

Land and Water Use Barriers to Community Gardens Survey Summary

In order to fully understand local community gardens challenges and barriers to obtaining land and water two methods of communication were utilized; open exchange with members of Community Garden Networking group and subsequent survey of their challenges. A variety of individuals and community organizations and businesses are engaged in the networking group. Local neighborhood associations, Omaha Food Bank, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Office-Master Gardeners, Amos Foundation, Omaha Public Schools, City Planning and Environment Omaha are a few examples of organizations that are represented.

During the January 2010 Community Garden Networking Meeting initial discussions around the Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities grant and the challenges of securing land and water for a community garden began. Network members were thoroughly introduced the HKHC work plan and how elements of the plan would lend itself to the betterment of land and water use policies for community gardens in the future. It was concluded based on feedback that a more formal form of communication would provide clear and concrete concerns that individual community gardens faced. In March a nine question survey was developed and distributed to all garden network members. The nine question survey aimed to abstract from gardens exactly how they acquired the land for their garden, if water was available at the site, challenges the garden encountered when obtaining land and water, how challenges were overcome, and any other pertinent information on the challenges of obtaining land and/or water for their garden. Seventeen gardens/gardeners completed the survey. Survey results show that the majority (88.9%) of gardens rent or lease the land for their garden with 46.1% renewing those leases annually. Challenges that gardens face in obtaining land included; identifying current land owner, obtaining permission from land owner, persuading organizations (faith-based, public school system etc.) to make modifications to land and continuous re-location of the garden due to expired annual leases. Gardens identified multiple ways to overcome these obstacles including; modification to overall size of garden plot, connecting the community to the garden through relationship building activities (garden events, word of mouth etc.) and persistence. 73.3% of survey respondents have water available on their garden site with 53.8% obtaining water from a rain barrel or neighbors, 46.2% had an existing water meter onsite and 30.8% paid to install a water meter. Identified obstacles for obtaining water included obtaining permission from neighbors to use water, water meter an extended distance from garden and the use of extended hoses needed and price. Of survey responders 28.5% said price was a major obstacle to having water available on their garden site. In an effort to counteract these issues gardens

established agreements with neighbors, increased the number of rain barrels and length of hoses, and looked for alternative funding sources to minimize the overall cost associated with securing water on site. Additional concerns gardens expressed included "lead safe" gardening and increasing cost of land.

Survey findings were discussed with Community Garden Networking group during the April 2010 meeting. The purpose of this secondary discussion was to verify that interpretation of results were accurate and correctly portrayed ideas that gardens were trying to convey. Garden groups present identified legal issues and or advice that goes along with obtaining land is an obstacle that was not represented in survey responses. Further exploration of policies around leasing empty lots and special water considerations for community gardens were recognized as potential opportunities to increase the ease of obtaining land and water.

Survey website

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/X3G XKJ7>

Survey attached.

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1. Challenges for gardens in acquiring water and land

Thank you so much for taking a few minutes to complete this important survey. DCHD would like to identify current challenges community gardens face when acquiring land and water. Survey results will help to guide efforts around the development of strategies and implementation of policies that support effective land and water use for existing and future gardens.

2. Challenges in acquiring land

1. How did you acquire land for your garden?

Purchased

Rent/Lease

Other (please explain how you acquired the land)

2. If you rent/lease your land what is the length of the lease?

3. Please describe the challenges your garden encountered when obtaining land.

4. How did your garden overcome the challenges in obtaining land?

3. Challenges in acquiring water

1. Is water available on your garden site?

Yes

No

2. Please identify your garden's current water status.

Existing water meter onsite

Paid to install water meter

Rain barrel

Water from neighbors

Other (please specify)

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3. Please explain the obstacles your garden encountered when obtaining water.

4. How did your garden overcome these obstacles?

4. Additional challenges

1. Please provide any other comments on the challenges of obtaining land or water for your garden.

Thank you for completing the survey.