

To the Mayor and Members of the City Council**September 15, 2015**

Page 1 of 1

**SUBJECT: COMMUNITY GARDENS**

This informal report is written in response to a request by Mayor Price at the August 25, 2015 Pre-Council meeting regarding Community Gardens. Properties that could potentially be utilized to establish a community garden include tax-foreclosed properties that the City holds as the trustee, City fee owned properties and privately owned properties.

Establishing a Community Garden on tax-foreclosed properties is not recommended since the City serves as the Trustee and not the actual property owner. Even though these properties are not restricted for use as a community garden, several issues arise related to garnering approvals from the multiple taxing entities. City fee owned properties for a community garden is conducted in a manner similar to the adopt-a-park program. An entity may enter into an agreement with the City to take on maintenance and care of the property. Liability insurance is required if power tools are used on the site. The simplest option for the establishment of a Community Garden is on privately owned property with minimal City involvement beyond zoning and land use requirements. The Parks and Recreation Department and Office of Communication and Public Engagement staffs serve as resources to assist community groups interested in starting a community garden on private property. Assistance has included education classes provided through the Botanic Garden and referrals the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT).

Although the City does not have a formal program to encourage or establish Community Gardens, the establishment of the Blue Zones Food Policy committee, a working group related to Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture, was formed in March 2015 to provide guidance and recommendations in this area. The group is drafting a proposed ordinance that will include a clause on Community Gardens. The ordinance may address issues related to activities not currently allowed in a residential district that could support community gardens activities, including:

- Sale of garden produce,
- Signage on the property,
- Fencing and landscaping requirements,
- Parking (no additional spaces required)
- Platting
- Maximum size of structures

If you have further questions, please contact Steve Cooke, Property Management Director and/or Jocelyn Murphy, Planning Manager.

David Cooke
City Manager