



Community Gardens in Parks Plan

March 2023

Contents

Acknowledgments	2
Introduction	3
Why a Community Gardens in Parks Plan?	3
Plan Development	4
How to Read This Plan	11
Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids	11
Current City-Owned Community Gardens	11
Future Community Garden Site Selection	13
Future Community Garden Concept Plans	21
Managing Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids	29
City Support: Staff Resources	29
Community Garden Administration	32
Programming Strategy and Community Partnerships	36
Community Gardens Budget	43
Current Administration and Maintenance Costs	43
Site Budgets: Construction and Maintenance	43
Community Gardens Program Budget Growth	52
Funding Opportunities to Support Community Gardens	52
Appendix I: Community Engagement Feedback	
Appendix II: Future Community Garden Site Selection Rubric	
Appendix III: Community Garden Design Toolkit	

Acknowledgments

This plan was created by New Venture Advisors (NVA), a business consulting firm specializing in food system planning and sustainable food business development, and Wheat Design Group, landscape architects who partner with architects, engineers, and urban developers to create innovative and inviting spaces. Between August 2022 and March 2023, NVA and Wheat Design worked with a team of City of Cedar Rapids staff to develop this plan.

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The recommendations and concept plans that follow were informed by the experiences and input of hundreds of community members who took the time to complete the community survey and participate in community events.

We are especially grateful to the members of the steering committee, who provided their expertise and input throughout the formation of the plan.

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Introduction

Why a Community Gardens in Parks Plan?

Benefits of Community Gardening

Community gardens are a sustainable way to improve the quality of life of city residents by supporting healthy lifestyles and providing an opportunity to engage with nature. These growing spaces encourage diverse populations to come together around a mutual interest and promote better community health by strengthening relationships between neighbors and their local ecosystem.

In 2021, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) conducted a literature review of eight individual studies on the quantitative benefits of community gardens. They concluded that community gardeners had significantly better health outcomes than their neighbors not engaged in gardening activities in terms of life satisfaction, happiness, general health, mental health, and social cohesion. The NIH found that “community gardens are associated with health gains for their users, irrespective of age, being an affordable and efficient way of promoting physical and mental health and well-being. To encourage the design, maintenance, and prospective evaluation of supportive urban environments promoting healthy and, at the same time, sustainable lifestyles, is essential to achieve public health gains and environmental sustainability.”¹

Community gardens enhance the green infrastructure of a city while providing habitat for new plant and animal life. This benefits the biodiversity of the local ecosystem and creates pockets of support for pollinators amidst a city’s development. Investments in soil remediation and maintenance needed for successful gardens help to promote soil health and fertility. These soil improvements are an impactful community-level response to mitigate the effects of climate change. Community gardens can help to reduce urban heat island effects, manage stormwater runoff, more efficiently absorb atmospheric carbon, and lower food transportation energy demands.² These benefits tie into the goals of the City’s existing Pollinator and Natural Resources initiatives.³

Background on Expansion of Community Gardening in Cedar Rapids

The City of Cedar Rapids' 2021 Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) fulfills the ambitious goals of the City Council's Climate Resolution to reduce greenhouse gasses, build resilience to climate hazards, and support access to basic needs for all residents.⁴ The CCAP envisions a resilient and accessible city where all residents have access to high-quality green space, healthy food, clean air and water, and good, green jobs.

¹T. Lampert, et al., “Evidence on the Contribution of Community Gardens to Promote Physical and Mental Health and Well-Being of Non-Institutional Individuals: A Systemic Review.” National Library of Medicine, August 6, 2021.

²Nora Kyrkjebo, “A Secret Tool to Slow Climate Change in New York City,” Columbia Climate School News from Climate and Society, June 18, 2020.

³“Pollinator and Natural Resource Initiatives.” City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation, accessed March 24, 2023, https://www.cedar-rapids.org/residents/parks_and_recreation/pollinator_and_natural_resources_initiatives.php.

⁴ *The City of Cedar Rapids Community Climate Action Plan*, 2021, accessed March 24, 2023, https://www.cedar-rapids.org/local_government/sustainability/community_climate_plan.php#plan.

One of the primary focuses of the CCAP is to ensure all residents have affordable and accessible options for growing and consuming healthy, culturally relevant food. Part of the plan's 2030 vision is to develop a food access policy that ensures vulnerable residents can access healthy and relevant food within a 15-minute walk to sites such as urban farms, community gardens, pantries, and grocery stores.

Throughout the CCAP planning process, efforts to expand healthy food access emerged as the top community priority to support climate action locally. In response to this community demand, the City of Cedar Rapids elected to undertake a community-driven planning process to create a vibrant network of community gardens in eight additional parks across the city.

Currently the City manages three park-based community gardens with 357 plots available for use. This plan will significantly increase residents' opportunities to grow their own food within their communities. The City is committed to expanding community gardens to more city parks with a focus on equitable access for residents who are under-resourced and under-represented.

Plan Development

Steering Committee

In order to ensure additional community oversight of the community engagement and planning processes, the City assembled a steering committee of representatives from local food and agriculture organizations and Cedar Rapids community gardeners. Organizations represented on the steering committee included the Linn County Public Health Department, Iowa State University Extension Master Gardener program, Feed Iowa First, Hawkeye Area Community Action Program (HACAP), and Matthew 25. The local community gardeners were pulled from all three current City community gardens: at Tuma Park, Ellis Park, and near the Gardner Golf Course.

The steering committee met three times over the course of the planning process to provide input on various aspects of the plan and strategies for community outreach.

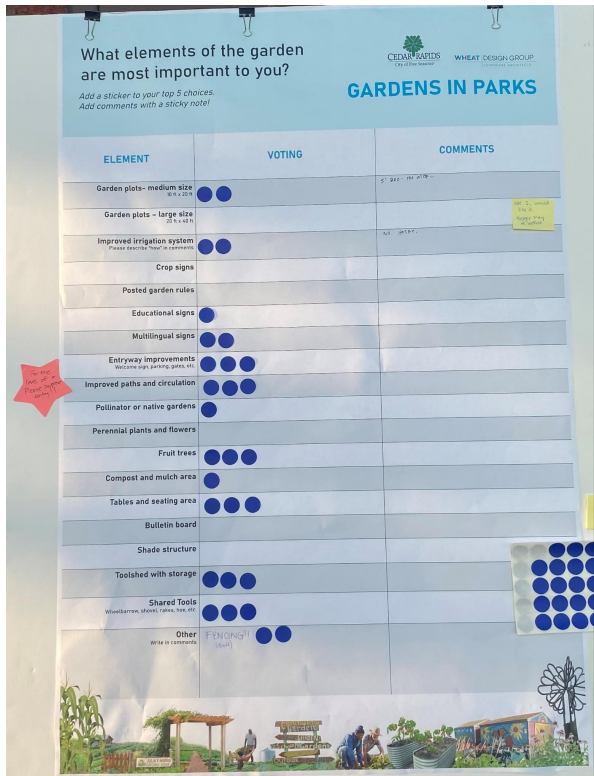
Community Engagement

A preliminary survey was distributed to current gardeners at the three existing community gardens within city parks prior to the development of the Sinclair Park concept plan in Fall 2022. This survey focused on understanding the gardeners' experience with city services at the three gardens as well as soliciting feedback on additional garden amenities.

A community gardens survey was open to all Cedar Rapids residents through the months of October and November 2022. This survey was developed to give the community an opportunity to share their input on how the City should expand gardens within municipal parks. The survey was hosted on the City's website and promoted via city communication channels and facilities. The survey was shared online via the city website, social media, and newsletter, and via QR code posters at the Downtown and Ladd Libraries, Northwest Recreation Center, City Services Center, and Ground Transportation Center. The survey was also shared by steering committee members and community organizations, including the Catherine McAuley Center, United We March Forward, The Arc, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Encore Cafe, and other neighborhood organizations. The survey was available in

multiple language translations that city staff assisted with inputting including Spanish, French, Swahili, and Kirundi.

City staff also attended in-person events, including produce distributions with Feed Iowa First, Encore Cafe, and Life Enrichment Center, to gather community feedback.



Dot voting for amenity preferences at the Sinclair Community Garden Open House, September 2022

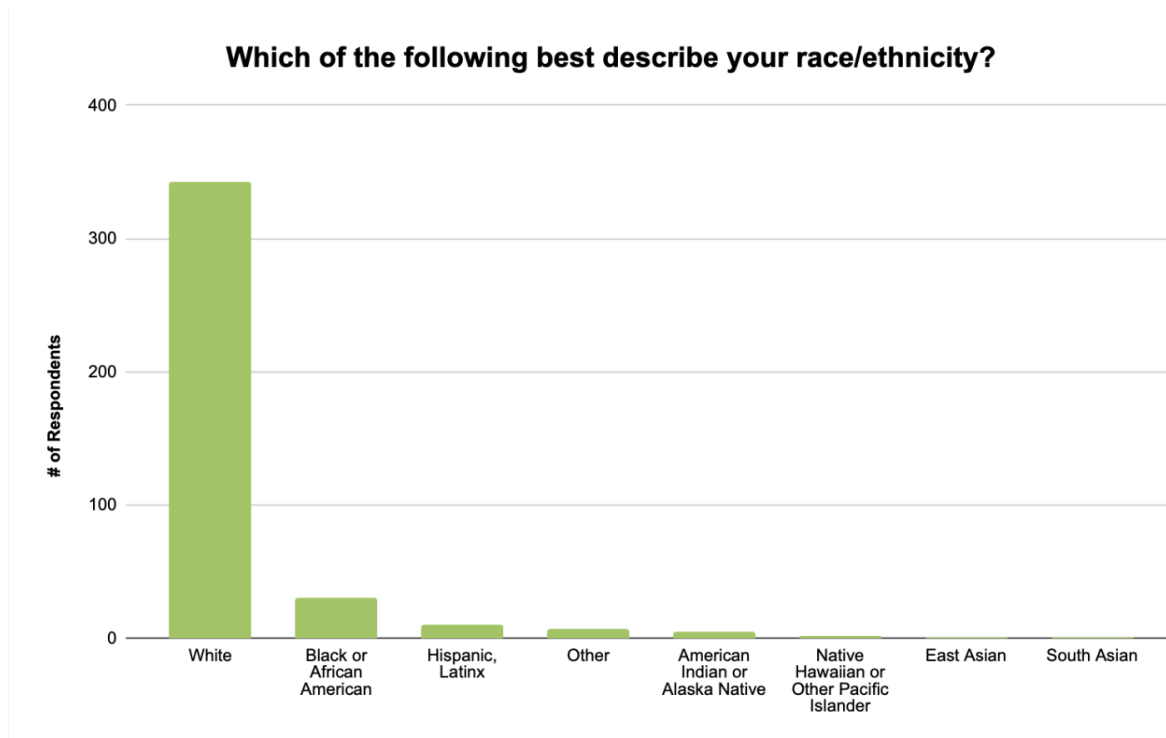


Outreach completed in partnership with Feed Iowa First to promote the Plan survey, October 2022

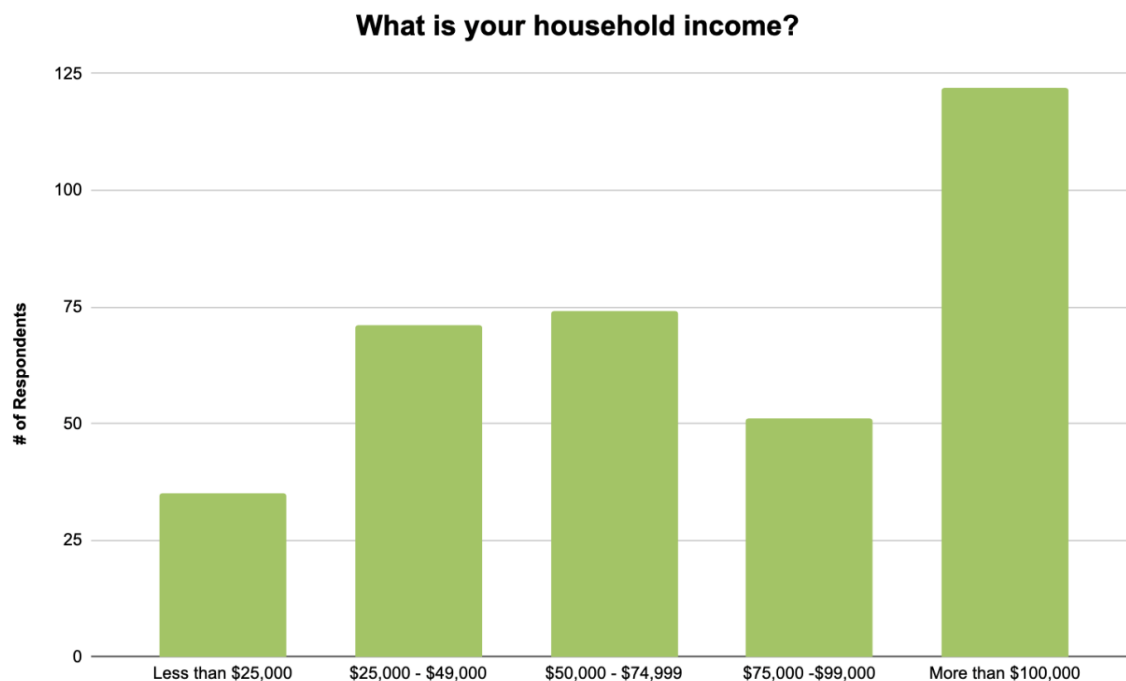


Sinclair Community Garden Open House, September 2022

In total, 438 residents completed the survey. A summary of the demographics of respondents is included below.

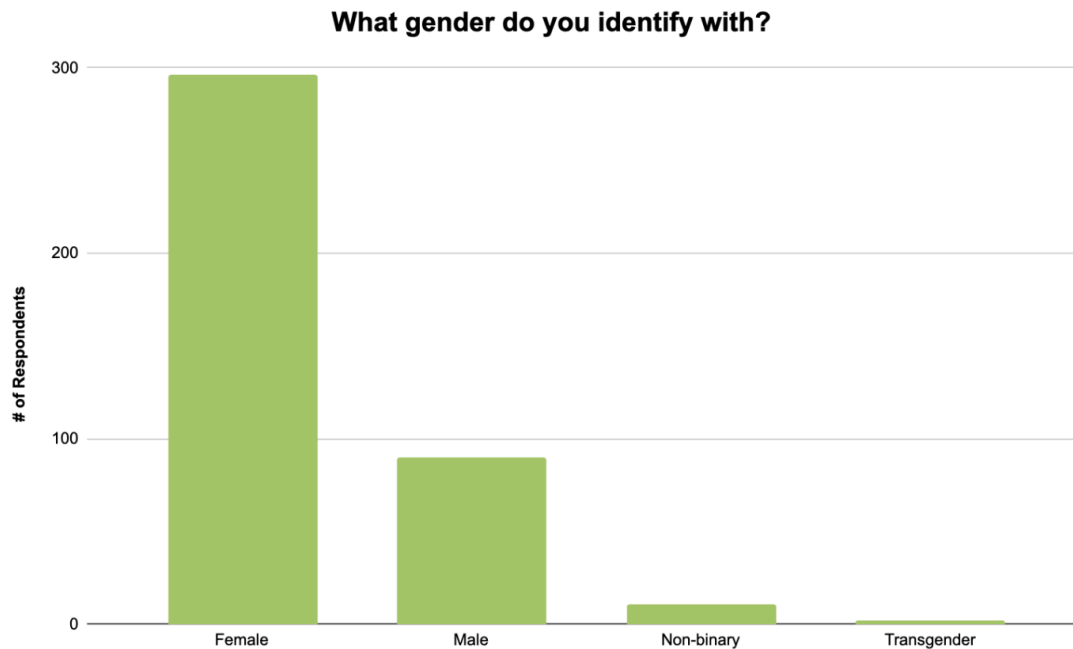


Eighty-six percent of survey respondents identified as White, 7.3 percent identified as Black or African American, and 2.5 percent identified as Hispanic or Latinx. This closely aligns with the demographics of the City as a whole⁵. The survey response percentages were all within 3 percent or less of the equivalent City demographic percentages for race and ethnicity.



⁵ U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Cedar Rapids City, Iowa, accessed March 24, 2023
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/cedarrapidscityiowa/RHI125221#RHI125221>.

Annual household income was indicated to be over \$100,000 by 34.6 percent of survey respondents, which represents a slight oversampling of this income demographic that makes up 26.8 percent of the city's population. Conversely, 20.1 percent of respondents indicated their annual income was between \$25,000 and \$50,000, representing a slight undersampling of this income demographic that makes up 27.5 percent of the city's population. All other income category response percentages were closely aligned with the percentages of city demographics.⁶

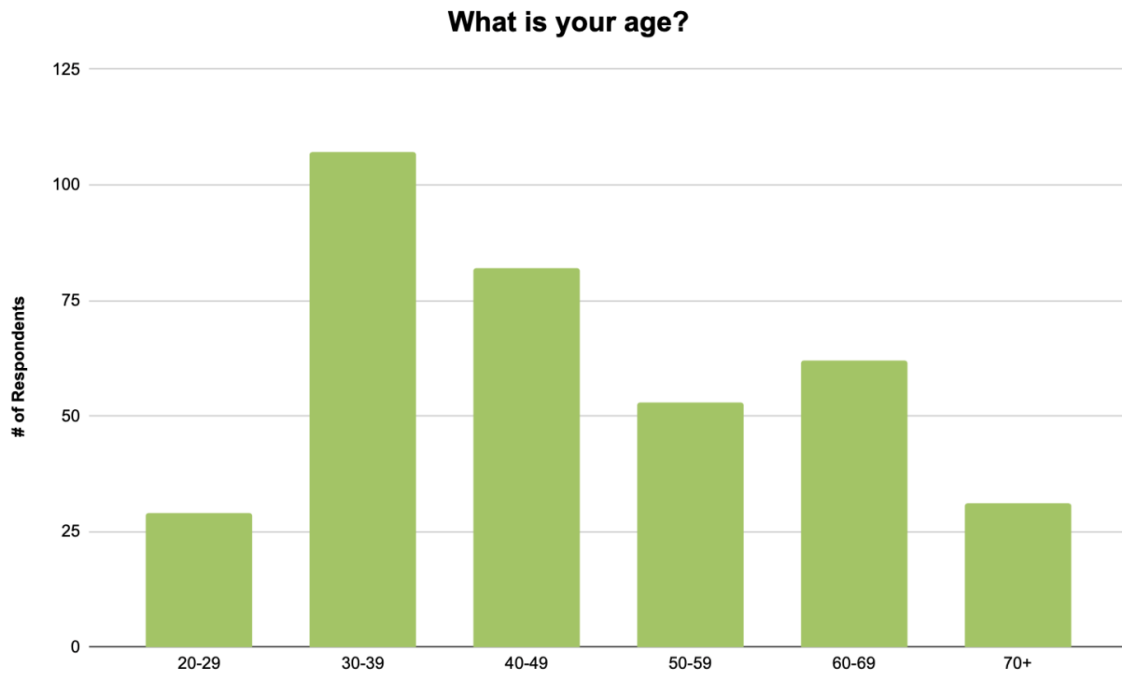


Women make up 50.1 percent of the city's population, but 74.1 percent of survey respondents identified as female, representing a significant oversampling.⁷

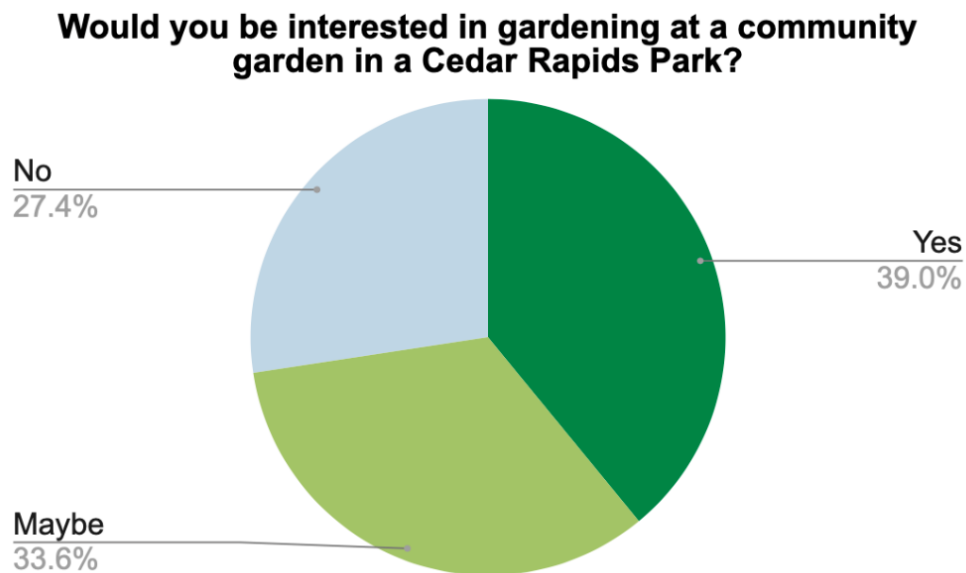
Survey age range categories did not directly align with U.S. Census Data categories for an exact comparison. A majority of respondents identified as ages 30–39 or 40–49, but at least 25 responses from each of six age categories (20–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–49, 60–69, and 70+) were recorded.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

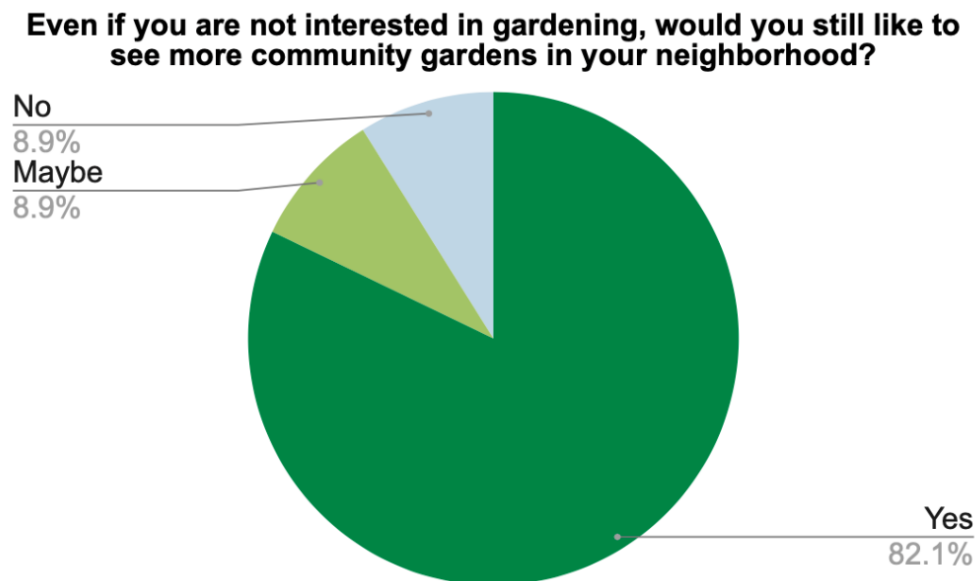


Key survey findings are highlighted below, while the full community survey data can be found in Appendix I: Community Engagement Feedback.



