

Community Garden Sustainability Plan Cheatsheet

BACKGROUND

Project proposed and led by	The Green Institute (Corrie Zoll) Minnesota State Horticultural Society (Vicky Vogels) Farm in the City (Anna Wasescha)
Project funded by	McKnight Foundation
Project Manager	Kirsten Saylor from Sep 04 -- Sep 05
Community Garden Definition	<i>A community garden is any space where plants are grown and maintained by a community to meet the needs of that community.</i>

METHODOLOGY

Issues and challenges facing local community gardens:

- Interviewed 30 community garden coordinators: at garden and/or by phone
- Interviewed public agencies and nonprofit organizations involved with CGs
- Intern researched St. Paul landholding public agencies and district councils

Research of regional models: how other regions support their community gardens

- Interviewed 20 people by phone or in person
- Attended two national conferences in October '05
- Internet research and follow-up with emails

FINDINGS

Local Findings:

- From three databases of community gardens, we found:
 - 93% are in Minneapolis and Saint Paul
 - 98% lie within Hennepin and Ramsey Counties
 - 2% lie in the other five metro counties.
- Development boom claimed many garden sites on tax-forfeit land.
- No active public policies supporting community gardens. Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan and St. Paul Food Policy are most supportive. Currently a grassroots effort in St. Paul to establish an open space land use code.
- Misperceptions of and lack of knowledge about community gardens create problems for and work against garden group.
- Liability insurance: gardeners are avoiding it or good insurance is hard to afford. The lack of it is a public relations disaster waiting to happen.
- Leadership burnout: Gardens are heavily reliant on one or two people to organize and champion the garden.

- Lack of conversation between garden groups across the metro area resulting in redundant efforts and poor resource (capital and knowledge) distribution. Our greatest asset is each other.
- No central clearinghouse about community gardens in metro area. No idea of how many gardens, where they are, what they do/grow, how they operate. No common voice for community gardens. No capacity for public relations work on behalf of community gardens.
- Lack of advocacy and or support for securing community garden sites. No regional mechanisms for short-term (5-10 years) nor permanent ownership.

Regional findings:

- Organizational models fell into three categories:
 1. A nonprofit organization supporting community gardens
 2. A city program supporting community gardens
 3. An informal network of community gardens
- Most stable models were public programs (or publicly supported) which supported community gardens, often providing training and technical assistance.
 - There are no county or state community garden programs.
- Public programs typically had one or more nonprofit organizations which complimented them, by providing for items which the public programs could not (insurance, materials, etc.)
- Where community gardens were well served, the nonprofit organization had either gardening or community gardens at the core of its mission.
- No program had a paid membership, although some annual requirements of gardeners, such as annual registration.

<h3>PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS</h3>

1. Form an association of Twin Cities community gardens, which would:
 - a. Grow leadership among community gardeners
 - b. Assist gardeners with building a supportive community around the garden
 - c. Assist gardeners in securing necessary goods and services
 - d. Act as a central clearinghouse – a liaison to the general public, public entities, donors
 - e. Be the outreach arm of the gardening community through enhancement of public relations, advocacy, and collaboration and coalitions with the public and private sectors.
 - f. Assist in the establishment of more community gardens
2. Develop a partnership between the public sector and the Community garden association.
3. Collaborate with social and environmental justice organizations for policy changes and projects conducive to community gardening.