

City of Seattle Legislative Information Service

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Resolution Number: 30194

A RESOLUTION adopting a Five-Year Strategic Plan as guidance for the expansion of Seattle's community gardening program and adopting the policies and procedures necessary for the implementation of the plan.

Date introduced/referred: June 5, 2000

Date adopted: June 19, 2000

Status: Adopted As Amended

Vote: 7-0 (Excused: Licata, McIver)

Committee: Neighborhoods, Sustainability and Community Development

Sponsor: CONLIN

Index Terms: P-PATCH-PROGRAM, GARDENS, COMPREHENSIVE-PLAN, PLANNING

Text

WHEREAS, the City's Comprehensive Plan establishes a goal of one community garden for every 2,500 households in an urban village and urban center; and

WHEREAS, twenty of the Neighborhood Plans submitted to the City Council for approval include requests for community gardens; and

WHEREAS, there are currently 600 households on a waiting list for community garden plots; and

WHEREAS, population growth in the City, both current and projected, will result in many more families living in multi-unit housing in areas of high density, which can lead to increased demand for garden space; and

WHEREAS, surveys of available land have determined that publicly-owned lands have the greatest potential for meeting the demand for space for community gardens, particularly in high density areas of the city; and

WHEREAS, an effective community gardening program for the City of Seattle should include an inclusive plan for strengthening and expanding the community gardening program in Seattle that would include the goals of protecting and supporting current community gardens, establishing new community gardens, and addressing social equity and food security issues; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of P-Patch and the City of Seattle P-Patch Program in the Department of Neighborhoods have proposed a five-year strategic plan with policy recommendations to address these goals; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Seattle finds that the proposed strategic plan for community gardens is consistent with the goals established in the Comprehensive Plan and would advance the implementation of those goals;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE, THE MAYOR CONCURRING, THAT:

Section 1. The City of Seattle adopts the attached P-Patch Program 2001-2005 Strategic Plan as shown in Attachment A.

Section 2: To implement the Plan, the City Council directs the following actions;

1. The Department of Neighborhoods will set a goal of developing at least four additional community gardens per year with emphasis given to the City's higher density areas; and
2. The Executive Services Department will work with the P-Patch program to identify surplus City land holdings suitable for community gardens in present and projected high-density areas. Community gardens are to be added as one of the City's priorities for surplus property disposition under Resolution 30184. This addition is not intended to give community gardens priority over other competing City needs for City surplus property. In addition, the appropriate City agencies, including Executive Services Department, Department of Parks and Recreation, SEATRAM, Seattle Public Utilities, and Seattle City Light will work with the P-Patch program to identify non-surplus City owned lands or lands owned by other public entities in areas suitable for potential co-location of garden sites. When making recommendations to Council for the disposition of City surplus property, ESD will explore opportunities for co-locating community gardens with other City priority projects such as affordable housing and light rail station are development; and
3. The City Budget Office shall develop recommendations for a replenishable capital source to acquire currently leased P-Patch sites or other high priority sites as they become available and if necessary to assist in the acquisition of surplus utility sites for community gardens; the Council encourages the Mayor to suggest initial funding in the 2001 budget; and
4. The Council encourages the Mayor to suggest adding one new staff person in 2001 and one additional staff person for each ten to twelve new community gardens as they are created in order to provide the P-Patch program with adequate staff for managing the program effectively.
5. The Department of Neighborhoods will seek opportunities to partner with groups working on food security issues; and
6. The Department of Neighborhoods will provide an annual status

report to City Council on meeting the recommendations of the 2001-2005 P-Patch Strategic plan. The report shall identify the sites that have been secured during the calendar year and shall make recommendations for the development of future community gardens.

Adopted by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2000, and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this _____ day of _____, 2000.

President of the City Council

THE MAYOR CONCURRING:

Paul Schell, Mayor

Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2000.