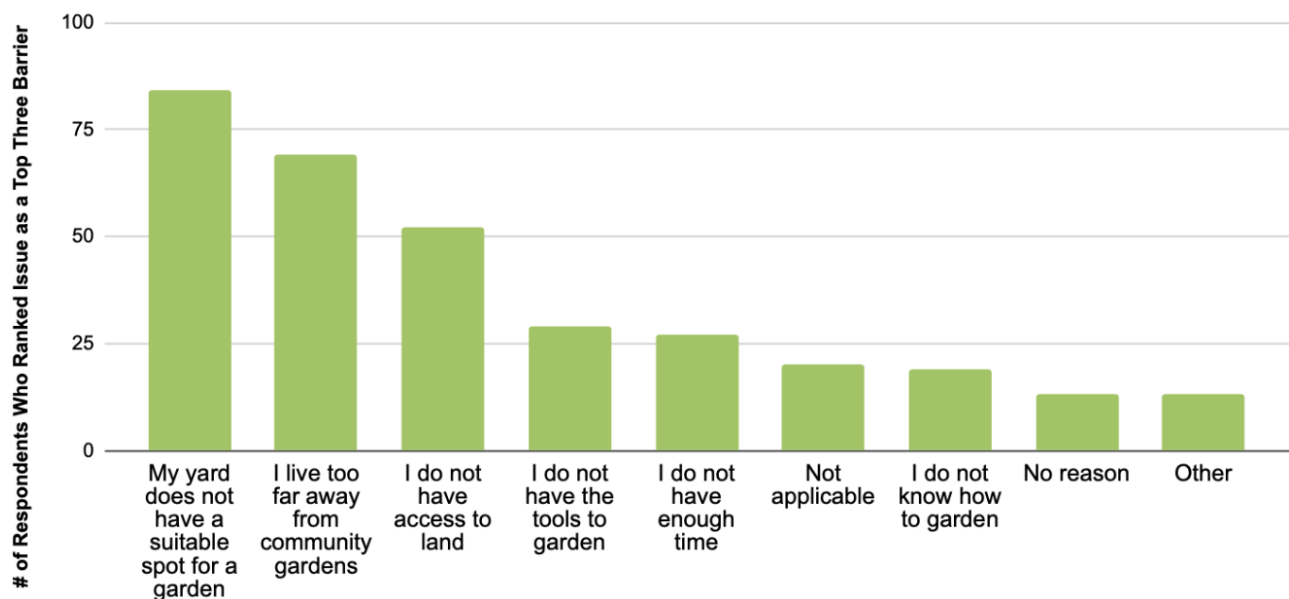
Thirty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they would be interested in gardening in a Cedar Rapids park. Another 33.6 percent said that they might be interested in participating in a park garden. This high level of interest is representative of the community enthusiasm for pursuing additional gardens as a means of connecting with their neighborhoods, addressing food insecurity, and reducing their carbon footprints.

Of the respondents that indicated they were not interested in gardening, 82.1 percent still saw the value of having a community garden within their neighborhood.



For those 8.9 percent of respondents that did not want to see a garden in their neighborhood, top concerns included

- Responsible garden oversight and upkeep: making sure that gardens did not revert to weeds, look unseemly, or attract pests
- Managing influx of gardeners into neighborhoods: addressing upticks in traffic or parking and maintaining neighborhood safety standards



Are there barriers that have kept you from gardening or make it difficult to garden?

Respondents were able to select the top three barriers that made it more difficult for them to garden in the city. Several of the barriers that respondents noted had kept them from gardening included limited access to suitable land or space to grow and being too far away from current community gardens. Expanding the City's community garden program to eight additional parks throughout the four city quadrants would alleviate a majority of these issues and increase opportunities for those interested to grow their own food.

The first draft of the plan was posted on the City's website for public comment in February of 2023. All comments received can be found in Appendix I: Community Engagement Feedback. The draft plan was also presented at an open house event held at NewBo City Market on March 2, 2023.



Draft Plan Open House, March 2023

How to Read This Plan

This plan contains two main sections, each with a unique focus and primary audience.

Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids

- **Overview**
 - This section outlines concept plans for the future community gardens in parks across the city of Cedar Rapids and details the process and criteria for selecting these sites
- **Primary Audience**
 - General Cedar Rapids residents
 - City staff interested in learning more about the site selection process
- **Key Takeaways**
 - Eight community garden sites were selected from 97 city parks based on several factors including equity and accessibility criteria
 - Community garden concept plans are available for the following parks:
 - Sinclair (plan developed separately in fall 2022)
 - Lincolnway
 - Twin Pines
 - Tokheim
 - Noelridge
 - Huston
 - Reed
 - Cherry Hill

Management of Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids

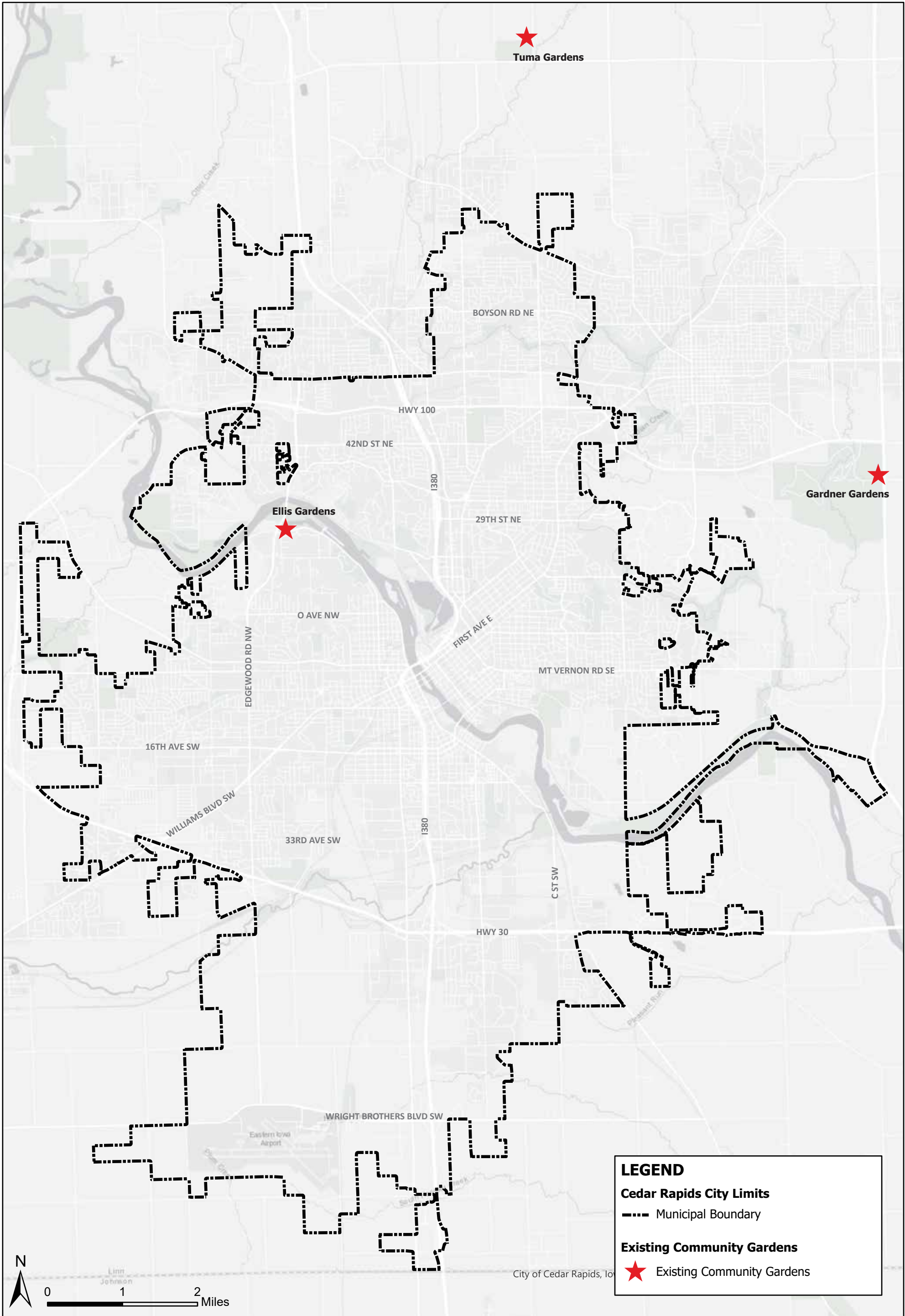
- **Overview**
 - This section acts as a centralized resource for city staff managing the growing number of community gardens in City-owned parks.
- **Primary Audience**
 - City staff involved in garden management and oversight
- **Key Takeaways**
 - Increasing community garden management from three sites to eleven sites will require a significant scale up in city resources, including staff time for oversight and regular garden upkeep and financial investment for garden infrastructure
 - Community partnerships will be key in best leveraging the benefits of community gardens for all residents and implementing best practices for growing

Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids

Current City-Owned Community Gardens

The City currently manages three community garden sites at Ellis Park, Tuma Park, and near the Gardner Golf Course, as depicted in map 1. In total, these sites provide 357 available garden plots.

Map 1: Current City-Owned Community Gardens



Future Community Garden Site Selection

Sinclair Park was identified by the City of Cedar Rapids as an ideal park to host a community garden, and a concept plan for Sinclair was developed in October 2022. To determine the viability of other potential community garden sites, the City first narrowed down options from 97 total city parks to 17 potential parks using the following criteria.

Criteria	Description
USDA Low Income, Low Access (LILA)	The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines low income (LI) areas as census tracts in which 20 percent or more residents are living below the federal poverty level or where the median family income is less than 80 percent of the state average or where the tract is in a metropolitan area and has a median family income less than or equal to 80 percent of the metropolitan area's median family income. Low access (LA) areas are defined as those census tracts where the distance to the closest grocery store exceeds half a mile for urban areas and ten miles for rural communities.⁸ Parks within USDA designated LILA census tracts were prioritized.
2018 CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index (SVI)	The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) maintain a Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) that uses 16 US Census variables to identify communities that are vulnerable to potential negative effects caused by external stresses on human health such as natural or human-caused disasters, or disease outbreaks⁹. These variables include data related to socioeconomic status; household characteristics; racial and ethnic minority status; and housing type and transportation. Parks with "high" or "medium-high" designations were prioritized. Parks considered "low" or "low-medium" were included only if they were also within a USDA LILA census tract.
Floodplain	Parks within the 100-year floodplain with no existing or proposed flood control were removed from consideration.
Available Space and Accessibility	Parks with other community amenities and limited room for a garden were removed from consideration. Parks that were heavily treed or that had no large tracts of open space were removed from consideration due to a need for at least six to eight hours of direct sun exposure for optimal gardening. Parks that were small with limited sidewalk proximity were removed as they are less accessible for pedestrians.
Location	Parks in proximity to other existing city gardens were removed so that planned gardens would be equitably distributed across all four city quadrants.

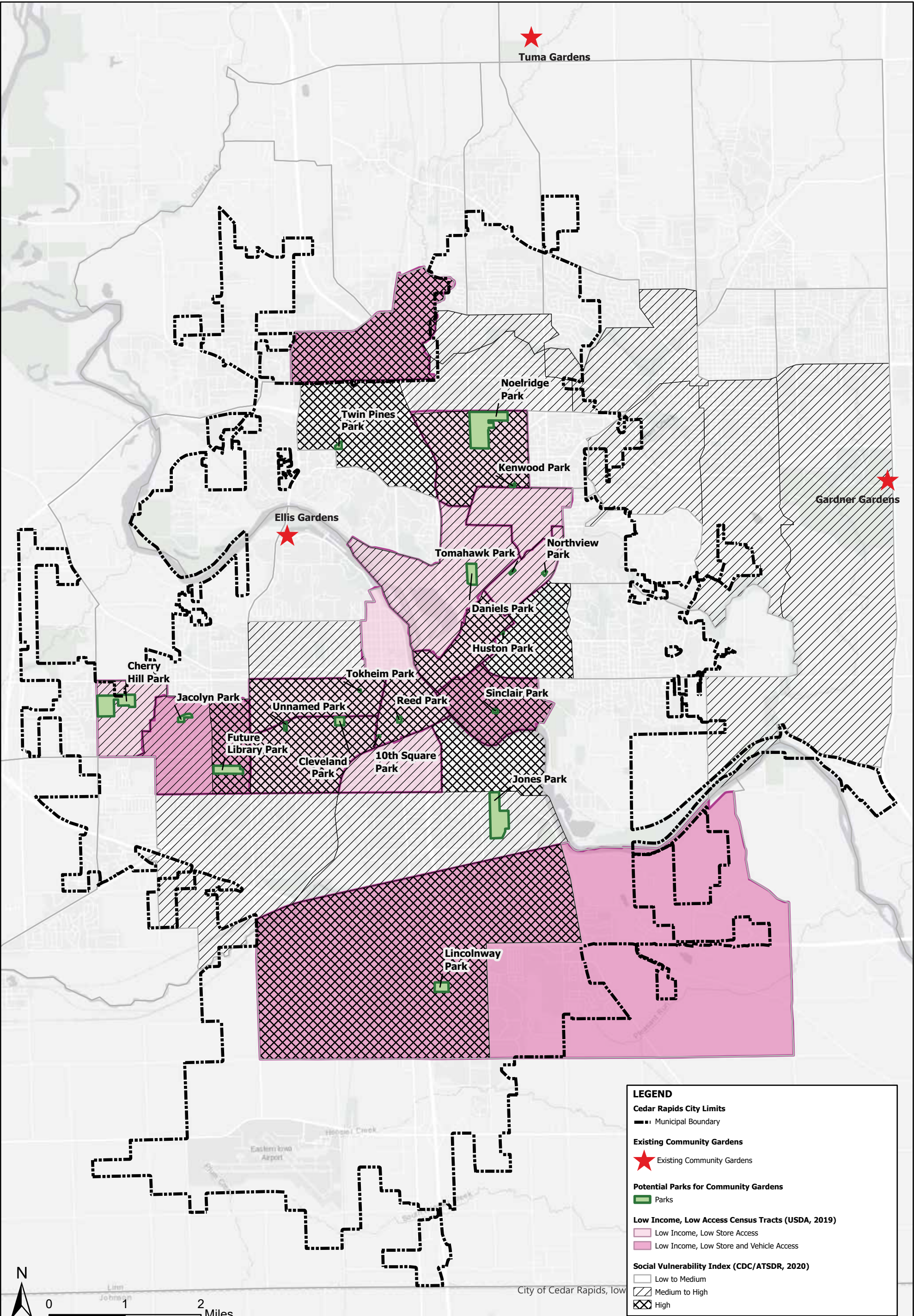
The 17 parks as well as the LILA census tracts and SVI designations are shown in map 2.

⁸"Defining Low-Income, Low-Access Food Areas (Food Deserts)." Congressional Research Service, June 1, 2021.

⁹"CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index." Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, accessed March 24, 2023 <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/placeandhealth/svi/index.html>.

Map 2: Potential Parks for Community Gardens

With USDA LILA and CDC/ATSDR SVI Census Tracts



The 17 parks that were under consideration are noted in the table below:

NE Quadrant	NW Quadrant	SE Quadrant	SW Quadrant
Noelridge Park	Cherry Hill Park	Huston Park	Reed Park
Twin Pines Park	Tokheim Park		Lincolnway Park
Tomahawk Park	Jacolyn Park		Future library site
Northview Park			Jones Park
Kenwood Park			10th Square Park
Daniels Park			Cleveland Park
			Unnamed Park

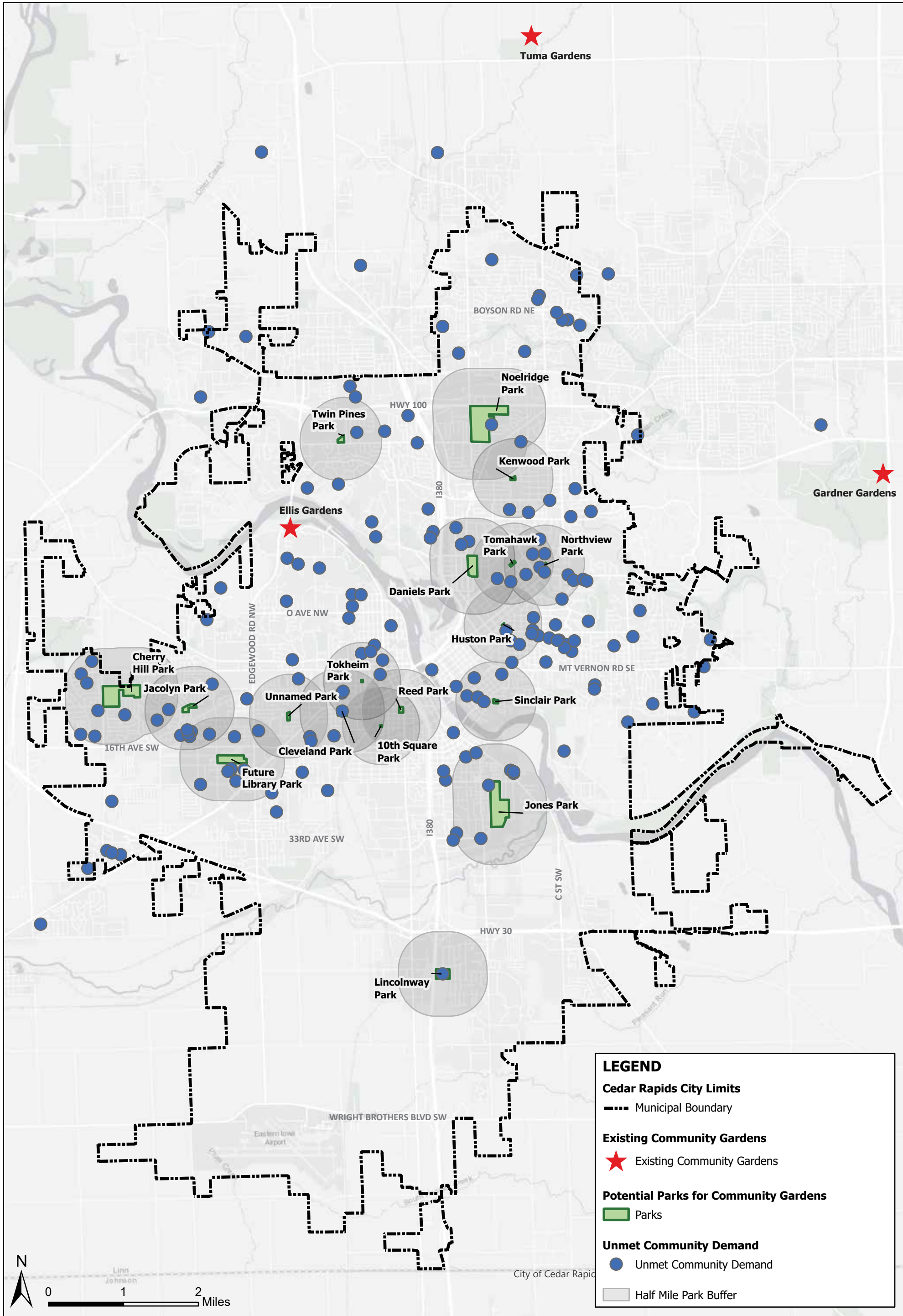
From those 17 potential parks identified by the City, the seven parks most suitable for accessible and equitable garden development were selected for full concept plans using the methodology outlined below as well as in-person site visits by city staff and Wheat Design consultants.

As the most important criteria to design a plan that addressed equitable garden access throughout the city, the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), unmet community demand, and population density criteria were weighted more heavily than other criteria, on a scale of 0 to 3. All other criteria were rated on a scale of 0 to 1.

Criteria	Description	Score			
		3	2	1	0
2020 CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index	The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) uses 16 U.S. Census variables to identify communities that are vulnerable to potential negative effects caused by external stresses on human health. Although the 2018 SVI was used as a criterion during the first round of site selection, as explained above, the 2020 SVI was released in the middle of the planning process in October 2022 based on updated census data. The 2020 SVI includes a few changes to the methodology and variables used in 2018, including a change in assessing poverty, housing cost burden, and other variables.¹⁰	High	Medium - High	Low - Medium	Low
Unmet Community Demand	The number of 2022 community survey respondents that expressed interest in gardening and live within a 0.5 mile radius of the park	13–19	8–12	4–7	0–3
Population Density	Population per square mile within a 0.5 mile radius of the park	5,625–7,500	3,751–5,625	1,876–3,750	0–1,875
Pedestrian Accessibility	Presence of trail and/or sidewalk connections to the park			Yes	No
Public Transit Accessibility	Presence of public transit stop(s) adjacent to the park or across the street			Yes	No
ADA Accessibility	Slope and space to meet ADA guidelines. All features should be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance. <i>(See Appendix III: Community Garden Design Toolkit for additional information)</i>			Yes	No
Water Access	Presence of a water line in or adjacent to the park			Yes	No

Map 3 shows the unmet community demand within a half-mile radius of each of the 17 parks under consideration.

¹⁰“CDC SVI Documentation 2020,” Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, August 5, 2022.



