NORTH ST. PAUL
COMMUNITY GARDENS PROPOSAL

December 3rd, 2013

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December 3rd, 2013

Paul Ammerman  
Community Development Director  
City of North Saint Paul  
2400 Margaret Street  
North Saint Paul, MN 55415

Dear Mr. Ammerman:

The Darles Applestrong Group is pleased to submit our Response to your Request for Proposals to design and conduct a participation process for the development of a community gardening participation policy and the identification of key potential garden sites in the community. The principals at the Darles Applestrong Group have prepared a participation process that addresses the goals and objectives described by the City of North Saint Paul in the development of a community garden policy.

The principals at the Darles Applestrong Group make up a multi-disciplinary team with a range of academic backgrounds in Environmental Science, Economics, Political Science, and Urban and Regional Planning. Our team has experience in designing and conducting successful public participation processes, and the lessons learned from our previous experiences will allow our team to achieve the goals and objectives of the community gardening participation process.

Attached is a participation process and work program that has identified a variety of community members and stakeholders to engage in the development of a community gardening policy. The work program that has been developed will allow the City to gather all community members’ perspectives and determine whether a community gardening policy will be beneficial for the community. Our work program also includes a process that will develop long-term engagement in community gardening programs to ensure successful implementation of a community garden policy.

We are excited about the opportunity to work with the City of North Saint Paul and its community members. Please let us know if you have any questions, or need any additional information about our team or the participation process that we have developed.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Appleby  Chelsey Armstrong  Charles Darnell  David Davies-Deis

Principals, Darles Applestrong Group
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OVERVIEW

Introduction
Background
General Approach and Goals
Issues
Opportunities
Response to Requirements
The City of North St. Paul, in response to requests from community members, has decided to begin a planning and participation process that will inform the City’s approach to community gardening. Community gardening is a practice that has been increasing in popularity in the City. In particular, the popularity of community gardening has increased since the formation of the Cowern Community Garden, a community garden located at Cowern Elementary School. The success of this existing community garden has generated interest in the organization and development of additional community garden sites in the City.

Renters comprise 30% of North St. Paul. This is slightly more than the 27% rental rate in the state of Minnesota. Renters will be a target demographic for community gardens since they are less likely to have access to garden space at home.

Community gardens have many benefits. Community gardens are a great way to build relationships across cultures and ethnic groups. They offer immigrant groups an inexpensive way to grow vegetables and herbs not found in most grocery stores. This could be important to North St. Paul given the significant Hmong population. Community gardens offer several health benefits, including physical activity, mental health improvement, and healthy diets. Community gardens are also typically less expensive to maintain than parkland for municipal governments, but still provide some of the same benefits as pocket parks. Some studies have even found community gardens to prevent crime because they give residents a sense of ownership of the community.

North St. Paul is about three square miles and reported a population of 11,460 residents in the 2010 census. Perhaps the most famous “resident” is the 20-ton snowman, which also serves as the official logo.

About 30% of households in North St. Paul have children under 18. With the proven success of the Cowern Community Garden, children are another important group to community gardens.
General Approach and Goals

As with any key issue in the City of North St. Paul, city staff and elected officials want to make sure to engage local residents on the issues and opportunities that will accompany the development of a community garden policy and the potential expansion of the number of community garden sites in the City. It is the overall goal of the City to engage local residents and community members on key issues in order to better understand and address their concerns. The development of a community garden policy and potential expansion of community garden sites is no different, and is bound to generate both support and opposition from community members.

The purpose of designing and conducting a participation process for the community gardening policy development process in North St. Paul will be to engage community members and understand the community’s overall perspective on the issue. City staff and elected officials have already heard from residents that support the idea of expanding community gardening in the City, but there have also been residents that have expressed opposition to the idea. The City wants to make sure to generate public support and understanding relative to the development of a community garden policy, as this potential policy would have an impact on the overall quality of life in the community. Community members must be engaged to determine whether this policy would have a positive impact on the overall quality of life in the community.

There are a number of additional goals for the community gardening policy participation process. One goal, depending on the level of support in community gardening from community members, is to identify key potential garden sites throughout the community. These sites must be supported by the surrounding residents, easily accessible for members of the community, well-maintained, and they must contribute to the vitality of the community. The participation process will determine where these key potential garden sites are in the community by involving residents and community members, whose support is necessary for a successful community garden.

Another goal of the community gardening policy participation process is to develop long-term engagement with residents and community members. If the City determines that the development of a community gardening policy would result in a positive impact on the overall quality of life in the community through the participation process, long-term involvement from community members will need to be identified to ensure the long-term success of the community gardens. Residents and community members that are supportive of a community gardening policy and support the expansion of community garden sites in the City will need to be involved over an extended period of time to oversee the implementation of the community garden policy. Also, these same residents and community members will need to be involved in the decision-making process that results in the selection of additional community garden sites.

Driving the City’s community gardening effort, in addition to the interest that has been heard from community members, is that community gardens help achieve city-wide goals that have been adopted in the City of North St. Paul Comprehensive Plan. One of these goals is the Active Living goal, which expresses a desire for opportunities for physical activity in residents’ daily lives.

