

Dear Garden Leaders,

As you are aware, an ad-hoc committee has been meeting since early this year to plan for the future of the Community Gardens Program. At the May 10, 2014 Garden Leader meeting, participants requested that they receive updates about the planning process. Our goal is to provide an update memo monthly, with this memo being an overview of the planning process to date. You will also receive an invitation to 'share' a google docs file that contains minutes from meetings, as well as select reference and planning documents. Additionally, a google group has been formed to facilitate communications among garden leaders. Please reply to this e-mail if you have additional ideas on how to improve communications between garden leaders and the Ad Hoc Community Gardens Planning Committee.

**To:** Community Garden Leaders

**From:** Nan Fey, City of Madison Community Gardens Committee; Sharon Lezberg, Dane County UW-Extension; Mary Michaud, Public Health Department, Madison and Dane County (on behalf of the Ad Hoc Community Gardens Planning Committee)

**Re:** Madison/Dane County Community Gardens Planning Process

**Date:** 6/06/2014

*To many of us, community gardens represent a vital piece of what community means. The transitions currently taking place, transitions in the ways we support and grow participation in community gardens, represent a truly exciting opportunity to reflect, dream and mobilize. Garden leaders and a group of committed organizations and agencies are stepping up to envision and shape the future of this rich tradition, and the possibilities are truly inspiring. Here, we have summarized the collaborative process that has taken place. We invite continued ideas and enthusiasm as we shape the future of support for community gardens in Madison and Dane County. On behalf of the Ad Hoc Community Gardens Planning Committee, we would like to thank you all for the strength and excitement you collectively bring to this effort.*

**Summary.** In late 2013, the Board of Directors for Community Action Coalition for Southern Wisconsin, Inc. (CAC), who for over two decades provided support for community gardens in Madison and Dane County, began to discuss whether and how to adjust their involvement in community gardens administration. Ultimately, CAC decided to end its community gardening program. Effective May 30, 2014, CAC will no longer provide oversight and support for the community gardens program. (For more information, refer to this CAC [memo](#) dated 3/27/14. Or, read an [overview](#) of the value of community gardens in Madison and Dane County).

We'd like to bring you up to date on the planning efforts that have been underway since that time. Groups representing community garden leaders, City and County

agencies, and local nonprofits, are identifying strategies and plans to support thriving community gardens into the next decade.

**Background.** The Community Action Coalition convened a “visioning” meeting of organizational representatives to begin identifying the services that would need to be provided, and to discuss what organizations and possible structures would sustain community gardens in the future. From the nearly 40 people attending this session, over a dozen offered to participate in an **Ad Hoc Community Gardens Planning Committee** (referred to as the ‘Planning Committee’ in this memo) that would need to begin soon and proceed quickly in order to support gardens during the growing season of 2014, and have a plan for 2015 and beyond. At its first meeting on March 31st, the Planning Committee decided to form two working groups: ‘*Transition 2014*’ (to deal with immediate issues for gardens) and ‘*Structure and Funding*’ (to develop a plan for the future). Details on these committees and working groups is provided below.

***Planning Committee:***

- **Purpose:** Provide oversight and planning for short- and long-term support of community gardens. Convener is Nan Fey (who serves as co-chair of the Madison City Community Gardens Committee, and Chair of the Madison Food Policy Council).
- **Meetings:** Monthly meeting of the Planning Group on the third Thursday of the month, from 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. at the Dane County Extension office. These are open meetings and garden leaders are welcome to join.
- **Members:** see attached spreadsheet with contact information.

***Working groups within the Planning Committee:*** (meeting on an as-needed basis)

**(1) Structure and Funding Working Group:** The purpose is to identify a structure for ongoing support of community gardens in Madison and Dane County. As part of this charge, the group will develop an operations budget and seek funding to assure that there is support for the backbone operations and functions of a community gardening program. The proposed structure is a partnership of three core organizations working collaboratively. Each organization will take a leadership role in various aspects of the work:

- **Operations & Community Development:** Community Groundworks (nonprofit partner)
- **Education:** Dane County Extension
- **Technical support:** City of Madison
- Other organizations will provide additional support and competencies. The garden leaders will be very integral to this partnership organization, but the nature of the involvement will be determined collaboratively as we move forward.
- **Working Group Members:** Courtney Berner (U.W. Center for Coops), Martha Cranley (United Way), Nancy Dungan (City of Madison Community Development), Francis Eanes (UW Madison student), Carrie Edgar (Dane County UW-Extension), Nan Fey (City of Madison Community Gardens Committee), Madelyn Leopold (Parks

Commission), Sharon Lezberg (Dane County UW-Extension), Mary Michaud (Public Health Madison & Dane County), Danna Olsen (City of Madison Community Gardens Committee), Shelly Strom (Community Groundworks), Karen Von Huene (Community Groundworks), Ben Williams (Volunteer/nonprofit consultant), Mark Woulf (City of Madison Mayor's Office).

**(2) Strategic Planning Subgroup:** The Structure & Funding Working Group proposed a strategic planning process in order to address the details of the partnership arrangement. A sub-group of the Working Group has been assembled to plan this strategic planning process.

- Members: Nancy Dungan (City of Madison Community Development), Carrie Edgar (Dane County UW-Extension), Mary Michaud (Public Health Madison & Dane County), Karen Von Huene (Convener; Community Groundworks), Mark Woulf (City of Madison Mayor's Office), Ben Williams (Volunteer/nonprofit consultant), Shelly Strom (Community Groundworks).

**(3) Transition 2014 Working Group:** This group was formed to address the immediate needs of community gardens upon transition away from CAC's support role. The Transition 2014 working group met on June 4 to develop a master list of transition issues that need to be addressed (incorporating everything that was learned from the Garden leader meeting on May 10 along with other information from CAC staff and the visioning meeting). Working group members (see membership below) are addressing critical issues as they arise (e.g., assuring that we hold copies of all leases). The working group is attentive to the need to address key operational issues, including:

- leases (CAC is holding the leases until end of 2014; they don't need to do anything about that)
- liability insurance (CAC holding till end of the year),
- compost deliveries to gardens,
- water system maintenance and shut-down.
- **Note that garden leases will have to be renegotiated in 2015, but that they are held by CAC until the end of 2014.**
  - The transition working group will send out a memo to garden leaders about where to go for answer to questions. In the meantime, Dane County Extension's VISTA volunteer Lexa Dundore will be the point of contact for garden leader inquiries: [dundore.lexa@countyofdane.com](mailto:dundore.lexa@countyofdane.com); 224-3696.

- Working Group Members: Chris Brockel (Fair Share Coalition and Garden Leader), Lexa Dundore (Dane County UW-Extension/VISTA volunteer), Nancy Dungan (City of Madison Community Development), Nan Fey (City of Madison Community Gardens Committee), Lisa Johnson (Dane County UW-Extension), Aislynn Miller (City of Madison Community Gardening Committee), Annette Nekola (City of Madison Community Gardens Committee), Shelly

Strom (Community Groundworks), Mark Woulf (City of Madison Mayor's Office).

**City of Madison Community Gardens Committee:** This committee has been a key player in the planning process, and several committee members participate in the Planning Committee. Additionally, the City of Madison Community Gardens Committee is taking the lead role in connecting with garden leaders. Meetings of March and April addressed issues that might arise for gardens during the transition period. Committee members (Annette Nekola, Jill Schneider, Melissa Gavin, and Aislynn Miller) convened a **Community Gardens Leaders Meeting** on 5/10/2014.

Annette Nekola reported results of this meeting to the Planning Committee during their May meeting. Members of the Planning Committee noted that Garden Leaders represent the lifeblood of the initiative, with the enthusiasm, knowhow, and spirit to move it forward. Garden leaders requested more frequent communications from the Planning Committee, and Planning Committee members agreed that increasing the flow of communications among the groups would increase the likelihood of successful planning. Planning Committee members discussed ways to make those communications easier and are working on developing systems to share documents. Planning Committee members anticipate providing short update reports to community garden leaders on a monthly basis, and welcome garden leader participation in the Planning Committee and Working Groups.

**Upcoming meetings:**

- Planning Committee Meeting: June 19, 9:00 - 11: 00 a.m., Dane County Extension Building, 5201 Fen Oak Drive.