

# Community Gardens in Parks – Garden Application Process

In 2013, the City of Fort Collins City Council approved funds to pilot a project to build four community gardens in city-owned parks. With the overwhelming success and popularity of these gardens as evidenced by the number of waitlisted gardeners in 2014, City Council approved funding to open one additional garden in 2015 and one in 2016.

Due to lessons learned during the pilot phase, the Gardens on Spring Creek in collaboration with the Parks Department, Park Planning, Neighborhood Services, Social Sustainability and the City Manager's office have created an application process for neighborhoods seeking a community garden in their community or neighborhood park.

## Best Practices

In researching other municipalities with Community Garden Programs, we came up with the following best practices and application steps:

### Vigorous and Comprehensive Public Process

- Identify available park sites ahead of time
- Host open house for community members with interest in building community gardens in their neighborhoods
- Outline application requirements and process
- Provide application materials and list of available parks

### Outreach

- Garden Group Leader and organizers conduct outreach in their neighborhood identifying support through the Community Support Petition
- Evaluate applications and select strongest applications based upon selection criteria
- Host neighborhood open houses to gather input from neighbors within 1 mile radius of the selected parks
- If community support is demonstrated, the garden proposal may be approved

## Garden Criteria

Prior to the public process, the Parks Department will identify parks that can accommodate community gardens. Providing a list of available parks to host community gardens will save time and energy by limiting inquiries and petitions for parks that are unsuitable to host a community garden. This list will be available at the initial open house.

The following criteria have been determined for successful community gardens in parks:

1. Garden Size - Must accommodate a minimum # of 12 (10'x15') plots
2. Location
  - Adjacent/near main irrigation line
  - Level area with little or no slope
  - Receives at least 8 hours of unobstructed sunlight
  - Accessible to parking and sidewalks/paths
  - High visibility for safety purposes and building community
  - Clear access to garden's utility gate
  - Does not displace current park amenities.
3. Fence, compost bins, secure storage area and table/bench provided for each garden
4. Cost to build may not exceed budget

## **Application Process**

The Gardens and Neighborhood Services will host an initial open house to inform residents about the program from the application process to the approval and opening of the new garden.

All of the application requirements are outlined in a packet to help guide residents through the process. Application materials include the application, and a Community Support Petition. Community support for the garden must be demonstrated in order for the garden and community building to be successful. Garden group leaders and organizers will conduct outreach in their neighborhood identifying community support via the Community Support Petition. All items must be turned in by a selected deadline to be considered for a garden.

Applications will be evaluated by a team from the partner departments according to the following criteria:

1. Available park from the list
2. Completed application
3. Garden Leader and organizers identified – engagement level assessed
4. Community support – Community Support Petition
  - a. Number of neighbors in support
  - b. Number of neighbors opposed
  - c. Number of neighbors in support with view of the potential site
5. Committed community partnership(s)
6. Quality of neighborhood benefits
7. Proximity to other existing community garden(s)
8. Number of committed gardeners

Once applications are reviewed and evaluated, The Gardens, Neighborhood Services and Park Planning will host a neighborhood meeting with neighbors living within a 1 mile radius of the proposed community garden. This meeting will give neighbors a chance to be informed about the community garden as well as provide feedback.

With demonstrated community support and utilization of feedback received, Park Planning will work with the Gardens on Spring Creek and the Parks Department staff to design the garden.

Once construction is underway, the new garden will be added to the list of Community Gardens in Parks. Plots will be filled for the next growing season.

## **Request for a Community Garden in City of Fort Collins Parks – Application Process**

In order to facilitate the development of new gardens, the City has identified 14 city-owned parks that have an available waterline, space and other conditions conducive to creating a successful and sustainable community garden.

The following steps outline the process for requesting a community garden in one of these parks and describe the established procedure for reviewing requests.

**Step 1:** Review the City's list of available parks and identify which park would fit the needs of your community garden project.

**Step 2:** Once you have identified a specific city-owned park as suitable to meet your garden needs, complete the Community Gardens in Parks Application.

**Step 3: Community Support Petition** – Applicants are required to use this form to gather signatures and verify 1) community support and 2) gardener interest in the project. This is a key component of your application, and the more signatures that you include, the stronger your application will be. Signatures must be collected from gardeners interested in a plot who constitute 50% of the available plots. Signatures may only be collected from neighbors living within a 1 mile radius of the park. Only one signature per household will be accepted and must be 18 years or older to sign. Please include signatures of neighbors directly adjacent to the park.

**Step 4:** Turn in completed application and Community Support Petition.

**Step 5:** Once the application materials have been received by Gardens on Spring Creek, all requests will be evaluated. This process will involve a review by the garden review committee comprised of appropriate city employees. The review committee may request a question and answer session with the applicants.

**Step 6:** Selection and approval of 2 applications for two community gardens in 2015 for construction in 2016. Notice of the decision will be sent to all applicants.

**Step 7:** Once the applications are approved, the City will host a neighborhood meeting for each site to gather public input on the proposed garden. Neighbors within a 1 mile radius of the each proposed garden/park will receive notification of the open house and information about how they may submit comments.

**Step 8:** After public input has been considered, Park Planning will start designing and building the community garden.

# City of Fort Collins Community Gardens in Parks Application

|                                       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Section 1:</b> General Information | Date: |
|---------------------------------------|-------|

Please indicate which city-owned park is being requested. This must be one of the identified parks that are suitable to accommodate a community garden.

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|---|
| Garden Group Leader - Project Responsibilities: Provides overall coordination of the project among all garden organizers, and primary contact person. |
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Name:

Address:

City/Zip:

Phone:

Email:

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| Garden Organizers: Individuals who participate in organizing and promoting the community garden before the garden is established. |
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Garden Organizer:

Garden Organizer:

Project Responsibilities:

Project Responsibilities:

Address:

Address:

City/Zip:

City/Zip:

Email:

Email:

Garden Organizer:

Garden Organizer:

Project Responsibilities:

Project Responsibilities:

Address:

Address:

City/Zip:

City/Zip:

Phone:

Phone:

Email:

Email:

**Section 2:** Neighborhood benefits of this project.

Please provide a summary describing the most convincing reasons why the City of Fort Collins should approve this application for creation of a community garden in a city-owned park.

**Section 3:** Community partnerships.

Please identify potential community partnerships that could be eligible for 1-2 plots in the community garden. (i.e., organizations which will provide direct educational programming and/or organizations that will grow produce to donate to the Food Bank)

**Section 4:** Neighborhood Outreach.

What methods did you use to communicate with the residents of your neighborhood? (i.e., door to door, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), email)