced at the site by gardeners or volunteers.

Labor

Paid labor is usually needed—especially for administration. Also, gardeners themselves rarely meet the amount of general volunteer labor needed to maintain a community garden.

In Decatur, Georgia, the Oakhurst Community Garden Project employs just two part-time city workers—plus 650 civic-minded volunteers. Most of the California gardens cited by Lawson

employ paid staff members, who spend much of their time on community-building programs associated with the garden (2005).

Self-sufficiency

From FAO and USDA statistics, an IDRC document estimates land required for the average U.S. diet at 1.64 ha (4.0525 A) and meat production accounts for 56% (Leckie, 1997). Present-day community gardens cannot be counted on to provide produce for winter storage or canning. Lawson notes that one goal of early urban-garden programs was to give immigrant populations crowding into cities in the early 20th Century an incentive to move to the country to achieve food self-sufficiency. However—including pastures, woodlots, garden, water supply, outbuildings, storage, potato field, hog pen, chicken yard, and possibly honeybees (or, more likely, sorghum) for a sweetener—a totally sufficient farmstead in the South that could be worked by the average family was traditionally 80 acres.

In addition to the amount of land available, other factors that may limit the canning and winter storage of food produced on community gardens include access by low-income gardeners to facilities for cooking and canning (including staple supplies, seasonings, and utensils); the availability of recipes and know-how for turning raw produce into complete meals; and whether community-garden participants have a tradition of cooking and sharing meals.

Zoning

The ACGA is collecting examples of model community ordinances and posting them on its website. Ordinances are only one kind of authorization for community gardens; administrative decisions allowing them are probably more common. In some jurisdictions, administrators have wide latitude in determining specific land use within a community garden's mandate. *http://communitygarden.org/docs/cg_policies.pdf*

The Cleveland, Ohio, zoning regulations for community gardens serve as a model for other localities. *http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/clevelandcodes/cco_part3_336.html*

Finding land for gardens—and then keeping the gardens on the land—has been an ongoing problem since the inception of programmatic urban gardening, particularly on the West Coast and in the Northeast.

Composter. Dunbar Gardens, Little Rock, Arkansas. Photo: Katherine Adam, NCAT

Struggles to maintain permanent community gardens in Boston; New York City; Madison, Wisconsin; Seattle; and Los Angeles are well documented (Lawson, 2005).

Even so, a simple resolution of the city council in Seattle authorized its "Pea Patch" community gardens on unused public lands as well as on existing parkland. The gardens were not envisioned to be permanent, but rather as a short-term use of the land for up to five years. Many California community gardens allow on-site sales of produce as part of the gardening organization's "civic purpose."

Again, the effectiveness of the oversight of a garden's planning committee and the amount of community trust the committee has been able to earn are of utmost importance to the success of a community garden.

Marketing and distribution

There are a number of examples of commercial sales from community gardening. In some cases, however, the sales are intended more as work

The UMCE's Toolkit (McKelvey, 2008) lists benefits of community gardening:

- Growing high-quality fruits and vegetables
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Mental health
- Community identity
- Environment
- Education
- Youth
- Income
- Crime prevention
- Property values

training than as a major source of funding for the garden and its associated programs.

In the early 1990s, for example, University of California-Santa Cruz Homeless Garden Project gardeners sold vegetables they raised in order to have pocket money. Los Angeles school gardens, often seen as a variation on community gardens, promoted "Food from the Hood" programs at about the same time. The programs recruited young single men, often former gang members, to raise and market food, using the money to support positive programs.

The Berkeley Youth Alternatives Community Garden Patch operated a showcase community-garden Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in Berkeley, California, but ultimately was able to meet only 1/7 of its annual budget (Lawson, 2005). Wages were the CSA's largest expense because much of the paid staff's time was devoted to training, administration, and other nongardening activities. To bring revenues more in line with expenses, the popular CSA program had to be discontinued in 2004—although sales at the garden gate continued.