City Clerk

Attachment A: P-Patch Five-Year Strategic Plan
P-Patchres.doc
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Attachment A: P-Patch Five-Year Strategic Plan

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Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and Friends of P-Patch

P-PATCH PROGRAM FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May 2000

This five-year plan presents a strategy to carry out the successful expansion of Seattle's community gardening program, with particular emphasis on new community garden sites in the highest-density areas of the city and expansion of services to under-served populations. The plan includes measures for protecting existing gardens on leased private property.

This plan describes who currently owns our 50 community gardens in Seattle (15 are on private property) and relates the public benefits of the program to the core values in the Comprehensive Plan: community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity/security, and social equity. The essential role of community gardens in enhancing food security for low-income

residents and food bank consumers is also described.

A key finding is that undeveloped private land is so scarce in Seattle's high-density areas that it is unrealistic to expect to meet the demand for new garden sites in these areas through purchase or lease of private property. The principal strategy proposed is to make use of City-owned property to accommodate 15 to 20 new gardens over the next five years. This could be done through co-location with other City operations such as public utility facilities and parks, or through the use of City properties that are no longer needed for their original purpose. Appropriately located and available property belonging to other public agencies such as the Seattle Housing Authority, the Seattle School District, and Metropolitan King County should also be considered.

The plan calls for the Mayor and City Council to adopt and implement the following policies and procedures to help realize expansion:

? Establish as City policy a schedule for acquiring and developing three or four additional community gardens per year with priority given to Seattle's highest-density areas.

? Inventory surplus City land holdings suitable for community gardens in present and projected high-density areas, and non-surplus lands in those areas, for potential co-location of garden sites.

? Designate City-owned lands in the high-density areas for use as community gardens.

? Establish a capital source to help acquire currently leased P-Patch sites and acquire new sites for community gardens, as necessary.

? Consider mutual and offsetting benefits in exchange for the use of surplus utility properties.

? Augment P-Patch staff to match expansion of the program.

Friends of P-Patch Role: Friends of P-Patch will adopt and implement policies that support the expansion of the community gardens program and that assume responsibility for raising funds to help develop and manage gardens.

Related Issue: A broad-based investigation is needed of the extent and characteristics of food security issues that impact our citizens, leading to the formulation of a Community Food Security Plan.

FRIENDS OF P-PATCH AND P-PATCH PROGRAM

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

May 2000

I. OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY GARDENING IN SEATTLE

In response to the high demand for community gardens, the general success of the P-Patch Program, Seattle's increasing population, and potential future difficulties in establishing new community gardens, we the Friends of P-Patch and the P-Patch Program have developed a comprehensive plan to introduce our policy recommendations. The plan, outlined below, presents a strategy to carry out the successful expansion of Seattle's community gardening program.

Community gardening in Seattle goes back more than a quarter of a century, starting with the first P-Patch garden at Picardo Farm in 1973. In 1999, the P-Patch Program encompassed 39 neighborhood sites, serving more than 1,400 families throughout Seattle. Sites range in size from 7 to 281 plots.¹ Also part of the P-Patch Program are 11 Cultivating Communities gardens, operated in cooperation with the Friends of P-Patch, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), and SHA residents.

Despite the impressive growth in the number and distribution of community gardens in the past decade, the annual waiting list for garden spaces has 600 to 800 persons on it. The waiting time for the more centrally located gardens is two to three years.

These facts about the P-Patch Program do not tell the whole story of what happens in the gardens. Community gardens build and strengthen the community, promote environmental stewardship, provide economic opportunity and security, and increase social equity. These elements correspond to the four core values in the City's Comprehensive Plan: community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity/security, and social equity. The following description shows how the P-Patch Program supports these values and illustrates the importance of increased support.