After scoring each of the parks, the project team identified the top two parks in each quadrant of the city to ensure an equitable distribution of community gardens throughout the city. At this time, two additional considerations were taken into account:

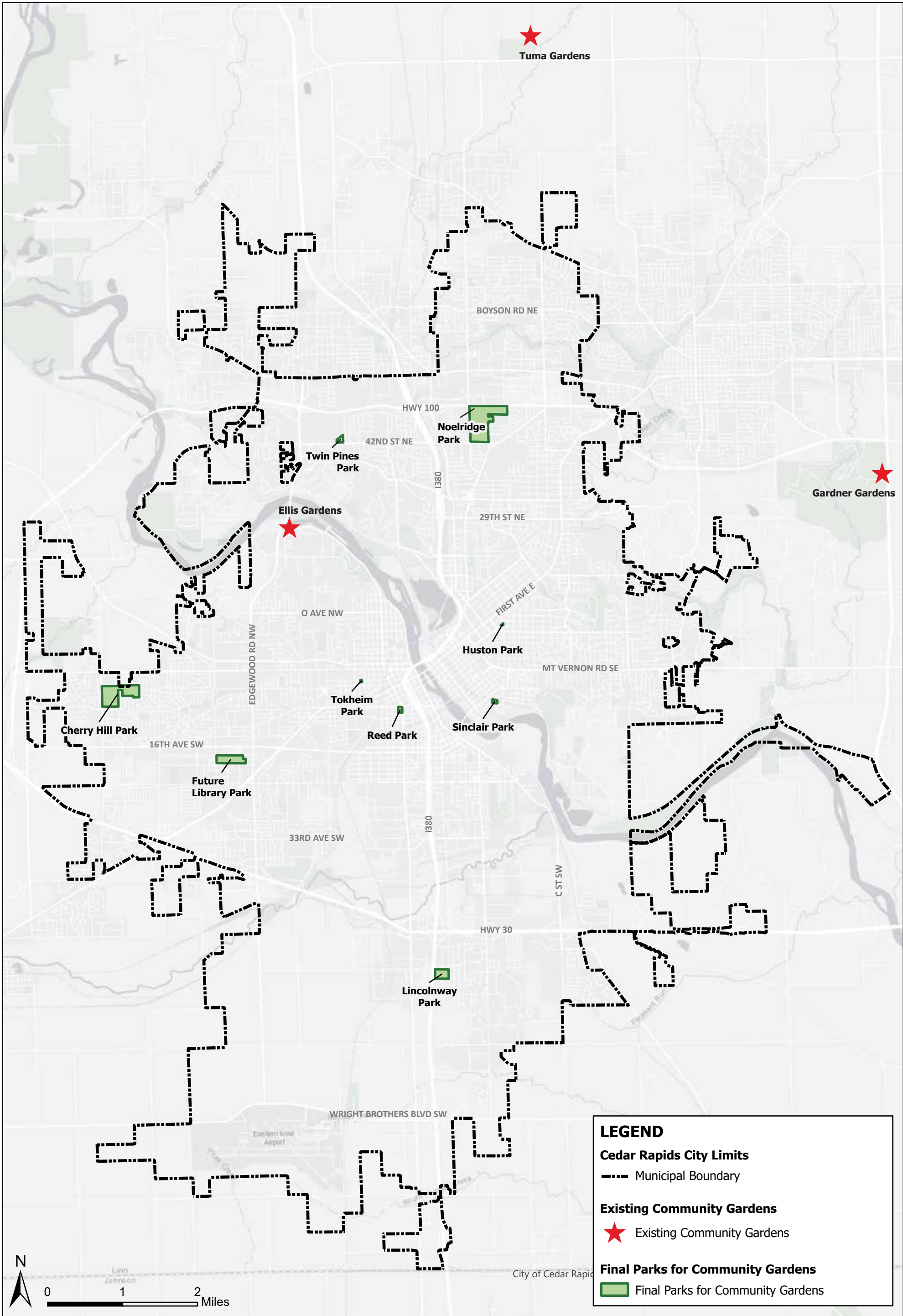
- Although Daniels Park scored within the top two parks in the northeast quadrant, after a site visit and further consultation with landscape architects, it was determined that Daniels was not the best site for immediate development due to hilly terrain, tree cover, underground utility wires, and potential interference with baseball players at the park. This site is recommended for further community activation in the future and may be an appropriate site for other innovative gardening or horticulture activities, such as a community orchard, berry bushes, or perennial garden.
- Furthermore, at the time of this ranking, the future westside library site was in the early planning phase and a community garden layout could not be determined. A concept plan for this garden is not included in this plan, but a community garden should be considered at the site. For this reason, the project team selected a third park in the southwest quadrant, Lincolnway Park. Lincolnway Park did not rank within the top two parks within its quadrant, primarily due to its low population density, but was identified as a park to be included for accessibility and equity reasons. Lincolnway Park is not in close proximity to any other city parks or gardens and the surrounding community experiences limited food and transportation access.

The final selection of parks is noted in the table below and shown in map 4.

NE Quadrant	NW Quadrant	SE Quadrant	SW Quadrant
Noelridge Park	Cherry Hill Park	Sinclair Park <i>Concept plan complete Fall 2022</i>	Reed Park
Twin Pines Park	Tokheim Park	Huston Park	Lincolnway Park
			Future library site <i>To be considered at a later date</i>

Although this plan includes only seven concept plans, all 17 parks included in the rubric are appropriate for community gardens or other innovative gardening or horticulture activities and should be considered once city resources allow for additional development.

Additional notes on the park selection and individual rankings for each of the 17 potential parks can be found in the appendices.



Proposed Implementation Schedule

Several factors will influence the timing for implementation of new community gardens. The extensive work required to transform existing park space into accessible and functional garden spaces will require considerable investment. Decisions on when to install the basic framework of core garden amenities and any upgrades to include the preferred garden amenities will be funding dependent. More information on the program's budget can be found later in this plan. To make the most efficient use of city funds, this plan recommends that timing of garden installation be coordinated with other planned city projects where possible. Beyond budget considerations, this Plan recommends that garden installation be spread equitably across the city's four quadrants throughout the short-, mid-, and long-term time ranges.

Timeframe	Park	Quadrant	Reasoning
Under Construction	Sinclair Park	SE	
Short Term	Lincolnway Park	SW	Integrate with planned city projects: ADA improvements planned for 2023–2024
	Twin Pines Park	NE	Integrate with planned city projects: Roadwork adjacent to park proposed for 2025
	Future library site	SW	Integrate with planned city projects: Library construction planned for 2024 through 2026
Mid Term	Tokheim Park	NW	Prioritize a park in the NW quadrant
	Noelridge Park	NE	Continue to expand program equitably across quadrants
Long Term	Huston Park	SE	Continue to expand program equitably across quadrants
	Reed Park	SW	Continue to expand program equitably across quadrants
	Cherry Hill Park	NW	Continue to expand program equitably across quadrants

SINCLAIR COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

Preferred Amenities

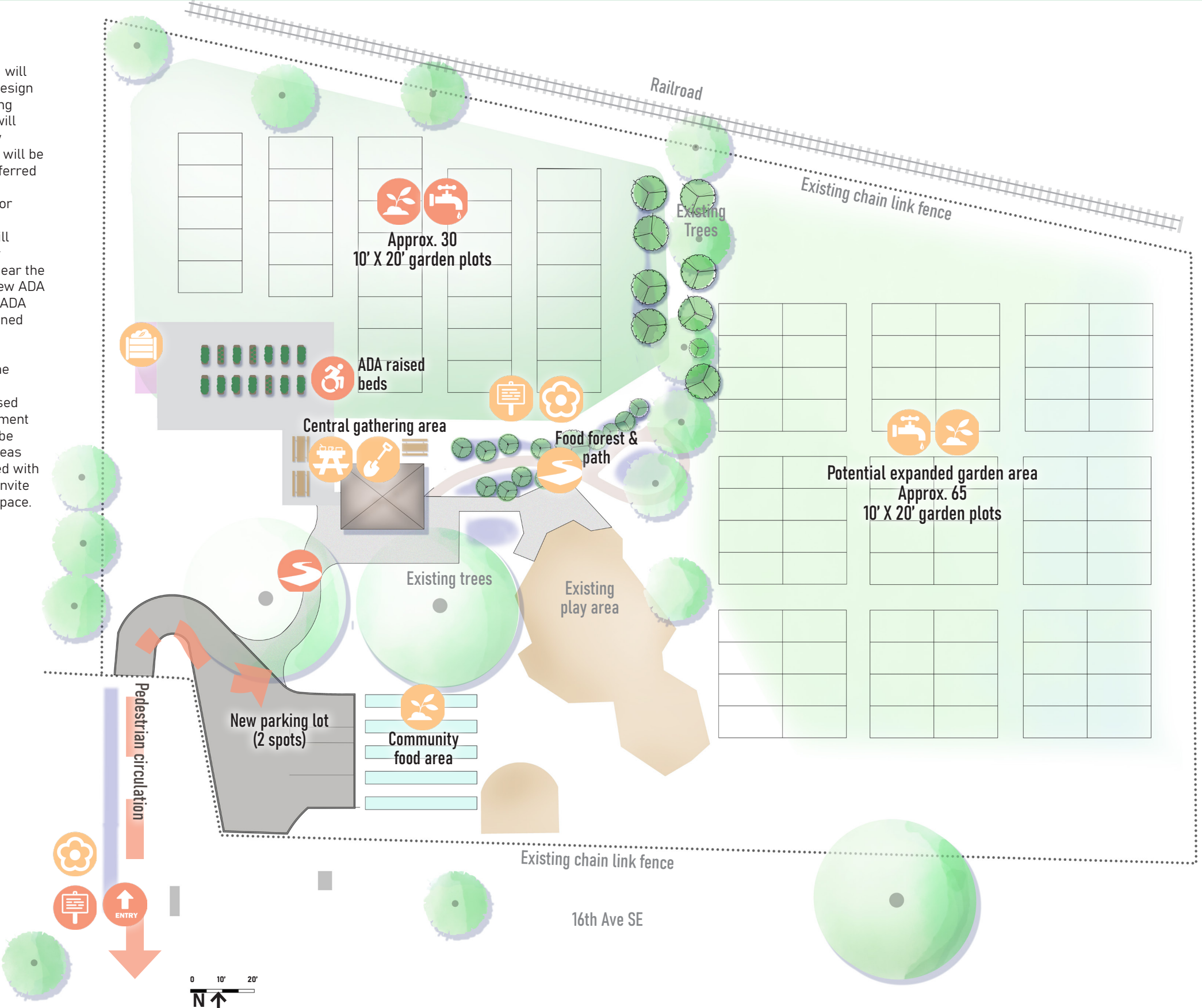
- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area
- Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Sinclair Park in the Oakhill Jackson neighborhood will be enlivened with a new community garden. The design focuses on reusing the existing park in an enriching and positive way. The construction of the garden will happen in phases and is contingent on community needs, support, and funding. The “Core Amenities” will be added during Phase 1 in the Spring 2023, and “Preferred Amenities” may follow as possible with funding.

“Core Amenities” are essential features for a functional and accessible garden. In Phase 1 of construction, approximately 30 in-ground plots will be added, along with a centrally located spigot for watering. Two new parking spots will be located near the entrance with an accessible pathway leading to new ADA garden beds. Between 10-15% of the plots will be ADA accessible. The entryway will be more clearly defined with a posted sign.

In Phase 2 the current defunct bathroom may be updated into a tool and storage area for the gardeners. A proposed gathering area with picnic tables may be centrally located around the proposed toolshed. In addition to the expanded garden allotment plots, perennial beds with pollinator plants could be placed at the entrances and near the gathering areas for maximum enjoyment. An ADA nature path, lined with edible perennials and educational signage, could invite gardeners and non-gardeners alike to enjoy the space.



LINCOLNWAY COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

-  Entrance
-  Sign
-  Garden plots
-  Water spigot
-  ADA accessible raised beds
-  ADA accessible surface

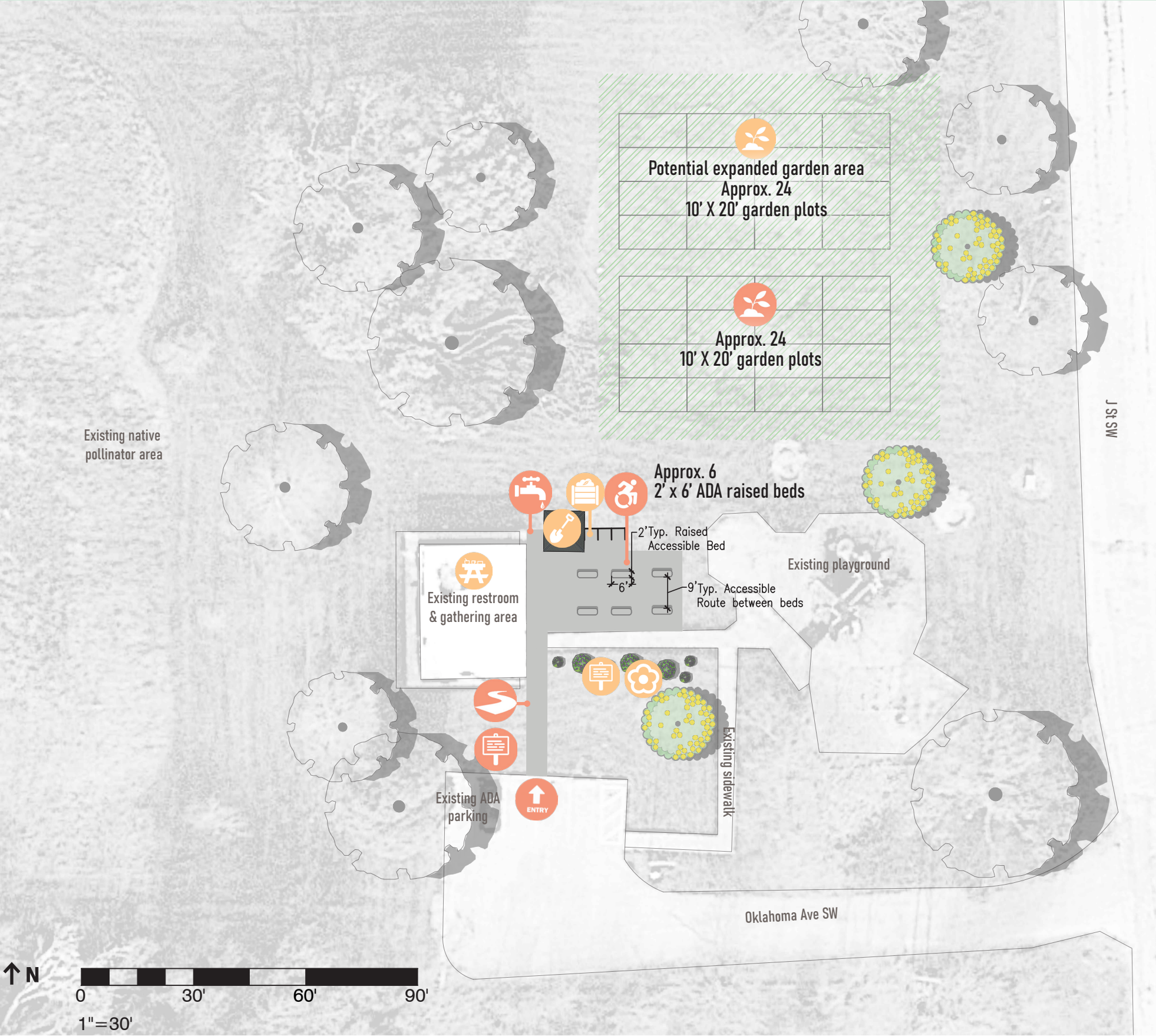
Preferred Amenities

-  Tool shed
-  Gathering area
-  Educational signs
-  Pollinator & perennial plants
-  Compost area
-  Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Lincolnway Park is a neighborhood park located in the southwest quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed Community Gardens are located in the southeast corner of the park - just north of the existing playground and restrooms. The proposed garden area could be accessed from the parking lot off of J St SW. The garden amenities and ADA accessible raised beds could be built around the existing restroom and covered picnic tables.

This site has the potential for 0.32 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10'), medium (10' x 20') or large (20' x 40') depending on the community's needs. 6 ADA accessible plots could be located at the center of the park with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost and pollinator plants.



TWIN PINES COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

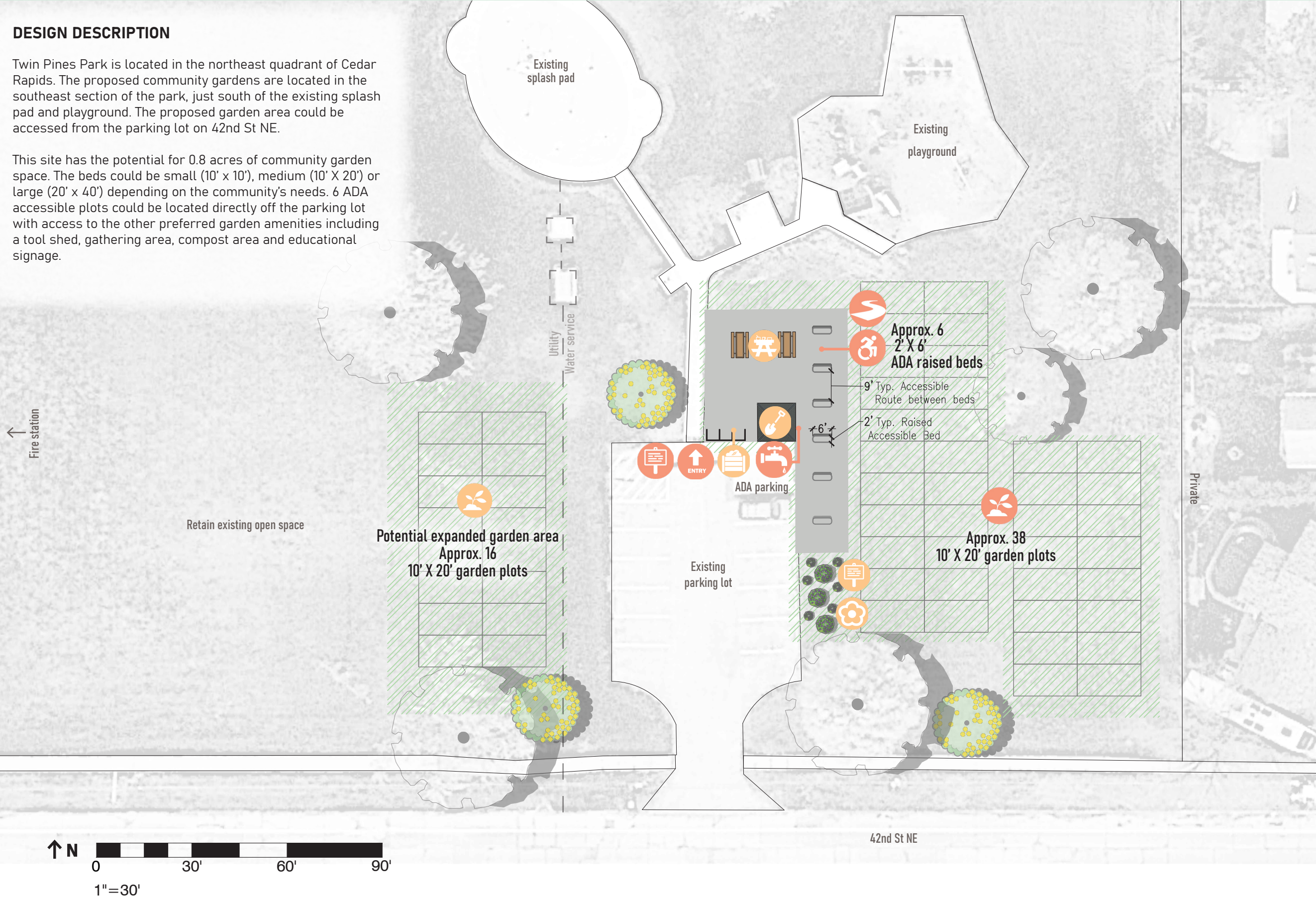
Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area
- Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Twin Pines Park is located in the northeast quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed community gardens are located in the southeast section of the park, just south of the existing splash pad and playground. The proposed garden area could be accessed from the parking lot on 42nd St NE.

This site has the potential for 0.8 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10'), medium (10' X 20') or large (20' x 40') depending on the community's needs. 6 ADA accessible plots could be located directly off the parking lot with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost area and educational signage.



TOKHEIM COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

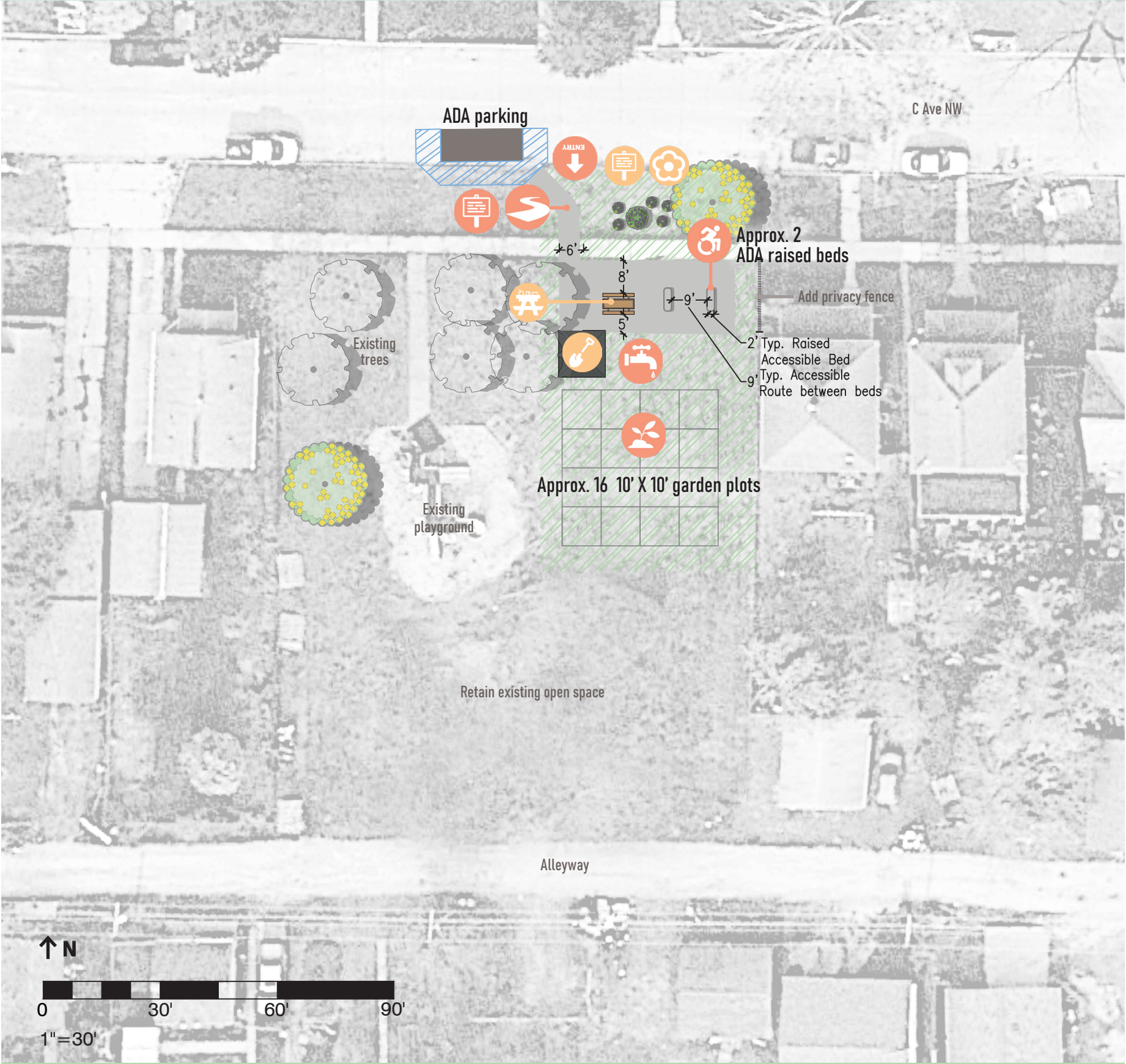
Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Tokheim Park is a small neighborhood park located in the northwest quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed community gardens are located at the north end of the park to the west of the existing playground. The proposed garden area could be accessed from C Ave NW.