Active Living Goal (City of St. Paul Comprehensive Plan):

“…establish a climate and an urban pattern for active living to create and sustain changes in land use design, building design, transportation, public policies and projects to cultivate, support and integrate physical activity into daily life” (City of North St. Paul Comprehensive Plan, 2009).

Community gardens would provide an opportunity for North St. Paul residents to incorporate physical activity in their daily lives. Also, community members have identified the need for the definition of active living to include easy access to quality foods, which would be provided by the development of additional community garden sites in the City.
Lastly, the possibility of developing a community gardening policy would complement another policy that has been adopted and implemented by the City of North St. Paul, the Rainwater Garden Policy.

**Rainwater Garden Policy**  
*City of St. Paul Comprehensive Plan:*

"...encourage the use of rain gardens and similar techniques to reduce and control runoff, of enhance water quality and further the City’s environmental goal" (Rainwater Garden Policy and Resident Guide, 2012).  
City of North St. Paul Comprehensive Plan, 2009).

A community garden policy, similar to the Active Living policy, would provide an opportunity for the City to address both community gardens and rain gardens. The participation process developed and undertaken for the development of a community gardening policy will have a goal of aligning with these other two City initiatives, the Active Living goal and the Rainwater Garden Policy.

A vision for the community gardening policy will be developed during the participation process, specifically during the Community Capacity Analysis portion of the participation process. This vision will incorporate the perspectives of community members and will create a high-level vision of what community gardens can do for the City of North St. Paul.

There are a number of issues that need to be addressed as the City of North St. Paul completes the planning and participation process related to the development of a community gardening policy. These issues are as follows:

- Identification of community expertise in community gardening.
- Determine level of interest in the development of additional community gardens.
- Maintaining a high level of public involvement and engagement, even long-term.
- Identify solutions to community gardening that are context driven and relevant to the City of North St. Paul.
- Development of community garden sites that are consistent with the existing community’s characteristics.
- Location of community garden sites at locations that are accessible, complimentary to the surrounding land uses, and are consistent with the City of North St. Paul Comprehensive Plan.
- Inclusion of all stakeholders and interested community members.

There are a number of opportunities in the rain garden participation program, and many potential positive outcomes for the City of North St. Paul. These opportunities are as follows:

- Connect organizations, businesses, institutions, and individual who have not previously connected with each other.
- Promotion of healthy eating and active lifestyles.
- Gathering a diverse group of people around a unifying project such as a community garden.
- Improve the aesthetics of North St. Paul.
- Learning opportunities for adults and children about how to garden and how to come together as a community.
- Food for those in need—either through discounted garden plots or through donation to local food pantries.
- Empowerment of North St. Paul community to tackle other community issues that may benefit from a participatory process.
The work program that has been developed will successfully address all of the goals laid out by the City of North St. Paul in their Request for Proposals for the development of a community garden policy participation process. The work program has been split up into three phases, each of which specifically addresses a major goal of the community gardening policy participation process.

The first phase is the Community Capacity Analysis. Tasks in this phase will help the city understand the community’s attitude toward community gardening. By bringing together interested parties and reaching out to stakeholders, the City will be able to gage the level of interest in community gardening and develop a vision for what community gardening could do for the City of North St. Paul. Also, the community engagement that has been developed for this phase of the participation process will lay the groundwork for the long-term engagement that will be necessary to successfully implement the future community gardening policy.

The second phase of the participation process focuses on Site Analysis and Information Gathering. The main purpose of this phase is to identify potential locations for additional community garden sites throughout the City of North St. Paul. However, this phase will also allow for community members to become educated on the health and benefits of community gardens. This education will draw on past successes from the existing Cowern Community Garden, as well as the experience of other gardening organizations in the area. The analysis of potential garden sites ad gathering of information will incorporate an interactive website that will allow additional information sharing and education.

The final phase of the participation process is the Policy Development Review and Site Selection. This phase contains tasks that focus on the drafting, reviewing, and approving of a community gardening policy for the City of North St. Paul. This phase will allow the City to develop an official approach to community gardening, and will also provide an opportunity for aligning the community gardening policy with other City goals and policies.
PARTICIPATION PLAN

Goals and Intent of Participation
Identifying Stakeholders
Stakeholders
Participation Techniques
Promotion Techniques
Delivery of Information
Documentation
Monitoring
The goals of this participation process are the following:

**Goals:**

1) Understand community opinions of community gardening.
2) Educate community on community garden benefits.
3) Identify potential new community gardens.
4) Engage North St. Paul community in the long-term.
5) Align community garden policy with other North St. Paul goals and policies.

In this instance, it is important that the participation process engages the audience, and then learns about the issues through their perspective. In this case, there is a cause already in the minds of city planners, but the support of the community is essential to the implementation of this cause.

There are community members that have voiced support, as well as members that have voiced concern. If the audience that is supportive is also an audience that fits in with North St. Paul's overall strategies for working with underrepresented communities, then this is good news for the entire city. However, the intent is to engage community groups (non-profits, neighborhood associations, schools, clinics, etc.)

