



To: Madison Food Policy Council

From: Edible Landscapes Work Group

Re: Final report

Aug 10, 2017

The Edible Landscapes Work Group was formed to implement two policies passed by the Madison City Council:

- The Edible Landscapes on City-owned Lands ordinance and permit process
- The Terrace Planting ordinance and policy

Both policies emphasize increasing access to places to garden and/or create edible landscapes, and both efforts started in response to efforts by residents to plant fruit and nut trees on street terraces and/or in parks. City staff have been consistently resistant to allowing residents to plant woody material, including trees, in street terraces, but we have successfully developed ways to allow them on other public lands, and to allow non-woody edible (and other) plantings in terraces.

The terrace planting [ordinance](#) was passed in 2013. We subsequently worked with Christy Bachmann in Engineering, who instrumental in drafting [the policy](#) and getting approval from staff. George Hank in Building Inspection will be critical to the ongoing interpretation and enforcement of the policy. To spread the word about this policy, we worked with the Pollinator Work Group, since people seldom distinguish between their yards and the terrace. We crafted a [brochure](#), [flier](#) and [website](#) addressing what you can (and should) plant in your yard and terrace, designed to be printed and available around the city. In June 2017 we sent out a [press release](#) and a [newsletter article](#) to neighborhood newsletters, listservs, and blogs. We received favorable coverage (see [here](#) and [here](#)). We also delivered brochures and fliers to Olbrich, the Arboretum, public libraries, and relevant groups.

The Edible Landscapes [ordinance](#) was passed in 2013. We subsequently developed a [permit process](#) with the help of staff from IT and the impacted departments (Parks, Engineering, Stormwater Utility, Water Utility). Based on the experiences of the initial applicants, we improved the [website](#) and worked with staff to clarify the process and expectations all around. To that end, we drafted a standard operating procedure for staff to work from (available from the food policy coordinator). It contains the details of the permit process.

Critical to the long term success of this project is cooperation from the staff point people. They currently are:

- Parks Department – Kate Kane
- Engineering – Christy Bachmann
- Stormwater Utility – Christy Bachmann
- Water Utility – Amy Barrilleaux

We will rely on the Food Policy Director to maintain good relationships and clear communications with them, and to make sure they are not putting up unnecessary roadblocks for applicants. In order to ensure that the permit process is clear and easy for the public, not a burden on staff, and getting to yes most of the time, we will need the Food Policy Director to actively monitor applications and their process over the next year or so. If we can't achieve those goals with this process, we may need to reconsider and revise it,

possibly to include involving a reconstituted work group and/or the Food Policy Director more directly. The Food Policy Council should plan to revisit the process annually, monitoring how many applications have been received and approved, why any were denied, and what the applicants' experiences have been. To that end, we have designed an annual reporting process, supervised by the Food Policy Director, to provide the food policy council with the information it needs to make sure this program is going well.

We have not explicitly discussed racial equity issues in this work group, although the underlying goal of making more land available to grow food does speak to them. As the Food Policy Council continues to track applications and permits granted, we should consider tracking the demographics of the applicants, in addition to the geography of the permits so we can assess how well this process is serving all Madisonians.

Now that this work is done, we are disbanding. Ongoing work on this issue will be done by the Food Policy Director and the Food Policy Council. For further information on the history of edible landscapes in Madison or about the process we went through, interested parties could contact the members of the work group:

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