This site has the potential for 0.13 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10') or medium (10' X 20') depending on the community's needs. 2 ADA accessible plots could be located at the center of the park with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area and pollinator plants.



NOELRIDGE COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

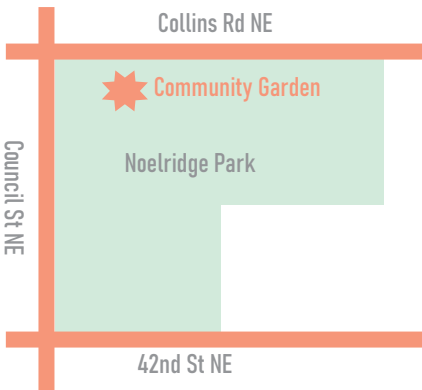
Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area
- Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Noelridge Park is a large regional park located in the northeast quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed community gardens are located in the northeast section of the park, just south of Collins Road. The proposed garden area could be accessed from the northeast parking lot from Council St. NE.

This site has the potential for 0.75 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10'), medium (10' X 20') or large (20' x 40') depending on the community's needs. 8 ADA accessible plots could be located directly off the existing ADA parking with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost and pollinator plants.



HUSTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennials plants
- Compost area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Huston Park is located in the Wellington Heights neighborhood in the southeast quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed community gardens are located in the center of the triangle-shaped park, and could be accessed from street parking on 3rd Ave SE, Washington Ave SE, or 15th St SE.

This site has the potential for 0.35 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10') or medium (10' X 20') depending on the community's needs. 4 ADA accessible plots could be located at the NE corner of the park with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost and pollinator plants.



REED COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

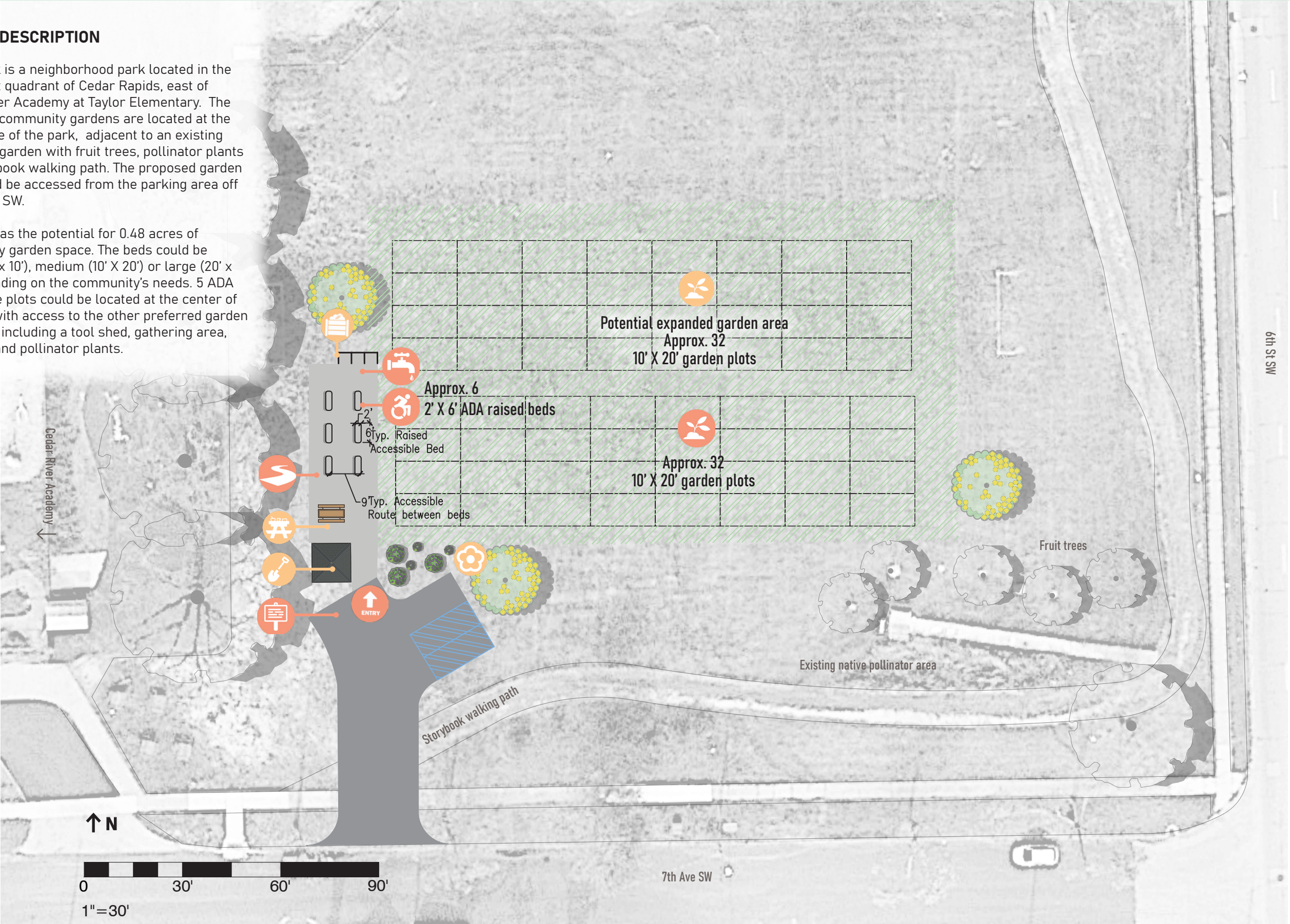
Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area
- Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Reed Park is a neighborhood park located in the southwest quadrant of Cedar Rapids, east of Cedar River Academy at Taylor Elementary. The proposed community gardens are located at the south edge of the park, adjacent to an existing perennial garden with fruit trees, pollinator plants and storybook walking path. The proposed garden area could be accessed from the parking area off of 7th Ave SW.

This site has the potential for 0.48 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10'), medium (10' x 20') or large (20' x 40') depending on the community's needs. 5 ADA accessible plots could be located at the center of the park with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost and pollinator plants.



CHERRY HILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

CONCEPT PLAN

Core Amenities

- Entrance
- Sign
- Garden plots
- Water spigot
- ADA accessible raised beds
- ADA accessible surface

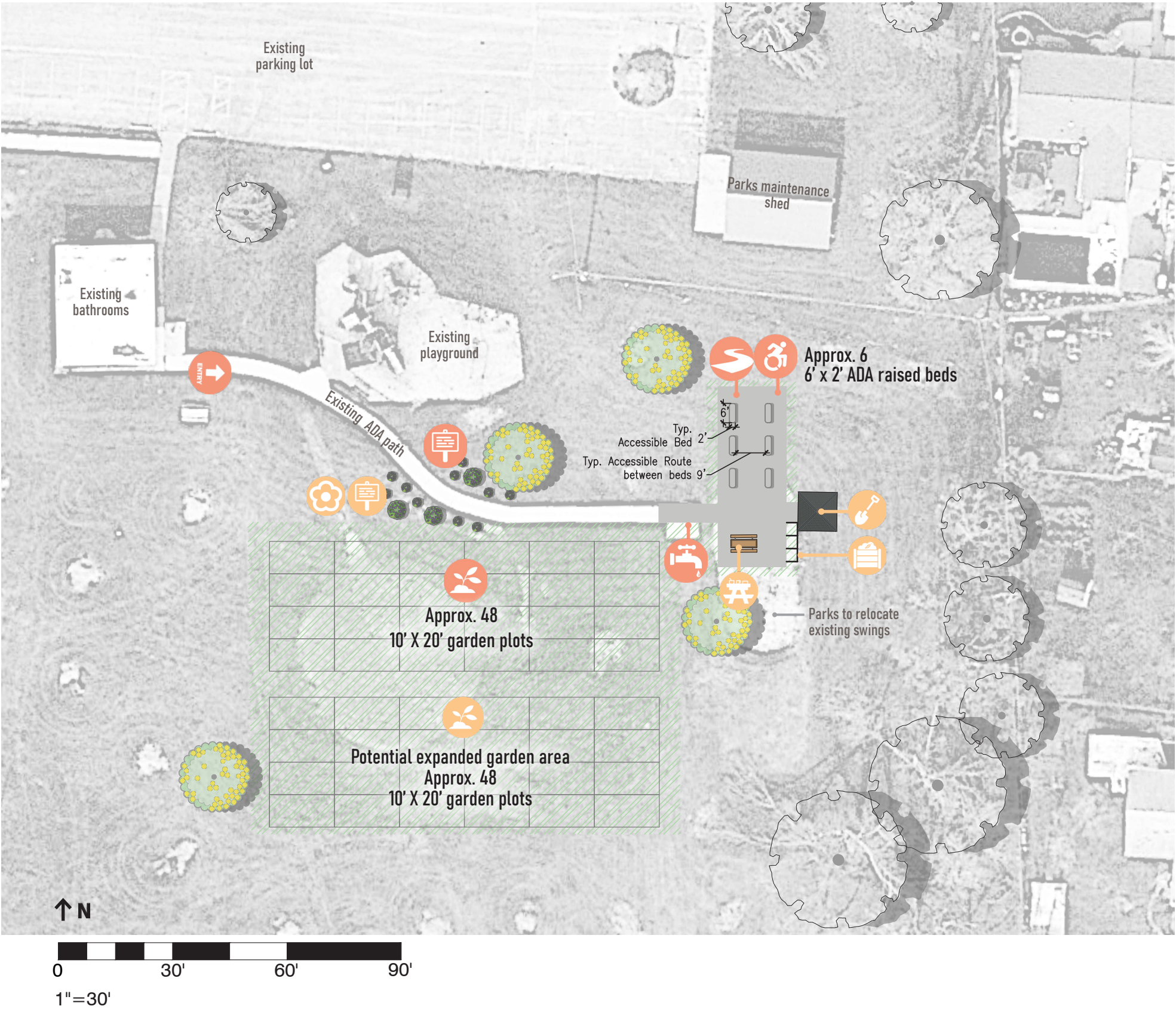
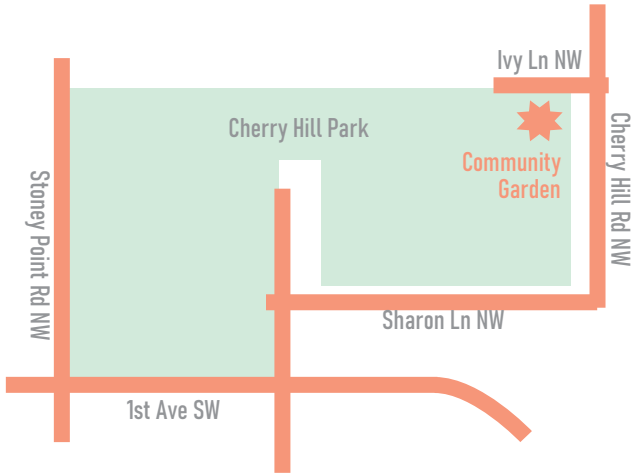
Preferred Amenities

- Tool shed
- Gathering area
- Educational signs
- Pollinator & perennial plants
- Compost area
- Potential expanded garden area

DESIGN DESCRIPTION

Cherry Hill Park is a large regional park located in the northwest quadrant of Cedar Rapids. The proposed community gardens are located in the northwest corner of the park. The proposed garden area could be accessed from Ivy Lane NW from the existing parking lot to the north.

This site has the potential for 0.5 acres of community garden space. The beds could be small (10' x 10'), medium (10' X 20') or large (20' x 40') depending on the community's needs. 6 ADA accessible plots could be located off of the recently constructed ADA pathway from the parking lot, with access to the other preferred garden amenities including a tool shed, gathering area, compost and pollinator plants.



Managing Community Gardens in Cedar Rapids

City Support: Staff Resources

At the three current City-run gardens, Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation staff currently provide the following administrative and maintenance services:

Current Administrative Functions

Recreation Administration	
Facilitate garden plot renewal and new application processes	This entails outreach to existing gardeners to confirm renewals as well as the community at large for new applicants, processing all applications, and executing garden plot leases.
Parks Administration	
Community outreach	This function involves fielding general questions from the community and operations questions from current gardeners.

Current Maintenance Functions

Water Access	For gardens with water access, staff get the water lines up and running before the season opens in April and perform ongoing maintenance to repair any leaks or faucet issues through the season until October. This includes annual water testing and maintenance on the backflow preventers.
Regular Mowing	Staff mow around the garden plots every week or every other week throughout the season, depending on the need.
Plot Cleanup	At the end of each season, staff clear the plots of all debris left behind, including steel posts, plant cages, plastic, etc., prior to mowing and tilling.
Tilling	In the spring, staff tills all in-ground plots prior to the beginning of the season in April. In the fall, staff mows and then tills all in-ground plots after clearing out any debris to ready them for winter.
Plot Delineation	Staff marks out the parameters of each individual plot after tilling so gardeners can identify their growing area.

Maintenance Strategic Recommendations

The following are strategic recommendations for maintenance and oversight of Cedar Rapids' community gardens based on research of best practices and community partner feedback. Given that expanded and more complex garden maintenance will represent a significant increase in scope for the Parks and Recreation staff, this plan recommends adhering to current garden maintenance standards in the short term.

Aligning with the mid-term and long-term goals of this plan, staff can then look to improve garden management by incorporating these recommendations and building upon community partnerships for support.

To support expanded management needs, this plan recommends bringing on an Americorps VISTA position and then a new community gardens coordinator in year 3 of the program. These positions would help alleviate the additional administrative functions needed to oversee the program's expansion. Responsibilities may include program strategic planning and evaluation, communications to the public and gardener network, partnership management, volunteer oversight, fundraising, and others.

Pre-Season (January–March)

- 1. Aim to schedule spring tilling as close as possible to garden opening and consider opportunities to align tilling with gardeners' cultural practices.**

By waiting as long as possible into spring to till, the City can help ensure workable soil for gardeners. Cedar Rapids falls within USDA Plant Hardiness Zone 5a, with an average last frost date of April 15. These zones are the standard by which gardeners and growers can determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a location and are based on the average annual minimum winter temperature. Given that the last freeze is generally around mid-April or potentially later in some years, gardeners should be encouraged to do their research on cold weather plantings and related care.

Many diverse communities that utilize Cedar Rapids' community gardens to grow culturally relevant foods often focus on warm or hot weather crops and may not begin to plant until May or June. Soil that was tilled in early April will likely be compacted and in need of re-tilling by that time, making this service less of a resource for gardeners focused on later growing seasons. If certain gardens have a concentration of gardeners that prefer later season gardening, the City should consider offering a later tilling date which could help stagger spring tilling needs as the gardens expand. This can be determined by post-season surveys. If tillings are staggered, the City should communicate tilling dates to the gardeners so that they may begin sowing or planting as soon as possible.

- 2. Perform NPK soil testing at each garden site every two to three years.**

In addition to the existing soil testing for organic and metallic pollutants performed upon garden installation, the City should perform pH and NPK soil testing at each garden site every two to three years. At least two samples per acre of garden space should be collected for these soil tests post-spring tilling. The City should distribute the results to gardeners to help them better

understand what types of plants will thrive in the existing soil and what types of soil amendments they might need for optimal growing conditions. Performing these tests on a regular basis every two to three years will also create key data points on soil health in community gardens. This plan was created in response to a recommendation from the 2021 Cedar Rapids Climate Action Plan. Data on soil health will help speak to other goals within that climate action plan as healthier, well-balanced soils can help to improve air quality, improve water filtration, and increase carbon sequestration. This recommendation could be undertaken in partnership with Feed Iowa First who currently conduct NPK testing at their garden sites.

3. Train maintenance staff on upkeep of ADA-compliant raised garden beds.

As new gardens are installed with raised beds, the Parks Department should ensure all garden maintenance staff are trained on upkeep of the new bed types.

Gardening Season (April–October)

1. Install informational signage to improve neighborhood relations and discourage theft or vandalism.

Create standardized signage for the gardens including the garden name, city contact information for administrative questions, and language about the garden's stewardship and purpose. Signage indicating that the garden is a community resource in which food is grown by and for neighbors can be an effective deterrent against theft and vandalism. For example, "Neighbors growing food for their families" and "Harvesting without permission is theft." Additionally, once gleanings and donations are in place, a note could be added that excess produce is donated back to the community. This messaging should be posted in multiple languages most appropriate for the individual garden neighborhoods.

2. Add bi-monthly garden checks to ongoing mowing services.

As gardens expand into new parks across more densely populated neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids, management will need to increase focus on community relations. Of the 438 community survey respondents, 15 percent indicated that they had concerns about new community gardens in their neighborhoods. The majority of these concerns were related to garden plots being left untended and looking unruly or being overrun with weeds. The current garden lease has several clauses to deter unsightly or overgrown plots including prohibiting brightly colored fencing, prohibiting any illegal or invasive plantings, and a fee if the plot has debris or weeds over 12 inches tall left at the end of the season. Maintenance staff should take the need for closer scrutiny into account when marking out plots at the beginning of the season. Consider creating a simple garden map with plot numbers and flagging any plots in violation to garden administration as a part of bi-monthly walkthroughs performed in conjunction with regular mowing. Staff should communicate that the end-of-season fee will be strictly enforced.

3. Implement new procedures to handle waste management, including additional trash receptacles at garden sites and a garden compost pilot program.

Ensure convenient trash receptacles are placed near garden sites within the park to encourage upkeep and limit non-organic materials left in the garden. To reduce trash and waste, consider piloting a garden compost program at Sinclair Garden in partnership with a community partner.

(See Gardener Resources recommendations within the Community Partnership section for more information.)

Post-Season (November–December)

1. Reduce or eliminate the practice of fall tilling.

Rather than tilling plots in the fall, the City should mow down garden plots. Leaving the root systems intact will help to maintain soil integrity over the winter season when the plots are fallow. In addition, this would save an average of 32–40 staff hours per garden per Parks Department estimates.

As an additional soil amendment, staff should consider adding leaf cover or other soil amendment to the mowed garden plots. The City currently collects and pays a fee to dump leaves at the county landfill. By diverting some collected leaves to use as ground cover at City-owned gardens, the City would save on dumping fees and create a soil enriching resource.

Community Garden Administration

Garden Plot Applications

The 2023 application timeline is as follows:

January 16	Garden plot renewal letters sent out
February 24	Deadline for garden plot renewal
March 14	Garden plot sign-up open to public
April TBD	Beginning of garden season (<i>exact date is weather dependent</i>)
October 8	End of garden season

Current gardeners are eligible to renew only their exact same plots, with a limit of four plots per lessee. Gardeners may either renew their plots by mail, by sending in a check or credit card payment with their completed lease agreement, or in person at either of the following locations:

- Northwest Recreation Center, 1340 11th Street NW, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- City Services Center (CSC), 500 15th Avenue SW, 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

The installation of new gardens with no current gardeners and a variety of plot sizes introduces an opportunity to update the application process. The recommendations that follow are options for updating the process for various community groups.

ADA Accessible Raised Beds

Individuals with a disability or older adults (65+ years old) should have priority in renting the ADA accessible raised garden beds installed at new garden locations. The ADA raised beds should open to the public one to two weeks before the remaining plots, in early March, so that those who self-identify as requiring accessible beds can have priority. If any of these ADA beds are not leased during the renewal or general application period, those plots may be rented by the City on a temporary basis to the general public. Any ADA raised bed temporarily assigned to the general public must be relinquished

at the end of the current garden season and is not eligible for automatic renewal if a person with a disability or older adult is interested in the plot.

New Gardeners

New gardeners can either be defined as gardeners that have never participated in any community garden or have never been a member of a Cedar Rapids City-owned community garden. New gardeners should be restricted to leasing a maximum of two small (4'x6') or one medium (10'x20') plot during their first season. New gardeners should also be encouraged or required to attend a “New Gardener Orientation” class covering basics such as transplanting seedlings, beneficial co-plantings, natural soil amendments, and more. This class should reinforce garden lease clauses preventing the use of herbicides and pesticides and offer alternative strategies for weed and pest control. This orientation class is a programming recommendation in partnership with the Iowa State University (ISU) Extension Master Gardener program. The City should also consider establishing a more formal mentorship program pairing current experienced gardeners with new gardeners for support.

Neighborhood Recruitment

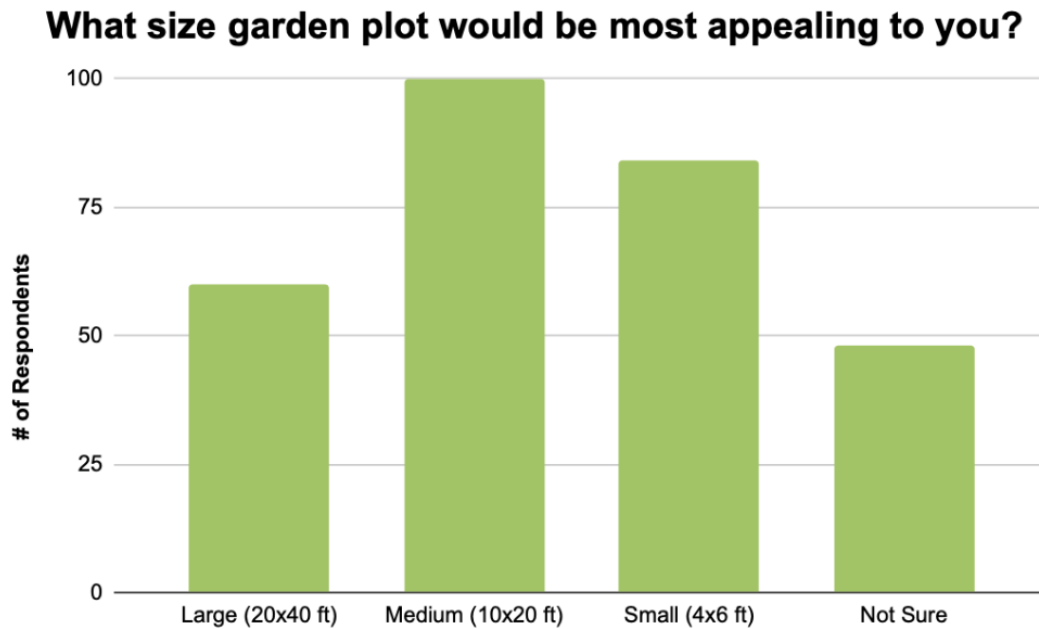
During the community survey process, respondents who provided their address were mapped along with potential park sites to determine hyper-local neighborhood interest in a garden at each park site. The City should consider using this same process to prioritize applicants within a predetermined radius from each garden. Prioritizing neighborhood applicants makes each garden a true neighborhood resource and helps to ensure maximum accessibility. Formal recruitment can be coordinated across current community gathering spots including program advertisement in multiple languages at libraries, schools, community partner organizations, and within other Parks and Recreation materials.

