

What's Growing in Austin: Community Gardens Program



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Presentation Overview

- Why Community Gardens?
- City of Austin Efforts and Current Status
- Garden Challenges and Successes: Finding Land, Utility Conflicts
- Community Agriculture Example: Festival Beach Food Forest
- Future Opportunities



North Austin Community Garden

What is a Community Garden?

A community garden is "any piece of land gardened by a group of people" -*American Community Gardening Association*



South Austin Community Garden

Benefits of Community Gardens

- Re-engage people with their food
- Provide spaces for people to learn to grow food, created BY the community, enhancing community stewardship and pride
- Nature therapy! Connecting to nature and the soil
- Provide access to affordable, fresh, local, culturally appropriate, nutritious food
- Foster friendships and cooperation across racial, socioeconomic, and age groups



South Austin Senior Activity Center
Senior Garden

All this around food, food production, and health--common to all.

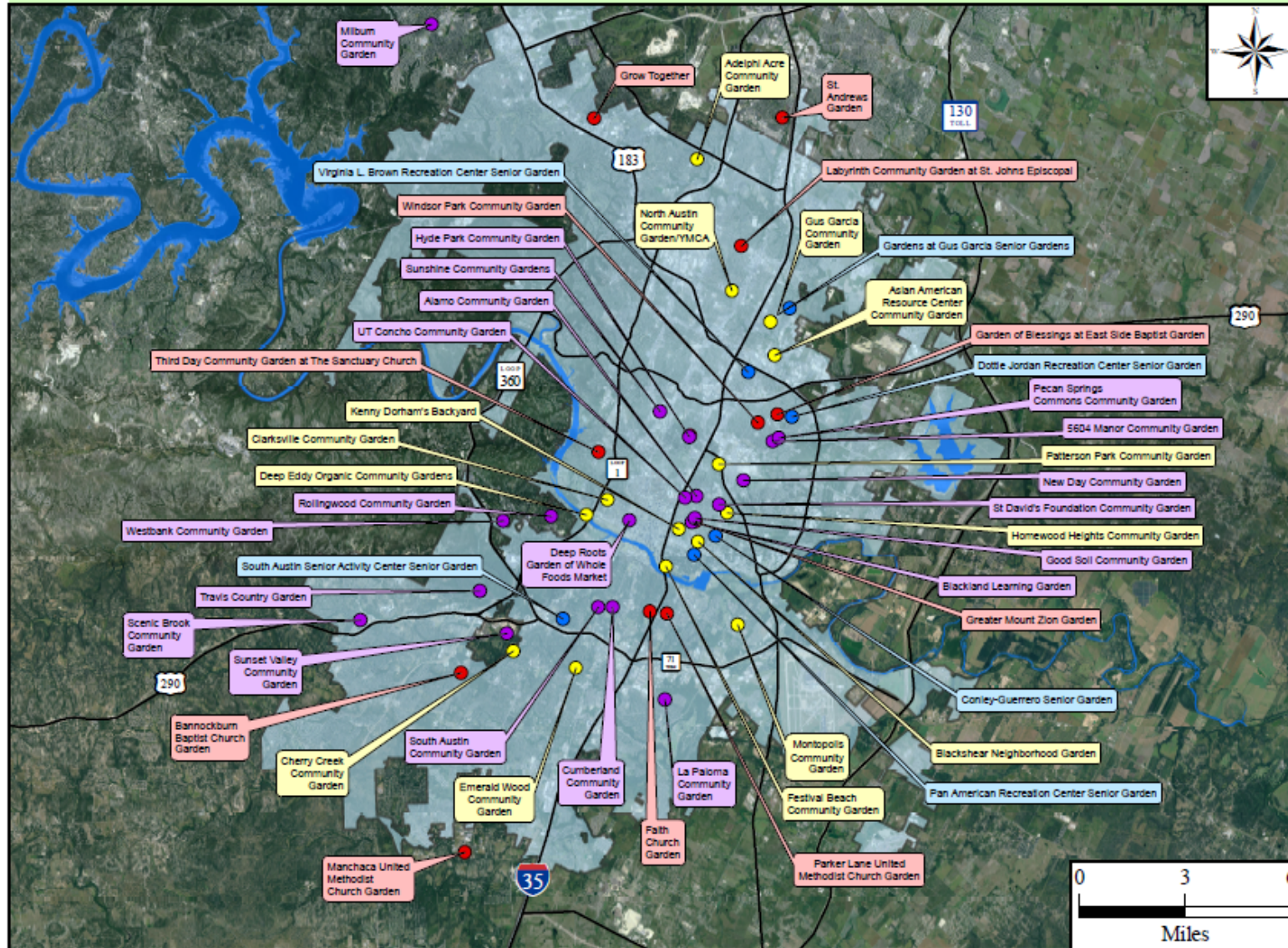
City of Austin Community Gardens Program