COMMUNITY

Flowers grow in flower gardens

Vegetables grow in vegetable gardens

And people grow in community gardens

Creating and maintaining a community garden brings neighbors together. Before the first seeds can be sown, interested neighbors, P-Patch staff, Friends of P-Patch, landscape designers, and other volunteers must come together to design and build the garden. The layout of the garden, its entryway, and its public spaces are designed to be inviting to all - gardeners and non-gardeners alike. At the Interbay P-Patch, for example, more than 300 people signed the visitors' book in 1999. Photographers regularly use the gardens for inspiration and subject matter. It is not unusual to find neighbors having Sunday coffee and office workers having lunch in the gardens.

Community gardens are valued as open spaces and places for

socializing and relaxing. Public amenities such as benches, children's play areas, and art have been added to many community gardens to increase their value as community centers. The activities that take place in community gardens - sharing gardening tips, cooperating at work parties, arranging social events for gardeners and neighbors, and enjoying the fruits of the land - bring people from all walks of life and all ages together in a natural way, building a stronger, more integrated urban community and strengthening civic engagement.

Once a garden is developed and built, it is the gardeners, with advice from the P-Patch staff, who maintain the garden. If the garden is leased or on public land, the proprietary agency or private owner no longer is responsible for ongoing maintenance. Maintenance is the responsibility of the gardeners (all gardeners pledge a minimum of eight hours each year) and their volunteer leaders, with support from P-Patch staff. In 1998, gardeners donated approximately 12,000 hours to maintain their community gardens - equivalent to more than five full-time employees. Management of the gardens by the gardeners is a strength of the program, but requires staff support to ensure consistently high quality. Increased financial support would help ensure the high quality of garden management as the Program expands.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Community gardens are oases of greenery and renewal in an increasingly dense urban environment. P-Patch community gardens set an example of land stewardship in that they:

1. Restore and enrich the land by teaching and using the principles of organic gardening.
2. Maintain open space in trust for current and future generations, leaving the land in better condition than before it was cultivated.
3. Provide a working model of active environmental stewardship. Community gardening is a springboard to greater environmental awareness.

Organic gardening is a basic tenet of the P-Patch Program. Organic gardening is practiced in all gardens, and several sites have become regional centers of outreach and education for organic gardening, composting, and wise water use. Following are outstanding examples:

* Bradner Gardens Park P-Patch brings together the P-Patch Program, Seattle Tilth, and Master Gardeners to create educational opportunities for the larger community.

* Interbay P-Patch, with 30 compost bins around the site, is a teaching and research laboratory for compost creation, soil improvement, and water conservation.

* Picardo Farm P-Patch features demonstration gardens that

neighbors can visit to learn better gardening practices. It currently hosts two University of Washington research projects.

* Cascade P-Patch features a unique water collection design that captures water runoff from adjacent buildings.

The P-Patch Program's environmental stewardship goes beyond these illustrations. Less tangibly but perhaps even more importantly, the practice of organic farming encourages awareness of environmental issues and maintains the health of the land for future generations. Community gardens enable densely populated communities to maintain open space. Preserving open space, and maintaining a community garden in that space, fosters civic engagement for the future.

As a recent Metropolitan Seattle article about Seattle's community gardens put it, "They say it takes a village to raise a child, but to raise a village, in this modern world, it sometimes takes a garden." If we want to raise Seattle properly, we need gardens. The development of environmental awareness in our community will mean a better, cleaner Seattle as the ideals of organic gardening extend into other arenas.

This is an area in which we already do well, but increased support will enable the P-Patch Program to reach more neighborhoods and more citizens, and provide new land stewardship opportunities in Seattle.

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY/SECURITY AND SOCIAL EQUITY

Economic opportunity and security are tightly intertwined with social equity in community gardening. In this context, security means food security. Community gardening allows participants to raise their own food to improve their nutrition and benefit their health. For many P-Patch participants of limited means, a plot in a community garden helps create food self-sufficiency rather than dependence on food subsidies. Intensively gardened, a 200-square-foot plot will provide an average of 150 pounds of fresh vegetables annually. Seattle's community gardeners promote food security by giving from their gardens: they donate eight tons of fresh produce each year to Seattle area food banks, far more than is donated by any other community gardening program in the country.

