



**To:** Park Board

**Agenda Item #:** VI.B.

**From:** Susan Faus  
Assistant Parks & Recreation Director

**Action**

**Discussion**

**Date:** November 12, 2013

**Information**

**Subject:** Yorktown Park Community Garden Status

### **Action Requested:**

Approve the Yorktown Park Community Garden as a permanent park amenity

### **Information / Background:**

A brief review of the history of the development of the community garden project:

- March 2012 — City Council members expressed a desire to revisit the community garden question using public land.
- July 2012 — City Council encouraged the Community Health Committee to add community gardens to their work plan.
- November 5, 2012 – City Council approved the Edina Community Health Committee’s recommendation for the city fund and launch a pilot community garden program at Yorktown Park.
- November 2012 — do.town met with the Southdale YMCA to confirm their interest in partnering on a community garden project.
- January 8, 2013 — The Park Board selected Ellen Jones and Dan Peterson to serve on the Yorktown Community Garden Work Group.
- January 2013 – Planning began. Staff collected community garden data from 16 neighboring communities, compiled the data, completed a project timeline and prepared a draft Rules and Policies document.
- February 12, 2013 — Park Board approved the draft Rules and Policies document.
- March 12, 2013 — The Park Board held a public hearing and was asked to review and comment on the proposed community garden and parking lot.
- April 2, 2013 – City Council approved the Yorktown Park Pilot community garden and permanent 29-space parking lot.
- May 20, 2013 – Community Garden Grand Opening.

The first year of the community garden was an opportunity for us to gather information on what residents wanted to make a successful and sustainable community garden. We had successes and also identified areas for improvement.

Overall, staff believe that the Yorktown Community Garden was a great success. There has been strong support from the residents in Edina. The community garden has 55 total plots. All 55 plots were rented (by Edina residents) and there were 43 people on a wait list. In July, we surveyed our gardeners on a variety of areas to determine levels of satisfaction (see attached survey). Key findings included:

- 81.1% said that they would definitely or probably sign up for a garden plot again next year.
- 45.5% said they would recommend that their friends who want to try community gardening try Yorktown.

Based on these results, along with the number of people who expressed an interest in renting a plot, we have every reason to believe that the garden will sell out again in 2014.

- 72.7% stated that the quality of soil and drainage didn't meet expectations.
- 36.4% said that the design water supply, paths and fencing didn't meet expectations.

Based on the results of the survey the city made the following improvements to address concerns:

- The complaint heard most often was dissatisfaction with drainage. In October, at the end of the growing season, 24" of poor soils including clay were removed to improve drainage. This decision was a collaborate decision made by Tim Zimmerman (City Horticulturist), Larry Cipolla (Master Gardener), and Bob Prestrud (Park Maintenance).
- The city hired Aqua Engineering to add a water supply line that runs from the fire station to supply the water to the garden. Four spigots will be added to make watering convenient in all areas of the garden.

Initially, the community garden project was approved as a pilot project. Staff is requesting your approval that the Yorktown Park Community Garden become a permanent amenity in the park.

Attachments:

