

PROPOSAL FOR 2008 COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOT FEES

For Public Hearing on February 12, 2008 at 6pm in City-County Building Room 201

In the fall of 2007, the Mayor’s Committee on Community Gardens designated a working group to study the plot fees being charged at city-supported gardens. The group included gardeners, city staff, committee members and staff from the Community Action Coalition (CAC), which provides many of the services received by community gardens. This group reviewed the current fees, compared them to fees charged in other communities in Wisconsin and throughout the country, studied the cost of the services being provided to the gardens, and the demographics of participating gardeners. The working group’s *goals* were to develop a new proposal for plot fees in city-supported gardens that would do the following:

Sustain the Community Gardens program in the City of Madison. Providing adequate fees to support the gardens we have; realistically reflect the value of garden plots on public land; and allow the program to “grow” new gardens in the future to meet the increasing demand for community garden spaces.

Promote Equity and Fairness within gardens and across the city by providing a sliding fee scale related to the income of the participating gardeners/households.

Simplify the Fee Scale with fewer categories and round numbers, making it easier for gardens to administer.

Household size or number of gardeners	Income		Income		Income	
	monthly	annual	monthly	annual	monthly	annual
1 - 2	up to \$2,166	up to \$26,000	\$2,166 - 3,417	\$26,001 - 41,000	over \$3,417	over \$41,001
3 - 4	up to \$3,167	up to \$38,000	\$3,167 - 4,417	\$38,001 - 53,000	over \$4,417	over \$53,001
5 - 6	up to \$4,250	up to \$51,000	\$4,250 - 5,333	\$51,001 - 64,000	over \$5,333	over \$64,001
7 and more	up to \$5,333	up to \$64,000	\$5,333 - 6,583	\$64,001 - 79,000	over \$6,583	over \$79,001
Annual Plot Fee	\$10		\$35		\$65	

The Proposed Plot Fee Scale is based on the following assumptions:

1. These plot fees will be applied to all gardens receiving support from the City of Madison or from CAC (which is funded through the city’s Community Development Block Grant office) including land, insurance, funding for garden improvements, language interpretation, compost, woodchips, tilling etc.
2. Gardeners will determine the fees they pay for each plot on the income of their household or gardening group.
3. The income categories reflect the group’s consideration of County Median Income and Federal Poverty Levels.
4. The fees are based on a plot that is 400 square feet. In gardens that do not have standard plot sizes, proportional adjustments may be made to the fees; for example, a 200 square foot plot might be one-half the regular plot fee, a plot that is over 800 square feet might be double the regular plot fee.
5. Ten percent of the fees collected at each garden will be available to support the New Garden Fund, which is used to help establish new community gardens or help existing gardens make capital improvements.
6. These fees will be reviewed every two years and adjusted as necessary.

By renting community garden plots on a sliding scale according to the size of a household or gardening group and its income, we hope to make city-supported gardens affordable to everyone and also have adequate funds to operate them effectively. These fees have not been adjusted for over 10 years, and the impact of the change on individual gardeners and gardens will vary depending on a number of factors – some fees will go up, others down – but we anticipate that overall the fees generated will increase by approximately one-third across the City.

It is important to realize that plot fees alone will never be enough to sustain our community gardens, which always require a significant investment of public funds. For example, much of the public funding for community gardens in Madison comes from federal funds that support families with low and moderate incomes; families with higher incomes pay higher fees because the federal funds cannot be used to subsidize their participation. We hope that this new fee structure will increase the overall sustainability of community gardening in Madison, as well as provide for continued improvements and growth.

The proposal will be the subject of a Public Hearing on February 12, 2008 to be held in Room 201 of the City County Building (210 Martin Luther King Boulevard) at 6pm.

Those wishing to provide input at the Public Hearing should arrive before 6:00, and complete a green registration sheet indicating their position on the proposal (support, opposition, or neither of these) and whether or not they wish to speak during the public hearing.

Speakers will have 3 minutes to provide feedback to the committee during the Public Hearing. Committee members may then ask questions of the speaker if they have any.

Interpretation services will be available for Hmong and Spanish speakers, and can be requested from the Mayor's office for other languages.

Those not wishing to speak, but who have written comments on the proposal, may submit them at the Public Hearing along with their green registration sheet.

If you cannot attend the hearing, you may provide written comments to city staff by post or email. Please do so by the 4:30 on February 11th so that your comments can be made available to the committee at the Public Hearing.

Send your comments to:

Lisa Olmsted, Office of the Mayor,
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Madison, WI 53703

Email: lolmsted@cityofmadison.com