

Draft 6; 11/5/09; PRAB approved

Outline of Steps in Applying for a Community Garden on Land Owned by City of Northfield

WHY COMMUNITY GARDENS?

Community gardens in Northfield provide gardening opportunities for the recreational, social, educational and health benefit of the citizens and neighborhoods of Northfield. Community Gardens improve the environmental sustainability of neighborhoods by

- encouraging local food production , food sharing, and food security,
- promoting intergenerational social interaction,
- teaching organic & sustainable gardening methods,
- and increasing the biodiversity of public lands.

DEFINITION: A Community Garden is defined as: An assigned space within a park or on public land that is reserved for the use of an organized group of community members for the purpose of growing ornamental or edible plants. The community gardening group is solely responsible for all necessary maintenance of this space.

Step 1: ORGANIZING THE GROUP

Residents of Northfield who would like to develop a Community Garden in their neighborhood should organize themselves as OR affiliate themselves with an official garden club or group, hereafter referred to as Gardening Group. City policy requires inclusiveness: anyone interested in joining a group is to be fairly considered. The group will appoint a liaison or group leader who will serve as the group's representative to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) and to the public. Once established, the Gardening Group must develop a working relationship with the Parks and Recreation Board and city staff. Creating a community garden is a long-term responsibility which will require community support and dedicated, on-going commitment by members of the community gardening group. The Gardening Group should review this entire document (and Appendices) before moving to step 2.

Step 2: SELECTING A SITE

Gardening Group approaches city staff with an idea for a location. Please keep in mind that not all parks are available for community gardening. The Gardening Group should contact city staff if they need help in identifying potential sites that would make a good garden space. City staff can provide a map showing city land and advice on possible locations. Select a site that takes into account the Site Selection Considerations (Appendix 1).

Step 3: PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

The City of Northfield Community Garden *Preliminary Application Form* (Appendix 2) is submitted to city staff by the Gardening Group. The application includes location, approximate size of garden and contact information of group organizers.

Submit Preliminary Application form to:
Brian Erickson, PE
Public Works Operations Engineer
801 Washington St.
Northfield, MN 55057

Preliminary Application is reviewed and comments made by city staff to identify any major conflicts. Letter of Permission to Apply (or denial) is sent to gardening group within 30 days of receipt of Preliminary Application. Comments and suggestions from city staff may be passed on here. Permission to apply will only be denied if the

City sees serious obstacles with the site, such as clear conflicts with planned uses in the near future or conflicts with utility infrastructure passing through the site.

Step 4: PROPOSAL PACKAGE

After receiving a Letter of Permission to Apply, the Gardening Group compiles a formal proposal package. The proposal package will be reviewed by city staff and the PRAB, and will be made public at the public meeting. The proposal package will include:

1. The Letter of Permission to Apply provided to the Gardening Group by city staff.
2. Written Proposal providing details on where the garden will be located and laid out, and how it will be financed and operated. This proposal should address the following items, and should also take into account the guidelines in the Letter of Commitment (Appendix 3).
 - a. Include a site plan with specific location of the garden, the number and size of plots, location of composting, tool storage, fencing, or other structures/components associated with the garden. Provide a simple sketch depicting the garden plan.
 - b. Aesthetic considerations
 - c. Parking and site access considerations
 - d. Soil fertility (it is recommended that soil test results be included in the proposal if possible) and sunlight conditions
 - e. Description of the Gardening Group, a list of its current members, number of gardeners and how plots will be assigned, and how gardeners will be selected
 - f. Adequacy and location of water sources
 - g. Financial plan for operating the garden (see Appendix 6 for ideas/resources)
 - h. Statement of commitment to organic practices
3. Letters of support from neighbors, community organizations and others who support the garden, or petitions with signatures from neighbors (Appendix 4). These are optional, but can be useful if the letters show that the Gardening Group is well organized, and that the proposal anticipates the questions and concerns other citizens may have.
4. Any other information you think might be useful for the public meeting and for city staff to use in review of the application.

Submit Proposal Package (# 1 – 5 above) to:
Brian Erickson, PE
Public Works Operations Engineer
801 Washington St.
Northfield, MN 55057

Step 5: PUBLIC MEETING

A public meeting will be scheduled during a PRAB meeting to hear public comment on the Proposal Package of the Gardening Group. Notice of the public meeting will be made public by city staff per existing City procedures, with special attention to notifying residents near the proposed garden site. Representatives of the Gardening Group must be present at the public meeting and be prepared to answer questions from the public about their proposal.