Garden Plot Sizes and Fees

As of the 2023 season, the City charges a standard \$41 per 20x50-foot garden plot to all gardeners. According to the community survey, a majority of respondents find this \$40 range to be appropriate, but many others are looking for discounted plots or are willing to pay more for this resource.



Community survey respondents also indicated an interest in a range of garden plot sizes. With the current plot size of 20x50 feet defined as “large,” a majority of respondents preferred medium (10’x20’) or small (4’x6’) plots.



Based on community interest from the survey, the City should aim for an equal number of large, medium, and small plot sizes available at each new garden. The City should take these varying plot sizes, as well as the availability of ADA accessible raised beds, into account and create a fee structure that scales with plot size. For example:

Garden Plot Size	Annual Fee	RecAssist Fee
Large (20x50 ft = 1,000 sq ft)	\$50	\$25
Medium (10x20 ft = 200 sq ft)	\$40	\$20
Small (4x6 ft = 24 sq ft)	\$20	\$10
Raised Bed	\$20	\$10

This represents an increase from the current standard fee of \$41 per plot, but the gardens program will soon offer additional resources and networking that will add value to the gardeners’ experience. All plot rental fees will be utilized to help cover some of the costs of the community gardens program.

To increase equitable access to community gardens, the City should consider offering discounted plots in line with the current Cedar Rapids RecAssist Low Income Assistance program¹¹. Qualifying families and individuals would receive a 50 percent discount on garden plot fees.

Offering raised beds, small beds, and medium beds will increase the number of beds available over the total square footage of the garden area. The increased revenue from a greater number of beds will help to offset discounts available to lower income and larger families. To offset these discounts, the City should also include the option for gardeners to pay more than the assigned fee for their size plot, with an explanation that any excess funds will be used to cover discounted community plots to increase equitable garden access. Additional means of fundraising for the program are also outlined in the “Funding Opportunities to Support Community Gardens” section of this plan.

The City should enforce fines for gardeners that leave their plots in an unacceptable state at the end of the season in October. If fines are not paid, the City should consider precluding delinquent gardeners from leasing a plot the following season. A fine is outlined in the existing city garden lease to require the removal of all non-organic material including trash, wire cages, and other plant supports, but needs to be enforced consistently. Funds from any fines collected could help to cover the additional maintenance needs associated with uncleared plots while a limitation on renting a plot the following season could serve as a serious deterrent.

Garden Communications

With a steadily increasing number of gardens, the City will benefit from additional communications with gardeners to advertise available resources, connect participants across the garden network, and set garden management expectations.

Individual Gardener Feedback

- **Pre-Season**

The City has invested significant effort to ensure that this plan prioritizes accessibility, equity, and community feedback in its design. To determine how successfully new gardens reach low-income and low-access residents, the City should capture data against a set of metrics that could include:

- Number of new gardeners within a certain radius of each garden
- Number of new gardeners with household incomes below \$25,000

To capture this information and more, the City should consider including standard demographic questions in the garden plot application. Having demographic data on garden program participation will also strengthen external grant applications for additional program funding.

- **Post-Season**

Since this plan recommends the introduction of new fee structures, plot sizes, and garden amenities at each of the new garden locations, post-season gardener surveys should be distributed to gather feedback on these new processes. This will allow the program to evolve to best fit community needs and serve as additional data for future garden expansion and fundraising efforts.

¹¹“RecAssist: Low Income Assistance Program.” City of Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation, accessed March 24, 2023, https://www.cedar-rapids.org/residents/parks_and_recreation/recassist.php.

Gardener Network Communications

With a growing network of community gardeners, the City has the opportunity to help connect and equip a significant group of residents with shared interests across Cedar Rapids. Network communications could be facilitated in the following ways:

- **Community Gardener Newsletter**

The Parks and Recreation Department should consider offering a monthly or quarterly newsletter for current gardeners for regular communication during the gardening season. Newsletters could highlight individual city gardens, cover timely garden maintenance topics, and advertise local resources such as plant sales and educational classes. This newsletter should be made available as a digital and printed resource. The department should consider having translations available into languages other than English. Data gathered from applications and end-of-season surveys can provide information on top language resources needed.

- **Community Gardener Social Media Groups**

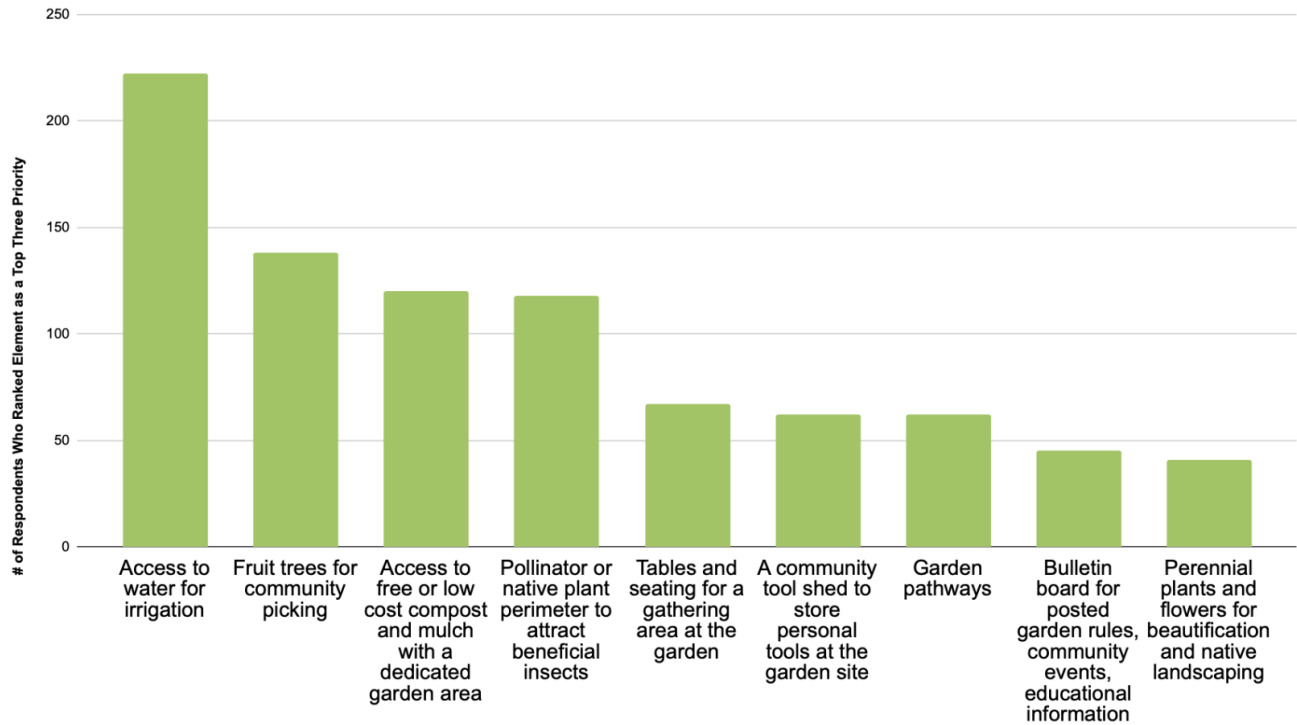
To allow for gardener-to-gardener feedback, the Parks and Recreation Department should consider social media options to connect gardeners. This could include regular seasonal posts within the Parks and Recreation page, creating a sub-group to the existing page, or encouraging garden leaders to create collaboration pages for their particular gardens. This would allow gardeners to opt into a social network and facilitate the sharing of best practices across the network.

Programming Strategy and Community Partnerships

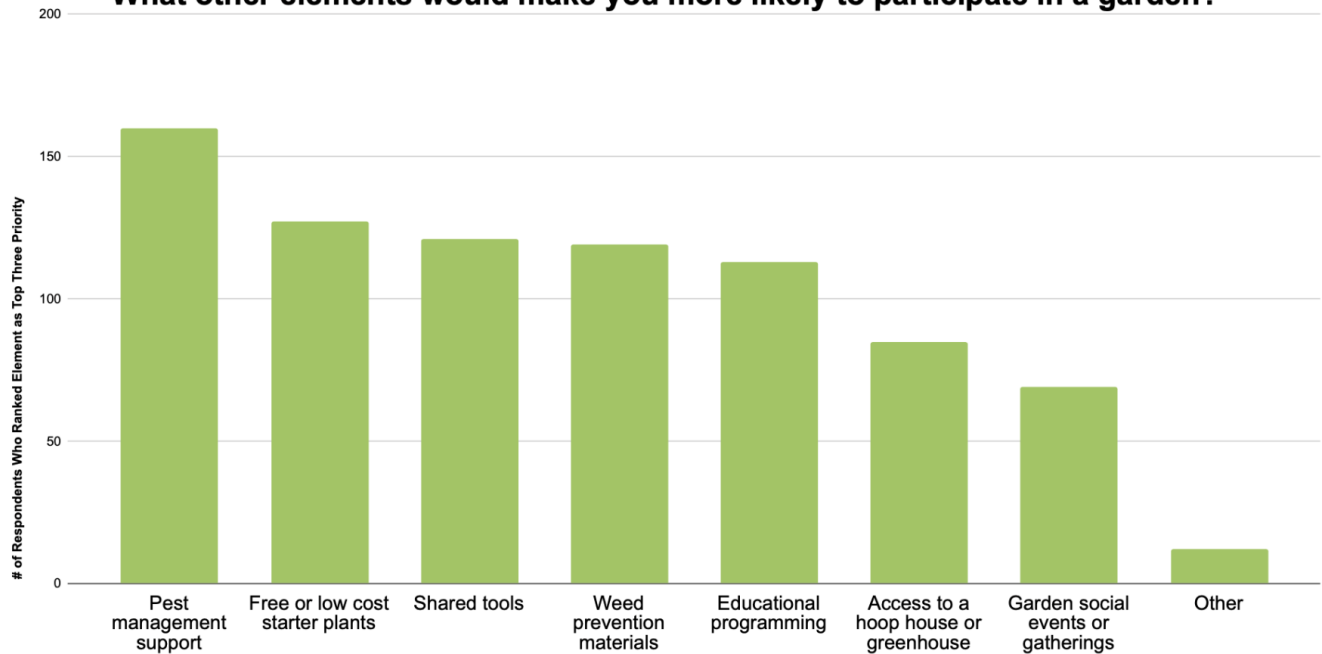
One goal of the 2022 community survey was to elicit feedback on what types of additional amenities and services would attract and support gardeners. Over 300 respondents in the survey ranked the design elements that would make them more likely to participate in a community garden. Access to water for irrigation was by far the most requested amenity that would directly support growing efforts. The second tier of requests, with between 100 to 150 responses, included fruit trees for a community orchard, access to free or low-cost compost and mulch, and the addition of pollinator and/or native plants to attract beneficial insects.

The community survey also asked respondents to rank other elements, outside of the primary design features, that would make them more likely to participate in a garden. Top responses included pest management support, access to free or low-cost start plants, shared tools, weed prevention materials, and educational programming.

What design elements would make you more likely to participate in a garden?



What other elements would make you more likely to participate in a garden?



These elements are reflected in the Garden Toolkit, which models the core and preferred amenities that every Cedar Rapids community garden installation should take into account. Each garden will be initially built out with the core amenities of in-ground and ADA accessible garden plots, water access, a clear and accessible entry way, and navigable pathways.

As budgets allow, the gardens may be upgraded to include the preferred amenities of a gathering area such as picnic tables, pollinator and perennial plantings, a shared tool shed, a communal compost and mulch area, and additional educational signage. These upgrades could occur during the initial garden installation or at a later date.

DESIGN TOOLKIT: GARDENS IN PARKS

Core Amenities

-  Garden plots
-  Water
-  Entry way
-  Accessible garden beds
-  Pathways

Preferred Amenities

-  Gathering area
-  Pollinator & perennials
-  Tool shed
-  Compost area
-  Educational Signs

The inclusion of fruit trees, although of high interest to community members, was determined to be an element that would be best developed on park sites with site conditions that are appropriate for in-ground garden plots, such as Daniels Park. Therefore, orchards were not included in the community gardens toolkit but are recommended for future consideration as the city budget allows.

In addition to in-garden amenities, the City has the opportunity to engage gardeners and the community at large through programming with community organizations. Below are strategic recommendations for partnership initiatives to offer as part of the community gardens program. Time frames for suggested implementation are divided into short term (within the next 1–2 years) and long term (3+ years).

Focus Area	Program	Time Frame
Education	Implement new gardener orientation	short term
	Establish a formal education partnership with ISU Extension Master Gardeners program	long term
Gardener Resources	Create and distribute a comprehensive list of local Cedar Rapids gardening resources	short term
	Establish a community seed library	short/long term
	Supplement a community gardening tool bank	long term
	Pilot a garden compost project	long term

Gleaning & Produce Donation	Establish produce donation opportunities for gardeners	short term
	Create formal gleaning network across garden network	long term
Community Engagement	Increase volunteer recruitment	short term
	Host annual community event(s) at each community garden	long term
	Community benefit plot fee refund	long term

Education

1. Implement New Gardener Orientation

- **Community partners:** ISU Extension Master Gardeners
- **Time frame:** Short term
- **Detail:** Offer, and consider requiring, a gardener orientation class for first time city-gardeners at each garden site covering basics such as transplanting seedlings, beneficial co-plantings, natural soil amendments, and more. This class should reinforce garden lease clauses preventing the use of herbicides and pesticides and offer alternative strategies for weed and pest control.

2. Establish a Formal Education Partnership with ISU Extension Master Gardeners Program

- **Community partners:** ISU Extension Master Gardeners
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** The Master Gardener program is a volunteer service program whereby gardeners are given advanced training in horticulture in exchange for volunteer service to the community. The ISU Extension Master Gardeners program has over 250 participants that each need at least 20 hours of volunteer service per year to maintain their certification. A formal partnership outlined by a memorandum of understanding would be mutually beneficial to the City and ISU Extension. This would open the City to numerous educational opportunities for their expanding garden program while helping to expand ISU Extension's reach into more urban and underserved communities. The City could post signage at each garden with the Master Gardener logo and contact information for their Horticultural Information Hotline for gardening questions. ISU Extension could offer additional gardening education through their Speakers Bureau program and highlight Cedar Rapids community gardens in their annual Garden Walks.

Gardener Resources

1. Create and Distribute Comprehensive Cedar Rapids Gardening Resource Guide

- **Community partners:** Cedar Rapids Wellbeing Advisory Committee
- **Time frame:** Short term
- **Detail:** Work with the Wellbeing Committee to compile a comprehensive list of gardening resources including educational opportunities, volunteer opportunities, plant sales, sources for compost/mulch, etc. for distribution to new and existing gardeners.

Host this resource on the Parks and Recreation website along with garden application information.

This guide should be updated following the formalization of new internal management processes and pursuit of key strategic partnership recommendations in order to be a useful resource for new and existing community gardeners covering:

- Overview of the Cedar Rapids Community Garden program
- Processes for securing a garden plot
- Copy of the Garden Plot Lease
- Cedar Rapids Community Garden Resource List as developed by the Wellbeing Committee
- Additional local and regional gardening tips for growing in Zone 5a
 - Include ISU Extension resources - weed maintenance, organic practices, planting calendars, etc.
- Additional information on Cedar Rapids zoning code to identify locations for small on-site markets

2. Establish a Community Seed Library

- **Community partners:** Matthew 25
- **Time frame:** Short term
- **Detail:** Expand existing seed library at Matthew 25's Cultivate Hope Corner Store to increase access to free seeds for community members. Consider additional funding to offer more seeds and create a secondary location.
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** Coordinate with Cedar Rapids public library locations to host seed libraries stocked with free seeds available to community members. Libraries are an accessible community resource open to the public that can host seed libraries with minimal infrastructure needs including a display rack, signage, and staff training.

3. Supplement a Community Gardening Tool Bank

- **Community partners:** Matthew 25
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** Consider using some garden program funding or raising additional funds to supplement the community tool bank run by Matthew 25. This is a resource for community members to rent garden tools that they may not have access to and can be a stop gap resource before the preferred amenity of communal tool sheds are installed. The City should consider purchasing additional shovels, hoes, rakes, broadforks, and spades for the program and directing gardeners there for tool rental. Alternatively, the City could consider hosting its own garden tool repository for rental or supporting shared tool management at the garden sites. A seasonal community tool drive can be an effective way to accrue gently used gardening tools without impacting the program budget. To support hosting tools at specific garden sites, the City could have a shared combination lock for on-site tool sheds. For a more cautious approach or in light of theft, the City could advertise certain days or times that the tool shed would have supervised access either from maintenance staff or garden leaders.

4. Pilot a Garden Compost Program at Sinclair Garden

- **Community partners:** TBD
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** Partner with a community organization experienced in community compost operations to design and implement a garden compost pilot program at Sinclair Garden. Sinclair is recommended for this pilot in the long-term time frame (3+ years) so that an established group of gardeners can communally manage this resource. As a complex, multi-step process, compost maintenance would not be as successful during a garden's first few years of establishment.

Composting methods to explore include tumblers, which can process less volume, but are more accessible and contained, or three-bin composting systems that require manual turning. For either option, education will be a key component of this program. Operations and maintenance training for gardeners should be required and clear signage about allowable inputs should be posted.

The City should work with Linn County Solid Waste Agency to ensure compliance with composting regulations and adherence to best practices.

Gleaning and Produce Donation

1. Establish Produce Donation Opportunities for Gardeners

- **Community partners:** Feed Iowa First, Matthew 25
- **Time frame:** Short term
- **Detail:** Make gardeners aware of organizations where they can drop excess produce for donation to the community, such as the GAP-certified produce donation shed at Feed Iowa First's main location or Matthew 25's Cultivate Hope Corner Store. Include these resources along with locations and drop off times in the gardener newsletter or post at garden locations. Include a question surveying interest in implementing a communally managed donation program at various gardens in post-season gardener surveys.

2. Create Formal Gleaning Network across Garden Network

- **Community partners:** Feed Iowa First, HACAP
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** Once additional gardens are installed, work with HACAP to coordinate produce pickups by local partner agencies at nearby gardens. This would create a hyper-local food access point, keep community garden resources within the neighborhood, and positively impact community relations with the garden. Consider a formal gleaning network across all 11 planned community gardens in partnership with Feed Iowa First, serving the northeast and northwest quadrants, and HACAP, serving the southeast and southwest quadrants. If possible, raise funds to equip participating gardens with a small refrigerator in the communal tool shed (among the preferred amenities) to store produce for coordinated bi-weekly pickups.

Community Engagement

1. Increase Volunteer Recruitment

- **Community partners:** Kirkwood Community College Agriculture Program, United Way of Eastern Iowa
- **Time frame:** Short term
- **Detail:** Expand “Garden Buddies Program” that was piloted in October 2022 to help with end of season plot clean-up at existing gardens. Establish a regular cadence of garden volunteer opportunities including garden bed preparation (this could coincide with Earth Day volunteer opportunities), garden maintenance, and end of season clean up. Volunteer support will not only serve as a community touchpoint for new gardens, but can help to cover communal garden tasks such as weeding perimeter plantings and maintaining walkways that individual gardeners might not tend to.

2. Host Annual Community Event(s) at Each Community Garden

- **Community partners:** TBD
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** As gardens expand into new parks across more densely populated neighborhoods of Cedar Rapids, the City will need to increase focus on community relations. Of the 438 community survey respondents, 15 percent indicated that they had concerns about new community gardens in their neighborhoods. These concerns were mainly related to garden upkeep, but also highlighted worries about increased traffic, bringing unknown people into the neighborhood, and vandalism/safety concerns. To increase neighborhood familiarity with the garden, the City should sponsor at least one community event at each garden each year. This could be a garden tour with light refreshments, a volunteer workday, or a garden open house in conjunction with other activities at the park.

3. Consider a Community Benefit Refund for Eligible Gardeners

- **Community partners:** City of Cedar Rapids, volunteer and/or gleaning partners in place
- **Time frame:** Long term
- **Detail:** Gardeners may apply for a 50 percent refund of their plot fee at the end of the season in October if they are able to demonstrate that they did one of the following:
 - i. Donated a portion of their produce to a non-profit organization, food pantry, or similar entity that benefits the community by reducing hunger and food insecurity, or
 - ii. Volunteered a predetermined number of hours for communal garden maintenance or improvement, including, but not limited to maintaining garden pathways, weeding garden perimeter and/or pollinator/native plantings, turning compost, servicing communal resources such as entryways, tool sheds, orchards, etc.

Community Gardens Budget

Current Administration and Maintenance Costs

The administrative and maintenance tasks associated with the three existing community gardens are completed by two admin support staff, two maintenance supervisors, five maintenance workers, and ten seasonal staff. These staff members dedicate a portion of their time to community gardens, primarily in the spring and fall. In total, the current program requires approximately 782 hours of staff time yearly, equating to approximately \$33,000 in labor expenses.

These gardens also require the use of vehicles. Assuming that the maintenance and fuel costs of the vehicle fleet are allocated evenly across the 97 parks in Cedar Rapids and that half of the costs per park are for garden-related maintenance, fleet expenses equate to just over \$2,000 per park. In total, the three existing garden sites are estimated to cost approximately \$39,000 per year.

Site Budgets: Construction and Maintenance

Based on the number of plots and amenities in each site plan, an estimated budget was determined for each garden. The site budgets are estimates based on 2023 costs and include both construction costs and maintenance costs.

Maintenance costs include labor hours for staff, costs of vehicle maintenance and fuel, and a six-month rental of temporary bathroom facilities at sites without permanent bathroom facilities. Maintenance hours are based on the tasks necessary to support the existing community gardens as well as the addition of new tasks associated with the implementation of the Community Gardens in Parks Plan, including soil testing and bimonthly garden checks. Labor hours were scaled based on the number of in-ground beds and ADA accessible beds at each site and do not include any additional hours that may be required to support the preferred amenities at each site. Since many of the new gardens will be smaller than the existing community garden sites, with fewer garden beds at varying sizes, the new gardens are expected to require fewer maintenance hours for mowing, tilling, and cleanup.

