

1993 Project Abstract

FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JUNE 30, 1995

This project was supported by MN Future Resources Fund (Msxxx.xxx)

JUL 05 1995

TITLE: Developing Multi-use Urban Green Space

PROGRAM MANAGER: Alan Singer

ORGANIZATION: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

LEGAL CITATION: M.L. 93 Ch. 172, Sec. 14, Subd. 7(b)

APPROPRIATION AMOUNT: \$220,000

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

- A. Develop plots demonstrating ecologically-sound lawncare techniques and landscaping alternatives.
- B. Involve neighborhood and community residents (children, families and adults) in urban gardening.
- C. Develop urban tree nurseries and orchards.

OVERALL PROJECT RESULTS

In addition to beautifying the individual neighborhoods where each of these sites are located, this project has been the impetus for a tremendous amount of community involvement and new partnerships. In some cases it was the sole reason for forming block clubs and new friendships. More importantly, it has taken the conceptual idea of a sustainable landscape to actualization where people see and smell this new aesthetic. It has transformed people who were unfamiliar and even threatened by the concept to some of the greatest supporters and proponents. In some cases this was adjacent residents and in others it was staff and elected officials. This project was, in an important way, a precursor to the Park Board's recent decision to reduce grass cutting throughout the park system. Practicing and aspiring landscape architects had opportunities to design new projects giving them practical experience and exposure. Plant nurseries supplying native materials were benefitted in creating additional demand which in turn will eventually make native species more affordable and mainstreamed. The project has created a new dimension to community gardens. The sites have become an educational resource for children and adults and can provide seeds and plants for other similar projects.

PROJECT RESULTS USE AND DISSEMINATION

The projects have received a tremendous amount of attention from the neighborhood newspapers which stimulated informational requests by the general public. Features have been included on Minnesota Public Radio and KARE 11 news. Neighborhoods which do not have a site are seeking ways to create additional sites. Three metro area garden clubs and two metro area lakeshore organizations have requested materials and presentations. Planning districts in St. Paul have requested a similar program in their city. Presentations have been made at the "Creating a Sustainable City" conference attended by 170 people in Minneapolis on June 10, 1995; at the national Izaak Walton League conference held in Washington, DC held in July, 1994 and a planning meeting for Annapolis, MD. It is very clear that as these new sites mature and become even more attractive, the concept of a more sustainable landscape will become more widely used and accepted.

JUL 05 1995

- I. **Project Title:** Developing Multi-Use Urban Green Space
Program Manager: Alan Singer
Agency Affiliation: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
Address: 400 South 4th Street, #200
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55415
Phone: (612) 661-4826
- A. **Legal Citation** ML 93 Chpt. 172, Sect. 14, Subd. 7b
Total Biennial LCMR Budget: \$220,000
Balance: \$ 7,927
- Appropriation Language as drafted 7/27/92: 7 (b)**
This appropriation is from the future resources fund to the Commissioner of Natural Resources for a contract with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to develop City tax forfeited lands into neighborhood gardens, orchards, alternative landscape demonstration areas and tree nurseries.
- B. **LMIC Compatible Data Language**
N.A.
- C. **Status of Match Requirement**
N.A.
- II. **Narrative:** Tax forfeited property located within the City of Minneapolis will be identified, inventoried, and evaluated as potential sites for one or more of the following uses: neighborhood gardens, orchards, alternative lawncare and landscape demonstration areas/and or nurseries. Based upon developed guidelines which include both physical site factors and relevant social concerns, suitable sites will be selected throughout the City. Neighborhood and community residents will be recruited, organized and maintained for involvement in site design, development and maintenance. Information and programs on organic and intensive gardening, low-input and alternative landscaping techniques, ecologically-sound lawncare, food preservation and yard waste composting will be an integral portion of this project.
- III. **Statement of Objectives:**
- A. Develop plots demonstrating ecologically-sound lawncare techniques and landscaping alternatives.
- B. Involve neighborhood and community residents (children, family and adults) in urban gardening.
- C. Develop urban tree nurseries and orchards.

