



Agenda Report

MEETING DATE: Thursday, November 2, 2023

TO: PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

FROM: CRISTY CASSEL, ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS MANAGER, PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF NEW COMMUNITY GARDEN IN MUZZIO PARK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PV HEALTH TRUST

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

Approval to create a community garden in a part of the lawn area of Muzzio Park that is underutilized. This would be an enclosed raised beds garden accessible to residents to grow vegetables and learn about health. This garden would be coordinated by the Pajaro Valley Health Trust.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends approval of the creation of a community garden on a section of Muzzio Park to be determined by park staff so that neighbors have adequate space to garden on raised beds and the lawn areas that are heavily utilized for recreation are not impacted by the garden.

DISCUSSION:

The Community Garden Program is one component of the City of Watsonville Urban Greening Plan and the City's Climate Action & Adaptation Plan, and it is housed under the Public Works & Utilities Conservation Outreach Program. The Community Gardens Program follows guidelines approved by the Parks & Recreation Commission and the City Council in 2012 to help maintain and establish new gardens throughout the City. These guidelines include rules and procedures for the use of City property by community members for the purpose of non-commercial gardening. A "community garden" is typically defined as any land collectively gardened by a group of people, allowing individuals to grow food for themselves.

Value of Community Gardens

Community gardens provide people a place to grow produce or other crops for their own use on land that may be owned by the City, other local government agencies, non-profit associations or private owners. They may be divided into individual plots or tended in a communal fashion and are managed

and maintained with the active participation of the gardeners themselves rather than tended only by a professional staff.

The American Community Gardening Association lists several potential benefits from community gardening:

- Produces nutritious food
- Reduces family food expenses
- Improves the quality of life for people in the garden
- Creates opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy, and education
- Provides a catalyst for community development and resiliency
- Stimulates social interaction
- Encourages self-reliance
- Beautifies neighborhoods, develops neighborhood pride
- Conserves resources
- Reduces crime
- Preserves green space
- Reduces city heat from streets and parking lots
- Provides opportunities for intergenerational and cross-cultural connections
- Increases fruit and vegetable consumption and increased physical activity among community gardeners

Location

The proposed location at Muzzio Park (26 W Front St. Watsonville, CA 95076) meets the criteria used in the Community Garden Program Guidelines to evaluate establishing a community garden on City-owned property, including water access and sun, adequate space, and accessibility for mobility, among other requirements. Following the Community Garden Program Guidelines, the City's Community Garden Program Manager, Leonardo Cruz, coordinated with Pajaro Valley Health Trust staff to do door-to-door community outreach to ask neighbors and parkgoers for their level of support to create a new community garden and interest to participate in it. Additionally, notices about the project were put up for 28 days in different places in the park for people to fill out the survey, email, call, or text their thoughts and feelings about the proposal. The responses are attached to this report.

- The proposed area could comfortably allow for 40 households to each have a plot of 24 square feet.
- There is a water meter for the park, and a separate meter will be installed by the Public Works & Utilities department and the water will be paid for by Pajaro Valley Health Trust and the community gardeners.
- Additional water lines for the garden would be added by Public Works City staff per the community garden guidelines.
- This garden would be run by the Pajaro Valley Health Trust Community Gardens Program like the Community Garden in Cary Davis.

- If the Parks and Community Services Commission approves the creation of the garden at the park, then a Community Garden Permit would be signed to officially permit the use of the site for a community garden.
 - The permit would be renewed every year between the Pajaro Valley Health Trust community garden coordinator and the City's Community Gardens Program Manager contingent on compliance with the Community Garden Program Guidelines as well as other City considerations and priorities.
 - After the permit is signed, the garden coordinator would provide a plot agreement and waiver of liability (to be renewed every year) from each gardener before starting any work on the garden.
- The design of the garden will be created by the Master Gardeners from Pajaro Valley Health Trust in collaboration with the gardeners and approved by Watsonville's Community Gardens Manager who will ensure that the Community Gardens Guidelines are being followed.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

03-Infrastructure & Environment
 05-Community Engagement & Well-Being

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Minimal staff time would be required to assist Pajaro Valley Health Trust and neighbors in starting this garden and monitoring community garden activities in Muzzio Park.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

None proposed.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):

Aerial view of the proposed community garden area
 List of Proposed Community Garden Supporters
 Community Garden Permit