2013 Gardeners Survey

Community Garden Potluck Comments

2014 Registration and Garden Basics Information

**Community Garden Potluck Comments**  
**Monday, September 16, 2013**

- I have plot 43 and am surrounded on 3 sides with abandoned plots. All covered with weeds. Those weed seeds have blown into my plot and will be a huge problem next year. People who have abandoned their plots should lose them for serious gardeners on the waiting list. There is a terrible waste of vegetables rotting on the abandoned and neglected plots that could be collected and given to VEAP. Call those people and let them know that if they don't pick their produce this week, Edina will and donate it to VEAP. There is a bushel or two of produce that Edina could contribute to feed people. Isn't that a reason for a community garden?
- We have had a garden plot in Chanhassen for 3 years; very successful gardens. Two hoses – never a problem sharing water.
- Place a single overhead sprinkler in the center to water at 5 a.m. – not sure if it can be set according to real rain, but maybe a wireless system could work??
- Please auto sprinklers!
- I feel the watering system should be automatic because four spigots and hoses will not work easily – dragging hoses is difficult for many of us.
- I think you need to dig holes thru the hard pan with a post hole digger to fix the drainage problem.
- Picnic tables – top of hill – under trees by apartment building.
- Hoses on garden work well in Chanhassen; measure soil temperature or tell people when it is optimal to plant.
- Put signs up on first row next to fence/parking. Reserved for gardeners.
- Prefer no hoses, unless we have multiple connections.
- Please consider one spigot at least on the end and two on each long side.
- Please work out a way we can email each other at once – to exchange plants, ideas, requests for help, etc.
- An empty/bare plot is an invitation to weeds. It is not only a problem for the proximate gardeners, but it leaves a negative impression for passersby. When a plot is abandoned, it could be planted with a 'ground cover'. If the abandonment occurs early in the season, this could be annual flower seeds. The flowers would attract pollinators to the gardens. If the abandonment occurs beyond this window, it could be planted in sorghum-sudan grass. This is an drought tolerant, none spreading, annual grass that grows very quickly, potentially reaching a height of several feet. It is a nitrogen fixer, prevents weed development, can be cut at the height of a foot or more and used as mulch, and can be finally cut down in the autumn to be used as a

green manure that once worked into the soil improves the organic content and tilth. And, it is inexpensive seed, broadcast sown. I've used it in my home gardens for two years, and have been impressed with it's utility and it's beauty.

A bulletin board, either a physical structure or an electronic bulletin board (or both), solely for community gardeners. Both information and information requests could be posted by participants in the community garden. This could include your emails, gardener reports of problems, successes, products, process etc. An etiquette should be used to prevent the monopoly of single issue, 'gossip/bully pulpit', or personal complaints, emphasizing the information access.

This summer I, and apparently several other gardeners, saw unharvested produce, essentially wasted food. I appreciate that schedules run-amok, even for dedicated & hungry gardeners! And I know that as the plots become more successful, people will be more attentive to their harvesting (And hopefully to their weeding as well.). But food waste is an affront on so many levels. A gleaning program with a food shelf could be explored, allowing for timely harvest of produce that might otherwise be neglected by the plot holder. I know this is a complex issue, but I think it is a worthy one.

I've talked to several gardeners who save seed from one harvest, to start the next season. This year I am doing the same with a successful pepper plant that I've grown. And, alot of plot holders seem to be starting their own plants at home. Perhaps seed saver exchange in the fall/starter plant exchange in the spring would be welcomed by plot holders.

Along the same line, I always seem to have more seeds in a package than I can use in a season. Other gardeners have said the same thing. Maybe an early spring seed swap would be welcomed by plot holders.

Thanks in advance for considering these suggestions. If any of them are not clearly stated, or if you would like to discuss them, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Liz Klaver

- Very nice event last night. It was nice to learn that so many people are planning to renew. I wrote notes, but I wanted to make sure I clearly communicated my observations about the garden and the surrounding parks.

1. If it hasn't happened already, it would be good to do a short presentation on the survey to the Park and Rec board, given that so many people are planning to renew. It would also be good for them to know what was learned the first year and the additional improvements that will be made in 2014. They need to be salespeople for the program.

2. Yorktown is clearly still not "marked" as a park, with no signage for the park or the garden. It really would benefit from signage in 2014. That is a detail that really shouldn't slip another year. Of course, I'm a believer that all city parks should be marked - but this one in particular, since it is carved up by a parking lot, community garden, skate park and fire station, along with walking path that makes it seem more like a corridor than a park. It also needs some new amenities. If you are

pipng in drinkable water from the fire station, it should have a water faucet or two - probably both at the skate park and at the garden. Looking at the space as it has been built out, I think that a high quality horseshoe pit would be the easiest thing to fit into the park in a small space as an interim measure before other things are considered.