- Created by Austin City Council in 2009 to have a single point of contact and streamline the process for creating community gardens on City land (including school parkland!)
- Parks and Recreation staff can assist community members with land search, license agreements, water tap access, and permitting
- Community gardens and urban green spaces create community, which is a core mission for Parks and Recreation



Deep Eddy Community Garden

67 Community Gardens in Austin



Legend

- Private Gardens (20)
- Public Gardens (14)
- Senior Gardens (6)
- Church Gardens (12)
- Highways
- Lakes
- Austin City Limits

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Community Gardens in Austin

- 67 total gardens on City, County, State, church, school, and private land
- 23 community gardens are on City land (6 of these are senior community gardens at senior centers/recreation centers), 1 food forest, 1 community farm
- Gardens each have plots available for a seasonal or yearly fee (some have sliding fee scales), plot size varies from 4' x 6' to 10' x 10' or larger

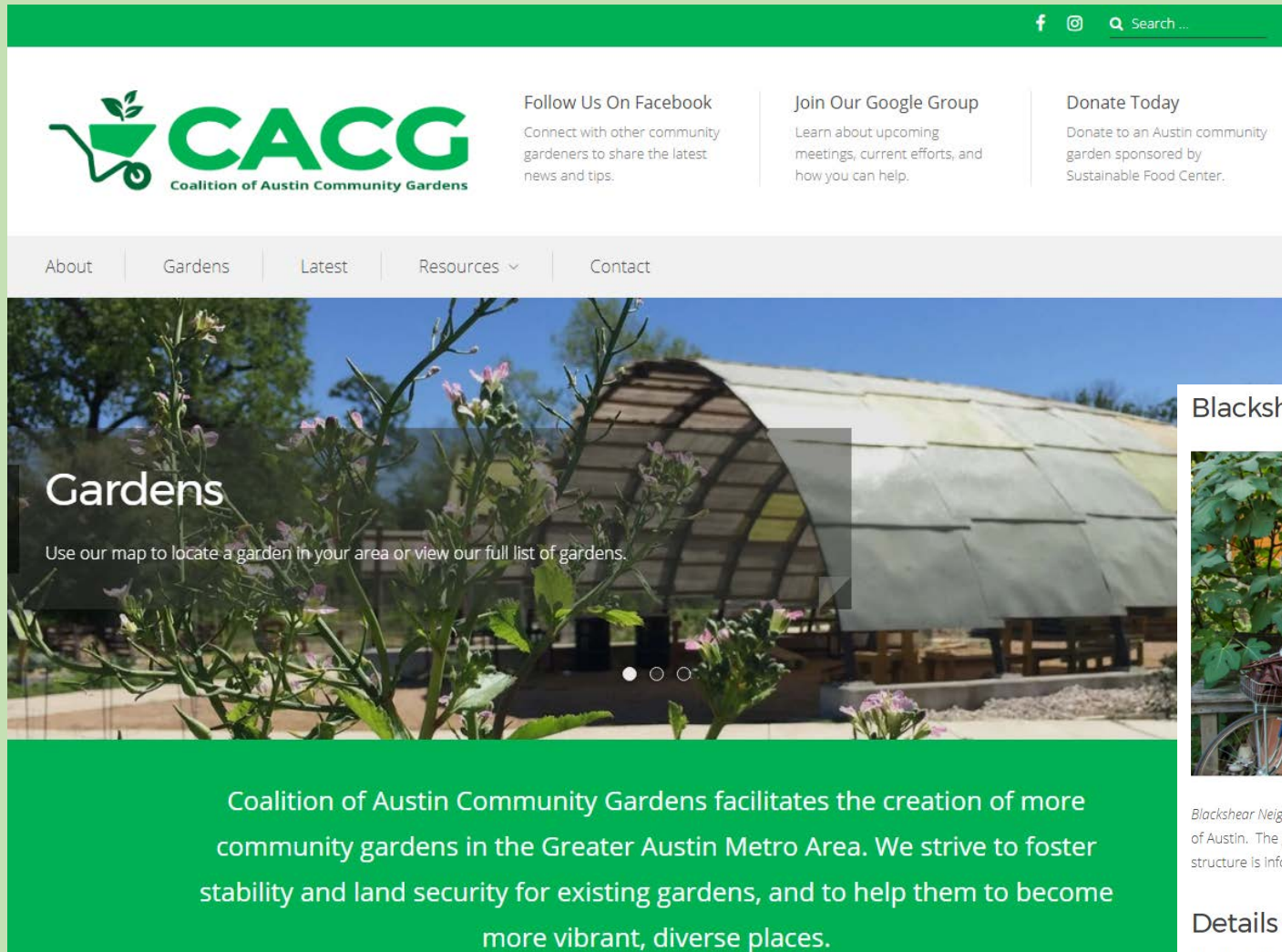


Gardens at Gus Garcia



Festival Beach Community Garden

Coalition of Austin Community Gardens & Website



The screenshot shows the website's header with a green navigation bar containing social media icons (Facebook, Instagram) and a search bar. Below the header is the CACG logo, which features a green wheelbarrow with a plant growing out of it. To the right of the logo are three columns of text: 'Follow Us On Facebook' with a link to connect with other gardeners; 'Join Our Google Group' with a link to learn about meetings and efforts; and 'Donate Today' with a link to donate to a garden sponsored by the Sustainable Food Center. A secondary navigation bar below the header lists 'About', 'Gardens', 'Latest', 'Resources', and 'Contact'. The main content area features a large image of a garden with a covered walkway and the word 'Gardens' in large white text. Below this image is a green banner with white text: 'Coalition of Austin Community Gardens facilitates the creation of more community gardens in the Greater Austin Metro Area. We strive to foster stability and land security for existing gardens, and to help them to become more vibrant, diverse places.'

Each garden has its own page with information on how to join:

Blackshear Neighborhood Garden