The development of a community garden policy by the City of North St. Paul Department of Community Development will require participation from a wide variety of community members. Not only will existing community members need to be engaged in the participation process to develop a successful community garden policy, but the City will need to involve other stakeholders from the broader community.

These other stakeholders will include regional groups with interests in the type of outcomes that will result from a city-wide community garden policy, local businesses, policy makers, and City staff.

Each of these groups will have different interests and motivations for being involved in the participation process.

By reaching out to a wide variety of community members and stakeholders, the City of North St. Paul can ensure that every stakeholder will have an opportunity to contribute to the development of a community garden policy.

Participants will be identified initially through internet searches and stakeholder interviews. We will weigh more heavily stakeholders recommended as important by other garden participants. Once stakeholders are identified, contact information will be recorded for future availability.
Local Policy Makers and Staff:

North St. Paul City Council:
North St. Paul City Council members will play a crucial role in the development of city-wide community garden policy. Ultimately, they will vote to approve the final community garden policy. City Council members will need to be involved in the participation process to stay informed and to hear from community members about their thoughts and interests.

North St. Paul Commissions:
There are many Commissions in the North St. Paul government that will have an interest in the development of a city-wide community garden policy, and they will be involved in the participation process. These Commissions include the Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission, Environmental Advisory Commission, Design and Historical Review Commission, and the Economic Development Authority. These Commissions are organized and have missions of addressing a variety of issues in the City of North St. Paul, many of which could be related to the development of a community garden policy. Some of these issues that could be related to community gardening include:

- Manage investment in the city park system (Parks and Recreation Commission)
- Consider variances and interpretations of the City Zoning Code (Planning Commission)
- Protect and manage the historical property in North St. Paul (Design and Historical Review Commission)
- Educate and involve the community to have a positive effect on natural resources throughout the city (Environmental Advisory Commission)
- Maintain a high quality of life by supporting local businesses (Economic Development Authority)

North St. Paul City Staff:
Staff from the City of North St. Paul will be involved in the participation process to provide technical expertise and knowledge on issues related to the development of a community garden policy. Staff will respond to questions and concerns of community members, and their expertise in city codes and processes will assist in meaningful and efficient public meetings.

Community Members and Public:
- Existing Residents Near Cowern Garden
- Residents in Other Areas of City
- Multi-Family Housing Residents
- Minority Populations
- Students/Faculty at Richardson and Webster Elementary Schools
- Students/Faculty at North High School

Organizations, Groups, and Agencies:
- North St. Paul Green
- Gardening groups
- St. Paul – Ramsey Food and Nutrition Commission
- North St. Paul Area Food Shelf
- North St. Paul Neighborhood Watch
- Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District

Local Policy Makers and Staff:
- North St. Paul City Council
- North St. Paul Commissions
- North St. Paul City Department Staff

Community Businesses:
- Local restaurants
- Local businesses

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS:

- Existing Cowern Community Garden Users
  - Cowern Garden Users
  - Cowern Garden Organizers and Leaders
  - Students/Faculty at Cowern Elementary

- Community Members and Public
  - Existing Residents Near Cowern Garden
  - Residents in Other Areas of City
  - Multi-Family Housing Residents
  - Minority Populations
  - Students/Faculty at Richardson and Webster Elementary Schools
  - Students/Faculty at North High School

- Organizations, Groups, and Agencies
  - North St. Paul Green
  - Gardening groups
  - St. Paul – Ramsey Food and Nutrition Commission
  - North St. Paul Area Food Shelf
  - North St. Paul Neighborhood Watch
  - Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District

- Local Policy Makers and Staff
  - North St. Paul City Council
  - North St. Paul Commissions
  - North St. Paul City Department Staff

- Community Businesses
  - Local restaurants
  - Local businesses
Organizations, Groups and Agencies:

North St. Paul Green:
North St. Paul Green is a volunteer group that plants and maintains gardens in downtown North St. Paul. As an organized gardening group, they will have an interest in the community garden policy. Also, they will have expertise in gardening that can be used to develop best practices for additional community garden sites in North St. Paul.

Gardening Groups:
There are many gardening groups that will be involved in the participation process. These groups, which include Gardening Matters, Metro Blooms, and Ramsey County Master Gardeners, will have expertise and insight to share with other participants as the city seeks to develop a community garden policy.

St. Paul – Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission:
This Commission has developed task forces that address Urban Agriculture, Food Access, and Food Literacy. All of these task forces have created priorities and recommendations for an overall set of Food System Recommendations that is supported by the St. Paul - Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission. These priorities and recommendations will be considered in the development of the City’s community garden policy, and engagement with the Commission will allow for ease in the sharing of information and policy objectives.

North St. Paul Area Food Shelf:
The North St. Paul Area Food Shelf has been involved with the existing Cowern Community Garden, and has been the recipient of produce from the garden. The Food Shelf will be a potential partner with any additional community gardens in North St. Paul, and they will be involved in the participation process to speak to the benefits of partnering with community gardens.