3. There ended up being somewhat challenging relations between the Y and the City over garden plots and the parking lot. It is best that the irritation on both sides is allowed to dissipate, as the Y-City partnership is the best opportunity for collaborative programming you could ever want. When you are thinking about raised beds for 2014, I think that you should think about raised bed for the Y - an issue to bring up with them. Any classes they might have for children or seniors would be much more workable with raised beds - and with raised beds, weeding, is so much easier, and gravity takes care of any drainage problems. Gardening classes and cooking classes should be co-sponsored by the Y and the city, unless the city would like to bring Community Ed in as a new partner.

4. Currently, the City and Community Ed are in some ways competitors for community programs. That is really not necessary - or positive. Working together, you two would come up with much better programming than happens today, and through joint planning bring more Edina residents into both group's programs. Our overall city goal of getting our citizens more active and in that continual learning mode is a deep value that everyone should share. Why not have community ed classes as the Y, or Y classes in community ed space - or joint programs? The only obstacle is an excessive desire to control everything.

5. On the other end of the city is the Edina Senior Center. If the city is serious about broadening community garden concepts in 2014, doesn't it make sense to have some kind of community gardens on or near the space jointly operated by Edina Library and the Senior Center? Look at what a senior population has done at 7500 York to illustrate the potential. Pretty clearly classroom spaces in both parts of the building could be used for community education. We could look at the library's collection on gardening and try to build it up, directing the public from the city website to the library as an information source on library resources.

6. I'm going to talk with Larry about a community garden in or near the Colony, which is my apartment/condo complex between Fairview Southdale Hospital and Xerxes. There is land close to or in the frontage road of the Crosstown that might be ideal for such an application. A lot of people are going to be reluctant to plow up additional city parkland for parks, but may have less reason to oppose use of government owned land such as that in highway right of ways - basically growing weeds. I don't know if my suggestion is practical but others are.

7. Back to the garden. Hoses work perfectly in Chanhasen - no problems whatsoever. Vandalism is a program that can hit any public resources. People steal things. That calls for decent security (such as noise triggered lighting at night) and fences, but should never cause a city to simply leave facilities unbuilt or make them very hard for people to use. Likewise, it would be great to have a tool shed, including long and short tools. Such a shed could be built by another Eagle project (those are going on all the time) and the tools could be donated or bought cheap at garage sales. Mark them City of Edina Property - and they will be much less desirable to thieves.

8. I'm very supportive of redoing the tilling and soil preparation. Hopefully most people who want to maintain their plot should be able to do so. Once the garden has been redesigned, you should first let those gardeners know if they can keep their plot and then let them do so. If not, the

remaining gardeners should be able to pick freely from all the unclaimed plots in the garden. It will be much easier for them if they clearly see what is left. Then after that is done, communicate with the wait list people - with what is still left - and then if anything is left, open it up to the community gardeners. I would recommend that could consider with lots that are being reworked to put in more 10 by 10 plots and creating a little bit more of a price difference between the two. If you do this, we may be able to get between 60-70 plots in the garden without expanding it.

9. The critical issue, with the late snow cover, the less than perfect tilling and the monsoon rains, which undid most of the good done by the tilling, following by weeks of hot dry weather to thoroughly bake the soil, was "when to plant" and "what do to more completely prepared the soil." I planted in mud and as a result lost all my tomato plants. I should have waited - but didn't. Not only should we be monitoring soil temperatures, but we should be telling people - don't plant your tomatoes yet - if they aren't going to do well as a result. I like the early opening, so people really have a chance to plant their cold weather plants - if the soil is ready, but those dates should be decided right when they are going to happen - cold plant planting opening on xx, warm weather planting opening on xx. With things like lettuce, in a normal year, one can risk planting as early as March 15 and if one replants, have lettuce from May 1 to October 15. Most warm weather plants can be planted as late as June 20 and produce a full crop - earlier is better, if conditions are right, but not necessary. I would like to have Larry be asked to make those calls.