IV. Objectives

- A. **Title of Objective:** Develop plots demonstrating ecologically-sound lawncare practices and landscaping alternatives.
- A.1. **Narrative:** Demonstration plots will be designed, constructed and maintained for homeowners to see that alternative lawncare and landscaping techniques can be both attractive and ecologically sound.
- A.2. **Procedures:** Demonstration plots will consist of a standard layout illustrating the differences between and due to lawn cutting heights, watering regimen, fertilizer/herbicide application and grass varieties. Areas with native short grasses and forbs will be planted and compared. Interpretive signage, informal handouts and tours will be provided.
- A.3. **Budget:**
a. Amount budgeted: \$90,000
b. Balance: \$0
- A.4. **Timeline:**
- | | 7/93 | 1/94 | 6/94 | 1/95 | 6/95 |
|--|--------|------|--------|------|--------|
| Design standard lot layout | XX | | | | |
| site evaluation | X----- | | | | X |
| site development and materials | X----- | | | | X |
| interpretive signage/information materials | | | X----- | X | X----- |
| programs | | | X----- | X | X----- |
- A.5. **Status:** Construction of six sites on tax-forfeited properties located throughout Minneapolis are now complete. Due to volunteer labor shortages and rainy weather, the seventh site at 1211 Knox Avenue North will be completed in early July by Sustainable Resources Center and community residents. All sites were evaluated by and designed by professional landscape/architectural firms who develop sustainable planting schemes appropriate for home landscapes. As a result of locational differences, social demographics, etc., each site is unique in its form and function. Both native and non-invasive perennials are planted in naturalized and laid-out beds. Alternative turf grasses such as 'no-mow' fescue are demonstrated. In some sites, conventional turf areas have been installed but are maintained using non-chemical, agriculturally-appropriate methods. Native shrubs and vines are used as

to specimens and as thematic plantings. Native trees are used to demonstrate planting, staking and mulching techniques. Each site has an informational kiosk listing upcoming classes and events, interpretive signage describing each major landscape element, plant markers for individual plant, self-guiding materials to assist visitors at the site, tool box and composting bins.

While the value of this project has been very important in the areas where sites have been developed, utilizing only tax-forfeited properties prevented site development in other areas of the city where current lawn and garden practices contribute to non-point source pollution. This would have been very beneficial and perhaps even more effective from strictly an educational focus. Also, a significant amount of time was spent searching and securing appropriate tax-forfeited sites. In hindsight, the resources devoted to this aspect of the project could have been used for additional site development and community organizing and education.

Individual Site Descriptions

3112 Pillsbury Avenue South This site is located in the census tract of the Lyndale Neighborhood with the highest unemployment and crime and lowest education rates in Minneapolis. Specifically, the site is between a small apartment building and a fourplex (torn down in late 1994) and across the street from Horn Towers which is a major senior citizen and public housing complex. Residents had tried to garden there in the past but their efforts were thwarted by gang and drug-related activities. Site design was a collaboration between the landscape architect and area residents. Construction involved voluntary and paid efforts by neighborhood children and adults and youth workers from the Lyndale Neighborhood Association. The Association believes that the project was partially responsible for the reduction in crime in the area and there have been no major incidents of vandalism at the site since its completion. Site elements for this objective include ground cover; native, sun-loving and shade-tolerant species demonstration areas and arbors for native vines. The turf area planned for the site was eliminated in order to provide more space for gardening.

3817 1/2 Avenue South This site is located in a quiet residential area several blocks west of Hiawatha Avenue. Initially viewed with adamant skepticism by an adjoining property owner, she is now its strongest champion, donating time and water. Site elements for this objective include lawn care demonstration areas utilizing two different non-traditional turf grasses and over one hundred different prairie, woodland and perennial species.

1211 Knox Avenue North This site is in a residential area of the Near North neighborhood where there has been a significant amount of crime. The neighborhood is in transition and many recently demolished houses being replaced with newly constructed homes. The design, which was the result of a collaborative design session involving area children, the local block club and a team of nationally award winning architects, is a direct extension of needs and desires of the community residents. Labor, donated by Twin Cities Tree Trust, provided an opportunity for their adult employment and training participants to learn a number of construction skills. Unfortunately, Tree Trust had a number of recent budget cuts and was unable to fulfill its obligations to the project. As a result, this site was not completed by June 30th. Remaining site work including plant installation will be completed by Sustainable Resources Center by the middle of July. We estimate nearly \$60,000 of donated services and materials have been contributed to this site beyond the state allocation. Essentially the site consists of a series of outdoor "rooms" delineated by colorful fencing of different heights. Raised beds contain a combination of native plants with flowers and/or foliage corresponding to the fence color.

2749 Portland Avenue South This site is located at the very busy and highly visible corner of East 28th Street and Portland Avenue in the Phillips Neighborhood. A highly diverse population of low income SE Asian, African American, Tibetan, Mexican and American Indians reside in the surrounding apartment buildings. The Phillips Neighborhood Housing Trust and the local block club (which started in part because of the project) were partners in the design of the site. Through this partnership, a \$6,600 grant from the Community Initiatives Self Help Program was given for site amenities such as arches and benches currently under construction. Site elements for this objective include native grass, forb and perennial demonstration areas, turf areas for organic lawn care demonstrations, an aspen grove and a native shrub hedge for attracting wildlife.