Whether marketing is feasible depends on a number of factors that vary across the country. In New York City, for example, several farmers markets have featured produce from community gardens (NPLAN webinar, 2010). However, the summer of 2010 saw the first season of the Bed-Stuy Farm Share in Brooklyn (Green Brooklyn, 2010). Bedford-Stuyvesant residents can now buy shares of organic crops from farms located outside the city and receive weekly supplies of vegetables.

Besides a CSA, marketing and distribution choices for produce from a community garden could include such options as donating to a food bank; donating food through a church, especially if the garden is on church land; having an on-site stand; trading with other gardeners or relatives; and selling to small grocery stores.

Profile: Oakhurst Community Garden Project, Decatur, Georgia
www.oakhurstgarden.org
www.facebook.com/pages/Oakhurst-Community-Garden-Project/165401601194

The Oakhurst Community Garden Project (OCGP) is located at the corner of South McDonough Street and Oakview Road in Decatur, Georgia, just southwest of Agnes Scott College. The OCGP serves as a community garden, nature center, neighborhood meeting space, and wildlife habitat where visitors can experience the potential benefits of urban greenspace.

Begun in 1992 as a small private garden, the current community garden dates from 1997. The OCGP now covers two acres of City of Decatur and privately donated land.

Through a wisteria-covered gate, visitors enter the grounds, which feature well-tended raised beds about 4 feet by 8 feet in size. The beds go for $60 per year plus 16 hours of service in the community garden. The garden's growing season starts about March 1.

By August, the plots mostly have peppers, squash and trellised tomatoes—interspersed with flowering plants. A children's play area includes a cob house; a house originally on the site of the OCGP is now a community center.

The OCGP is located in a flood plain by a small stream. Water for the garden, however, comes from rain barrels and the city water system, not from the stream. Two small open sections near the stream in a natural area at the back of the property are the scenes of Rent-a-Garden events such as weddings and parties. Right by the stream are rustic tables and benches—an outdoor classroom dedicated in 2009 as a memorial to a mother and daughter.

The garden boasts a spring plant sale, and the OCGP garden group has its own greenhouse space for vegetable starts. The sale, operated in a self-service style, keeps going until all the plants are taken.

Some "urban chickens" cooped at the back of the garden—and free-ranging at certain times of the year—star in presentations at local schools. They are cared for by neighbors on "Team Chicken" and fed donated vegetable scraps and grains. The other side of the garden features tithonia and native swamp biscuit, as well as beehives.

The OCGP's staff consists of one part-time gardener and one part-time administrator, both paid at least in part by the city. There are also 650 volunteers involved, and the City of Decatur and the Decatur Preservation Alliance (DPA) provide strong support.

"Tons of planning" goes into maintaining this garden and its programs—including extensive fund-raising efforts featuring an annual Garden Tour. The OCGP is a wonderful example of a successful community-public-private partnership with heavy local participation and commitment.

History of Community Gardening

City Bountiful: A Century of Community Gardening in America, Laura J. Lawson's dissertation on the history of "urban garden programs" (now called community gardening), notes three waves of national interest, each with its own characteristics, but sharing common themes. Lawson's work is based on exhaustive analysis of original documents from public archives and extensive profiles of East Coast and West Coast gardens.

A common denominator for each rediscovery of community gardening has been economic uncertainty and social change. In the U.S., each wave has emphasized somewhat different goals. Most recently, among other purposes, urban gardening has taken on the role of promoting healthier eating habits, especially in children, aimed at addressing health conditions related to obesity.