SINCLAIR PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 1.2 acres

Probable Construction Cost				
CORE AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Paving				
New parking lot	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	1,200	\$10	\$12,000
New concrete path	SQ. FT.	950	\$10	\$9,500
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guideline sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA Beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	14	\$300	\$4,200
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	14	\$70	\$980
SUBTOTAL:				\$53,430
PREFERRED AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Irrigation System				
Irrigation System expansion	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
3' ADA 'nature' concrete path	LF	240	\$10	\$2,400
Bike rack	EA.	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Drinking fountain	EA.	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Picnic table	EA.	4	\$1,500	\$6,000
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,200	\$1,200
Educational signs	EA.	6	\$650	\$3,900
Trash receptacle	EA.	2	\$635	\$1,270
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1	\$5,575	\$5,575
Structures				
Bathroom remodel to tool shed	L. Sum	1	\$25,000	\$25,000
SUBTOTAL:				\$60,445
SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES				\$ 53,430
SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES				\$ 60,445
25% CONTINGENCY				\$ 28,469
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS				\$142,344
Annual Maintenance Costs				
DESCRIPTION				Totals
Maintenance team labor	259	hours		\$11,702
Fleet expenses				\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)				\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS				\$14,637

LINCOLNWAY PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.28 acres

Probable Construction Cost

CORE AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$12,500	\$12,500
Site Paving				
New concrete path	L. Sum	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	1,450	\$10	\$20,000
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guideline sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	6	\$510	\$3,060
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	6	\$70	\$420
SUBTOTAL:				\$52,730

PREFERRED AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Picnic table	EA.	2	\$1,200	\$2,400
Educational signs	EA.	1	\$650	\$650
Landscape plants	EA.	1	\$1,650	\$1,650
SUBTOTAL:				\$16,050

SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES	\$ 52,730
SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES	\$ 16,050
25% CONTINGENCY	\$ 17,195

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS	\$85,975
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Annual Maintenance Costs

DESCRIPTION	Totals
Maintenance team labor	155.5 hours \$6,894
Fleet expenses	\$2,155
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS	\$9,049

TWIN PINES PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.52 acres

Probable Construction Cost				
CORE AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Paving				
New concrete path	L. Sum	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	2,433	\$10	\$24,330
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guidelines sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	6	\$510	\$3,060
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	6	\$70	\$420
SUBTOTAL:				\$54,560
PREFERRED AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Picnic table	EA.	2	\$1,200	\$2,400
Educational signs	EA.	1	\$650	\$650
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1	\$1,650	\$1,650
SUBTOTAL:				\$17,700
SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES				\$ 54,560
SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES				\$ 17,700
25% CONTINGENCY				\$ 18,065
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS				\$90,325

Annual Maintenance Costs		
DESCRIPTION		Totals
Maintenance team labor	169 hours	\$7,523
Fleet expenses		\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)		\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS		\$10,458

TOKHEIM PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.1 acres

Probable Construction Cost				
CORE AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$25,000	\$25,000
Site Paving				
New concrete path	SQ. FT.	500	\$10	\$5,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	1,000	\$10	\$10,000
New parking lot	L. Sum	1	\$15,000	\$15,000
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guideline sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	2	\$510	\$1,020
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	2	\$70	\$140
SUBTOTAL:				\$67,910
PREFERRED AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Picnic table	EA.	1	\$1,200	\$1,200
Educational signs	EA.	2	\$650	\$1,300
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1	\$775	\$775
SUBTOTAL:				\$15,500
SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES				\$ 67,910
SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES				\$ 15,500
25% CONTINGENCY				\$ 20,853
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS				\$104,263

Annual Maintenance Costs		
DESCRIPTION		Totals
Maintenance team labor	78.5 hours	\$3,320
Fleet expenses		\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)		\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS		\$6,255

NOELRIDGE PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.72 acres

Probable Construction Cost				
CORE AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Paving				
New concrete path	L. Sum	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	2,664	\$10	\$26,640
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guidelines sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	8	\$510	\$4,080
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	8	\$70	\$560
SUBTOTAL:				\$58,030
PREFERRED AMENITIES				
DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling 60 new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Picnic table	EA.	2	\$1,200	\$2,400
Educational signs	EA.	2	\$650	\$1,300
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1	\$2,300	\$2,300
SUBTOTAL:				\$19,000
SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES				\$ 58,030
SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES				\$ 19,000
25% CONTINGENCY				\$ 19,258
TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS				\$96,288
Annual Maintenance Costs				
DESCRIPTION				Totals
Maintenance team labor	230	hours		\$10,356
Fleet expenses				\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)				\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS				\$13,291

HUSTON PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.3 acres

Probable Construction Cost

CORE AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Paving				
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	950	\$10	\$9,500
New Parking lot	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guideline sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA Beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	6	\$510	\$3,060
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	6	\$70	\$420
SUBTOTAL:				\$44,730

PREFERRED AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	Discuss	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,200	\$1,200
Picnic table	EA.	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Educational signs	EA.	1	\$650	\$650
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1		\$1,650
SUBTOTAL:				\$14,850

SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES **\$ 44,730**

SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES **\$ 14,850**

25% CONTINGENCY **\$ 14,895**

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS **\$74,475**

Annual Maintenance Costs

DESCRIPTION	Totals
Maintenance team labor	99 hours \$4,270
Fleet expenses	\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)	\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS	\$7,205

REED PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.48 acres

Probable Construction Cost

CORE AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$12,500	\$12,500
Site Paving				
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	1,300	\$10	\$13,000
New Parking lot	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guideline sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	5	\$510	\$2,550
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	5	\$70	\$350
SUBTOTAL:				\$50,150

PREFERRED AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Landscape Plants				
Fruit tree (15 Gallon)	EA.	3	\$250	\$750
Shrub (15 Gallon)	EA.	3	\$150	\$450
Shrub (5 Gallon)	EA.	6	\$75	\$450
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,200
Picnic table	EA.	1	\$1,200	\$1,200
Educational signs	EA.	1	\$650	\$650
Landscape plants	EA.	1	\$1,650	\$1,650
SUBTOTAL:				\$16,200

SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES \$ 50,150

SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES \$ 16,200

25% CONTINGENCY \$ 16,588

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS **\$82,938**

Annual Maintenance Costs

DESCRIPTION	Totals
Maintenance team labor	191.5 hours \$8,569
Fleet expenses	\$2,155
Temporary bathroom rentals (6 months)	\$780
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS	\$11,504

CHERRY HILL PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN BUDGET

Project Size: 0.35 acres

Probable Construction Cost

CORE AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Base construction cost (mobilization, demo, site grading)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Utilities				
New water service for irrigation (backflow preventer, etc)	L. Sum	1	\$10,000	\$10,000
Site Paving				
New concrete path	L. Sum	1	\$5,000	\$5,000
New concrete pad for ADA beds	SQ. FT.	1,416	\$10	\$20,000
Entry improvement				
Entrance/guidelines sign and install (galvanized steel, 12' x 18')	L. Sum	1	\$250	\$250
Site Amenities				
ADA beds (galvanized metal)	EA.	6	\$510	\$3,060
Organic soil mix	CU. YD.	6	\$70	\$420
SUBTOTAL:				\$50,230

PREFERRED AMENITIES

DESCRIPTION	UNIT	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	TOTALS
Site Preparation				
Preparing and tilling new plots	L. Sum	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Site Amenities/Furnishings				
Tool shed	EA.	1	\$8,500	\$8,500
Compost bins	L. Sum	1	\$1,500	\$1,500
Picnic Table	EA.	1	\$1,200	\$1,200
Educational signs	EA.	2	\$650	\$1,300
Landscape plants	L. Sum	1	\$2,200	\$2,200
SUBTOTAL:				\$15,500

SUBTOTAL CORE AMENITIES

\$ 50,230

SUBTOTAL PREFERRED AMENITIES

\$ 15,500

25% CONTINGENCY

\$ 16,433

TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS

\$82,163

Annual Maintenance Costs

DESCRIPTION		Totals
Maintenance team labor	263.5 hours	\$11,919
Fleet expenses		\$2,155
TOTAL ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COSTS		\$14,074

Community Gardens Program Budget Growth

In total, the annual costs of the community gardening program are anticipated to be approximately \$220,000 in the short term, \$330,000 in the mid term, and \$400,000 in the long term. This budget considers the costs of garden capital improvements, maintenance, staffing, and events, as well as a yearly inflation rate.

Potential funding opportunities, to supplement the existing city budget and plot rental fees, are listed in the following section of this plan. If sufficient funds cannot be identified to fully fund the program, the City should consider delaying the construction of additional gardens and focusing on core amenities, with the addition of preferred amenities at a later date.

Funding Opportunities to Support Community Gardens

In addition to engaging with community partners, sustaining financial support for Cedar Rapids' expanded community gardens program will be critical to its success. Cities can use a variety of mechanisms to fund construction, maintenance, and programming to support community gardens. The City of Cedar Rapids has access to a variety of potential funding sources - both external and internal to the organization. The resources that follow serve as an overview of some of those potential funding opportunities.

Internal Funding Opportunities

- Cities can fund community gardens through the general fund for recreation and public spaces. This can be a stable source of funding for long-term maintenance and programming in community gardens.
- Revenues from garden plot rentals can also provide a stable income stream for a community garden program. However, city staff should strike a balance between affordable plot rentals for community members and increasing the program's revenues.

External Funding Opportunities

Many community grant programs use a variety of funding sources to fund construction, maintenance, and programming. Often, grant funding can play a critical role in maintaining gardens as vibrant community spaces.

Grants applicable to community garden programs fall into two major categories:

- **Government grants** are a means to distribute federal funds towards ideas and projects that provide public services and stimulate the economy. Opportunities are sponsored through

different federal agencies appropriated through bills passed by Congress. Every opportunity has its own eligibility criteria; however, generally most entities (nonprofit, government, education, for-profit, small business) can apply if they are providing a public good or service. Because government grants are funded by tax dollars, they require stringent compliance and reporting measures for ensuring the money is spent according to federal guidelines. All federal grants can be found and must be applied for through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

- **Corporate and foundation grants** are funds made available through corporate or family trust funds that seek to provide a public good based on giving priorities agreed upon by the foundation's board of trustees. Private grants are usually only available for nonprofits with a 501(c)(3) designation. Many foundations allow businesses/organizations to partner with a 501(c)(3) who will be the acting fiscal agent.
- For additional grant opportunities, visit New Venture Advisor's [Good Food Funding Guide](#).

Government Funding for Community Gardens

[USDA: Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production \(UAIP\)](#) competitive grants initiate or expand efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban areas and suburbs. Projects may target areas of food access; education; business and start-up costs for new farmers; and development of policies related to zoning and other needs of urban production. *Grants are divided into two categories: planning projects (\$50,000–\$250,000) and implementation projects (\$75,000 and \$350,000).*

[Community Development Block Grants](#) allocated to cities are another funding source that cities can utilize to support community gardens. Authorized under the Housing and Community Development Act, the main goal of the program is to “develop viable communities by providing decent housing and suitable living environments and expanding economic opportunities, principally for persons of low and moderate incomes.” All CDBG funding is targeted to benefit low- and moderate-income residents who earn at or below 80 percent of the median family income. Note: This grant is aimed more at housing/utility improvements than larger community areas like gardens as a whole, but community gardens could still qualify as part of the public services that they fund. *The CDBG allocation amount and timing varies from year to year, based on the allocation from Congress.*

[NRCS: Conservation Innovation Grants](#) grants are allocated in both national and state-level competitions. CIG funds innovative, on-the-ground conservation projects, including pilot projects and field demonstrations. They are competitive grants that drive public and private sector innovation in resource conservation, and recently have begun to focus on urban agriculture and gardens. *In past years, maximum award funding has been \$1 million. Application timing depends on state or national level competitions.*

There are a few key government grant sources that support educational programming in gardens. These sources could provide partnerships with school districts or Iowa State Extension and Outreach:

EPA: Environmental Education Grants Program. Under this program, EPA seeks grant applications from eligible applicants to support environmental education projects that promote environmental awareness and stewardship and help provide people with the skills to take responsible actions to protect the environment. This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. *Awards range from \$50,000 to \$100,000, and applications are typically due in December.*

USDA: Farm to School Grants. On an annual basis, USDA awards competitive Farm to School grants that support planning, developing, and implementing farm to school programs. USDA's Farm to School grants are an important way to help state, regional, and local organizations as they initiate, expand, and institutionalize farm to school efforts. *Awards range from \$10,000 to \$500,000 and applications are typically due in January.*

Corporate and Foundation Grants for Community Gardens

Funding Source:	Description:	Application Timing:	Award Amounts:
Ben & Jerry's Foundation	Supports small, grass-roots organizations with an annual budget under \$500,000, focusing on community and root cause issues.	October and February	Up to \$30,000
Cedar Tree Foundation	Funds projects focusing on children's health, regenerative grazing, fracking and energy extraction issues, and amplifying youth voices about the environment.	Varies; grants are sometimes region-specific.	Multi-year grants up to \$125,000
Clarence E Heller Foundation	The mission of the Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation is to promote the long-term good health and viability of communities and regions. Focus areas include protecting the environment, regional planning, and sustainability in agriculture and food systems.	February	Varies; recent grants awarded from \$25,000 to \$150,000.
Clif Family Foundation	Funding priorities: strengthen our food system; enhance equitable community health outcomes; safeguard our environment.	February 1, June 1, or October 1	Varies
Kresge Foundation	Kresge supports equity-focused systems of health that create opportunities for all people to achieve well-being.	Varies	Varies; recent grants awarded from \$90,000 to \$1.2 million
Michael & Susan Dell Foundation	The Michael & Susan Dell Foundation is dedicated to transforming the lives of children living in urban poverty through improving their education, health and family economic stability.	Rolling	Varies; recent grants awarded from \$100,000 to several million
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation	Pioneering Ideas: Exploring the Future to Build a Culture of Health seeks proposals that are primed to influence health equity in the future of food.	June	Varies. Recent grants in Iowa awarded from \$50,000 to \$750,000.
Simply Organic Giving Fund	Support for organizations that provide people access to healthy, organic food options.	September	Up to \$150,000
Wellmark Foundation	MATCH grants support promising projects that can help individuals, families and communities achieve better health. These grants require a 50 percent match from the grantee.	Late 2023	Up to \$50,000

Appendix I: Community Engagement Feedback

This appendix contains community feedback from Cedar Rapids residents received through four channels:

1. General feedback to Cedar Rapids staff via phone or email
2. Draft Plan Feedback Survey open February - March 2023
3. General Community Survey open October - November 2022
4. Current Community Gardeners survey open August - September 2022

Comments from Online Plan Feedback Survey
February - March 2023
Open to all City of Cedar Rapids residents

What excites you about the draft Community Gardens in Parks Plan?
I like that there is a proposed garden in Noelridge Park. It is close to where I live!
I love the idea of creating more space for people to have the opportunity to grow food and develop pride and a sense of ownership of our community. The increased plant material will better support pollinators Amma make the city greener.
Many new and improvements. More people will be able to garden.
ADA raised beds to ensure individuals of all abilities can access the garden. Training for staff on ADA beds. I highly recommend the compost program. Gardner Network Communications would be extremely beneficial. Annual Community Garden Events.
I live near two parks and this would give me a reason to go visit them
More chances to see beauty and collaboration amongst neighbors
That they're adding more in town gardens.
The opportunity for more people to have a garden. Encouraging people to eat healthy!
two parks close to my house have plans. Noleridge and Twin Pines
Growing one's own food is highly empowering. Very excited to see these opportunities expanded within the community, with opportunity for all.
First, the Community Gardens in Parks Plan is visionary. Clearly there are multiple benefits: access to fresh produce (hopefully, the gardens will be strictly organic); there will be community gatherings and numerous opportunities for conversations "over the rows" so to speak; opportunities for on-site education for citizens of all ages about the benefits of gardening (emotional, relational, even spiritual, in addition to produce); I also hope that there will be an ongoing and very serious effort to reduce any kind of lawn which requires mowing, especially with fossil fuel mowers. Goats or sheep should be used instead of mowing, and, ideally, all lawn would be converted to native prairie grass; all of these latter initiatives would be educational, as well as beneficial for air and water quality, less burden on the water treatment plant, etc..
Excellent idea, improved use of city spaces and involvement of community. Potential to network with (diversity of) neighbors and use gardens/plantings for beauty and sustainability.

Very well thought out. We're working on rehabbing our neighborhood gardens teamed up with Linn Cty Master Gardener's in Wellington Heights. The information provides a lot of data we can use during our own process. The answers to the previous survey included help see what issues others find concerning we can address. Questions that came up is how can the city add to what's already set up to support this neighborhood sooner? How can we partner resources to weave the city goals for our community into our goals as a team approach with what we have established and are currently implementing long term?

What strategic recommendations in the draft Community Gardens in Parks Plan are most important to you?

I looked over the Noelridge Park area. I like that there is a compost and pollinator areas. I would like to see more perennial plants and trees planted, which could also supply food for people to pick. I like the access to water also.

Garden compost pilot and soil testing. ADA compliant raised gardens will significantly increase the diversity of gardeners.

Access to water

Multilingual signage

Bus access

Tokheim Park - Will on-street parking have a reserved handicapped space?

Cherry Hill - ADA raised bed could be utilized by someone with difficulty walking distance due to the use of a wheelchair, cane, walker, or limited walking mobility. I have some concerns with the distance required to walk utilizing the existing walking path and believe there is a benefit to creating a shorter path.

To help with mowing on in-ground plots, I would recommend mulch paths around the plots. This will help to drastically reduce weeds and the need for constant cutting around the beds and can reduce cost and maintenance hours for the city. Generally you should refresh mulch every couple years.

The city could consider to not mow the garden down in the fall and leave plants intact over the winter, many animals and insect utilize plants for protection over the winter months (i.e., bees, ladybugs, dragonflies, etc.).

If existing buildings on property, use rainwater collection to offset use of water spigot.

There should be one at Fairview park on the south east side

Be intentional about marketing to include gender neutral info and images need to include actual Cedar Rapids residents, not stock images

Size of garden spaces. 10 x 20 is to small. 10 x 20 is only good for three rows of vegetables.

There are no drive up spots at the gardens to drop off supplies. People with physical issues would have problems getting to their plots.

If fruit trees are planted, who is going to take care of them? Spraying, cleaning up after them and etc.

Accessibility

Proper supervision and support from city employees

tools shed and different size plots

Promoting equitable access across the community.

Will the City of Cedar Rapids conduct seminars on how to transform personal lawns into prairie grass or other native species planting? In addition to gardening techniques, the environmental cost of applying herbicides, pesticides, non-organic fertilizer should be ongoing topics for discussion and implementation among city residents. The very fact that the City is engaged in this and other creative activities to make the urban area more sustainable, comfortable, clean, organic, relational, and friendly gives me great hope (and inspiration) for more such initiatives from City leadership. Bravo!
I am concerned that some areas of our city continue to have financial growth and support while other city areas, with clear need for such projects, seem ignored or overlooked.
Moving the neighborhood with the most need according to the survey to the top of the list for installation. Next year. Work with us on this since we are already involved in improving the spaces we have with the Master Gardeners support. Including so many details the city documents. We're building a better core to grow from. Shouldn't we work together? This can help city goals which need the neighborhood included 😊

Is there anything missing from the draft Community Gardens in Parks Plan?
Maybe a couple of more picnic tables for people to rest at or set there items on while they are working in their gardens.
Maybe more areas for community support and involvement to assist gardeners.
More bus routes and buses to access the gardens and parks during the week, sometimes it can take out an hour just to get across town. Watering is important and it would be nice to have more public transportation
Nothing is missing, but after reviewing the plan, I was concerned to see a lack of parks on the SW side of Cedar Rapids. I do believe this is something for the city to take into account moving forward as the SW side continues to be developed.
Near the ADA beds, I may recommend a bench other than the picnic bench. Some may need the opportunity to sit and take a break without having to walk a distance to sit. In addition, some individuals who receive services from a provider may have staff bringing them to their garden plot.
Fairview park in the SE side does not have a lot going on and a garden would help it a lot
More aquaponics across sites
Is there water supplied to all the plots?
I think education will be important. People need to understand that gardening is a lot of work. They can't expect to plant a seed and it will take care of itself! Weeding will be especially important. Also, there needs to be some kind of responsibility to keep things clean and taken care of out of respect to other gardeners.
Is there any security plan? I have seen posts on line where people work hard on their gardens only to come back at harvest time to finding all the plants have been destroyed by someone. Ripped out of the ground and all the food smashed.
A statue to Stacey Walker
Not missing - but would like to see quicker implementation. I was initially very excited to see Cherry Hill Park included in the plan, but 2030 is a long time in the garden world.

Along with community gardens there should be educational seminars on the benefits--individually and collectively--of growing our own food. If the focus is on gardens, there should also be seminars on the true costs of industrial agriculture, and what that system has destroyed in terms of small farming communities. See the work of farmer and writer Wendell Berry, especially his book, *The Unsettling of America*. Along with this visionary idea of gardens in the parks, perhaps "short courses" in "literature of the land" could be offered by local teachers, writers, poets. These courses would be yet another means of creating community--and a public literate about the vast benefits of sustainability--in our city. Thank you very much for this terrific idea of Gardens in the Parks! I eagerly look forward to participating! michael.david.newton@gmail.com

NOTE: the typeface size of future surveys should be at least twice as large as is used currently.

How about park areas or neighborhoods impacted severely from derecho— Daniels Park area a location in which neighborhood is diverse, needs attention, has potential growth, and people/community would benefit. With Garfield Ele closing, we will need a neighborhood focus. Also, Mt. Mercy and Coe College, as well as Irish district businesses, would have people willing and interested in sustainable efforts.

Is it possible the city could connect with and work with the Beautification Committee since we're already working with the master gardeners to improve the gardens we already have and are interested in many of the points mentioned.

The idea this neighborhood scores the highest (83) in the survey for need yet we are almost last on the list for installation between 2030-2033. Reminds me of the ten year old WH plan anyone can read and download <https://www.whcria.com/wellington-heights-neighborhood-plan>

This is not been finished. Example we have begged for proper lighting as a number one priority for years as an association as recent as 2020 and still the work isn't done especially along 15 ST SE.

Why isn't community with the greatest need prioritized? If it's gonna take up to 10 yrs, instead wouldn't it be a great idea to work with us now and find ways to use the momentum sooner for Hudson? Work with us now, please. Reconsider the time frame please.