Step 6: DECISION & LETTER OF COMMITMENT

City staff will review proposal package and public comment and notify the Gardening Group that their application has been approved. If there is cause to reject an application, reasons will be given along with recommended steps (if any) that can be taken to ensure future approval. If the proposal is denied and the Garden Group feels that this was done without merit, they can appeal the decision to the City Council.

The Gardening Group liaison will submit a signed Letter of Commitment. The group will also provide signed Liability Waivers from each person (or guardians) who will be gardening on the site. The agreement between the gardening group and the city will be brought before the City Council for approval.

Gardening Group may be required to renew its Letter of Commitment every three years. The Group may be asked for a progress report on the garden, current membership details, and a budget plan for the next 3 years.

Step 7: Install garden!

APPENDIX 1: SITE SELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Look for any under-utilized sections of parks or playlots or city land parcels which will minimize interference with park aesthetics or existing uses.
2. Is the space large enough to accommodate the desired number and size of garden plots?
3. Consider how water will be accessed by the gardeners.
4. Consider sun exposure and shade from buildings, trees, etc. At least six hours per day of sunlight is best.
5. Slope should ideally be non-existent or gentle.
6. Look for a site that allows easy access by the gardeners.
7. Is it a reasonable distance to restroom facilities?
8. After deciding on a site, confirm with city staff that the specific location is owned by the City of Northfield.

You may choose to use the Site Comparison worksheet (Appendix 1a) to rate sites under consideration.

Potential Community Garden Site
Comparison Chart

Site	proximity to gardeners	water	sun	slope	bathroom	parking	environ suitability	safety	soil	size	average

0=not suitable
10=very suitable

KEY:
Proximity to gardeners means especially high density housing; **water** source available? Roof for catchment or spigot that could be metered?; full **sun** is 6 hours or more daily; **slope** ideally should be non-existent or gentle & south-facing; **environmental suitability** means consider any previous industrial or ag-chemical use; **safety** means visibility to protect gardens and gardeners from harm; has **soil** been compacted by construction, etc?;

APPENDIX 2: COMMUNITY GARDEN PRELIMINARY APPLICATION FORM

Part 1.

Garden Group Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Is this a new garden group? YES or NO How many active members to date? _____

Garden Group Liason/primary organizer's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Alternate contact's name: _____

Phone number: _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Part 2.

Proposed location for community garden (Example: northwest corner of XYZ Park):

What is the proposed size of the garden: _____

Attach 2 to 4 photos or a drawing of the proposed location.

Part 3.

Please mail this completed form with pictures to:

Brian Erickson, PE
Public Works Operations Engineer
801 Washington Street
Northfield, MN 55057
Attn: Community Garden Application

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF COMMITMENT

These are the responsibilities and guidelines the gardening group must adhere to. Please read this document carefully, making sure that all members of your group understand and agree to the terms listed below. Finally, sign this Letter of Commitment formalizing your agreement with the City of Northfield.

SELECTION OF GARDENERS

The Garden Group shall develop a fair and open process for gardener selection. Availability of garden plots should be widely advertised, and distribution of plots should be equitable (such as a first-come-first-served or lottery process).

GARDENER PARTICIPATION

All gardeners shall be expected to participate in maintenance of communal areas of the garden.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Garden Group is encouraged to engage with the neighborhood and/or wider community through events or projects such as open houses, garden tours, food shelf donations, etc.

GARDEN/PLOT MAINTENANCE

The Group is entirely responsible for the maintenance of the Community Garden. Keep in mind that the space allocated is on public land and must always be actively maintained. The Group should provide the city staff with a schedule of spring prepping and fall winterizing dates. Pathways and areas between Garden Beds must be mowed or mulched and maintained by the group. The city will not do any maintenance within the Community Garden itself.

WATER

Please conserve water!!! The water supply is ONLY to be used by gardeners caring for their assigned areas. Use for any non-garden related activities is prohibited.

ORGANIC PRACTICES

It is strongly recommended that all cultivating practices be organic; only organic fertilizers should be applied in edibles gardens. Only organic means of disease and pest control may be used. No chemical pest control measures may be used.