1528 5th Street Northeast This site is located in a primarily East European ethnic area of the Sheridan Neighborhood across the street from the Holland Continuous Progress School. Teachers and children from this public elementary school participated in designing the site and have named it the "Holland School Earth Keepers Garden." The site was designed to demonstrate the uses of native grasses, flowers and shrubs and perennials for use in relatively small spaces. A traditional turf path is maintained using ecologically sound techniques.

5157 Newton Avenue North This site, located in a residential area of north Minneapolis consists of two unbuildable lots subjected to minor flooding next to Shingle Creek Park. Most of the site was a debris-strewn, low quality woodland. The site was designed in collaboration with the neighborhood association and teachers and students of Shingle Creek Urban Environmental Magnet school located three blocks away. Many of the existing trees were removed and/or trimmed to retain the wooded character in the center of the site with the understory planted with ferns and wild flower species. Sunny areas have been planted with native prairie grasses and flowers. Alternative turf species have been seeded while new sod (recently installed in conjunction with a repaving project) is maintained using organic methods. Crushed limestone, woodchip and stone paths lead visitors from one plant community to another.

2845 Garfield Avenue South This site is a new component of the Soo Line Community Garden which has been in existence since the 1980's. Located within the proposed Midtown Greenway, a full sun, native prairie demonstration area has been established.

Classes and Information

In addition to the self-guided materials available at each site, many classes have been developed and conducted for hundreds of people on-site and elsewhere. Topics have included "Landscaping with Native Plants," "Gardening For Wildlife," "Chemical Free Lawn Care," etc.. A number of elementary schools have utilized the sites and plan to do so in the future. Fact sheets on such topics as "Ground Covers" and "Sustainable Lawn Care" were developed and distributed. "The Beautiful Landscape Fair" was organized and conducted on March 19, 1995 at the Nokomis Community Center. Over 600 people visited exhibits and attended presentations focussed on promoting more sustainable home landscapes.

Future Considerations

Maintenance, plant replacement (as needed) and reworking of site elements will continue for the next two years via the Sustainable Resources Center with limited assistance from the Park Board, neighborhood organizations, schools, community residents and other entities. Community organizing and on-site classes will be ongoing to ensure participation and involvement by the community in all aspects of the sites. A significant media campaign will take place this summer to encourage metro area residents to visit the sites and participate in an organized demonstration site tour. Through an arrangement negotiated with the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, each Multi-use Urban Green Space site is protected from development for five years through a lease with SRC.

A.6 Benefits: By providing an accessible and visible means of demonstrating alternative lawncare practices and landscaping techniques, urban residents will reduce the amount of yard waste, water, gasoline, pesticides and fertilizers currently used. In addition, plant materials will beautify unused property.

B. Title of Objective: Involve neighborhood and community residents (children, families and adults) in urban gardening.

B.1. Narrative: Clusters of individual raised bed gardens will be constructed with participants receiving regular instruction in organic gardening techniques, food preparation and preservation. A full-service tool and equipment "library" will be assembled and provided for both existing and new neighborhood gardening and green space projects.

B.2. Procedure: Garden sites will be evaluated according to developed guidelines with particular emphasis on those sites with potential long-term use.

Interested residents will be involved in site preparation, construction of removable infrastructure and on-going maintenance. Information and programs will be offered to both involved participants and the general public. A variety of hand tools such as shovels, hoes, rakes, pruners, etc. as well as larger pieces of equipment such as a rototiller, sod cutter and wood chipper will be purchased, stored and hauled in an enclosed trailer (used) which will also be purchased.

B.3. Budget:

a.	Amount budgeted:	\$100,000
b.	Balance:	\$0

B.4.	Timeline	7/93	1/94	6/94	1/95	5/95
site						
community organizing	X-----					X
purchase roto-tiller,						
tools and other equipment				X	X---	X
garden preparation and						
infrastructure	X-----	X	X---	X		X-----
information and programs		X-----	X			X-----

B.5. Status: A diverse cross-section of peoples and cultures were involved in every aspect of the garden building process from the initial organizing to the actual planting.

3112 Pillsbury Avenue South There are twelve 4'x4' raised beds, two 2'x2' elevated beds for people in wheel chairs and a large central herb garden. An area at the west end of the site originally intended for a lawn care demonstration area has been converted into an additional four large plots. Currently there are 14 gardeners and four volunteer garden coordinators.