Blackshear Neighborhood Garden is located at 2011 East 9th Street. It was started on January 30th of 2008 when a license agreement was signed with the City of Austin. The garden is the size of an urban city lot. It is divided into a section of shared neighborhood rows and another section containing 14 plots. Our structure is informal and neighborly. If you are interested in gardening at Blackshear email Liz and Nathan.

Details for renting a plot:

BLACKSHEAR HAS PLOTS AVAILABLE!!

- Our dues schedule is seasonal: January – June and July – December.
- It is a \$40 suggested fee per season, please pay what you are able.
- Fee includes water, use of tools, and access to seed exchange.

For more information:
communitygardensaustin.org

CACG Community Garden Trainings and Panels 2016-2018

Topics: Chickens, Bugs, Rainwater, and Selling Produce



Homewood Heights Community Garden

Annual Free Soil Testing for Gardeners



Get Your Soil Tested At Austin's Soil Kitchen!



Testing for heavy metals and nutrient analysis for free – one soil sample per gardener.

Austin's Community Garden Challenges and Successes



Adelphi Acre Community Garden: Challenges

- City of Austin Public Works Dept. right of way turn lane – never developed
- Neighbors became inspired about potential to bring site to life as a community space



APPROVAL: YES No

Comments: Caution near any gas lines. Any damage to our lines, the customer is liable. Contact us for any needed relocations



Adelphi Acre Community Garden: Success!

- Garden completed in 2015 with 80 plots
- Used Utility Coordination Committee to gain approval from 37 utility companies
- Funded using Neighborhood Partnering Program Grant, strong community partnerships, including with nearby nurseries, landscapers, arborists.



Cherry Creek Community Garden: Challenges



- Watershed land: City of Austin partnered with FEMA to buy out 31 homes in 100-year floodplain along Williamson Creek
- Houses were razed, ground was scraped – but multiple utility conflicts remained
- Neighbors concerned about crime in newly vacant area, loss of community inspired to create community garden

Cherry Creek Community Garden: Success!



- Community garden established 2015
- Partnership between City of Austin Watershed, Public Works, and Parks & Rec. Dept.
- Funded by Neighborhood Partnering Program
- 24 plots, fruit orchard, community table, and wildlife trail

Patterson Park Community Garden: Challenges

- Garden proposed in the middle of a busy park, stalled due to neighbor concerns
- Concern about water bill payments
- Concern about fencing off garden for exclusive use of few
- Concern about where gardeners would park



Patterson Park Community Garden: Success!