First Wave: Subsistence Gardens

The first wave, which encompassed the period from 1890 to 1917, saw the emergence of three types of urban-garden programs:

- Cultivation of vacant city lots
- Children's school gardens
- The civic garden campaign

In the first wave, assigned plots on vacant urban land ranged from an acre down to 1/8 of an acre—enough for a family to have food all during the growing season and put up a winter food supply. New York City provided one-acre plots; Minneapolis and Detroit provided 1/3 to 1/4 acre; and Brooklyn provided 1/8 acre (Lawson, 2005). One-eighth of an acre equals a single city lot in most jurisdictions, equivalent to 60 feet by 85 feet. This was ample space to supply most food needs year-round at a subsistence level—depending on the size of the household. Participants grew a wide variety of such storable produce as beans and peas (which can be dried), cabbages, carrots, turnips, onions, and potatoes, as well as radishes and lettuce for summer salads (Lawson, 2005).

Detroit in 1890 required gardeners to plant potatoes on half of their 11,000- to 14,000-square-foot allotments (Lawson, 2005), hence the name "Potato Patch Movement" (Cornell, 2006). Gardeners were encouraged to sell some of their production for cash.

There are a number of common community-gardening themes:

- Use of gardening to reintroduce "nature" to the city
- Association of urban gardens with education
- Portrayal of gardens as a democratic space and gardening as an activity that brings diverse groups together in mutual self-interest

Second Wave: War and Relief Gardens

The second wave, from 1917 to 1945, was the era of the war gardens of World War I (Liberty Gardens) and World War II (Victory Gardens), along with the gardens of the Great Depression (Relief Gardens) (Cornell, 2006). The second wave had its own emphases:

- Patriotic volunteerism
- Job training and work relief

Between the wars, gardening was promoted as a means of coping with the Great Depression of the 1930s and its wholesale unemployment. There actually were farm surpluses at the time, but transportation links were undeveloped, and an unemployed and destitute urban population could not afford to buy shipped-in farm

Growing up during World War II

Food rationing in the U.S. during World War II meant that Victory Gardens became a major food source for many Americans, given enough land and farming skill. Meat, sugar, canned goods, and gasoline were strictly rationed from 1941 through 1945. Margarine was substituted for butter, which was unavailable because fewer households could afford to keep a cow.

As just one example, in 1941 the military bought up the entire output of the Johnson and Steele canning facility in Springdale, Arkansas. Citizens of northwest Arkansas were then on their own to raise and can the winter food supply for their households. Home freezers became available only in the late 1950s, and there was little long-term warehouse storage available for food.

products. (In the 1920s, perishable produce was first successfully shipped across the continent—by train in "reefer" boxcars refreshed along the way with ice—and sold as a luxury item. It was not until the 1960s that fast, reliable, worldwide transportation links were in place to move quantities of goods, and home freezers became popular.)

Depression-era urban gardens, a form of work-relief, were a substitute for dependence on charity. The programs provided seeds, potato sets, land, and water. Households supplied the labor, but participants were not encouraged to sell what they grew. Lawson's chapter title is telling: "An Antidote for Idleness." This time period also saw the rise of company gardens and railroad gardens, which continued during World War II.

The size of an urban community-garden allotment differed by locality, but most were much larger than today's typical community-garden plot. A 1941 report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Services Agency (USDA FSA) had initially concluded that farm gardens and large suburban gardens should be promoted as the most efficient means of increasing the civilian food supply, but planning for the war eventually led to the establishment of urban community gardens. The final goal was six million farm gardens and 12 million non-farm gardens, often on public lands or industrial parcels (Lawson, 2005). Some were for demonstration purposes, which continues today, as seen in the USDA's "People's Gardens" at federal facilities.

Third Wave: Gardening for Community

Community gardens of today have been affected by demographic change. Household size has steadily decreased since the early 20th Century, and "householders" have become more mobile and more diverse, according to the latest available census (Hobbs and Stoops, 2002). Fewer than half of all households now consist of a married couple with their children. According to the 2000 census, the majority of households consist of one, two, or three persons—rather than "more than five" majority identified by the 1910 census. Forty-two percent of food dollars are currently being spent on food consumed away from home at restaurants, schools, churches, businesses, drugstores, convenience stores, bookstores, supermarkets, vending machines, sports and cultural events, and parks and recreation centers.(Farmer, 2005; Todd et al., 2010)

Although some World War II Victory gardens continued during the 1950s and 1960s, many were lost to the post-war building boom. Younger families moved to the suburbs, where the backyard garden was popular.