North St. Paul Neighborhood Watch:
Neighborhood Watch Groups are already established in North St. Paul, and will be involved in the participation process. Watch Group members will have insight into the community effects of the development of additional community gardens. Additional community gardens will have impacts on surrounding neighborhoods, and the Neighborhood Watch Groups can share ideas for managing these impacts. Also, the Watch Groups may have strategies for managing the security of any additional community gardens.

Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District:
The Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District developed and manages the North St. Paul Urban Ecology Center. The Urban Ecology Center was established to manage stormwater and also serves as an ecological education center. The Watershed District will be involved in the participation process, as they could be a potential partner with any additional community garden organizations in North St. Paul. The Watershed District could also share insight into the ecological benefits or impacts of community gardens.

Existing Cowern Community Garden Users:

Cowern Garden Users:
Existing users of the Cowern Community Garden will need to be involved in the participation process related to the development of a citywide community garden policy. These participants will be able to share their experiences of using the Cowern Community Garden, and they will be able to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the organizational structure and operation of the garden. The identification of strengths and weaknesses could be used to establish best practices for future community garden sites.

Cowern Garden Organizers and Leaders:
The organizers and leaders of the Cowern Community Garden will be involved in the participation process to share their experiences with running a successful community garden. Their guidance and experience could inform other community members that wish to organize and run a new community garden.

Students and Faculty at Cowern Elementary:
The faculty at Cowern Elementary was able to use the Cowern Community Garden in their curriculum and provide their students with hands-on learning experiences in the garden. The faculty and students will be involved to share their experiences using the community garden in the classroom.
Community Businesses:

Local Restaurants:
Local restaurants will be engaged and involved in the participation process. Local restaurants would have an opportunity to support and partner with any community gardens in North St. Paul. In other parts of the country, restaurants have partnered with community gardens to supply locally grown produce in their dishes. Restaurants in North St. Paul will be involved to determine whether there is an interest in this type of partnership with future community gardens in the city.

Local Businesses:
Local businesses will also be involved in the participation process. Businesses could have an opportunity to sponsor and support a community garden. Similar to the involvement of local restaurants, local business owners will be involved in the participation process to determine whether there is an interest in sponsoring a future community garden in the city.

Community Members and Public:

Existing Residents near Cowern Garden:
Residents living near the existing Cowern Community Garden will be engaged in the participation process. These residents could speak to the community garden’s effect on the surrounding community, outside of the elementary school.

Residents in Other Areas of City:
Residents in other areas of the city will be engaged in the participation process. These residents will need to be involved to gather the public’s opinion of expanding the number of community gardens in North St. Paul. Existing residents will need to be involved to determine the areas in which additional community gardens could be developed. They can also be engaged to gather and include their ideas in the development of the community garden policy, which will need to have support from community members to be successful.

Students/Faculty at Richardson and Webster Elementary Schools:
The faculty and students at the two other elementary schools in North St. Paul will be involved in the participation process. These participants could learn from the faculty and students at Cowern Elementary and determine whether a community garden would be beneficial at their own schools.

Students/Faculty at North High School:
Similar to the faculty and students of the other elementary schools, the faculty and students from North high School will be engaged to learn about the existing Cowern Community Garden. These participants could share insight into the level of interest in community gardens at the high school and the possibilities of using community gardens in high school curriculum.

Multi-Family Housing Residents:
Residents in North St. Paul that live in multi-family housing will be engaged in the participation process. Residents of multi-family housing may not have an opportunity to garden on their own property, and they may have a higher level of interest in participating in community gardens. These residents will be engaged to determine the level of demand for the development of additional community gardens.

Minority Populations:
The Hmong community has been a supporter of community gardens in North St. Paul. These residents have an interest in expanding the number of community gardens in the city, and will be involved in the participation process. Other minority residents in the city will be actively engaged in the participation process, as these populations have been historically underrepresented in public participation processes.
Participation Techniques

Surveys
Surveys will be used in the first phase of the work program and will be distributed in order to gather feedback about the Cowern Community Garden and potential future gardens. Surveys will be distributed to both users and non-users. The following questions will be asked of each group:

**Current Gardeners (Not from Cowern Elementary):**
- What is the intersection nearest your home location?
- Why do you participate in the community garden?
- Do you have space at your residence to garden?
- What has worked well with the Cowern Community Garden?
- What could be improved with the Cowern Community Garden?
- Do you have suggestions for additional community garden locations?

**Non-Users Living Near the Cowern Community Garden:**
- Have you ever visited the Cowern Community Garden?
- If yes, what were your impressions of the garden?
- Have you met anyone who gardens at the Cowern Community Garden?
- What effect, if any, do you believe that the community garden has had on your neighborhood?

**Non-Users Not Living Near the Cowern Community Garden:**
- Have you ever visited the Cowern Community Garden?
- Do you know anyone who gardens at the Cowern Community Garden?
- What effect, if any, do you believe that the community garden has had on your neighborhood?

**Cowern Elementary School Teachers:**
- Does your class participate in activities at the community garden?
- If yes, what effect has the garden had on your classroom and students?
- How could the garden be improved to better serve Cowern Elementary students?
- Do you think that there are other places in North St. Paul that would benefit from a community garden?