One of the outcomes of this particular project is the establishment of a youth farm project. Due to the success of this site, the large house next to it was razed to make room for a pilot project in which neighborhood youth will grow and market their own crops as a practical means of learning how to run a small business. The hope is to expand this concept into other areas of the city.

3817 26th Avenue South There are six 5'x5' raised beds and one larger irregular raised bed all being used by gardeners. The volunteer garden coordinators live across the street. The site has become so important to the adjoining residents that Block Club is burying a time capsule at the site for the National Night Out Block Gathering on August 1st.

1211 Knox Avenue North From its inception, separate garden plots were not included in the design. Rather, vegetables would be planted among the demonstration beds. In addition, there are edible and medicinal plantings. Pillsbury Neighborhood Services Youth Program has committed to not only gardening but also maintaining the site. Numbers of other area residents and agencies have expressed interest in participating.

2749 Portland Avenue South There are eight 5'x5' raised beds and twenty 5'x5' ground level plots. Twenty-four gardeners from the neighborhood are currently participating despite the late date in May when the plots became available. Individual and institutional coordinators are still being identified.

1528 5th St. Northeast Due to the small size of the space, there are small ground level plots of which five are being used by area residents.

5157 Newton Avenue North The gardening area consists of three 5'x5' raised beds and three irregular shaped ground level beds all of which are being utilized. A neighbor donated the materials and labor for the raised beds as well as benches and a small bridge which will be added to the site. There is an active coordinating committee which has committed to maintaining some site elements through 1995.

Equipment

A used pickup truck and small enclosed equipment trailer were purchased as part of this project. The trailer was retrofitted to carry a rototiller, mulcher/chipper and other equipment purchased with funds from this project. This equipment includes an electric lawn mower, shovels, forks, hoes, pruners, rakes, trowels, weed whips, edgers, cultivators, watering and gas cans, ladder and other miscellaneous items.

Classes

Twenty Two classes and programs were conducted for hundreds of people on such topics as "square foot Gardening," "Composting," "Starting Seeds Indoors," "Herbs and Vegetables," etc.. In addition, there were many small group, informal demonstrations on site with community volunteers and gardeners.

B.6. Benefits: Land will be reclaimed and information on organic and intensive gardening techniques will be provided. Personal development of participants includes esteem building, positive family interaction, environmental education opportunities, career exploration, and learning a life-long hobby/interest. Considerable fresh vegetables will be harvested at no cost to participants. The project has stimulated neighborhood interest in creating market gardens on other unused/underutilized land parcels.

While the pick up truck and rototiller have worked very well, it is both difficult and dangerous to push the rototiller up a steep ramp to the truck bed. A used equipment trailer with a secure enclosure would provide a means to develop, store and haul a full-service, equipment and tool "library" for use within neighborhoods. Instead of having to rent equipment or haul materials from outside of the neighborhood , purchasing a mulcher/chipper and sod cutter would provide a much more efficient and cost effective approach to developing additional neighborhood green spaces. Having a large stock of hand tools such as shovels, hoes, rakes, forks, pruners, etc. will enable residents to participate on an initial and on-going basis.

Our intent will be to design an attractive "advertisement" for the mobile equipment and tool trailer acknowledging the use of state funds as recommended by LCMR. All equipment and tools purchased through and for this project will be used for this same type

of program beyond the final closing date of this specific project as designated by Sustainable Resources Center. If the purpose and use of the equipment and tools is changed during from the described intent during the capital expenditure's useful life, Sustainable Resources Center commits to pay the Fund an amount equal to either the cash value received or a residual value approved by the director of the LCMR if the items are not sold.

C. Title of Objective: Develop Urban Tree Nurseries and Orchards

- C.1. Narrative: On marginal portions of selected sites, a wide variety of shade and fruit tree seedlings and saplings will be planted and maintained for future use within the neighborhood.
- C.2. Procedures: Sites will be selected and prepared for planting. Nursery stock (using tree tubes and stakes) will be planted and maintained by neighborhood residents. Information and interpretive signage will be developed on tree care and the value/importance of the urban forest.
- C.3. Budget
- | | | |
|----|------------------|----------|
| a. | Amount budgeted: | \$30,000 |
| b. | Balance: | \$ 7,927 |
- C.4. Timeline
- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------|---------|------|------------|------|
| | 7/93 | 1/94 | 6/94 | 1/95 | 6/95 |
| evaluation and site preparation | X-----X | X-----X | | X---X | |
| nursery stock purchased and planted | | | | X-----X | |
| interpretive information and signage | X-----X | | | X--X-----X | |
- C.5. Status: This objective has proved to be the most difficult to fulfill. As originally envisioned, small seedlings and saplings donated and purchased at a very low cost would be planted on selected sites and then transplanted to future public locations. However, we encountered many barriers which caused us to reevaluate our approach. Commercial nurseries expressed concern, even at this small scale, of government subsidized nurseries being an unfair advantage. Residents wanted to utilize the limited space with other uses. Probably the most prohibitive reason was that we could not ensure that the stock could be maintained and transplanted in a cost effective manner beyond 1995.