The post-war era eventually saw the rise of "gardening for community," rather than for food production or as an antidote to idleness. Today's programmatic urban gardening aims to build social ties among individuals, with a view toward joint community action and promoting such wider goals as encouraging healthier eating habits through gardening, beautifying public spaces, providing access to nature, and exercising.

By the 1970s a second great tide of immigration had begun—this time from the rural South to northern urban centers. With the advent of machinery in southern row cropping, more than a million former tenant farmers (sharecroppers) were idled and forced off the land. Many headed north, most hoping to secure good-paying jobs in industry. U.S. industrial production had peaked, however, in 1960. Meanwhile, with flight to the suburbs accelerating, alleviating poverty and combating urban blight in inner-city neighborhoods became major social concerns by the end of the 1970s (Schukoske, 2000). Food co-ops and bulk-buying clubs were organized in some parts of the country; many organizations constructed greenhouses to cut heating bills and to extend the season for food production in the North.

Approximately 40 percent of the country's food budget is now spent on food that is eaten outside the home, according to a recent study by the USDA Economic Research Service (Todd et al., 2010). The study also notes that food eaten outside the home tends to be less nutritious than food prepared at home, which makes it important for maintaining health that consumers carefully consider their choices wherever they are eating. The researchers found that most Americans eat too few fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and they consume too much saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar.

The modern form of "community gardening" began about 1973 in the red-lined South Bronx neighborhood of New York City (Debord, 2002). A severe economic downturn was occurring, coupled with inflation that had government bonds paying 16% interest by the end of the decade. Economists called it "stagflation." The flight of industry, leaving jobless pockets of urban poverty, created food deserts. To alleviate suffering in impoverished urban communities, and to combat crime and unrest, citizen groups arose to persuade municipalities to encourage gardening on abandoned vacant lots. An early community-gardening organizer in the South Bronx was Karen Washington, who helped organize the Green Thumb program to secure land. The U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs (OAC) published *People Power*—a self-help manual for "groups tackling food, housing, health care, and energy problems" in the face of inflation (Peterson et al., 1979).

Modern community gardens look very different from those of earlier eras. On a standard city lot, the most popular individual plot size has become the 4-foot by 15-foot raised bed. One commenter on the website GardenWeb recently posed the central question: "Is the purpose of your (community garden) primarily food production? Or community development?" *www.gardenweb.com*

Current Economic Value of Community Gardens

A recent report by the USDA Economic Research Service (USDA ERS) includes community gardening as an important "non-market source," along with home gardens and shared gardens, for providing households with access to local food. The report cites a 2009 ACGA survey in estimating that one million of the 43 million U.S. households growing their own produce in 2009 were growing food in community gardens. Food gardening in 2008 was valued at $2.5 billion, while an estimated $2.8 billion was spent on gardening inputs, suggesting that economic benefits were not the only benefits being considered by gardeners (Martinez et al., 2010).

Summary

Community-garden organizers no longer rely on social and institutional conditions of the past when conceptualizing, planning, and implementing today's programmatic community gardening. Lawson defines food security as supplementing household food expenses by allowing "people without private land to use shared land for food production." Lawson's *City Bountiful* concludes that, while community gardens are not the ultimate solution to food security, they provide one piece of a more comprehensive strategy.

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Further resources

For additional resources, go online to see the ATTRA Local Foods pages, especially Urban and Community Agriculture. *www.attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/local_food/urban_ag.html*.

Appendix

The city of Fayetteville, Arkansas, has developed a manual for residents who are interested in organizing community gardens. Although specific to Fayetteville, it provides insight for organizing community gardens anywhere in the country.