**Social Media**
Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram accounts will be created for the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative, and will be used throughout all phases of the participation program. It is important that the accounts are not solely linked to the Cowern Community Garden, so that viewers recognize the potential to expand gardening beyond the Cowern Garden. These accounts will be used to build awareness about community gardening, engage North St. Paul residents, and build connections between local businesses and organizations. These accounts will also be a medium for promoting upcoming events and meetings, displaying pictures of current gardens, telling stories about the impacts of the gardens, and having conversations about current and future gardens.

**Website**
A website will also be created for use throughout all phases of the work program. The website will have basic information about the community garden, such as the garden’s history, the number of plots, how to rent a plot, and operational rules for the garden. Pictures of the garden, as well as stories from the garden, will be available for those who do not have any connections to the garden. There will also be a “get to know the gardeners” section of the page, in which viewers can see who from their community participates in the gardens. These biographies would be provided at the gardeners’ choosing.

In addition, more advanced web interfaces will be incorporated into an interactive features. For instance, there could be a garden map that shows who gardens each plot, as well as the plots that are currently available.

The website will also have a place for ideas, comments, concerns, and questions about the Cowern Community Garden, or potential future gardens. Links to the garden’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram would also be available on the website. One important aspect of the website is that it will available in multiple languages for North St. Paul’s increasingly diverse population.
Events
Events are a participation technique that will also be utilized throughout the entire work program. Initial events will be held to inform people about community gardening and gauge residents’ interest in the gardening. One event will be held at the Cowern Community Garden, so that those who have not seen the garden previously are able to experience the garden in person and interact with others in this space. Speakers will be invited from the school and community to share how the garden has impacted them. Additional speakers from another community in the Twin Cities will also be invited to speak about their experience.

Additional events will be held at potential sites for additional gardens. These events will allow residents to envision what a community garden would look like in the space and address potential concerns about the garden. The events at potential garden locations will be promotional, like the event at Cowern Garden, but it is more important that these events are constructive and that residents have the opportunity to exchange ideas.

Other off-site informational and promotional events will be held at local restaurants and community spaces. Since the Hmong community has shown a strong interest in the Cowern Community Garden, an event could be held at the Hmong Alliance Church or the Hmong House restaurant. Other restaurants in the area may also be interested in using community grown produce at their locations and could also host events. Schools and community centers are other optimal locations for events. Setting up a booth at an event put on by the History Cruzers and other organizations would also be an effective way for participation.

Charrettes
If a new location is chosen for a community garden, charrettes will be held to design the new garden. These would take place in the third phase of the work program. Those interested in gardening, as well as those living near the garden will be especially targeted to attend. The design of a garden is an important time for gaining community buy-in and ensuring that the garden meets the needs of all residents in North St. Paul will especially be targeted to attend. The charrettes are an important time for gaining community buy-in and ensuring that the garden meets the needs of all residents in North St. Paul.

Meetings/Hearings
If there is significant interest in additional community gardens, public meetings and public hearings will be held to allow for those with comments to voice their support or concern. These meetings and hearings would take place during the third phase of the work program. Feedback from the meetings and hearings will be instrumental in making modifications to North St. Paul’s Community Garden Plan. The meetings will be held at a variety of locations and times so that all interested in attending have an opportunity to participate.
Promotion Techniques

Internet
Events and the survey will be promoted on the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative website, the City of North St. Paul’s website, and the websites of other local restaurants, businesses, and organizations. As stated previously, the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative website will be available in multiple languages so that all members of the community interested in participating are able to easily read about how to get involved. Videos on the website will also be available to watch for those individuals who are unable to read.

Announcements
Event information will be passed to school, churches, and other groups to announce at meetings.

Door hangers
Door hangers will be used to promote participation in events and meetings related to community garden in North St. Paul. The delivery of this promotional material will potentially lead to face-to-face conversations about the garden, which may be beneficial in providing information, clarifying misunderstandings, and gaining participation from those who may not have otherwise participated.

Logo
A logo will be created for North St. Paul Community Gardens. Some initial ideas involve use of the snowman that is the official city logo. For instance, the snowman could be pictured harvesting a carrot for his nose or carrying a garden tool.

Newspaper
Participation and involvement will be promoted in the local newspapers, such as Lillie News, and the City of North St. Paul Newsletter.

Posters
Posters will be created to promote the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative and the planning process underway for potential garden expansion. Posters will be hung at the Cowern Community Garden, city hall, the community center, the fitness center, the library, and at supportive businesses. The posters will have several images and language that is easily translatable, so that they can be printed in several languages for North St. Paul’s increasingly diverse population.
Information will be delivered to the public and relevant agencies and community organizations at each stage of the community garden planning process. Information will be available on the City of North St. Paul's website and social media accounts, North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative website and social media accounts, the North St. Paul Newsletter, and press releases to the local newspaper. Individuals and organizations that participate in the planning process and indicate that they would like to receive updates on the project will receive updates either via email or letter.