COMPOSTING

Composting is encouraged, but only that which is organic and will decompose (e.g. plant material, fruit peels/cores). Avoid rodent-attracting foods such as rice, bread, meat, or grease. Inorganic or non-plant materials such as plastic, metal, kitty litter, feces, or any large or thorny branches are not suitable for compost. The compost must be contained in a bin, tumbler or open cage.

GARDEN BORDERS

The garden boundaries must remain as submitted on the original design plans. Any proposed expansion must be reviewed and approved by city staff.

NEW MEMBERS

The Group shall inform new members of the Community Garden rules and regulations; stressing the importance of ongoing maintenance. The group must follow a transparent membership process open to all. As a public agency, City of Northfield policy requires inclusiveness; anyone interested in joining the Group is to be fairly considered.

LIABILITY

The city is not responsible for the garden itself or for anything in or pertaining to the garden. Each member of the gardening group must sign a waiver of liability.

FUNDRAISING

The Group may organize fundraising events to finance needs of the Community Garden such as a compost bin, water hoses, plants, etc.

CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES

The Group will be expected to organize a spring work day to prepare the garden, and fall clean up day to clean the site for winter.

VEHICLES

Park patrons are permitted to use motorized vehicles within a park ONLY on designated roadways, driveways and parking facilities. The parking or driving of motorized vehicles by any park patron on walkways, sidewalks, trails, restricted-access drives, lawn areas, under trees, or within landscaped areas is strictly forbidden. The garden group liaison should notify city staff if exceptions are necessary for installation or special garden maintenance.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- . Littering, dumping, alcohol consumption and other unlawful activities.
- . Amplified sound
- . Pets are not allowed in the garden.
- . Ball playing or other forms of active recreation.

GARDEN TERMINATION

- If the Gardening Group decides to no longer maintain their space, they must immediately notify the city staff. Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of city staff.
- If city staff determines that the garden is not satisfactory, the designated liaison will be given two separate warning notices. If the problem continues thereafter, the agreement will be revoked and the Gardening Group will be responsible for proposing a plan to restore the garden to parkland to the satisfaction of the city staff.

I, _____ am the official liaison of the garden group named

_____. Each current member of our gardening group has read the

above listed terms and agrees to abide by them and now enters into a commitment to maintain our

community garden in _____ (park or location)

Liaison Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 4: PETITION FOR A NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN

Garden Group Name: _____

Organizer's Name: _____

Park or location: _____ Date: _____

We, the undersigned, are residents living near the above proposed community garden. We accept and/or support the above named Community Garden Group's proposal to maintain a community garden at this location:

Name (pls print)	Signature	Address	Date
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____

APPENDIX 5: RESOURCES & FUNDING IDEAS

Here are a few ideas for locating funds and/or horticultural resources for your Community Garden:

- Northfield Community Gardeners operates the Greenvale Park Community Garden; support & information on how to organize a community garden; 507-649-0707 or northfieldcommunitygarden@hotmail.com
- Rural Enterprise Center operates The Huerta (or Faith Community Garden); support & information on how to organize a community garden; www.mainstreetproject.org/programs/rural_enterprise_center.html
- Northfield Garden Club has many members with gardening expertise to share; also provides small grants for local garden projects; www.northfieldgardenclub.org/ P. O. Box 745, Northfield, 55057
- Gardening Matters is a twin cities organization devoted to promoting community gardening and assisting community gardens; they are metro focused but are helpful to outstate gardens also; trainings, tips, etc. www.gardeningmatters.org/ PO Box 580496, Minneapolis, MN 55458 612-492-8964 - info@gardeningmatters.org
- COMGAR is a listserv that connects community gardeners around the state; good place to ask & answer questions with other new & experienced community gardeners & organizers. www.gardeningmatters.org/Resources/COMGAR.htm
- University of Minnesota Extension website supplies a wealth of gardening resources: www.extension.umn.edu/ Master Gardener and Master Composter certification classes are also available.
- American Community Garden Association works to create new resources for community gardens, coordinates an annual conference, and has online resources and informative lists of all topics involving community gardens: www.communitygarden.org
- National Gardening Association promotes the environment, is a resource of plant information, has a free newsletter, and provides links for gardeners. Periodically, they provide information about grants and other funds available: www.garden.org
- FoodShare Metro Toronto has good online and print resources on how to start and manage community garden. <http://www.foodshare.net/garden01.htm>
- Local businesses may be interested in donating materials, monetarily, and/or with volunteer hours.
- Local officials may have funds available to support such a community improvement project.