- Grand Opening May 2017 as part of neighborhood association Memorial Day party, over 65 plots offered
- Partnered with local artist to install sculpture at park
- Garden hosted Fall 2017 Harvest Festival with pumpkin patch for photos



Community Garden at a School: North Shoal Creek Community Garden at Pillow Elementary



Permitted Spring 2017,
broke ground Fall 2017 with
22 plots (3 plots reserved
for school use)



Ribbon cutting & grand
opening Spring 2018

Community Agriculture: Festival Beach Food Forest



Site Context



Site Context – Affordable Housing and Community Garden as Neighbors

- City of Austin Parks & Recreation Dept. land adjacent to existing Festival Beach Community Garden
- Underutilized property next to RBJ Residential Tower (affordable housing for seniors and people with disabilities)
- Mowed at city's expense



Major Challenges

- First food forest to be established on City parkland: lack of existing permitting protocol
- Need for start-up funding
- Dirty stormwater runoff from RBJ Towers parking lot caused flooding and erosion
- Need for improved ADA accessibility, especially for RBJ Towers residents
- Need for community buy-in and gardener buy-in



Success: Festival Beach Food Forest Secures Neighborhood Buy-in and Funding

- Food Forest built on positive reputation of Community Garden
- Food Forest hosted meetups and community info sessions
- East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Planning Team provided “enthusiastic endorsement”
- Treefolks (local nonprofit) donated fruit and nut trees
- American Forests Community Re-Leaf Grant
- City of Austin Public Works Neighborhood Partnering Program Grant



July 29, 2014

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RE: Festival Beach Food Forest pilot project

Dear PARD representatives,

As the neighborhood association directly connected to Festival Beach, the East Cesar Chavez Neighborhood Planning Contact Team enthusiastically endorses the Festival Beach Food Forest pilot project lead by the East Feast Coalition.

Representatives from the East Feast Coalition and Holly Neighborhood met with the Neighborhood Team on July 23, 2014.

Our Team respects the time and efforts that our neighbors have already dedicated to realizing the community vision for the Holly Shores Master Plan. Many of our members participated in a series of public meetings over the past two years to create a cohesive vision for 90 acres of our cherished parkland. While there is ongoing discussion regarding the proposed ideas, sometimes heated, the Food Forest is a great example of preservation of the park's neighborhood heritage and natural tranquility. It is also in line with the following sections of our Neighborhood Plan, which read as follows:



Festival Beach Food Forest in Full Bloom, Beginning Phase II



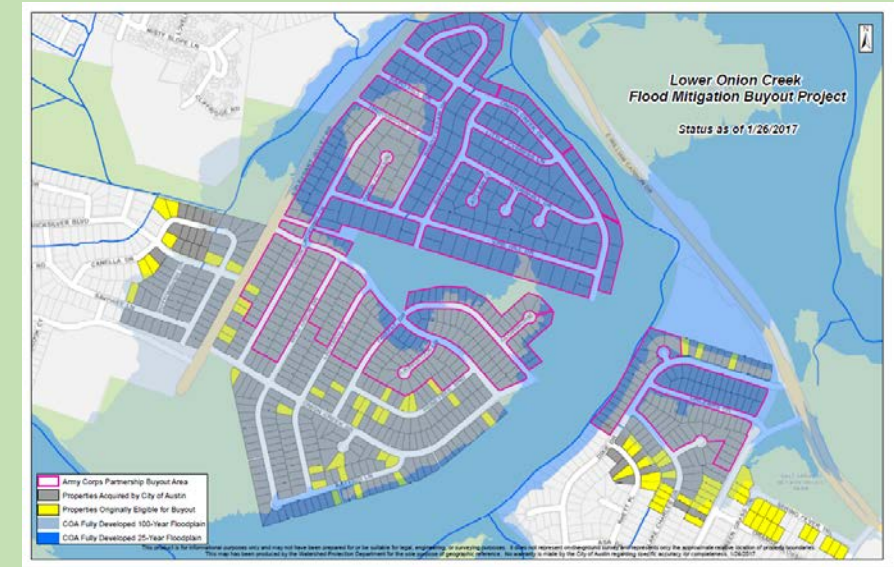
- The Food Forest now hosts free permaculture classes, lectures, design workshops, plant walks, potlucks
- For more information, visit their Facebook page and website www.festivalbeach.org



Future Opportunities

- Future Community Gardens

- South Austin - Tahoe Trail land acquired by PARD for garden
- South Austin - Heartwood Community Garden going in on 25-year floodplain buyout land along Williamson Creek
- Far North Austin – Alderbrook Park community garden site
- Southeast Austin – Onion Creek? Plenty of 100-year floodplain buyout land
- More gardens at recreation centers/senior centers/ libraries



- Redefining Community Agriculture

- Definition is evolving through CodeNEXT to include community gardens and urban farms – what else?
- Challenge of aligning civic definitions with what’s happening now and what citizens may want in the future
 - Agricultural entrepreneurship on City land?
 - Farm incubators for new and beginning farmers?

- Overall – community gardens and community agriculture will continue to create community and serve Austin citizens

Go forth and grow some food!



For more information:
communitygardensaustin.org

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Photo Credits: Sustainable Food Center staff, City staff, Adelphi Acre Community Garden, Cherry Creek Community Garden