



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
FROM: Julie Edmonds-Mares
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GARDENS UPDATE
DATE: 03-26-12

Approved

Date

3-29-12

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

Accept staff's update regarding changes made to the Community Gardens Program in 2012.

BACKGROUND

The Community Gardens Program was established in 1977 to provide San Jose residents with open space to cultivate and grow their own vegetables. In doing so, the program fosters community growth by encouraging garden participants to share different growing methods, provide healthy fruits and vegetables for their families, and develop a sense of camaraderie.

At present, there are a total of 19 community gardens located throughout the City, varying in size from a quarter acre to five acres (see Attachment A). Among these 19 gardens, the City offers over 1,000 plots to City residents that range in size from 150 sq. ft. to 700 sq. ft., with corresponding registration fees ranging from \$45 to \$200 per plot per year.

Each garden has a Volunteer Garden Management Team (VGMT) that manages the garden on behalf of the City, with team members selected by the community gardener voting and/or City staff appointment.

The program's popularity is illustrated by the extent of the community garden plot waiting list, which currently amounts to over 400 San Jose residents.

ANALYSIS

In 2012, staff implemented a number of administrative changes to the Community Gardens Program. In addition, staff is pursuing community partnership opportunities with The Health Trust, Santa Clara County, CommUniverCity, and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. These program changes and partnership initiatives are summarized below.

2012 Program Changes

Administrative Fee: In order to cover the costs of expanding the oversight of the City's Community Gardens Program, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services (PRNS) instituted a community garden plot administrative fee in 2012. This fee will collect \$0.05 per square foot of garden space from each community gardener and is expected to generate approximately \$21,000 per year. The revenue will pay for costs associated with increasing part-time Community Activity Worker staff hours from 20 to 34 hours per week. With the increase in hours, staff will be able to: 1) provide more timely responses to maintenance needs at the 19 gardens; 2) provide community members with greater access to City staff to address their questions and concerns; and, 3) improve the City's ability to provide support to individual VGMT's as they address various field issues.

Payment of Water Utility Bills: Until recently, nine Volunteer Garden Management Teams (VGMT's) were responsible for administering the water utility accounts for their respective gardens, including the remittance of utility billing payments from bank accounts established under the City's Tax ID Number. In 2012, the City transferred the administration of these accounts from the VGMT's to the City in response to a City Attorney's Office' liability assessment, which determined that the City, as the property owner of the community gardens, has the legal responsibility to collect water fees and pay water bills. Until this change, staff had only administered the water utility accounts for the other 10 community gardens, which included the direct remittance of water bills for those gardens.

Use of the City of San Jose Tax ID Number for VGMT Banking: Related to the change in utility billing administration noted above, in 2012 staff ended the practice of allowing the VGMT's to use the City's Tax ID Number to establish banking accounts for their individual Community Gardens. This was done at the City Attorney's Office recommendation. Prospectively, staff will assist gardeners in opening separate bank accounts using Tax ID Numbers assigned to the VGMT's by the IRS.

Community Garden Assignments Limited to San Jose Residents: In 2012, staff implemented a change that discontinued the practice of allowing non-San Jose residents to participate in the Community Gardens Program, which currently has a waiting list of over 400 San Jose residents. This change was made after an extensive community outreach process was conducted during the summer and fall of 2011. Having received and evaluated minimal objections from the community at-large, staff asked 38 non-residents to vacate their plots in January 2012. In turn, the vacated plots were reassigned to San Jose residents on the waiting list.

Partnership Development

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Program Grant: In early 2011, staff began working with The Health Trust – a local non-profit organization that aims to advance healthy living and wellness – to jointly apply for a grant issued by Santa Clara County's Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) Program. In November 2011, the City was notified that it was awarded the grant in the amount of \$25,000 to support the Community Gardens Program.

These funds will pay for the staffing costs associated with evaluating and implementing various policies and strategies aimed at expanding the Community Gardens Program, including:

- Expanding community outreach efforts;
- Establishing a process to allow residents and community groups to use land owned by the City and/or other public agencies to grow fresh fruit and vegetables;
- Promoting community gardens in new City parks as part of the official planning process; and
- Setting community gardens as a priority during the City's annual budget development process.

