



## Agenda Report

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**File #:** 23-1169

**Meeting Date:** 4/13/23

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**TITLE: COMMUNITY GARDENS UPDATE**

**DEPARTMENT: PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**PRESENTED BY: ASHLEY THOMAS, SENIOR RECREATION SUPERVISOR**

**CONTACT INFORMATION: ASHLEY THOMAS, SENIOR RECREATION SUPERVISOR  
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**RECOMMENDATION:**

It is the recommendation of staff that the Parks and Community Services Commission:

1. Receive and file this update on the Community Garden program and;
2. Provide feedback on additional garden plots at the Del Mar Garden location.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Costa Mesa has two (2) community gardens, the Del Mar Community Garden on Del Mar Avenue, and the Hamilton Community Garden on Hamilton Street. Between the two garden locations there are 99 parcels total. The Del Mar Community Garden has been in existence for over 20 years and has 57 garden parcels approximately 13 feet wide by 15 feet long. The Hamilton Community Garden was established in 2004 and has 42 parcels of the same dimensions. The parcels are rented by residents to grow vegetables, fruits, flowers and plants for their consumption and use.

The annual cost to rent a parcel is \$60, plus a one-time \$20 key deposit and a \$100 clean-up deposit. Each calendar year, gardeners pay the annual fee and sign an acknowledgement that they have read and will abide by the current Community Garden Rules and Agreement (Attachment 1). In November, staff prepares renewal packets that are sent to all gardeners. If the parcel is not renewed by the December deadline date, the parcel will be assigned to the next person on the waitlist. Currently, Del Mar Community Garden has an average two-year waitlist with 75-80 names and Hamilton Community Garden has an average nine-month waitlist with 40-45 names.

The Community Gardens were designated by the City as a self-governed entity monitored by the Parks & Community Services Department, with support provided by one (1) City part-time employee. This staff member is responsible for oversight of the gardens, including on site communication with gardeners, ensuring trash is picked up and portable restrooms are cleaned, and monitoring the tools, equipment, and water in use at the gardens.

**ANALYSIS:**

On an annual basis, staff explore opportunities to maintain and enhance the gardens. This year staff performed a major clean-up, disposing of items in the common area deemed unsafe or unclaimed by current gardeners. Additionally, they purchased and installed new heavy-duty metal garden hose holders to better organize the shared hoses.

As indicated by the more than 100 interested residents on the waitlist, there is a high demand for parcel space. Staff researched viable options to increase the number of available parcels within both community gardens. Unfortunately the Hamilton Garden is fully maximized, but there is an opportunity at the Del Mar Garden to increase the number of parcels. Staff are planning to install twelve (12) new elevated garden beds (6' L x 2' W x 2.5' H) along the exterior walls of the north and west side. These beds are raised which can allow access to a variety of potential gardens. And while this doesn't solve the waiting list issue, it is still a positive use of that space and an opportunity that doesn't currently exist.

In addition to these parcels, staff evaluated the area nearest to Del Mar Avenue. This is a large space that currently holds mulch and tools. It has not previously been developed as garden parcels as there are two large shade trees that cover the area with shade most of the day. Shaded areas traditionally do not serve as successful garden parcels, as evidenced by the back corner of the Del Mar garden that has had the same issues.

Staff have also evaluated the installation of windscreen on the chain link fencing along Del Mar Avenue. This would provide more privacy to the gardens and a consistent appearance along Del Mar Avenue. In preparation for this meeting, staff notified all current gardeners including those on the wait list to attend the meeting to share any thoughts, commendations, or concerns regarding either the Del Mar Community Garden or the Hamilton Community Garden.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

The alternative would be to not install the raised garden beds at Del Mar Community Gardens.

**FISCAL REVIEW:**

Funds for the raised garden beds and windscreen are available in the current fiscal year budget.

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

There is no legal review required for this report.

**CONCLUSION:**

It is the recommendation of staff that the Parks and Community Services Commission:

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2. Provide feedback on additional garden plots at the Del Mar Garden location.