Link to city site: *www.accessfayetteville.org/government/parks_and_recreation/documents/misc/Manual_for_Community_Garden_Development___step_%231_.pdf*

Starting a Community Garden

By permission of the Fayetteville, Arkansas, Parks Department
2010 Manual for Community Garden Development.

Step 1. Forming a Garden Group

We recommend that residents of Fayetteville who would like to develop a Community Garden in their neighborhood park organize themselves as an official garden group (Group). As a public agency, the City of Fayetteville policy requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

Step 2. Selecting the Location

First, check with the Park Horticulturist to see if an area has been identified suitable for a community garden. Consider these factors which must be used in identifying and defining a site for a proposed Community Garden:

1. Confirm with the Park Horticulturist that the specific location is owned by the Parks and Recreation Department.
2. Look for any under-utilized sections of parks or play-lots which will not interfere with park aesthetics or existing park uses.
3. Is the space large enough to accommodate an appropriate number of garden plots?
4. An existing water source is highly desirable. An area located within 100 feet of a functioning water source is preferred. The use of fire hydrants or drinking fountains is not an option.
5. Consider sun exposure and shade from buildings, trees, etc. Full sun to mostly sunny is best.

6. Are there restroom facilities nearby? If not, what options do the gardeners have?
7. Will fencing be needed? The garden group is responsible for all costs associated with fence construction.
8. Will a storage facility be needed? If so, how much space will be required?
9. After these determinations are made, inform the Park Horticulturist to see if this fits with Parks and Recreation plans.

Step 3. Application

Upon completion of Steps One and Two, submit an Application Form to:

Parks and Recreation Dept.
Community Garden Request
[Address of Municipal Parks Dept.]

Please keep in mind that not all parks are available for community gardening.

All application forms received will be responded to within 30 days.

The Group's liaison will then receive an Application Approval Letter from the Parks and Recreation Department directing you to proceed to Step 4 or a request for more information.

Step 4. Community Support and Proposal

Community consent and support is vital in obtaining the Parks and Recreation Department's approval for a successful community garden. After receiving your Application Letter, complete the following:

Identify Funding

One of the necessary initial steps is to locate funds and supplies to develop and operate this garden.

Petition

- A petition of support must be circulated within the neighborhood surrounding the proposed site. It is recommended petitioning at least three blocks in each direction. A minimum of 15 signatures is needed, with only one signature per household.
- *Important:* Include the signatures of both gardeners and non-gardeners.

Members of the Garden Group are not permitted to sign.

Site and Usage Survey

- Survey visits determine what is going on in the area of the park surrounding your proposed garden site by identifying types of park usage, times of heaviest usage, various types of sporting activities, etc.
- Arrange for the Park Horticulturist or Park Planner to accompany you on your first survey visit.
- Three separate site visits are to be conducted over a period of one to two weeks.
- Of these three required visits to the park, one is to be during peak usage time on a weekday and one during peak usage time on a weekend (work with the Park Horticulturist to find peak usage times).
- Please conduct the surveys during times of high usage.

Letters of Support

The Group should seek participation from the park's closest Neighborhood Association in order to ensure inclusion and request assistance with garden issues and safety concerns. Collect letters of support from the local Neighborhood Association. If a Neighborhood Association is not available, solicit a letter or two from a neighborhood governing association, local block club, or school.

A Public Neighborhood Meeting

A minimum of one public meeting must be held to receive a consensus of the neighbors surrounding the proposed Community Garden. This meeting should be arranged by the liaison and can be held at the park or coordinated with the Neighborhood Association.

Important: The Park Horticulturist must be notified in advance of the date, time, and location of this meeting.