Meetings and events will also be held at each stage of the planning process. Information will be provided about the current state of the process, and attendees will have the opportunity to voice questions, comments, and concerns to be addressed as the planning process progresses.

Charts and graphics that are easy to read and understand will be available with the main points of the participation efforts. These will be available as hard copy handouts, PDFs on the website, and infographics on social media.

There will be a chapter of the planning documents, which will be available in hard copy and online, that reports the outcomes of the participation efforts. Charts will report the number of people at meetings and events, as well as the number of comments received through various mediums. There will also be a summary of the main themes that people commented on throughout that section of the planning process. In addition to reporting the outcomes of the participation efforts, the chapter will comment on how the community garden plan changed in each stage of the process as a result of the comments received from the public.

On going participation will be encouraged through the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative website, social media accounts, over the phone, and through letters. Gardens are a dynamic part of a city and are able to change easily based on the feedback of residents.

As North St. Paul expands the number of community gardens within the city, an annual survey will be administered to gain insight on residents’ thoughts and opinions on existing and potential future community gardens. The information gleaned from the survey, as well as annual community garden meetings, will inform changes to existing gardens and plans for future gardens.
WORK PROGRAM

Introduction
Phase 1
Phase 2
Phase 3
Planning and Engagement Intersections
Monitoring and Evaluation
The work program section outlines the activities and specific participation process for the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative. The participation process aims to bring together groups from the city who have varying interest in community gardens. Most of the engagement focuses on assessing the degree to which community gardens can be supported in North St. Paul. The Cowern garden has been a successful example of community gardening; it is important to build on the momentum of this effort.

Phases of Engagement

Three distinct phases of engagement have been identified that will contribute to a community-centered development of an approach to community gardening in North St. Paul as well as the identification of prospective gardening sites. The complete work program timeline can be found in the Appendix. Phase One focuses on the identification of North St. Paul’s strengths and its capacity to support a community garden initiative; Phase Two concentrates on the community garden site selection process; Phase Three builds on the previous two phases to develop the community gardening policies and move toward a pilot project. The processes for both policy development and site selection run parallel to one another; throughout the engagement process, events and activities are designed to foster community-level participation and input.

Key Tasks:

- Obtain feedback from the community about the Cowern Garden, and gather preferences for additional community gardens.
- Connect stakeholders to build community capacity.
- Identify locations of potential new community gardens.
- Develop community garden policy.
1a. Community Garden Advisory Committee (CGAC) Formation and meetings
One initial meeting for city staff to determine criteria for selecting CGAC members; subsequent monthly meetings, ongoing.

Objective: Create a five-member advisory group brings together members of North St. Paul city government and community garden initiative key stakeholders to help guide the engagement process.

The CGAC will be the guiding force that helps to steer the North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative. This group consists of five members of the community who have been involved in the previous community garden project or who are considered to have a vested interest in the community garden initiative. It is recommended to have at least one member of North St. Paul city planning department, one member from a neighborhood community development organization, and a representative from the Cowern Garden group. Other members could include prominent members of landscape or agricultural community, as well as a member of the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale school district. CGAC members should be able to devote 15-20 hours during the initial four months of the planning process.

Deliverables:
- CGAC members identified by North St. Paul government
- Detailed list of responsibilities for CGAC members

1b. Cowern Garden Roundtable
One meeting, April 2014

Objective: Assemble representatives from Cowern Community Garden project to inform CGAC of best practices and lessons learned from creation of community garden in North St. Paul context.

The Cowern Garden provides a foundation for educating the community about community gardening. This event is intended as a transition point; there will be overlap between the CGAC and the group that developed the Cowern garden. These people serve as the common links that should be utilized to transfer knowledge so that the CGAC can develop a useful policy document.

Deliverables:
- Contact list of interested community members
- Best practices/lessons learned summary document that can be shared with public.

Communication Next Steps:
- Promote best practices document to public using community garden website and social media.
1c. Information Gathering and Community Garden Promotion  
May-August 2014

Objective: *Gather insight regarding the Cowern Community Garden and interest in additional gardens.*

Surveys will be distributed to those currently involved in the Cowern Community Garden, those living near the Cowern Community Garden, and other North St. Paul residents interested in providing insight. Paper surveys will be available at the garden, Cowern Elementary, community facilities, and mailed to those living within a quarter-mile of Cowern Community Garden.

Events will also be held to promote the North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative and gain public interest and support. These events will provide an opportunity to introduce the CGAC, as well as time for current gardeners to share their stories and insights on the garden. Other North St. Paul residents will also have the opportunity to share their insight on current and future community gardens in their city. As discussed previously, events will be held at the Cowern Community Garden, potential future garden sites, community facilities, and local restaurants. Facilitated field trips to neighboring communities (Maplewood, St. Paul) with community garden projects can be organized to expose North St. Paul residents to other examples outside of the Cowern Garden prior to visualization meetings.

A roadshow of sorts can be set up at community events that showcases a sample community garden plot. This demonstration should be constructed to display the benefits of community gardening; a variety of popular crops should be shown. Hands-on exercises help to get people interested in gardening. Participants can seed their own plants in individual growing containers, which can be taken home and cared for so that they are ready for transplanting to a garden later in spring. This will serve as promotional material in addition to other distributed literature.