The P-Patch Program is open to all Seattle residents regardless of economic status. The most recent survey of gardeners (1996) shows that for large numbers of people their garden production fulfills an important nutritional role. Approximately 25% of P-Patch households have incomes below the federal poverty level and 11% rely on food bank assistance. Friends of P-Patch has set up a Gardanship Fund, to which many Program participants contribute, ensuring that all people who request a plot can get one, regardless of their ability to pay.

As for social equity, the P-Patch Program provides gardening space for a variety of special-needs groups: physically disabled, youth,

homeless, and immigrant populations. Three gardens are cultivated predominantly by immigrant gardeners: Thistle, Snoqualmie, and Ferdinand. For many immigrant gardeners, gardening is both a way of life and an important nutritional supplement. Currently, 10 community gardens have raised beds accessible to people with disabilities. The University Heights P-Patch is home to a nationally renowned program for homeless youth, Seattle Youth Garden Works. The 11 social service agencies that will have plots at P-Patch gardens include Alpha House, Backyard Starts, Central Youth and Family Services, Seattle Youth Garden Works, and the William Booth Center.

Friends of P-Patch and the P-Patch Program have collaborated with the Seattle Housing Authority to establish Cultivating Communities, an innovative program that has built 11 community gardens and 3 income-generating gardens in SHA communities. Since many of the participating families include non-English speaking immigrants, building a successful program requires extensive door-to-door outreach with paid interpreters. Staff members work with interested residents, many of whom have extensive gardening skills learned in their home countries. These skills are supplemented with staff training to teach the gardeners techniques appropriate to this climate, for the produce grown for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) programs, and for local food preferences. The success of the Cultivating Communities stems from its intensive staff effort and its hands-on approach, helping gardeners to help themselves.

The produce grown in the income-producing gardens (CSAs) is sold within and outside the SHA community. This connection with the wider community helps participants build relationships and make broader social contacts. As gardeners have grown more confident, and with the help of the staff, they have begun to take a larger leadership role within their gardens and their communities.

Cultivating Communities is a key program for the Friends of P-Patch, because of both the program's success and Friends of P-Patch's continued interest in social equity issues. However, program expansion to support additional special needs populations will require extensive staff time for outreach and training.

The City Council has shown interest in expanding services into these areas, saying that "the City recognizes the social value of the garden" and "encourages the expansion of the P-Patch Program," adding that "outreach should give special emphasis to low-income families and individuals, youth, the elderly, physically challenged, and other special populations."²

1.

POLICY ISSUES

Considering the high demand for community gardens and the general success of the P-Patch Program, the significant increases in Seattle's population, and the potential future difficulties in establishing new gardens, we must develop a comprehensive plan that addresses (1) protection of current community gardens, (2)

establishment of new community gardens, and (3) social equity and food security.

Population growth in Seattle, both current and projected, will result in many more families living in multi-unit housing. Judging from past experience, that is precisely the kind of living arrangement that generates demand for community garden space. The Friends of P-Patch and P-Patch Program staff estimate that 15 to 20 community garden sites will be needed in the next five years in order to keep pace with the increased density. Our ultimate vision is a community garden in every neighborhood.

Although the number of community gardens has doubled in the last 10 years, they are not evenly distributed throughout the city, nor is there one in every neighborhood. Several high-density residential areas have no community garden sites: Northgate, Lake City, and the West Seattle Junction. High-density areas that are grossly underserved include Capitol Hill, Queen Anne, Fremont, and the University District. Many smaller neighborhoods have no community gardens.

Of the 38 neighborhood plans submitted to the City Council for approval, 20 include requests for community gardens. These requests are well within the Comprehensive Plan's goals of "one dedicated community garden for each 2,500 households in the [urban] village."
3

Although we believe it is possible to forecast areas of demand for new community gardens, development of specific gardens is highly dependent on land availability and on support and demand from the neighborhoods involved and from the future gardeners.