Written Proposal

A written proposal consists of the following documentation:

- Group Membership roster. Name of Group, park, contact information of the primary group leader, secondary group leader, and a complete listing of current group members.
- Funding plan. All costs for the proposed Community Garden are the sole responsibility of the Group.
- Garden design. Include a sketch, which can be basic and hand-drawn. Show the garden layout—including dimensions, location of the water source, and nearby buildings and trees. Describe which direction the site faces, how many hours of direct sunlight per day, and the soil type.

Be sure you have received the Parks and Recreation Department's specifications that should have been sent along with your Application Approval Letter. If you did not receive the specifications, contact the Parks and Recreation Department.

- Installation, Labor, and Supply. Answer the following: How will your garden be installed? Who will your laborers be?
- What is the source for materials such as lumber, fencing and soil?

- Maintenance plan. Provide a detailed maintenance plan, indicating how the garden will be cared for on a weekly and seasonal basis, including watering, weeding, mulching, spring prepping, and winterizing.

Submit the Paperwork

Mail to the [City] Parks and Recreation Department, Community Garden Request at the above address.

- Petition
- Three Usage Surveys
- Letters of Support
- Written Proposal Details
- Copy of Application Approval Letter

Your proposal package will be reviewed and responded to within 30 days. You will be notified if your proposal has been approved, or that further information is needed. After approval of your proposal, you will be required to sign and submit a Letter of Commitment (Step 5).

Step 5. Letter of Commitment

The most important aspect of successful community gardening in a park is on-going community support and communication between the community and the [City] Parks and Recreation Department. Listed below are the responsibilities and guidelines the Group must adhere to, and the community must support.

Garden/Plot Maintenance

The Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden. Keep in mind that the space allocated is on public land and must always be actively maintained. The Group is to provide [City] Parks and Recreation with a schedule detailing routine maintenance procedures including keeping the fence line trimmed, spring prepping, and fall winterizing.

Pathways and areas between Garden beds must be mulched and maintained by the Group. The Parks and Recreation Department will not perform any maintenance within the Community Garden.

Through Parks and Recreation Department independent observation, if the space is deemed unsightly, weedy, or unkempt, the designated liaison will be given two separate warning notices both via two different communication means—such as a phone call, e-mail or letter through the mail each time. If the problem continues thereafter, the agreement will be revoked and the Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Soil Testing and Organic Practices

It is required that a copy of results from a soil test report be submitted to Fayetteville Parks and Recreation Department. The first must be received prior to the addition of any soil amendments or fertilizers. Additional soil tests will be required every three years.

According to Rules Governing the Arkansas Soil Nutrient and Poultry Litter Application and Management Program Title 22 (effective January 1, 2010), a landowner or resident making a nutrient application is required to maintain documentation of each nutrient application for a minimum of five years sufficient to demonstrate compliance. It is strongly recommended that all cultivating practices be organic; to the extent possible only organic fertilizers should be applied.

Water

Please conserve water. Although the gardeners are responsible for paying water usage, any water usage inconsistent with normal watering will be determined by meter reads. The water supply is to be used by gardeners caring for their assigned areas. Washing of cars or other personal non-garden-related activities is prohibited.

Pest and Disease Control with Chemicals

Only organic means of disease and pest control may be used. No chemical pest-control measures may be used. No exceptions.

Composting

Composting is encouraged, but only that which is organic and will decompose (e.g., plant material, fruit peels/cores). Do not use rodent-attracting foods such as rice, bread, meat, or grease. Inorganic or non-plant materials such as plastic, metal, kitty litter, feces, or any large or thorny branches are not suitable for compost. The compost must be contained in a manner approved by the Parks and Recreation Department, such as a tumbler or open cage. Periodically, the Parks and Recreation Department can provide grass clippings that can be incorporated into a compost pile. Please notify the Park Horticulturist if your group is interested.