In addition to the seeding activity, people can place stickers on a map of North St. Paul to indicate their residence and their preference of where they would want a community garden to be located. Every participant would be assigned a number that is written on two stickers; a yellow sticker would locate their residence or school, and a green sticker would indicate their preference of location for a community garden. Available parcels from the space inventory may be identified on the map, but it may also be useful to allow residents to mark anywhere on a map. This may indicate if they are comfortable participating in a garden at a religious or educational institution.

Deliverables:
- Survey results
- Comment summary
- Contact list of people who pot plants
- Maps that indicate locations of residents and preferred locations of gardens.

Communication Next Steps:
- Decision regarding if an additional community garden will be constructed
2a. City Visioning Meetings
Four meetings, September 2014

Objective: Create a high-level vision of what community gardening can do for North St. Paul.

The visioning meetings can align the community’s attitudes about community gardening with the progress that has been made by the CGAC. Since the Cowern Community Garden is located at a school, meetings could be held at this and other schools in North St. Paul. It is important to lead a visioning meeting at least one apartment complex, since those without gardening space at their own residence are more likely to participate in a community garden. These activities should be led by independent facilitators who are knowledgeable about community gardening in the Twin Cities area but may not be from North St. Paul.

Activities at the visioning meetings should encourage community members to share experiences with community gardening efforts, concerns with such an initiative, and thoughts on how community gardening can be successfully implemented in North St. Paul. Representatives from nearby community garden groups from neighboring cities should be present and prepared to make a brief presentation about the benefits of community gardening with examples from their work. A real-time art visualization exercise involving students could be utilized during these meetings. As ideas are agreed upon during the meeting, the ideal community garden can be crafted by local student artists through various media; the result should be a visualization of the shared vision. Each meeting should yield different results that can then be suitably modified and implemented in appropriate locations.

Deliverables:
- List of participants
- List of possible specifications for a prototype community garden
- Summary document outlining effects of a community garden on neighborhood and city level.
- Visual sketch of a community garden
- Vision statements from each meeting that describe an ideal community garden and related policies.

Communication Next Steps:
- Post results from visioning meetings on the community garden website.
- Display creative output prominently at city hall and at events in area schools and apartment buildings.
- Brochure that can be used to promote community garden initiative at future events.

2b. Public/Private Space Inventory Meetings
Three meetings, late Sept. 2014

Objective: Take stock of both private and public land holdings in North St. Paul that could possibly be developed as community garden sites.

An inventory should be taken of available parcels of land that can be developed for community gardens. While it may seem most plausible to use public land for community garden development, private properties such as apartment buildings and private schools should be engaged to see if they are interested. A property owner need not attend a meeting to submit their property as a possible garden site; this inventory can be done through the use of a survey. Criteria that are drafted using results of visioning meetings can be sent to property owners to detail minimum requirements and incentives.

Deliverables:
- Running list of possible community garden locations with specific information about size, surrounding neighborhood, preferred timeline, and cost if applicable.
- List of priorities developed by property owners that may govern/guide use of land.

2c. Interactive Garden Mapping Website
October 2014

Objective: Provide up-to-date information about prospective sites to community members.

An interactive map of potential new garden sites will be added to the North St. Paul Community Gardens website. This map will give the potential locations a spatial context and will include clickable prospective sites. Each site will have information that has been collected through the engagement process, as well as an area for each site where people can provide site-specific feedback (Comments should be broadly moderated for inappropriate comments that target neighborhoods or individuals). This map will also be used at events where the community garden initiative may have a booth (see 2b) to help inform community members on tablet devices.

Deliverables:
- Interactive garden sitemap
### Phase 3: Policy Development and Site Selection

#### 3a. Community Garden Draft Policy Review Sessions

**At least three meetings, November-December 2014**

**Objective:** Acquire feedback on community gardening policies from regional community gardening groups and North St. Paul residents.

After the second phase of community engagement, a draft of community garden policies for the city will be drafted. This will include a singular vision, standards for development and maintenance, and estimated costs. Once this draft policy document has been elaborated, the community will informed and given the opportunity to provide feedback.

Meetings will be arranged with three groups:

1. **City, County, and Regional Public Sector Stakeholders** - draft policy should be harmonized with higher-level documents, including the North St. Paul city comprehensive plan.

2. **North St. Paul Residents** - policy document should be an accurate and equitable reflection of input from community.

3. **Twin Cities’ Community Gardening Groups** - feedback will be sought from peer groups so that standards, timelines, budgets, and criteria for North St. Paul’s community gardens are feasible.

Information can be gathered through a survey that is administered through the website and at meetings.

**Deliverables:**
- Identified members of CGAC as site representatives for three finalist sites
- Agreements with community partners regarding construction of gardens (including budget and timeline)

#### 3b. Site development resource meetings

**Numerous meetings, November 2014-February 2015**

**Objective:** Align community partners with garden site development strategies

Before site selection takes place, resources will be leveraged to ensure that gardens are built. Meetings will be held that solicit support from organizations and agencies that are working toward similar ends. For North St. Paul, there are opportunities to work with the GreenStep City project, as well as the StudentBuilt! project that can provide manpower or financial resources.