PROTECTING EXISTING COMMUNITY GARDENS

The P-Patch Program manages the P-Patch community gardens, but ownership of the properties is mixed:

Private individuals or organizations

12.5 sites

King County

3 sites

Friends of P-Patch

2.5 sites

School District

1 site

Seattle City departments:

Department of Parks and Recreation

12 sites

Department of Neighborhoods

1 site

SEATRAN

3 sites

City Light

4 sites

Total

39 sites

Cultivating Communities gardens on

Seattle Housing Authority property

11 sites

One-third of the community gardens are located on privately held land. The leases on these sites may not be renewed by the owners and are vulnerable to local and regional development pressures. In the past, Friends of P-Patch and the P-Patch Program have developed partnerships and leveraged private and public funds to preserve community gardens by purchasing sites from private owners. Three P-Patch sites were purchased from private owners by Friends of P-Patch: Pinehurst, Greenwood, and half of the Hillman City P-Patch gardens are held in trust as permanent community gardens.

In 1999, the P-Patch Program faced possible loss of two gardens on leased sites: Fremont and Sand Point. Funds were raised to purchase the Fremont site, but the owner is now reluctant to sell. There is currently no alternative garden site in the Fremont area because of the scarcity of both public and private open space. The Sand Point community garden is on land owned by Children's Hospital, which plans to expand its facilities on the site. Friends of P-Patch and the Sand Point gardeners successfully secured space in the expanded Magnuson Park.

The urgency of protecting leased existing community gardens through purchase or replacement suggests the need for formal City policies that give high priority to acquire privately owned current gardens and to use of public land for additional community gardens. One option for purchasing or replacing community gardens is to establish a capital source to help acquire sites when they come on the market.

LOCATING NEW P-PATCH SITES

In surveys of present and projected high-density areas in Seattle, the Friends of P-Patch and the P-Patch Program have determined that privately-held vacant land is too scarce to be a significant source of real estate for new garden sites. In most high-density residential areas, the only open space with gardening potential is in public ownership. The Comprehensive Plan specifies the City's support for using surplus property for P-Patch gardens.⁴

The City agencies whose land holdings have the most promise for future community garden locations in high-density areas are the Department of Parks and Recreation, SEATRAN, Seattle Public Library, Seattle City Light, and Seattle Public Utilities. A 1992 joint City Council and mayoral resolution supporting the P-Patch Program cited the need to "promote interagency and intergovernmental cooperation ... to expand opportunities for community gardening; ... [and] include the P-Patch Program in the evaluation of priority use of City surplus property."⁵

There are difficulties entailed in converting surplus public land acquired with ratepayer-based funds. If utility-owned lands are acquired with ratepayer funds, City and State law requires that "fair market value" be received when they are put into surplus. If ordinance changes to ease conversions are not feasible, the City could consider setting up a capital source to help finance conversions of surplus utility-owned land to community garden use in high-priority locations.

There is precedence for the Department of Parks and Recreation's interest in community garden use by the larger public. The new Bradner Gardens, for instance, is a successful collaboration between the Department of Parks and Recreation, the P-Patch Program, Seattle Tilth, and the Master Gardeners Program. The result is a beautiful park that includes a community garden.

Other public properties with community gardening potential in high-density areas are owned by Metropolitan King County, the Seattle School District, North Seattle Community College, the Port of Seattle, the University of Washington, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Other options, such as the nonprofit housing developers' projects, have potential for co-locating community gardens.

Acquisition requires considerable expenditure of resources. This plan assumes the development of three to four new community gardens a year, one of which might be acquired through purchase at an average cost of \$200,000 while the other two or three were acquired through lease of private land or co-location on public land. A capital source could be used to purchase the few remaining outstanding private parcels that enjoy neighborhood support and meet City evaluation criteria. These funds would be supplemented by funds raised by Friends of P-Patch, as happened with Pinehurst, Greenwood, and Hillman City.