Thanks for consideration 😊

Comments from Community Survey
October - November 2022
Open to all City of Cedar Rapids residents

Are there barriers that have kept you from gardening or make it difficult to garden?

I believe there should be raised garden beds made available. This would offer more accessibility for people with needs that prevent them from reaching the ground. (elderly, wheelchair bound, etc.)

I have to drive an hour round trip to get to the Tuma soccer complex community garden. I'm in my seventies so this is a challenge for my bladder and cuts into my gardening time. A garden plot closer to home would allow me to spend my time in weeding etc

I live too far away and don't have time due to the city bus

I need raised beds due to disabilities.

I was not aware of the importance of community gardens

I would continue to maintain my home garden but would like a place for those with disabilities to access space for a garden.

Not enough gardening plots. They always ran out of space too fast and I never got one.

Not enough space

Our community garden needs repairs and help with rain catching. 390 15th St SE and on the corner of 4th Ave SE and 15th St ... this one was built but didn't have a water system. The Beautification Committee is working on this but we need supplies/funds

People stole from my garden in park land in the past

Physical health

Physically Disabled

The Parks Director should plant my garden for me.

Using a cane

We used to garden in the robins lake garden but then we couldn't get a garden there as all the spots would be taken before we could sign up for one

What other elements would make you more likely to participate in a garden?
Having an area to donate excess or "misfit" fruits/veggies people may not want or need
Help with rain system
I asked a gardner at ellis and he suggested dont grow anything thats above ground as it gets stolen, wtf
Organic planting for the whole allotment and pollinator friendly practices adhered to
personal privacy and decrease in theft
Raised garden beds
Raised garden beds
The Parks and Rec Director should do all the weeding in these gardens.
Totally free is the only way I could participate
Ways to share fruits snd vegetables that would also coordinate what to grow with others so time and effort could be devoted to one or just 2 or 3 fruits/vegetables.

How much would you be willing to pay as a yearly fee for a garden plot?
\$120. I'd like to pay more towards a fund for income-restricted participants as well as providing tools and even seeds for them to use.
10
100
20\$ for a small \$40 for a medium \$60 for a large
30
30
45
50
Depends on size but willing to donate for others
Depends on the size
Donation of my choice
I will probably garden at home but would donate to the cause.
labor helping produce garden for community

Our community offers zero cost. We could use supplies for improvements. We need more rain barrels and a rain catch system. We need wood beds repaired. New beds where we lost some due to no water system in place. Please

The City should pay residents to plant gardens.

Please explain why you have concerns about a community garden being located in your neighborhood.

Whether people would respect others gardens. Whether there would be access to water at garden.
How to keep animals like rabbits and deer out

Easy one, impossible to express concern since I don't even know what the plan design details are for a neighborhood. Try again. Ellis 100% in favor as I used that for 3 years.

I've never lived in a neighborhood with a community garden so I'm unsure as to any pros or cons at this point but am open to the idea.

My main concern would be the appearance of the garden, placement of the garden, and upkeep. There's nothing prettier than a well tended well planned garden, but it takes work.

Have driven past several community gardens, and they were not kept up/weeded so they looked very bad in the area.

Not taken care of; messy

More people than are normally there. Don't want unkempt gardens in the neighborhood.

It would need to be maintained if not in use.

My concern would be the gardens not being tended to and the area becoming overgrown.

Close downtown & many homeless in area. Would be a great food source for anyone, but would conflicts among growers & those in need result?

Neglect

To much traffic

We don't want them trashy people coming into our neighborhood!

It would need to be an organic garden. No GMOs.

I would not want the pollination zones to be taken away or changed at Noelridge, they are my favorite part of the park.

They can become unsightly if not taken proper care of.

Our neighborhood is along 1st Ave SW (Cleveland Park). I'm mostly concerned about vandalism and how damages will be prevented. We have already installed a butterfly garden and other plants around

the park area and it is not typically bothered, but I'm concerned that vegetables will lead to a problem as they can be easily taken and serious messes can be made.

My concern for a neighborhood community garden is that participants should be from the same neighborhood.

Would you be promoting organic gardening methods and have rules around what chemicals can/cannot be used?

We already have issues with homeless people and things being stolen. I think having a community garden would exacerbate that problem.

In my community the residents tend to be ungrateful and throw things at houses and in streets. Frankly I'm thinking of moving out of Cedar Rapids due to the behavior that is tolerated in the Wellington Heights area. It is mostly teenage and adults, and this has been happening for quite some time. I think I'm getting ready to sell and move on.

Garfield area was donated to be used for schools. As a past president of their PTA I believe the school should have been kept open for this particular socio economic neighborhood, especially in this day and for some years to come until this country gets back to an economic life that is successful for most groups of people. There will be too many extreme differences in the lives of these children.

I first of all don't see the need. Secondly it becomes an unsupervised area that no one has ownership of so everyone let's "the next guy" address any problems or stop illegalities.

Destructive unsupervised youth

Additional traffic / unknown people in the neighborhood

Why does the city want our thoughts on what the city should do when they don't listen anyway, they do what they want. If you want my opinion, I don't want to type it out. Call me 319-431-2315 if you want my true thoughts.

Garden maintenance, general upkeep.

They look terrible. They grow up in weeds

Will they be maintained or look like unruly jungles.

More people and traffic

The ones now start out good, then most are not kept up decently and look terrible

I have often noticed how unkept and weedy the gardens get at Ellis at the end of the season. People have no knowledge of what it takes to maintain a garden. If you want to provide this resource, I think there needs to be a way to make sure the gardens are maintained have more produce than weeds.

Community gardens can be an amazing asset, but are also often done poorly. My concern is that there is excitement initially for these projects, but they often end up without needed infrastructure (eg, water access, deer fences) and end up abandoned. In my neighborhood, most if not all homes have

garden space already. I would love to see more public gardens (eg, pollinator habitat, community produce garden to donate, etc.) versus personal gardens in public spaces.
Our park is full already with playground, splash pad, ball diamonds. Need to have some green space. Cleveland
Upkeep of individual gardens, not everyone has the same idea as to what "upkeep" is. Gardens will draw additional "wildlife" = I have plenty of racoons in my neighborhood all ready.
Homeless people and college kids stealing or damaging the gardens and or property.
May attract people who do not live in our community creating an unfriendly environment.
People will steal and fight over the produce grown in the gardens in troubled neighborhoods with many transients from Chicago
Appearance of gardens if not cared for, theft of plants or produce, vandalism, damage caused by deer, raccoon, etc
Lots of homeless people looking for food
Limited available space
Community gardens are eyesores.
My only concern is the security of the garden as our neighborhood has a lot of kids without discipline who may destroy the garden
People stealing produce. Traffic. People gathering and hanging out .
Hidden costs and unintended consequences
They could bring people not from the area in that ups traffic.

Is there anything else you would like to share with us about community gardens?
There used to be one on B Ave NE Not sure if it was planted last year but it was nice having it in the neighborhood
(1) All of the elements that were listed are important, I feel. Since we could only choose 3 for each section, I selected the ones that I thought were most critical to the success of a community garden. (2) I did not see any mention of gardening methods and wondering how much consideration has been given to that? (3) Even if I didn't have a plot, I would still be interested in helping out. I think this is a great use of our parks, if done right. (4) I have been involved with community gardens in other places I've lived and one thing I think is important is to ask every garden participant to volunteer 5-10 hrs throughout the growing season to help maintain common areas, like pathways. I think this is

important in getting participants invested not just in their own specific garden plot, but the garden community as a whole. (5) Having an area of the garden dedicated to growing for food banks would be nice. (6) Would anyone really need a plot larger than 10x20? How about some 10x10 plots?
A community garden plot made available for children's groups like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Big Brothers/Sisters etc at a reduced rate would be wonderful!
A place for disposal of garbage, and area for organic waste disposal/compost would be good. Water access? Hand washing station? I would love to grow a garden, but between my lack of growing experience and time constraints it is very challenging to keep up with. Being able to partner with someone who i could learn from and share duties and harvest with would be a great opportunity and make it both less daunting and help manage in general. I know quite a lot about plants, love nature, farm girl, but have never been successful in growing food. Despite my best efforts, every year everything I attempt to grow either dies from lack of care, too much care, is suffocated by weeds, or is eaten by bugs or annuals. I would be happy to split the cost for a bigger plot, have all the tools needed. I am a proponent for natural and organic gardening, that is important to me.
Accessibility, native plantings, community bee hives would be cool to see added. Must have water on site or nearby. Community compost pile also a good idea.
ADA beds, paths
Along with community gardens, fruit trees that are for the community to help themselves to, in the gardens would be great.
Another reason we decided to opt out of the community gardens was because we caught other gardeners stealing from our garden. We turned them in but it didn't deter them from stealing our produce.
City has lots of unused land that could be used for gardening. Deer and other wildlife, as well as weeds, could be a problem.
Close Water access near the garden plot is critical.
Community gardens are awesome. Thank you.
Consider letting private property owners allow use of space for community gardening in exchange for incentives such as property tax reduction, etc.
Coordinate locations with food deserts throughout our community so they have an impact to undeserved populations. Actively encourage growers to share their leftover produce to be given away rather than rot on the vine.
Currently there are very few community garden project I would LOVE to see more!!!
Currently, I am at the Tuma garden Plots. Love the area and my garden. It would really be nice. However, if the paths that lead up in between the gardens were filled in with some gravel. Right now there's huge ruts that wear through out the summer because of water collecting etc.. almost to the

point where you can't drive in the paths
Easy access to water is a huge advantage based on previous experiences with community gardens.
Convenience of location and easy access is also important.
Exploring deep garden space (about 12'-14') for winter gardens. Also classes to show people how to incorporate home gardens to supplement their food costs as well as identifying edible plants/weeds that grow here in Iowa.
fencing around the entire garden with a lock to the gate that only gardener have a key. We spend lots of time and money on our garden. And we even put up fencing around our garden only to have people steal our produce.
Fencing is a 100% must to keep out rabbits and deer. A system to water plants is also vital.
Forget it!!!!
Garbage bins would be a nice thing to have near by.
garden near Glenbrook apts.
Great idea, thank you.
Great idea!!
Great idea. Hope it goes through. Hope we can get young people interested.
Having kid-friendly teachings & events will help.
Having more gardens with ADA accessibility is extremely important for our community. As an advocate serving the disability community, we have many individuals who would love the opportunity to get out of the house for a set place to socialize, to do something productive, and to work towards a finished product. Having specific ADA compliant trails and raised garden beds would allow our individuals to feel valued and create inclusion in the community.
Having the community gardens only at Ellis is really too far to drive.
Hayes Park needs attention!!
How can we help Iowans with limited food access utilize the gardens? How can we get information out about the garden to the people who live in the neighborhoods where the gardens are located. Based on my past experience having water available at the garden is a huge benefit, that I had not previously considered. I also like the idea for fenced in plots. The cost and time to fence in our plot was significantly greater than I had anticipated it would be, for a person on a limited budget this could present a significant barrier. I also like the hoop house and extended season gardening support.
How soon would this start?

I am a disabled person who loves to garden and has found gardening to be beneficial to my physical and mental health. I moved to an apartment, and found myself very much missing my access to green space that I could interact with in a way that also nourished my body. I am on SNAP and they will allow me to buy plants using SNAP dollars. This a way for me to extend my resources but also have more connection with the earth and my food. It enables me to have more human dignity as an impoverished person while also giving back to the land in the form of polinator flowers, which I use in companion gardening.

I am a Master Gardener and would be happy to help educate others about how to set up a garden in my neighborhood.

I applaud the cities efforts to make land available to Residents who would like to grow their own food and share it with others. It's the key to building healthy communities. In my neighborhood we have a lot of empty plots that have been empty since the flood of 2008. Has the city ever considered allowing Community Gardens on City owned property

I believe that my neighbors would benefit more than me.

I coordinated a community garden in Madison, Wisconsin for five years, six years if I include the year I spent getting city permission, writing grants, laying out plot boundaries, finding a free garden shed, and installing it. It was all volunteer work, about ten hours a week from March through October.

The Sinclair Park community garden sounds like it will be very much like the community garden in Madison. It sounds like fun because it's walking distance from my house, and I could see kids playing on the playground. I've visited Sinclair Park several times this fall and have seen a lot of progress in preparation for the garden. The squatter's tent is gone, the land is being plowed, and the restrooms have had repairs. I've met some of the city staff in the park and admire their skills, hard work, and friendliness.

I'd be glad to share my experiences the city development department, have a Sinclair garden plot, and be a senior gardener

I don't know where existing community gardens are located.

I had a garden plot for a few years at Gardener (formerly Squaw Creek Park). I appreciated that water was available. The addition of a centralized social area with seating would be nice along with a locking tool shed.

I have ample space for gardens in my yard now, but in my previous house (a rental), I did not, so a community garden plot would have been wonderful (this was near Bever Park). Also, in our previous homes (apartments in St. Paul and Seattle) we did not have any gardening space, but we did have access to free community garden plots (which operated on a lottery system). It was a godsend! Incidentally, our neighbors met while gardening and eventually married!

I have participated in community gardens here in Cedar Rapids & in Manhattan, KS. The experience in

KS was much better due to having communal tools & water access - in addition to volunteer requirements to help keep up the space. You can find out more about that program here: https://tryufm.org/community-gardens/ .
I hope we can make community gardens accessible and low enough cost for all to use and grow/share food. We must end hunger and malnutrition and by gardening we can work to do so.
I hope you plan to continue the gardens at Ellis as have been there for 30 years. Would be nice to have a water source other than the lagoon that the goose poop in year round. Also if we could get rid of a bunch of them it would be great but know that is a sore point to a few individuals. they mess up the trail and other close locations.
I love gardening
I love the idea of giving people in this community an opportunity to grow their own produce especially with the rise of inflation. It also would add so much beauty to our community and town.
I love utilizing green space for good! My concern is just dealing with the public and how we can manage and mitigate vandalism issues.
I loved my experience this year renting a space at a community garden! I have never gardened before and it was so exciting to see what we could grow in our space. Our family really enjoyed all of the fresh vegetables and meeting the wonderful people in the garden plots. Thank you for providing this in our area- so many wonderful benefits!!
I never knew how people reserved the plots.
I think it is a great idea!
I think it is very important to plant a variety of fruit, berries, and perennial vegetables that would be available to the community in every community garden along with native pollinator plants.
For large community garden spaces, it would be nice for people to sign up or be assigned certain things to grow to prevent lots of duplicate crops - then the community can combine efforts and share what is grown. Any surplus should be donated to local food pantries.
I feel that chemical pesticides should not be permitted, instead encourage natural pest repellents and provide education on this.
I think it would be cool if we could have cooking demo's from extension services to show people how to utilize produce!
I think it's an amazing idea but, for some of us we can't afford groceries let alone a garden fee. As I'm an SSI recipient who doesn't even get \$850 a month so it wouldn't help me if I had to pay to garden. When I can do it for free in my own yard!!!!
I think the yearly fee to have urban chickens is way to expensive! I think the current fee should give an unlimited license for urban chickens. As a compromise, a ten year license for the same fee sounds

reasonable.
I would be interested in plots that could be leased all year so semipermanent structures and perennials could be planted. For example rhubarb or raspberry bushes.
I would like to make sure a percentage of gardens are raised for handicap & elderly.
I would like to see produce go to elderly that can not garden or to food pantries
I would like to see the community continue to expand native pollinator gardens. And....to encourage residents to plant native gardens of their own. There is plenty of available people in our area to educate on this topic. We really should take advantage of their know-how.
Maybe visit the the possibility of setting limits on HOAs.
I would love to see shared produce garden for the community to harvest.
I'm glad this is finally getting somewhere! I still think we should utilize the time check/flooded and cleared out areas too. Especially since a lot of that is low income area.
I'm not at home while filling this out, so I'm not sure if my address was accepted. There seem to be a lot more community gardens on the north side of town, so it would be great to see some in the SW side that would be closer/easier to access.
I'd like to see the small park in our neighborhood (a triangle plot of grass called Haskell park) turned into a plot of fruit trees or native plants or fruits and veggies that anyone could take for free.
I'm the beautification committee chair in Wellington Hts. Sarah Brightstar is the Garden lead on the committee. We are working to restore the gardens at both locations mentioned with volunteers. We need supplies to repair beds that are rotting. Add beds. Rain catch system in both locations. We have a bulk item board and wish to install a second at the other location. Improve both. We want to install a small 24/7 free farmers market and continue sharing with elders who are home. This will help distribute food as it ripens. Afford other gardeners to contribute produce. I'm gathering content for a video shorts called, Seed to Table Cooking Show to engage different cultures and neighbors with the growing season and process. Gain interest in volunteering. Could be used as lessons for children and learning to plant. We interested in helping neighbors have their own gardens or pot gardens
Iowa city is doing awesome things with community gardens and Cedar Rapids should have even better amenities. Permaculture and water conservation are two things we should consider.
It is frustrating to put in all the work and have people come and take the food from my harvest before I even get a chance. If there were some type of way to secure the area, I'd be much more likely to utilize the garden space.
It would be good to place gardens in areas that are not as close to grocery stores or areas considered food deserts. Low income communities and neighborhoods should be prioritized because they may not be able to afford healthy produce at stores.

It would be nice to have an accessible program to donate vegetables and herbs if there is extra.
It's a great opportunity especially if produce can be given to those in need.
Jones park would be good; community gardens are a good idea
Just encouragement to make sure these gardens are used by people who will benefit the most from them. How do you connect a resource like this to folks who might have health issues, lack of transportation, little or no education about gardening here. For example, we have a huge immigrant community with many people who loved gardening in their home countries but need help learning about our climate and specific foods.
Let's make them someplace people want to spend time. Get the larger community interacting with the land that provides nourishment to all of us. Have farm to table dinners, cocktail hour, or even classes where we harvest the veg and make something delicious with it (or harvest flowers and make a flower arrangement).
Lots of parks have them, could be a walk or bike ride away to tend.
Love the idea of a community garden in my neighborhood !!
Love this
Love this idea!
Make sure it is a safe space.
Make them near or in current park space.
must be able to walk from Glenbrook W
N/A
near Glenbrook is best
No
No.
Nope
Not at this time
Open the road that goes through Bever park or share why you are not opening it ave haven't since the derecho.

Perennial food sources such as fruit/nut trees, berries, herbs, and vegetables should be included in every community garden for sharing.

It would be nice to have resources available that assist with determining things like best layout for sun exposure, soil testing for nutrients and composition, companion planting for beneficial and non-beneficial crops, seed saving methods, and natural pest repellents.

Those that live in the community (and those that will use the gardens) should be asked what crops that they want to have grown. It doesn't help if loads of people grow tomatoes, but they don't get used. In addition, there should be some crops grown that will expose community members to options that they may not have thought of for foods. This may include heirloom varieties that aren't super common.

I know it's a long shot, but I would love to see a coop for some chickens or ducks. Both can be beneficial to gardening and eggs would be an added bonus for the community!

Please consider the park along 3rd Ave SE west of Redmond Park. This is just grass and serves no purpose with Redmond so close. It would serve a needy neighborhood who need access to fresh produce.

Please give some thought to providing garden space for senior citizens not just the immigrant community. Some of us who have moved to apartments or condos or senior housing would also like the opportunity to have a garden plot. You are missing a large segment of the population who might like small plots but need some help such as tilling. Some of us can actually grow vegetables and not just weeds.

Put them in places away from housing

Raised beds

Raised beds as options. I have mobility issues.

Southwest side!

speaks Karundi only

starter plants should be tomatoes and eggplant

SW CR has very little opportunity for this. Many people would be happy to learn, experience or volunteer in such an opportunity. We have many neighbors who don't have enough space to garden sufficiently. We would love to contribute to a community garden community on some way.

Thank you SO Much for exploring gardening options with our community!

I would like to explore options of raised beds (non-wood is best) for myself &/or at least part of the gardens. Especially for new/elder/disabled gardeners that would struggle w weeding & time commitment

I'd be willing to pay a bit more (10-15%) annually for a raised bed vs plot of open ground.

I really do like the social aspects that

Have you considered partner gardening?

Like a Big Sis/Bro program for gardening?

Adults w Kids or Experienced w New gardeners who don't know where/how to start or manage a garden: growing/harvest/closeup for winter

I'd encourage community learning & social opportunities.

THANK YOU!!! this is awesome!

Tomahawk Park has unused space. I live nearby and would love to contribute there. Community gardens for growing food and native plantings add much value to an area for me. I would also be thrilled to get to know other gardeners in my neighborhood.

I would use a plot to grow food (not enough room at my house), but would also be very happy to plant and maintain the community garden with native plants for everyone(and beneficial insects) to enjoy.

*I have the endangered rusty-patched bumblebee in my yard just a block away from Tomahawk. If we plant natives at Tomahawk, there's a great chance we could expand the bee's range to the park. How's that for a program achievement?!

Community gardeners would have the opportunity to get to know an endangered species.

*I have Iowa native plants and seeds I can share. Free!

CALL ME. Garden at Tomahawk! There are many folks in rental houses around 16th etc that don't otherwise have appropriate spots to garden in.

Thanks for the opportunity to share interest!

The area west of 1st Street West from Penn Avenue to about H Avenue is flat and unused and kind of an eyesore. Gardens would improve the look and make it useful. Water lines and hose bibs would be needed. Also, the area is something of a food desert.

The gardens are very well-kept.

The Parks Director and City Manager should water all of these garden plots for the public.

They look bad.

They provide an important resource to our community and provide a positive activity
walking distance to Glenbrook W apartments
We at Hames Homes in Summit View and Grand View are working on a community garden now for all the residents in both communities- It would be great to have the city help our two communities with resources. Our communities have 2 percent of the population in Cedar Rapids. We have a community pantry, and the garden will help feed both communities and the people that use the pantry now that come that are outside our communities that use the pantry and will be using the community garden.
We don't need the damned things! Food banks everywhere!
We have done Ellis gardening for years. This year was horrible with theft. They would steal everything during day light hours. They were even caught by fellow gardens and they would just come back a few days later. Not worth it.
We have had community garden plots since 1996. It has been a peaceful way to escape the city without having to drive all the way out of Cedar Rapids. Please do not make this space some kind of community gathering place. Just let us garden the way we want. We do not bother anyone in this area. Just figure out a way to keep people from stealing our produce that we share with others, including the needy.
What about that whole area by czech village on C st, you havent done anything with that
Who does the prepping and clean-up of the beds?
Why not put gardens in apartment complexes, where people actually live and can get to know their neighbors and take a sense of pride in their home? Shamrock Apartments comes to mind—plenty of useless grass areas that could become gardens.
Will there be any rules about what kind of pesticides or herbicides can/can't be used? In a close area, drift and spread could occur. Planting plants to attract pollinators and then having potential pesticides used that will harm them seems like something that should be considered and potentially addressed.
Would like to see a garden location at Jones Park. Have minor concerns about vandalism of gardens. Gardens would help defray food cost.
Would love to volunteer
Yay community gardens!!!!
year round porta potties in the parks and on the trails, ie sac & fox trail
Yes I would like a community garden in the empty lot by the Halverson House 606 5th Avenue. I am on the Board for Save CR Heritage and Willis Dady Homeless Services and LCMRC. I would love the access to this lot as a garden. Need green space here too much pavement. I am also a certified TreeKeeper through Forever Trees.