Ideally, the construction of these gardens will be a community effort. A CGAC member needs to be tasked as a site representative who can arrange meetings with community partners.

**Deliverables:**
- Compiled feedback from meetings and website.

#### 3c. Site selection engagement with prospective neighborhoods

**One meeting, February 2015**

**Objective:** Engage neighborhoods and surrounding community of prospective garden site finalists

A list of three prospective sites will then be finalized by September. Criteria for selecting the sites should be finalized by August; even if the final community garden policy document is not finalized. The selection criteria will be standardized for the first round of site selection and subsequently revised for future selection processes.

Sites will be affiliated with a representative (this could be the City of North St. Paul, a school, an apartment building, a religious institution, or a community organization) that will make a brief presentation to the CGAC about their sites. Sites will be prioritized, but plans will be developed so that all finalists could be developed within three years. Following the presentations by the site representatives, the CGAC will choose the first site that will be developed.
3d. Public meetings and public hearings
Three meetings and two hearings, March 2015

Objective: Provide North St. Paul residents with the opportunity to comment on the proposed site of a new community garden in their community

Public meetings and hearings will be held at various places throughout North St. Paul for residents to comment on the site location and concept for a new community garden in the city. Residents and business owners will be able to voice approval or concern, as well as ask questions about the plan.

The comments received at the public meetings and hearings will influence the final outcome of the plan, including where the garden is located, its design, and garden hours and policies.

Deliverables:
- Public comments received

Communication Next Steps:
- Inform those attending and interested in updates how the plan changed as a result of the meetings and hearings

3e. Site design charrette
One event, April 2015

Objective: Engage those gardening at or living near the new community garden to assist in designing the garden site.

Design charrettes will be lead by a third party consultant who has experiencing working with communities and designing community gardens. Participants will include those planning to garden at the site, those living or opportunity a business near the site, and others with a vested interest.

Deliverables:
- A design for the new community garden

Communication Next Steps:
- Information will be sent to stakeholders about the final design for the garden and when construction and planting will begin

Planning and Engagement Intersections

The level of engagement will determine the pace of planning the North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative. The participation and the implementation are inexorably linked to one another with this initiative. Once a group is engaged, the follow-up process to maintain their involvement is essential to the viability to the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect of the North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative. The perceived resource and manpower limitations of the initiative require targeted strategies that achieve the primary goals and objectives. Feedback loops will be established so that community input reaches the CGAC quickly in order to modify their strategies. The North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative is an important but relatively small initiative that will feed into larger projects, but it cannot usurp too many valuable resources.

The monitoring and evaluation for this initiative will amount to regular check-ins by the CGAC with stakeholders from community gardening groups, community organizations, and the city. Each CGAC member will be responsible for specific tasks and portions of the project. It is suggested that there be one project coordinator that works at least half-time on community engagement for the North St. Paul Community Gardens Initiative. This person will report to the North St. Paul city planning department and act as a liaison between the government and the CGAC. He/she will also serve as a non-voting member of the CGAC.
APPENDIX

Work Program Phases
Work Program Timeline
Sample Survey
Sources
North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative
Work Program Phases

Community Capacity Analysis
- CGAC Formation
- Information gathering

Site Analysis
- Visioning
- Space Inventory

Review & Selection
- Policy Review
- Site Development
North St. Paul Community Garden Initiative
Work Program Timeline

2014
- CGAC Formation
- Cowern Garden Roundtable
  Apr 2014

2014-2015
- City Visioning Meetings
- Public/Private Space Inventory Meetings
- Community Garden Draft Policy Review
- Site Development Resource Meetings
- Public Meetings & Hearings
- Site Selection Neighborhood Engagement Meeting
  Feb 2015
- Interactive Garden Mapping Website
  Oct 2014
- Site Design Charrette
  Apr 2015

2015
- CGAC Monthly Meetings
This survey models the potential format for a survey of the Current Gardeners at Cowern who are not associated with the elementary school. Changes for the final version to be distributed would be the addition of quantitative questions, or a multiple choice response system to help quantify some answers.

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Cowern Community Garden Survey

Date: ____________
Name: ___________________________  Phone Number: ________________
Email Address: __________________

1) Why do you participate in the community garden?

2) What has worked well with the Cowern Community Garden?

3) What could be improved with the Cowern Community Garden?

4) What is the intersection nearest your home location?

5) Do you have space at your own residence to garden?

6) Do you have suggestions for additional community garden locations?

7) Please share any other comments or suggestions. Feel free to use back of sheet if necessary.
Sources

Cover Image: http://kjmcountrygardens.com
Logo Image Source: iadvocatehealth.org
Images p.2: Google Maps, Darles Armstrong Group
Images p.3: Darles Armstrong Group
Images p.4: ClipArt,
Images p.5: Darles Armstrong Group
Images p.6: redwoodcity.org
Images p.7: Darles Applestrong Group
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