The role of P-Patch Program staff has changed and expanded with the

increase in gardens. At the current staffing level of 4.5 FTE, the P-Patch staff is barely able to support existing gardens and only to a limited extent is able to work with neighborhood groups to develop new gardens. They cannot adequately address the requests made in neighborhood plans and the needs of special populations, or move forward on food security issues.

To meet the needs of Seattle citizens over the next five years, P-Patch Program staff must be able to:

- * Support existing gardens. This will mean increasing volunteer site management, working with gardeners to make each community garden a better neighborhood resource, and offering administrative help.

- * Work with neighborhood plan stewardship groups to find land, build support for site locations, and organize the neighbors to build new community gardens.

- * Put more emphasis on the level of design and construction oversight for new gardens to guarantee standards, increase efficiency of volunteers, and ensure safety, high standards, and future ease of operation.

- * Provide outreach to under-served and special needs groups.

- * Support the Cultivating Communities program.

EQUITY AND FOOD SECURITY

In our review of the connections between the P-Patch Program and the goals of social equity and food security, we have come to understand that we can address only a small portion of the food security issue. Although we are proud of the contributions that P-Patch gardeners make to Seattle's food banks and proud of the leadership role of Friends of P-Patch and the P-Patch Program in developing the Cultivating Communities program for SHA tenants, we realize that food security concerns among our citizenry are broader and deeper than we can currently address.

Food security issues include questions of employment security, nutritional adequacy, food waste, transportation access, quantity and quality of supply, retail store locations, farmland stability, and the hazards of dependence on the global food system. They also include the more traditional but significant problems of hunger and malnutrition among homeless and low-income residents and the emergency food systems that have emerged in response.

In-depth knowledge and understanding of the extent to which Seattle's citizens are affected by food security problems and the nature of those impacts is a prerequisite for an effective program dealing with food security issues. Gaining this knowledge is a major research challenge and the process will require the involvement of a broad spectrum of our community.

III.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

NEED: To carry out orderly expansion of community gardening program, especially in Seattle's highest-density areas.

Policy Recommendation: Establish as City policy a schedule for acquisition and development of three or four additional community gardens per year, with priority given to highest-density areas.

NEED: To identify and designate public lands that could be used for community gardens.

Policy Recommendation: Inventory surplus City land holdings suitable for community gardens in present and projected high-density areas and non-surplus lands in those areas for potential co-location of garden sites.

Policy Recommendation: Designation by the Mayor and City Council of City-owned lands in high-density areas for use as community gardens.

NEED: To implement strategies for the use of surplus utility properties.

Policy Recommendation: Consider mutual and offsetting benefits in exchange for the use of surplus utility properties.

Policy Recommendation: Seek additional co-location opportunities on utility properties in use.

Policy Recommendation: Establish a capital source to purchase community garden sites, as necessary.

NEED: To allocate funds to purchase the sites of community gardens located on leased property and to purchase additional sites as necessary.

Policy Recommendation: Establish a capital source to purchase community garden sites.

NEED: To increase staff capacity to support an expanded community garden program.

Policy Recommendation: Support funding to augment P-Patch Program staff on a schedule that correlates with the expansion of the Program.

NEED: To respond to the larger food security needs of Seattle residents.

Policy Recommendation: Sponsor an interdepartmental, intergovernmental, public-private investigation of the extent and characteristics of food security issues that impact our citizens, leading to the formulation of a Community Food Security Plan.

NEED: For continuing partnerships that support implementation of the community gardens' expansion plan.

Policy Recommendation: Friends of P-Patch should adopt and implement policies that support the expansion of the community gardens program, including the continued buildup and use of its land acquisition fund, and that accept responsibility for raising funds to help develop and manage programs to serve special needs populations.

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1 Seattle City P-Patch Map- Appendix A

2 Seattle City Council Resolution 28610

3 Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Element, E. Open Space Network, Goal 74, p.50

4 Seattle Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Element, Policy L152, p.52

5 Seattle City Council Resolution 28610

Attachment A

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Attachment A