Community Garden Partnership with the County of Santa Clara: Staff is currently negotiating with Santa Clara County to implement an agreement in which 1) the County provides community garden land at the new Martial Cottle Park located near Snell and Chynoweth Avenues; and, 2) the City administers the operations and maintenance of the new garden. At present, the County's Master Plan has been approved and the garden is expected to be completed in 2014. In the meantime, staff is working with the County to develop the lease agreement for this site, while considering another partnership site near Almaden Road and Highway 87, as well.

Exploration of Alternative Service Delivery Models: Staff is evaluating service delivery models that will allow greater numbers of residents to participate in the Community Gardens Program at one time. In particular, staff is considering a "communal" model in which individual plots are not assigned to gardeners; rather, the entire garden is shared by everyone that signs up. In this model, all participants would invest their time in the garden and share in the corresponding harvests. This model is already implemented at Prusch Park through Veggielution and has been successful. This new model may be implemented at the Martial Cottle Park following additional staff analysis that is currently underway.

Negotiation of New Community Garden Site Development: Recently, CommUniverCity was awarded a grant obtained from the Health Trust to develop a community garden site in San Jose. In partnership with CommUniverCity, staff has located a site near Williams Street Park that is owned by the Santa Clara Valley Water District and is working with the District to lease this plot of land. In turn, it is the City's intent to sub-lease the site to CommUniverCity in exchange for their operation and maintenance of the community garden. Details regarding the two lease agreements will be forthcoming in the near future.

/s/

JULIE EDMONDS-MARES
Acting Director of Parks, Recreation and
Neighborhood Services

For questions please contact Steve Hammack, Deputy Director, at 408-793-5579.

Attachment A

City of San Jose Community Gardens

	Garden Name	CD	Garden Location	Acres
1	Alviso	4	Tony P. Santos and Wilson Way	2.00
2	Berryessa	4	Cape Colony and Commodore Drive	2.00
3	Bestor	3	S. 6th Street and Bestor Street	0.25
4	Calabazas	1	Blaney Avenue and Danridge Drive	1.00
5	Cornucopia	5	S. King Road and Story Road	1.00
6	Coyote Creek	7	Tully Road and Galveston Avenue	1.00
7	Discovery	2	Branham Lane E. and Discovery Avenue	1.00
8	El Jardin	5	S. King Road and Story Road	3.00
9	Green Thumb	1	Rhoda Drive and Roewill Drive	1.30
10	Guadalupe	3	Walnut Street and Asbury Street	1.50
11	Hamline	6	Hamline Street and Sherwood Avenue	0.80
12	Jesse Frey	6	W. Alma Avenue and Belmont Way	1.00
13	La Colina	2	Allegan Circle near Lean Avenue	3.00
14	Laguna Seca	7	Manresa Court and Bayliss Drive	1.25
15	Latimer	1	Latimer Avenue and Duvall Drive	0.50
16	Mayfair	5	Kammerer Avenue and Sunset Avenue	3.50
17	Nuestra Tierra	7	Tully Road and La Ragione Avenue	5.00
18	Rainbow	1	Johnson Avenue and Rainbow Drive	0.25
19	Wallenberg	6	Curtner Avenue and Cottle Avenue	2.00

Green Thumb – CD1



Community Gardens Update

April 12, 2012

Program Overview

- Program History
 - 1977, Nuestra Tierra
 - 19 gardens
 - 1000 plots available
 - Plot sizes vary from 150 to 700 sq. ft.
 - No Gardens in CD8, 9 or 10
- Operations and Maintenance
 - Registration and fees
 - Plots are issued on a year to year basis
 - Fees range from \$45 to \$200/year
 - Volunteer Management Teams
 - Maintenance
- Staff support
 - Part-time staff person to coordinate program

Challenges

- Staffing
 - Proposal to increase hours
- 1000 plots available
 - Over 400 on the waiting list
 - Growing weekly
 - Larger plots are being divided in half as they become vacant

2012 Changes

- Administrative fee
 - 5 cents per sq. ft.
 - \$5 per 100 sq. ft. annually
- Water Bills/Bank Accounts
 - Under City's name
- San Jose Residents Only
 - Plots Reassigned

Partnerships

- Health Trust
 - \$25,000 grant
- Santa Clara County
 - Martial Cottle Park
 - Site near Almaden and HWY 87
- “Communal” Garden evaluation
- Santa Clara Valley Water District
 - Sub-lease to CommUniverCity

Questions??

Guadalupe Gardens – CD3