10. Another thing that might be covered is how long on can safely store plants in small containers if the planting season is delayed. They tend to overgrow their containers and become unsightly - which may or may not be a problem. You can buy plants much before you are able to safely plant them and once again Larry might speak up on when to plant. If you buy plants, given that they are typically sold in 4-6 packs, that is often too much for a garden. If gardeners are encouraged to communicate beforehand, they can split plant packs, have a greater variety of things and not spend so much money. And another note - all the plants I bought at the Edina Plant Sale did poorly. I would never go there again as a source. Others may have had better luck, but I went to a nursery out in Chaska that sells lots of heirloom vegetables - that their plants were much healthier - would have produced fantastically if they had better conditions. Pre-communication between gardeners last year wasn't possible due to schedule, but that is different in 2014.

Considering all the hurdles that got in the way, I consider the first year a good success.

Thanks,  
Joel

- It was nice to meet you yesterday. Thanks for organizing the end of season pot luck!

I just had an idea for those little plots at the front end of the garden. People planted flowers in their garden spaces just to have flowers to look at. Maybe there are people who either (1) just want flowers or (2) want flowers in addition to the garden space.

What if you opened up those plots for people to "rent" either free or at a very low price with the condition that they had to plant flowers that attract bees (and aren't too tall) and leave most of the flowers in the garden (as opposed to using it as a cutting garden and taking them home to enjoy). You could give first dibs to people who are also renting a garden plot because people might get tired of going out to weed just that tiny a plot -- unless you also gave people who took care of a

little flower plot (but didn't have a garden plot) priority on the waiting list for a garden plot for the next year.

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1. Which of these statements best describes your personal gardening experience?

	Response Percent	Response Count
This is my first gardening experience as an adult.	13.6%	3
I have grown container flowers and vegetables, but have little or no experience with a garden plot.	9.1%	2
<b>I have had a community or private garden plot(s) in the past, but not in recent years.</b>	<b>45.5%</b>	<b>10</b>
I have been a gardener most of my adult life.	31.8%	7
	Comments Show replies	3
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>0</b>

2. How did you first hear about the garden? (Check all that apply.)

	Response Percent	Response Count
Edina Sun-Current	13.3%	2
<b>Star-Tribune</b>	<b>53.3%</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>15</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>7</b>

2. How did you first hear about the garden? (Check all that apply.)

Word-of-Mouth	13.3%	2
Posters	0.0%	0
Edina Community Channel 16	0.0%	0
Southdale YMCA	6.7%	1
Emails	20.0%	3
	Other (please specify) <a href="#">Show replies</a>	9
<b>answered question</b>		<b>15</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>7</b>

3. Which of these statements best describes how you felt about this new opportunity?

	Response Percent	Response Count
It sounded fun; I thought I'd try it out.	19.0%	4
I thought about it for awhile and decided to sign up for a plot.	4.8%	1
<b>I was really excited because I really wanted to have a garden this year.</b>	<b>76.2%</b>	<b>16</b>
	Comments <a href="#">Show replies</a>	5
<b>answered question</b>		<b>21</b>
<b>skipped question</b>		<b>1</b>

4. How do you rate the following details related to the garden? Please use the comment box to discuss any issues with the garden that did not meet your expectations.

	Didn't Meet Expectations	Met Expectations	Exceeded Expectations	N/A	Rating Average	Rating Count
<b>Communications From City Staff</b>	4.8% (1)	38.1% (8)	<b>57.1% (12)</b>	0.0% (0)	2.52	21
<b>City Response to Your Questions and Concerns</b>	13.6% (3)	18.2% (4)	<b>54.5% (12)</b>	13.6% (3)	2.47	22
<b>City Response to Problems (e.g. Rabbits and Low Spots)</b>	18.2% (4)	<b>54.5% (12)</b>	27.3% (6)	0.0% (0)	2.09	22
<b>Classes Taught By Larry Cipola, Master Gardener</b>	4.8% (1)	23.8% (5)	<b>38.1% (8)</b>	33.3% (7)	2.50	21
<b>Onsite Advice by Larry Cipola, Master Gardener</b>	4.8% (1)	19.0% (4)	33.3% (7)	<b>42.9% (9)</b>	2.50	21
<b>Convenience (e.g. location and parking)</b>	0.0% (0)	<b>52.4% (11)</b>	47.6% (10)	0.0% (0)	2.48	21
<b>Design (e.g. water supply, paths and fencing)</b>	36.4% (8)	<b>54.5% (12)</b>	9.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	1.73	22
<b>Your Plot (e.g. size, quality of soil and drainage)</b>	<b>72.7% (16)</b>	22.7% (5)	4.5% (1)	0.0% (0)	1.32	22
<b>Costs (e.g. fees and garden supplies)</b>	0.0% (0)	<b>72.7% (16)</b>	22.7% (5)	4.5% (1)	2.24	22
<b>Friendliness and "Community" Among the Gardeners</b>	0.0% (0)	31.8% (7)	<b>68.2% (15)</b>	0.0% (0)	2.68	22
				Other (please specify) <a href="#">Show replies</a>		8
				<b>answered question</b>		<b>22</b>
				<b>skipped question</b>		<b>0</b>

