



Economic Development Division

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Office of Business Resources
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Managing Public Requests for Community Gardens on City-owned Land

Currently, requests to use City-owned land for community gardens can arrive at multiple departments that manage land. This document will outline a process to manage these requests.

Individual and Informal Organization Requests

Individual and informal resident groups with requests for community garden space can be forwarded to **Rooted WI, Inc.** (“Rooted”) who has managed the City’s Community Gardens “Master Lease” for 19 community gardens in the City of Madison since 2014 and is an annually-funded service provider to the City for community gardens management and technical assistance offerings. Rooted is best equipped to help individuals and informal resident groups locate existing garden plots and apply for waitlists as needed and appropriate. Additionally, with assistance from the City, Rooted can explore the capacity for expansion of an existing garden or determine the demand for a new garden at a location without existing garden access.

Formal Organization Requests

For formal organization requests, the interested entity should have the financial and administrative ability to support garden creation (capital needs, potential soils testing, legal/insurance requirements). They should have tangibly-identified community support for community garden access, which includes interest from an organized and committed group of growers ensuring sustainability of garden operations once initiated.

Formal organizational requests are processed based on whether or not the requester has identified a location.

I) Requests with identified preference for location

- A) Identify controlling agency. Staff receiving request(s) should identify which City agency manages that property and forward the request to that agency.
- B) Determine site suitability. If site is deemed unsuitable for any reason, agency can decline request(s), with brief rationale for denial, and/or encourage entity to consider alternative spaces. Suitability criteria should include:
 - 1) *Current use.* Review current uses and whether space is available for gardens
 - 2) *Future use.* Consider timing of any planned future use of the space (future park, conservation, development, etc)
 - 3) *Physical characteristics*
 - (a) Slope/topography
 - (b) Drainage/water flow/floodplain
 - (c) Sunlight exposure
 - (d) Water infrastructure access
 - (e) Public access



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- (f) Other
 - 4) *Soil quality*
 - (a) If known contamination (brownfield), entity would need to supply plan to avoid contamination
 - (b) City Hydrogeologist and other City agencies may have information regarding contamination for some locations
 - (c) If unknown, require soil testing (at entity's own cost) to determine best path forward – soil cap, raised bed, or in-ground gardens. Entity would be responsible for costs to mitigate (soil cap or raised bed) if necessary
 - 5) *Real estate/legal considerations*
 - (a) Review possible deed restrictions, easement agreements, etc
 - (b) If title review is necessary, staff can confirm with Office of the City Attorney as to whether it has been previously searched. If not, the requesting organization must supply this (at own cost).
 - C) *Lease management (Rooted Partnership or Standalone)*
 - 1) *Partnership with Rooted.* If the entity has a continuing partnership/relationship with Rooted under the “Master Lease”:
 - (a) Rooted will work with the City to amend master lease and account for additional garden space at existing sites or creation of new gardens where one does not exist
 - 2) *Standalone lease agreement.* If no relationship with Rooted, the entity:
 - (a) Must provide documentation of their garden plan re: implementation and management
 - (b) Will work with City Real Estate to create a lease
 - (c) Will provide necessary insurance coverages per City Risk requirements
 - D) *Request determination*
 - 1) Agencies in control of an individual parcel will make a final determination as to whether they can approve the request. The goal is to support new projects when feasible, but not if they conflict with other aspects of the management/development of a specific property. If a request is denied for factors related to a specific property, City staff will provide rationale and support identification of alternatives (see below).
- II) **Requests without identified location**
- A) *Support suitable location.* Direct requesting entity to Rooted for assistance. If Rooted is limited in its ability to support garden expansion in ways desired (particularly new sites), City staff can assist with identifying available sites.
 - B) *Site identified.* Once a potential site is identified, return to process for identified sites above – *Step 1A*.