Structures and Sizable Landscape Material

Structures such as garden storage shed and trellises must be approved by the Parks and Recreation Department. If a fence surrounding the garden is desired, it must be constructed to meet Community Garden Fence Specifications. Walls and sizable plant material such as trees and shrubs are not allowed, unless approved by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Garden Boundaries
The garden boundaries must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed expansion must be reviewed and approved by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Monitoring the Community Garden
The community, especially Group members, shall continually monitor the Community Garden for quality control and good management practices.

Management
Frequent communication with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding management of the Community Garden is required. If problems occur with the operation or patrons of the Community Garden, the Parks and Recreation Department should be informed and involved in the resolution of any problems.

New Members
The Group shall inform new gardeners and Group members of the Community Garden Rules and the Letter of Commitment; stressing the importance of ongoing maintenance. The Group must follow a transparent membership process open to all. As a public agency, the Parks and Recreation Department requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

Liability and Code of Conduct
The [City] Parks and Recreation Department is not responsible for the garden itself; or to anything in or pertaining to the garden. Each participating Garden Group must sign an Annual Lease Agreement. Each participating gardener must sign a Code of Conduct form.

Fundraising
The Group may organize fundraising events to finance needs of the Community Garden—such as a compost bin, water hoses, plants, etc. Prior approval from the [City] Parks and Recreation Department must be obtained, if the meetings are to be held in the park.

Clean-up Activities
The Group will be expected to clean up litter in the park and are encouraged to participate in the Adopt-A-Park or Adopt-A-Trail program.

Signage
Each Community Garden will have a sign indicating the name of the Community Garden Group and other information, as required by the [City] Parks and Recreation Department. Signage will be provided and installed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Vehicles
The parking or driving of motorized vehicles by any park patron on walkways, restricted-access drives, lawn areas, under trees, or within landscaped areas is strictly forbidden. Park patrons are permitted to use motorized vehicles within a park only on designated roadways, driveways and parking facilities, according to City Codes.

Prohibited Activities
- Littering, dumping, alcohol consumption and other unlawful activities.
- Amplified sound.
- Pets are not allowed in the garden. Pets are allowed in the park only if on a leash and the owner picks up their pet's waste according to City Code.
- Ball playing or other forms of active recreation are to be performed on ball fields or open spaces away from the garden.
- Vehicular traffic inside the park.

Garden Termination
If the Group decides to no longer maintain their space, they must immediately notify the Parks and Recreation Department. The Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Quality Assurance
An annual report must be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Department summarizing the successes and challenges experienced by the Community Gardeners. If needed, the Department will take appropriate action based on these assessments.

Step 6. Annual Lease Agreement
Each year an Annual Lease Agreement must be read and signed by all new and existing Garden Groups.

Garden Fees
When a site is approved for a community garden, Fayetteville Parks and Recreation will install a back-flow preventer and water meter. It will be the responsibility of the Garden Group to have the water turned on and to pay the monthly water bills. It will be necessary to winterize the water system by the first of November; this will be the responsibility of the Garden Group. Failure to winterize could result in permanent damage to the equipment; it would then be the responsibility of the Garden Group to replace any damaged equipment.

Fayetteville Parks and Recreation will charge the Garden Group a nominal annual fee for park land use.

Finish: Installation of the Garden

After the Fayetteville Parks and Recreation Department has accepted your signed Letter of Commitment, Annual Lease and Liability Agreement, and final garden design, it is time to take a soil sample for analysis and begin to create the garden.

Code of Conduct: As new gardeners join it will be up to the Garden Group Liaison to make sure they sign a Code of Conduct form. The Garden Liaison will provide copies of these forms to Fayetteville Parks and Recreation.

Important: Your Group will be required to renew its Community Garden registration every three years. You will be asked for a progress report on your garden, current membership details, and a budget plan for the next 3 years. Your Group may also be required to submit a renewed Letter of Commitment.

Finally, Congratulations!
You have raised all the community support and commitment needed for a successful Community Garden. This is a big responsibility, and we are pleased to be in this venture together and wish your group great success.

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Notes

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