5. Please check each of the statements that describe you current feelings and future plans regarding community gardening.

	Response Percent	Response Count
<b>I am glad that I signed up for a garden plot this year.</b>	81.8%	18
I have been able to work around the weather and damp soil conditions.	54.5%	12
I expect to have a decent crop by the end of the growing season.	27.3%	6
<b>I definitely or probably will sign up for a garden plot again next year.</b>	81.8%	18
I would recommend that my friends who want to try community gardening try Yorktown.	45.5%	10
I would like to serve on a Yorktown Garden Advisory Council. (Please provide contact information below.)	36.4%	8
	Comments or Contact Information <a href="#">Show replies</a>	9
	<b>answered question</b>	<b>22</b>
	<b>skipped question</b>	<b>0</b>

6. Please suggest changes you would like to see to the Yorktown garden before the 2014 planting year or take this opportunity to share any other feedback you might have.

<b>answered question</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>skipped question</b>	<b>4</b>

6. Please suggest changes you would like to see to the Yorktown garden before the 2014 planting year or take this opportunity to share any other feedback you might have.

	Response
	Count
<a href="#">Show replies</a>	18
<b>answered question</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>skipped question</b>	<b>4</b>

## **FREE Spring Garden Basics Classes**

*Master Gardener Larry Cipolla will lead interactive sessions on all you want to know about gardening. Come with your all your garden questions!*

Friday, January 17 6:30 – 8 p.m. - Backyard Composting: The Easy Way

Friday, February 21 6:30 – 8 p.m. - Seeds and Seedlings: Starting Seeds Inside and Outside

Friday, March 21 6:30 – 8 p.m. - Basic Vegetable and Herb Gardening: Garden Planning Designs

Friday, April 11 6:30 – 8 p.m. - Advanced Vegetable and Herb Gardening

Classes will be held at Southdale YMCA, 7355 York Avenue

## **Yorktown Park Community Garden**

Yorktown Park Community Garden is located at 7335 York Avenue, Edina. The garden is located just north and east of the Southdale YMCA and Edina York Avenue Fire Station. A total of 53 plots are available for rental.

### **Priority and rental rates for 2014 plots:**

January 6, 2014, registration begins for, Edina residents that were previous renters

January 27, 2014, registration begins for Edina residents

February 17, 2014: registration begins for previous plot holders that live or work in Edina

March 3, 2014: registration begins for Non-residents

Plots are assigned on a first-come, first-serve basis

- A waiting list will be maintained if garden plots fill, which is based on the date the application form is received.
- Gardeners may rent one plot per household.
- Payment can be in the form of a check payable to: **City of Edina.** We also accept VISA, MasterCard and American Express.
- There will be a fee of \$30 for a 10x10 and \$35 for a 10x15 plot.
- Garden plots are assigned to one person only and are not transferable. Others may garden at your site, but the responsibility for payment of fees, cleanup and other duties at the site will be the responsibility of the individual whose name is assigned to the plot.

For youth interested in gardening, Edina has an Edible Playground at Lewis Park. This Edible Playground is designed to give youth hands on fun experiences related to gardening, healthy eating and being physical. For more information contact Kristin at [kaarsvold@edinamn.gov](mailto:kaarsvold@edinamn.gov) or call 952-826-0433.