As a result, we incorporated a small scale tree nursery and orchard at 3817 26th Ave South, a small orchard at 2749 Portland Ave and 5157 Newton Ave and a full sized apple tree at 1211 Knox Ave. In addition to the fruit trees on the Newton Ave site ten Burr Oak, ten Sugar Maple and ten Basswood saplings were planted to begin the transition to a Big Woods forest and to eventually serve as "nurse" trees for producing seedlings which can be transplanted. The largest nursery project took place in the proposed Midtown Greenway corridor across from and near the Soo Line Garden. A combination of balled and burlapped and seedlings of Sugar Maple, Black Cherry, Basswood, Ironwood, Hackberry, Butternut, Shagbark Hickory, American Chestnut and Oaks. The larger trees went into permanent locations while others were installed into nursery beds for eventual transplanting to permanent locations within the corridor. Workers removed undesirable species such as Buckthorn, trimmed existing trees and mulched the areas.

Factsheets have been researched and written on tree care, trees and shrubs for energy conservation, and backyard urban orchards. Fruit trees and shade tree plantings and demonstrations have taken place. Neighborhood residents have been recruited for "special event" plantings of fruit trees and nursery stock. Classes on tree care, organic pest management for fruit trees and pruning fruit and shade trees were conducted.

- C.6. Benefits: Planting a significant number of small trees on local sites for eventual transplanting will enhance greater understanding and appreciation for urban trees and forests. The nurseries will create additional neighborhood green space, provide wildlife habitat and contribute to CO₂ abatement. Information on sources for native tree species will be compiled.
- V. Evaluation: The results of this project will be evaluated based upon the following: 1) ability to change the current policies related to tax forfeited land so they also include long-term use which does not directly provide taxes and/or jobs; 2) the size, number, uses and location of multi-use green space sites throughout the city; 3) providing the impetus and means for citizens to adopt ecologically-sound lawncare, gardening and landscaping techniques at their own homes; 4) stimulating similar projects on under-utilized urban lands; 5) levels of interest and involvement by neighborhood/community residents in all aspects of this project and 6) amount of locally produced vegetables.
- VI. Context:
- A. Although community gardening is a well established concept and continue to be quite successful, long-term use and adequate land remain barriers to expanding urban gardening. Moreover, many of the current gardeners are not using organic, intensive techniques This project will not only provide additional garden s but provide a

for promoting the reduction of the individual and cumulative impacts of yard wastes and the use of water, fertilizers and pesticides by urban residents. This is vital if we are going to improve surface water quality and the overall livability of urban neighborhoods.

- B. This project has the opportunity to supplement existing community garden projects by introducing new gardening information and techniques and working together to establish long-term community garden space. It may be possible to develop the lawncare and landscaping demonstration plots and tree nurseries at existing sites as well. In addition, this project complements and expands the existing efforts of the Minneapolis Departments of Planning and Public Health with regard to vacant lot utilization and the reduction of pesticides.
- C. The first and third objectives of this project represent new initiatives with no previous history. The urban gardening component is an extension of the efforts of the cooperating agency, the Natural Resources/Self-Reliance Center, which received LCMR recommended funding for the 91-93 biennium. Since this project addresses recently recognized and significant urban environmental issues, the need and potential benefits for similar future projects is quite high.

VII. Qualifications:

- 1. Program Manager: Alan Singer, Environment Programs Manager for Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
 - a. B.S. in Ecology, Earth Science and Communications from the University of Minnesota, 1984
- 2. Cooperators/Other Investigators:
 - a. Mary Morse, Urban Lands Program Manager, Sustainable Resource Center. Ms. Morse has been a full-time advocate for urban green space rehabilitation since January 1991. She has expertise in program development and management, volunteer and community organizing, urban and small space gardening, and government and policy work.
 - b. Sustainable Resource Center, a non-profit environmental organization, has assisted community gardeners in the metro area since 1976 by providing information, technical assistance and advocacy.