

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE June 5, 2009

TO Members of the Transportation and Environment Committee:
Linda Koop (Chair), Sheffie Kadane (Vice Chair), Jerry R. Allen, Carolyn R. Davis, Vonciel Jones Hill, Angela Hunt, Pauline Medrano and Ron Natinsky

SUBJECT Community Gardens briefing

On June 8, 2009 staff will brief the Committee on the City's efforts to establish a municipal community gardens program. Please find attached a copy of the presentation, and feel free to contact me if you need additional information.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Jill Jordan'.

Jill A. Jordan, P.E.
Assistant City Manager

C: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
Mary K. Suhm, City Manager
Deborah A. Watkins, City Secretary
Thomas P. Perkins, City Attorney
Craig Kinton, City Auditor
Judge C. Victor Lander
David K. Cook, Chief Financial Officer
Ryan S. Evans, First Assistant City Manager
A. C. Gonzalez, Assistant City Manager
Jill A. Jordan, PE, Assistant City Manager
Ramon F. Miguez, PE, Assistant City Manager
Forest Turner, Interim Assistant City Manager
Frank Libro, Public Information Office
Helena Stevens-Thompson, Assistant to the City Manager

Community Gardens

A Component of the Dallas Sustainable Communities Initiative

Dallas City Council
Transportation and Environment Committee
June 8, 2009



Purpose of briefing

To update the Committee on efforts to establish a City-sponsored Community Gardens program

Definition

- “Any piece of land gardened by a group of people.”
--American Community Gardening Association
- Typically considered a publicly functioning asset in terms of ownership, access and management
- May consist of individually tended plots on a shared parcel or may be communal (everyone shares a single plot)
- May have a specific purpose other than for personal consumption (e.g. educational – school or demonstration; economic - job training or entrepreneurial; or social – therapy or food pantry)

Importance for local sustainability

“Local food and agriculture help communities become more self-sufficient and less reliant on food transported great distances using fossil fuels. Local food is also fresher, often has more nutrients, and requires less packaging and refrigeration than food that must be shipped long distances. Local food purchases also re-circulate money back into the regional economy, as farmers' market revenues are typically re-spent locally. Finally – not to beat a dead horse – local food resources provide resilience for cities in the face of potential fuel shortages or truckers' strikes.”

--SustainLane 2008 analysis

Importance for local sustainability

Economic:

- supports self-sufficiency, creates local markets
- eases financial burden on families from high grocery bills
- promotes healthy nutrition reducing medical needs/expenses

Environmental:

- creates or maintains green space in a productive capacity
- reduces urban heat island effect
- assists with stormwater/watershed management
- reduces emissions from transport and visits to markets

Social:

- encourages neighborhood collaboration
- helps addresses hunger, e.g. donation gardens
- strengthens cross-cultural/inter-generational relationships

Examples of successful programs

Successful municipal community garden programs:

- Provide direct or indirect monetary and technical support (e.g. staff resources, technical assistance, grants, GIS mapping, newsletters);
- Collaborate with garden stakeholders (e.g. partnering with or helping to establish non-profits to maintain the gardens)
- Remove obstacles and barriers (e.g. zoning, land use issues, provide suitable land)

Examples of successful programs

Boston, MA:

- City began sponsoring a War Gardens Program in 1931 involving 30,000 residents
- In the 1970's, City began providing land to local non-profits to garden
- In 1975, City first applied CDBG funds towards the creation of City-sponsored gardens (now known as the Grassroots Program)
- Annually, 3-5 Technical Assistance grants up to \$25,000 and 3-5 Construction grants up to \$150,000 are awarded (capital construction only, no maintenance)
- Gardens range from food production for consumption and education to neighborhood beautification – City considers gardens of all types as critical to their open space management program

Examples of successful programs

Seattle, WA:

- Department of Neighborhoods created the P-Patch Program in 1973 in conjunction with a local non-profit
- Currently provides 68 gardens with 4 more planned in 2009
- 3,800 gardeners work 23 acres of land
- City provides searchable interactive map and technical resources
- In this decade 22 gardens were awarded City grants in amounts ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000
- A recent gardener survey indicated that one quarter of gardeners share produce once a week and 38% report sharing at least once a month

Examples of successful programs

Oakland, CA

- Parks and Recreation Department sponsors 8 community gardens throughout the City; the first began in 1973
- City coordinates a volunteer program with liaisons in charge of each garden
- Rules, regulations and application for individual participation are hosted on the City's website
- Sale of t-shirts funds the purchase of gardening tools

Developing a program for Dallas

Involvement to date:

- Community gardens in Dallas have grown “organically” with no municipal coordination
- In 2008, City partnered with Lake Highlands Area Improvement Association to pilot a community garden on unused City property
- City assisted with grant solicitation and equipment donations and technical assistance from Scotts Miracle Grow and Keep Dallas Beautiful
- In April 2009, City facilitated expansion that quadrupled the number of plots and added a donation garden



Developing a program for Dallas

Evolving participation:

- OEQ plans to expand the successful Lake Highlands model to develop 10 additional City-sponsored gardens:
 - Request for \$300K in Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant formula funding from the Department of Energy as part of the Dallas Sustainable Communities Initiative (DSCI)
 - Hire a full-time environmental coordinator to manage the program using this grant funding
 - Target appropriate City owned facilities in Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) areas to support weatherization/energy efficiency program
 - Solicit participant interest, build community capacity for managing gardens and develop network of experienced gardeners citywide
 - Seek long term funding sources for continued operations and expansion
 - Provide technical assistance for non-City sponsored gardens

Developing a program for Dallas

Timeline:

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| Inventory City property in target NIP areas suitable for gardening | Jun '09 |
| Apply for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funding | Jun '09 |
| Receive EECBG funding | Aug '09 |
| Hire Environmental Coordinator to administer program with grant funding | Sep '09 |
| Coordinator tasks include: determine community interest and develop neighborhood capacity for hosting a garden; establishing a 'gardeners network' to share best practices; offer training courses on garden design, organic practices, water conservation; establish an inspection process for garden characteristics and to measure success | Sep '09 – Dec '09 |
| Begin site preparation for first 5 DSCI gardens | Oct '09 |
| Begin site preparation for second 5 DSCI gardens | Spring '10 |