Comments from Current Community Gardener Survey
August - September 2022
Open to all current community gardeners at City park gardens

What do you think of the current 20 x 50 plot size?

- The garden is too large for my needs
- Currently we lease 3x plots at Gardener
- Wish we had access to water in some way other than bucket it from the lake.
- I fill the garden, and some years could use more; some years less. Would be nice to offer different sizes.
- It's the perfect size for us, a retired household of 3. Provides plenty of fresh produce during the season with a small amount left to can/freeze.
- I like my current plot size but would like to see a few larger plots offered.
- Perfect size for us. We have 4 plots (4,000 square feet). Allows us to grow everything we want without crowding the plants.

What do you think of the current garden plot rate of \$40/plot?

- Of course, I'd love to see it be a little less, but I think \$40 is fair. The price has increased the last 2 years by \$5/year and I hope that doesn't continue.
- I am ok with \$40 but it keeps going up every year so I don't see the need for it to go up any further.
- The question below is open ended. I might consider subsidizing other low income, but what does that mean and how often will the rate rise etc. etc.
- If it was higher, the plot loses its value to me considering time to drive and wanting to keep free of weeds.
- I think it's just about right, but would be willing to pay a bit more. We more than get our money's worth out of the produce (taking into consideration 'labor').
- It is fine for most people but can be pricey for some that can't afford it.
- why are those of us who clean up our gardens at the end having to pay a higher fee just because you have this group of people who comes in and plants beans and do not pick up after themselves.

In addition to the features listed above, what other elements would you like them to consider incorporating into future garden programs?

- Signs to discourage theft and people who are not associated with the gardens, we have been gardening at this location since 1995. The theft was terrible this year.
- Better security
- Security, way too much theft. Loss most of my garden this year. Confronted thief, didn't care.

- I would also like to see improved (or any) security features for the gardens. I put up a 6' green snow fence around the entire perimeter of my garden to discourage critters both 4-legged and 2-legged. However, while it more or less works for the animals I still have people cut through my fence. This has happened several years in a row.
- Most importantly get a sizable sign that states that these are private gardens to help cut down on the amount of stealing that occurs in our gardens.
- Water availability. We terminated our lease last year due to theft of vegetables. No longer participating due to stolen produce.
- Water
- I would like to see better access to water at Ellis gardens. Other gardens have access to water.
- Convenience of water and place to **store tools** would be welcome. But not sure making it a planned social program is necessary. People seem to gather and socialize as they desire.
- The spigots need to have diverter's on them so multiple people can water at once. It is frustrating for me when I have to supply it and they get stolen.
- Also, maybe with a 'bulletin board' feature, perhaps a listing of appropriate sources for food donation.
- Presentations by Master Gardeners
- I am not sure possible, but separate corn growers. I lose 1/4 of more of garden due to corn planted on perimeter of joining gardens, shade my garden. Plus I end up raking out corn stalks in spring.
- The entryway at Tuma has HUGE potholes...several feet across and probably 6-8 inches deep. They continue to get wider and deeper each year, so hopefully they will be fixed before next year.
- The problem with the features listed is that any that are implemented will eventually raise the price to lease a plot.
- The current size, system, fees, etc. work well for us. There may be others for which it doesn't. I have however noted that in the last several years, there have been new gardeners that tend to have less respect for others space. Hoses, tools, lawn chairs, parking in joint drive lanes, etc. are strewn everywhere. Water left on overnight with leaking hoses and soggy work spaces the next day etc. Yes it is hard to change personal behaviors, but it is changing and becoming a bit burdensome with the behavior of others.

Miscellaneous Feedback Directly to City Staff via Email or Phone

October 2022 - February 2023

- Question about type of soil/dirt mix will be in raised beds
- Reduced cost rental fee for those on fixed incomes? Sponsorship program?
- Seed library/plant starts
- Potential for vandalism/mischief should be a factor when prioritizing locations. Concern was brought up about people growing tomatoes in Cleveland Park and then kids ending up throwing them at cars on 1st Ave
- Question came up on the intent of more gardens
 - for personal consumption? or to sell at markets?
- Suggested that the parcel at 2424 18th St SW be considered for a community garden instead of development
- Tried to pull up survey, but couldn't
- Very supportive of gardens across the community
- Would like to see a garden specifically at Jones Park
- I'd like to add a couple of possibilities for garden plots. The two would be Seminole Valley Park and the ground between A Street and C Street SW. Both places offer lots of open spaces and the C Street area would encompass a lot of the neighborhood in that area.

Appendix II: Future Community Garden Site Selection Rubric

City of Cedar Rapids

Community Garden Master Plan

New Community Garden Site Selection - Decision Making Rubric Background Information

The City of Cedar Rapids' Climate Action Plan Vision 2030 Action 4 stated an intention to develop a food access policy as part of a Sustainable Development approach to ensure vulnerable residents can achieve healthy and relevant food (land access, growing, consuming, selling) within a 15-minute walk (including urban farms, gardens on commercial properties, public gardens, pantries, groceries, education).

The City of Cedar Rapids is undertaking an exciting community-driven planning process to create a vibrant network of community gardens in 7-10 parks across the City. This will create significantly more access to plots than the 300 available in the 3 current park-based community gardens. This planning process comes in response to interest voiced by the community in expanding healthy food access efforts as the #1 community priority to support climate action locally. Leading by example, the City is committed to expanding community gardens to more City parks with a focus on walkability and access for residents who are under-resourced and under-represented.

To develop the Community Gardens Master Plan, the City contracted with New Venture Advisors and Wheat Design Group to conduct community engagement and design a comprehensive management plan including individual site plans for all potential garden sites. To determine the viability of potential park sites, the City first narrowed down options from 97 total Cedar Rapids city parks to 17 potential sites using the following criteria:

1. USDA Low Income, Low Access (LILA) Census Tracts
 - Sites within LILA designated census tracts were prioritized
2. 2018 CDC/ATSDR Social Vulnerability Index
 - Sites with "high" or "moderate-high" designations were prioritized
 - Sites considered "low" or "low to moderate" but within a USDA LILA census tract were prioritized
3. Floodplain
 - Sites in the 100-year floodplain with no existing or proposed flood control were removed
4. Space/Access
 - Sites with other amenities and no room for garden were removed
 - Sites that were heavily treed or with no large tracts of open space for growing were removed
 - Sites that were small with little sidewalk access (surrounded by streets) were removed
5. Location
 - Sites in proximity to other existing or proposed city gardens were removed

From those 17 potential sites identified by the City, the parks most suitable for accessible and equitable garden development were selected to be highlighted within the Community Gardens Management Plan using the following criteria:

1. As the most important criteria to design a plan that addressed garden accessibility equity throughout the city, the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI), unmet community demand, and population density were weighted more heavily than other criteria and ranked on a scale of 0-3. Unmet community demand was determined by cross tabulating the locations of all [number] of 2022 community survey respondents with those that said they would be interesting in participating in a garden and measuring [1/2 mile] to each park.
2. All other criteria were rated on a binary scale of 0-1 as they held less weight within the ranking system.
3. Post-ranking, the sites were prioritized based on location in the city to ensure an even distribution of parks throughout the 4 quadrants and equitably spaced development.

Ranking System

2020 Social Vulnerability Index

- 3 High
- 2 Moderate-High
- 1 Low-Moderate
- 0 Low

Unmet Community Demand: Number of survey participants interested in gardening within a 0.5 mile radius of the park

- 3 13 - 19
- 2 8 - 12
- 1 4 - 7
- 0 0 - 3

Population Density: Population per square mile within a 0.5 mile radius of the park

- 3 5,625 - 7,500
- 2 3,751 - 5,625
- 1 1,876 - 3,750
- 0 0 - 1,875

Walkable Accessibility: Presence of Trail and/or Sidewalk Connections

- 1 Yes
- 0 No

Public Transit Accessibility: Presence of Public Transit Stop(s) Adjacent to Park

- 1 Yes
- 0 No

ADA Accessibility: Sufficient space for accessible garden bed requirements

- 1 Yes
- 0 No

Water Access: Water line in or adjacent to the park

- 1 Yes
- 0 No

City of Cedar Rapids
Community Garden Master Plan
New Community Garden Site Selection - Decision Making Rubric

PARK SITE	Social/ Equity			Accessibility & Development				TOTAL SCORE	City Quadrant	Post Ranking Considerations <i>Location/Proximity & Site Development Budget</i>	
	2020 Social Vulnerability Index	Unmet Community Demand <i>As determined by the 2022 community survey</i>	Population Density <i>Population per square mile within 0.5 radius of each park</i>	Walkable Accessibility <i>Presence of Trail and/or Sidewalk Connections</i>	Public Transit Accessibility <i>Presence of public transit stop(s) adjacent to park</i>	ADA Accessibility <i>Sufficient space for ADA Bed Requirements</i>	Water Access <i>Water line in or adjacent to the park</i>			Proximity of Other Park Sites with Current or Future Community Gardens	Landscape Architect Ranking
WEIGHT	60			40							
	20	10	30	10	10	10	10				
Huston Park	3	1	3	1	1	1	0	83	SE	No	Recommended
Reed Park	3	0	2	1	1	1	1	80	SW	Unnamed, 10th Square, Cleveland, Tokheim	Recommended
New Library Site	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	80	SW	Jacolyn Park	Recommended
Cleveland Park	3	1	2	0	1	1	1	73	SW	Unnamed, 10th Square, Reed, Tokheim	Recommended
Twin Pines Park	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	70	NE	No	Recommended
Tokheim Park	3	2	2	1	0	1	0	67	NW	Cleveland, Unnamed, Reed, 10th Square	Potential Challenges
Daniels Park	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	67	NE	Tomahawk & Northview	Potential Challenges
Noelridge Park & Aquatic Center	3	0	0	1	1	1	1	60	NE	No	Recommended
Jones Park & Pool	2	2	1	0	1	1	1	60	SW	No	Recommended
Cherry Hill Park & Aquatic Center	2	2	1	1	0	1	1	60	NW	No	Recommended
10th Square Park	3	0	2	1	0	1	0	60	SW	Cleveland, Unnamed, Reed, Tokheim	Potential Challenges
Jacolyn Park	2	3	2	0	1	0	0	53	NW	Future Library Site, Cherry Hill	Potential Challenges
Tomahawk Park	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	50	NE	Northview & Daniels	Not Recommended
Northview Park	2	2	1	1	0	0	1	50	NE	Daniels & Tomahawk	Potential Challenges
Unnamed Park	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	43	SW	Cleveland, 10th Square, Reed, Tokheim	Recommended
Lincolnway Park	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	40	SW	No	Recommended
Kenwood Park	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	30	NE	No	Not Recommended

City of Cedar Rapids
Community Garden Master Plan
New Community Garden Site Selection Finalization

After scoring each of the parks, the project team identified the top two parks in each quadrant of the City.

Sinclair Park in the Southeast quadrant does not appear in this rubric, because it was selected as an ideal park by the City of Cedar Rapids prior to the beginning of this evaluation process and a site plan was completed in October 2023.

Although Daniels Park scored within the top two parks in the Northeast, after a site visit and further consultation with landscape architects, it was determined that Daniels was not the best site for immediate development due to hilly terrain, tree cover, underground utility wires, and potential interference with baseball players at the park. This site is recommended for further community activation in the future and may be an appropriate site for other innovative gardening or horticulture activities, such as a community orchard, berry bushes, or perennial garden.

Furthermore, at the time of this ranking, the future westside library site was in the early planning phase and a community garden layout could not be determined. A concept plan for this garden is not included in this plan, but a community garden should be considered at the site. For this reason, the project team selected a third park in the southwest quadrant, Lincolnway Park. Lincolnway Park did not rank within the top two parks within its quadrant, primarily due to its low population density, but was identified as a park to be included for accessibility and equity reasons. Lincolnway Park is not in close proximity to any other City parks or gardens and the surrounding community experiences limited food and transportation access.

Although this plan includes only 7 site plans, all 17 parks included in the rubric are appropriate parks for community gardens and should be considered once City resources allow for additional garden development.

Southeast Sinclair Park (site plan complete Fall 2023) Huston Park	Northwest Cherry Hill Park & Aquatic Center Tokheim Park
Northeast Twin Pines Park Noelridge Park & Aquatic Center	Southwest Reed Park New Library Site (no site plan) Lincolnway

APPENDIX III: COMMUNITY GARDEN DESIGN TOOLKIT

The garden design toolkit explores recommended features to make the new community gardens functional, enjoyable, and long-lasting. Recommendations for each element are provided but may not stay the same across all gardens. As gardens are built, the City of Cedar Rapids and community gardeners may develop preferences. These elements should be revisited as gardens are constructed and used and assessed accordingly.

All structures, community tools or amenities require adherence to all ADA guidelines and requirements. All features should be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance.

Core Amenities



Entrance



Sign



Garden plots



Water spigot



ADA accessible raised beds



ADA accessible surface

Preferred Amenities



Tool shed



Gathering area



Educational signs



Pollinator & perennial plants



Compost area



CORE AMENITIES



GARDEN PLOTS

Garden plot sizes can be determined as needed at each location- depending on user demand. Plots can be in-ground. There should be labels on each plot-grade stakes can be painted or written on to define each plot.

- Small (10' X 10')
- Medium (10' x 20')
- Large (20' X 40')

Can be arranged in rows or blocks, In the site layout plans in 40' x 40' squares, with 8 medium plots or 16 small plots per section. Minimum 8' space in between the plots for ease of pathway maintenance using a mower.

Turf grass is to remain in existing pathways. Pathways should be 8' wide to allow for mower maintenance by parks staff. Wood mulch is optional for new pathways, but turf is easiest to maintain weeds with mower by parks staff. Pathways to ADA beds and other amenities must be accessible and follow ADA guidelines.



Above: In ground garden plot example in Iowa City, Iowa.¹

Below: Grass pathways between in ground garden plots.²



WATER

Irrigation systems on each plot will be managed by the individual gardener. Water spigots and access will be provided at each site. The watering system will be fully ADA compliant and should be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance.



Above: Water will be accessed through a spigot and hose.³

¹ Brennan, P. (2021) *Chadek Green Park*. [Photograph]. City of Iowa City Parks and Recreation. <https://littlevillagemag.com/iowa-city-parks-and-rec-what-did-you-think-of-the-community-garden-program/>

² Harden, M. (2022) *Community garden club to host informational, sign-up session March 22* [Photograph]. Leader Publications. <https://www.leaderpub.com/2022/03/18/community-garden-club-to-host-informational-sign-up-session-march-22/>

³ Nimmo Garden. (2022) *Hydrant*. [Photograph]. https://nimmogarden.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/hydrant.up_-768x1024.jpeg



ENTRANCE

An entryway may include a welcoming sign and a clear path from parking to the entrance, to define the threshold of the garden. Space for car parking and loading is preferred. Other elements of an entryway may include bulletin boards, accent plants or art work.

Other elements should remain clear of the entrance and route to maintain accessible route.



Above: A garden entryway with a sign, trellis and fence.¹



ACCESSIBLE BEDS

Accessible beds should be included at new gardens with appropriate existing infrastructure. A minimum of 10% of plots should be accessible to wheelchair users.

ADA bed guidelines are as follows:

- 2' max reach for a side-approach beds
- 4' wide to reach if accessible from both sides, but shorter reach is preferred
- Side-approach beds should be 48" high
- Holes should be drilled at the bottom of steel troughs with a 1/2" drill. Make 4-6 holes every sq. ft. of the container



Above: Galvanized metal troughs can be used as raised beds for side accessible garden beds if the reach is less than 24" from one side.²

Space requirements are as follows:

- Minimum 3' around each ADA bed, to allow space for an accessible device. 4' is preferred
- Accessible Route - If beds are adjacent, there needs to be an Accessible Route. For Accessible Route there must be space for each device and clearance for the route, for a total of 9'
- If a turn is greater than 45 degrees on an Accessible Route a 5'X5' turn space is required, with a slope of less than 2% in all directions.
- Pathways must follow all other slope, width and turn around requirements for accessibility

All features should be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance.

¹ Sky Valley Food Bank. (2018). Julia V. Morris Centennial Garden entryway. [Photograph]. <https://svfoodbank.org/jvm-community-garden/>

² Ethans, L. (2022). Galvanized metal garden beds. [Photograph]. Backyard Boss. <https://www.backyardboss.net/galvanized-raised-garden-beds/>



ACCESSIBLE SURFACES

Core and preferred amenities be on accessible surfaces. Surfaces must be stable, firm and follow slope and width requirements for ADA compliance.

Grass pathways are not ADA compliant- the accessible route through the gardens will be an accessible surface.



Above: An example of a garden beds on accessible surface.¹



SIGNS

Signs should be placed to identify the gardens and garden rules. A uniform design and size across the 8 gardens would create continuity and public recognition. Recommended size is 12" X 18", to be placed near the entrance and visible from the parking area. For durability the sign should be aluminum with a weather resistant finish.

Within the garden it is preferred to have plots numbered and labeled for the users. Wooden grading stakes can be painted or written on with permanent marker as practical and inexpensive way to label beds.

All signage requires adherence to all ADA guidelines and requirements, signs will be reviewed by ADA Accessibility Team for ADA compliance.



Above: An example of a garden sign with rules at The Grateful Tomato Garden in Salt Lake City.² Left: Wooden grading stakes for labeling individual beds.

¹Nolan, T. (2022). *Gardens beds*. [Photograph]. Savvy Gardening. <https://savvygardening.com/how-deep-should-a-raised-garden-bed-be/>

² Stephenson, K. (2019). *Garden signage*. [Photograph]. Salt Lake Tribune. <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2019/12/25/new-campus-wasatch/>

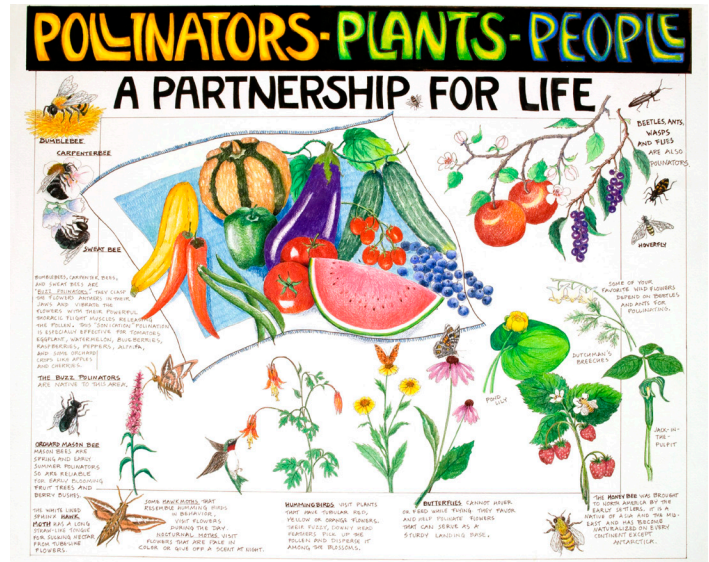
PREFERRED AMENITIES



INTERPRETIVE & EDUCATIONAL SIGNAGE

Interpretive signage can engage gardeners and non-gardeners alike. If budget and space allows, the community gardens are an opportunity to educate and excite the community about ideas, history or unique placed-based information. Signage content and design can be developed with partners.

All signage will be reviewed by the ADA Accessibility Team for ADA compliance.



Above: Example interpretive panel from the US Forest Service.¹

Left: Interpretive signage outside a garden.²



NATIVE POLLINATORS & PERENNIAL AREA

Community surveys showed a preference for native pollinator and perennial plants in and around the garden. The care and maintenance of the perennial plants would need to be coordinated with individuals or organizations through a maintenance agreement with Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation.

Cedar Rapids pollinator seed mix includes native grasses, hyssop, coneflowers, milkweed, asters, goldenrod, yarrow and clover.



Above: Example of pollinators used in Cedar Rapids.³

¹ U.S. Forest Service. (n.d.). *Pollinators-Plants-People, A Partnership for Life*. [Photograph]. <https://www.fs.usda.gov/wildflowers/features/panels.shtml>

² Coyote Art and Ecology. (n.d.). *Community Park Signage*. [Photograph]. <https://coyoteartandecology.com/projects>

³ Monarch Research Project. (n.d.). *Pollinators in a flower field*. [Photograph]. <https://monarchresearch.org/habitat/habitat-programs/>



COMPOST AREA

A composting system would need to be developed for the gardens. The compost areas must be ADA accessible and usable. The compost area should have explanatory signs and processes for users. Maintenance may include turning, shifting, and distributing product and would need to be coordinated by staff or volunteers.



Above: Example of a three bin compost stalls system made with wood.¹



TOOL SHED

A shared tool shed is a preferred amenity for each site. The shed should have a lock on it with a code and tool hooks inside for organizing equipment. The size and make of the tool shed can vary depending on the space and materials- the suggested size is a minimum of 10' X 10'.

All structures, community tools or amenities will be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance. Routes and storage area will be fully ADA accessible.



Above: An example of a shared garden tool shed, painted and with a locking door and accessible ramp.²

¹ The Editors. (2018). *Compost stalls*. [Photograph]. Good Housekeeping. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/home/gardening/a20706669/how-to-build-compost-bin/>

² Pings, M. (n.d.). *Community gardens toolshed*. [Photograph]. Soil Science Society of America. <https://www.soils.org/about-soils/community-gardens/>



GATHERING AREA

Seating and shade is a preferred amenity at all gardens. Seating and tables should be ADA accessible and in a central location, ideally near the entrance or tool shed. Tables, seating and shade create opportunities for education, community building and non-gardeners to enjoy the garden space. Materials should be durable and long-lasting.

Gathering areas will be fully ADA compliant with accessible routes. Design to be reviewed with the ADA accessibility team for ADA compliance.



Above: An example of seating area in a community garden. ¹

¹Croce, B. (2015). *Community picnic table painting*. [Photograph]. LIHerald.com. <https://www.liherald.com/stories/students-supply-added-color-at-community-garden,68501>