

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Meeting Date: <u>06/22/15</u>		Item Number: <u>A-2</u>	
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM: (1) Consideration of a Recommendation from the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission Regarding Allocating One or Two Resource People to Work with Existing Community Groups to Create On-Site and/or Off-Site Garden Sharing Opportunities in Culver City, Including Considering the Formation of a Website to Support these Efforts; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate.			
Contact Person/Dept.: Dan Hernandez, PRCS Director		Phone Number: (310) 253-6655	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒		General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☐	
Public Hearing: ☐		Action Item: ☒ Attachments: ☒	
Commission Action Required: Yes ☒ No ☐		Date: <u>04/07/15</u>	
Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas – City Council (06/18/15); (E-Mail) Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission (06/18/15); (Email) Culver City Community Garden Plots Renters (06/17/15); (Email) Senior Citizens (06/17/15); (Email) Meetings and Agendas – Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission (06/18/15); (Email) Parks, Recreation & Community Service Department Updates (06/18/15).			
Department Approval: Dan Hernandez (06/09/15)		City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (06/16/15)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by M. Noller) (06/16/15)		City Manager Approval: John M. Nachbar (06/16/15)	
<u>RECOMMENDATION:</u> Staff recommends the City Council consider a recommendation by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Commission regarding allocating one or two resource people to work with existing community groups to create on-site and/or off-site garden sharing opportunities in Culver City, including considering the formation of a website to support these efforts, and direct the City Manager as deemed appropriate. <u>BACKGROUND:</u> At various times throughout the years, members of the public have come before the PRCS Commission requesting that the Commission look into ways that more community garden opportunities might be made available in Culver City. There is one Community Garden on City-owned property that is comprised of sixteen (16) garden plots. The waiting list for plot rental is kept current by Darren Uhl, PRCS Department/Senior & Social Services Division/Disability Services Specialist. Mr. Uhl also sends communications and updates to the garden plot renters, as necessary. The Parks Division crew maintains the areas of the garden that are not under the care of renters and does a general clean-up of plots that are vacated before they are			

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

assigned to new renters. Earlier this year, the Parks Division crew was called upon to do a general refurbishment of the Community Garden, including plumbing repairs, in conjunction with the adoption of updated Community Garden Plots Rules and Regulations.

At the PRCS Commission meetings in December 2014 (two public speakers) and January 2015 (seven public speakers), discussions regarding the final draft of the Culver City Community Garden Plots Rules and Regulations led to a broader discourse regarding the general lack of community garden resources in Culver City. At the March 18, 2015 PRCS Commission Special Meeting, the topic of Urban Gardening was agendaized by the Commission for discussion at the April 7, 2015 meeting.

At the April 7, 2015 PRCS Commission meeting, Chair Stuart supplied seventeen (17) web-based articles on various urban gardening topics, including balcony, apartment and container gardening, micro-gardening, and neighborhood/community co-op gardening for use as an attachment to Agenda Item A-2: “(1) Informational Item Regarding Urban Gardening, Apartment Gardening, and Neighborhood Co-op Gardening; and, (2) Discussion Regarding the Potential Role that the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission May Wish to Take in Mentoring Community Members Interested in Community Gardening.” The staff report and attachment (47 pages) can be accessed on the City’s website at <http://www.culvercity.org/agenda.aspx>.

An excerpt of the approved April 7 meeting minutes relating to this topic is provided as an Attachment. As noted in the meeting minutes, the following recommendation was made:

The PRCS Commission recommended to the City Council that the City Council allocate one or two resource people to work with existing community groups, including, but not limited to, Transition Culver City, the Culver City Garden Club, local homeowners groups, and apartment property owners to create on-site and/or off-site garden sharing opportunities. In addition, the Commission recommended that the City Council consider forming a website to support these efforts.

Pursuant to direction provided by the City Council at the Regular Meeting of April 13, 2015, this item has been placed on this agenda for the City Council’s consideration.

