

Possible Sites for a community garden in the Pocket area (West of I-5)

February 15, 2015

For several years, neighbors have expressed an interest for a City community garden in the Pocket area – west of I-5. Currently, City council district 7 has one City community garden at Valley High Park (at the far east side of District 7. The closest City community gardens to the Pocket area are: Valley High Park community garden (7.8 miles away) and Southside community garden (7.1 miles away). Like a health club, a community garden will be used more if it is located close to where the gardeners live – where they can walk or bike to the community garden.

Of the approximate 16 City parks in the Pocket area west of I-5, only 7 may have room for a community garden – depending on the size of the garden. Plot size vary per garden but are based on 10x10 feet for a small plot, to 10x15 or 10x20 for a large plot.

- Small Garden: 1 - 15 plots (not recommend as this size of a garden is too small and the waiting list does not move)
- Medium Garden: 16 - 30 plots (0.15+ acres approx.)
- Large Garden: 31 – 50+ (0.25+acres approx.)

Adding a community garden to an existing park is a fairly easy process as land would not have to be purchased; but a change to the park master plan would need to be done along with a reports, public comment and public meetings, and of course finding funding for the project (which could run \$200,000+ depending on size, location, and construction issues for the site).

In determining whether a community garden can actually fit into an existing park, certain criteria must be considered:

- Is the space already programed as a soccer/softball field, or?
- Is there space for a small, medium or large garden?
- Will it receive the 6-8 hours of sun required for vegetables to grow?
- Will trees need to be cut down?
- Pests / active habitats (gophers, birds)
- Is the site close to the street – not hidden?
- Access to parking?
- Are there apartments or a school nearby?
- Is there interest from the community for the community garden?
- Comments from neighbors or park users - talk to neighbors using the park when taking inventory on the above.

Community gardens have many features or parts to them beyond plots, those include:

- Fencing and access gates, ADA accessibility pathways/plots, Compost area, gathering area (tables, shade tree or?), tool storage (locker for small gardens, and shed for medium and large community gardens), fruit tree area, herb garden, demonstration area.

Pocket area parks that have room for a community garden (based on size of the garden) include:

- **Small**
 - **Marriott Park** – SE corner of the park, approx. 2 small trees would need to be removed for the garden approx. 14-16 plots. On street parking. South Pocket area.
- **Medium**
 - **Parkway Oaks Park** – approx. 4 possible sites exist in this park, approx. 3-7 small trees 12” or less would need to be removed depending on site and size of garden determined. School adjacent to the park and garden could be a plus for the site. On street parking. South of central Pocket area.
 - **Seymour Park** – (off 43rd ave) the park is a long parkway type park, 2-4 trees would need to be removed for the garden, located near multiple apartments. Has a parking lot near by. Northern Pocket area.
 - **Lewis Park** – located adjacent to G. Didion Elementary school, this park 2-3 possible sites. The largest site was unclear if it is City or school district property. On street parking. Northern Pocket area.
- **Large**
 - **Ellsworth C. Zacharia Park** – located near multiple apartments, this park could have space for a large garden. approx. 2-5 trees 12” or less would need to be removed for the garden. Evidence of gophers in the area. On street parking /parking lot across the street at Seymour Park. Northern Pocket area.
 - **Seymour Park** – (off Florin Rd.) the park is a long parkway type park, maybe 1-2 trees would need to be removed, On street parking. More central to the whole pocket area.

Options: there are a few options to consider also.

1. A residential lot is for sale at the corner of Marriott and El Pouro across from Marriott Park. This lot could be the site for a small to medium community garden. A large oak tree would need to be removed for the garden – this would probably be an obstacle and reason the lot has been on the market for a long time (according to neighbors). There is a for sale sign on the property – calls to them went unanswered.
2. **Sojourner Truth Park** is next to the Robbie Waters / Pocket Greenhaven Library and the Engineering and Sciences High School. The park is used along with school district land to create the playing field for the high school. A portion of the school district property along Swale River Way, the area along the fence could be used for a community garden with minimal impact to the soccer fields. This is the site that residents were interested in having a community garden at as it was close to the library where meetings could take place. Upon further investigation, it was determined that the area was not part of the City park and was school district owned, so other sites were looked for. If this site is to be considered, an MOU with the school district would need to be modified/created for the community garden.

Over the years the parks and recreation department community garden program has received inquiries from residents in the Pocket area looking for a City community garden in their neighborhood. Within the last six months, Pocket area neighbors have discussed a community garden on line through “Next Door” and have held a few meetings to discuss the process and possible park sites that may work. I have attended the neighborhood meetings and listened to their concerns and provided information on what it takes to create a community garden in an existing City park. This study on possible sites will help determine a possible location for a community garden in the Pocket area.

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