DISCUSSION:

A site on City-owned property for the development of another community garden has not been identified. Therefore, the Commission’s recommendation seems to be more focused on private property, including exploring ideas for “shared, portable gardens” on vacant lots (with the permission of the property owner) and the

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

possibility of people who have private gardens “sharing” their garden space with others.

Staff is unable to offer suggestions regarding current staff members who have the resources and/or expertise to assist the community in developing garden-sharing opportunities on private property. As noted earlier, Disability Services Specialist Darren Uhl plays a very limited role in the management of the Community Garden. Community gardens and gardening are not his specialty areas. His position is funded by a portion of the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) allocation specifically to provide information and support to the community regarding disability services.

Catherine Vargas is the Environmental Coordinator in the Environmental Programs and Operations Division of the Public Works Department. Her main responsibility is the oversight of the Culver City Transfer Station, including the regulatory aspects regarding safety training and storm water permits. She also does outreach and community education regarding sustainability, such as sustainable (“smart”) gardening practices and recycling and waste reduction guidelines/goals.

Urban/Community Gardening Resources

Staff has identified three important, well-established resources that are currently available for those with an interest in urban/community gardening and finding garden sharing opportunities:

1. **The LA Food Policy Council** (<http://goodfoodla.org>) – The preface of the LA Food Policy Council’s Urban Agriculture Working Group’s “Urban Agriculture Policy: Draft Vision Statement,” states that:

Urban agriculture is about far more than growing vegetables on an empty lot. It’s about revitalizing and transforming unused public spaces, connecting city residents with their neighborhoods in a new way and promoting healthier eating and living for everyone.

The Working Group’s vision is “to create a world-class local food system in Los Angeles that is affordable, equitable, and environmentally sustainable.”

2. **The Los Angeles Community Garden Council** (LACGC; <http://lagardencouncil.org>)

The Los Angeles Community Garden Council’s mission is to strengthen communities by building new and supporting existing community gardens where every person in Los Angeles County can grow healthy food in their neighborhood. We envision a garden network for Los Angeles where people of all ages live healthy, active lives in a clean environment by growing fresh food. This network creates and fosters the meeting of people from diverse

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

cultures to share the best growing techniques and urban agriculture practices, promotes social and economic justice, reduces household expenses, provides job training and beautifies our community.

3. The Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI; <http://lani.org>) –

The mission of Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI) is to stimulate community-driven neighborhood revitalization. LANI facilitates stakeholder participation and decision-making, and promotes public/private partnerships that result in catalytic community improvement projects. LANI achieves this through:

- Community Consensus Building
- Transportation and Pedestrian Corridor Improvements
- Business District Revitalization
- Urban Greening
- Development and Support of Community Organizations

Organizations and/or individuals with a plan for developing new community gardens may contact LANI for assistance with finding available land for their project.

In addition, **GrowFriend** (<http://www.growfriend.org>) is a site that is a hybrid of community gardening and social networking that provides a “safe, easy, and fun way for gardeners to find land and for land to become productive!” According to the website, the system is designed to help create successful garden-sharing relationships that are based on familiarity, communication, and clearly described boundaries and expectations. This free service matches gardeners with available land and available land with potential gardeners.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the discussion of this Agenda Item.

ATTACHMENT:

Excerpt of the approved April 7, 2015 Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission meeting minutes relating to Agenda Item A-2: “(1) Informational Item Regarding Urban Gardening, Apartment Gardening, and Neighborhood Coop Gardening; and, (2) Discussion Regarding the Potential Role that the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission May Wish to Take in Mentoring Community Members Interested in Community Gardening.”

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

MOTION:

That the City Council:

1. Consider a recommendation by the Parks, Recreation and Community Services (PRCS) Commission regarding allocating one or two resource people to work with existing community groups to create on-site and/or off-site garden sharing opportunities in Culver City, including considering the formation of a website to support these efforts; and,
2. Direct the City Manager as deemed appropriate.