



Southeast Uplift
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June 17, 2014

Commissioner Amanda Fritz
City of Portland
1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 220
Portland OR 97204

RE: Using Right of Way Parcels for Community Gardens and Urban Farming

Dear Commissioner Fritz:

The SE Portland Parks Advisory Committee and Friends of Portland Community Gardens are very encouraged about your interest in exploring the use of public right-of-way parcels for community gardens. Patti Howard, Policy Analyst, briefly described this idea when she attended a Friends Board Meeting last year. The Friends shared the idea with the SE Parks Advisory Committee this past April; they also described their organization, the history and growth of the City's Community Garden Program, and the current challenges faced by the growing demand for community gardens in an increasingly dense, urban environment.

The SE Parks Advisory Committee and the Friends of Portland Community Gardens both agree that expanding the opportunities for urban farming to public right-of-ways is a very promising direction the city should explore. The Friends and Parks Advisory Committee have agreed to work together to explore and help develop new policy that would allow gardening in the public right-of-way.

As you know, the SE Portland community gardens have the longest waitlists out of the 50 gardens in the Community Garden program. The Mt. Tabor Community Garden became the most sought-after garden, with the longest waitlist, as soon as it opened last year. Other community gardens in SE Portland (Colonel Summers, Blair, Sewallcrest, Sellwood, Buckman, Ivon, and Clinton) all have very long waitlists, with people waiting 2-6 years to get a plot in some of the gardens. As more people desire to grow their own food, the demand for garden plots grows. This demand will be further heightened by the rapid development of apartment buildings throughout SE Portland, most notably along the Division corridor, with 11 new buildings and approximately 450 units between 31st and 48th Avenues in the past 3 years.

In the face of such growing demand for community gardens, it is becoming increasingly challenging to find areas to site new gardens in inner SE Portland. There are very few areas where a new community garden could go, and all of them are on private property, with the exception of the Washington High School site. (For instance, a new Brooklyn garden is being contemplated on land owned by Tri-Met and the Friends have been eyeing vacant land owned by Trillium Family Services on SE Powell as a potential community garden.)

Using public right-of-way parcels for community gardens, whether city-owned or state-owned, is a very promising direction the City should take, which has been implemented in other cities. For instance, Seattle has

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been using public right-of-ways very successfully for several years for gardens. According to the NPLAN (National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity) PHLP (Public Health Law and Policy) report, Des Moines, Iowa has a community garden program that allows the establishment of community gardens on city right-of-ways and real property.

Portland should follow Seattle and Des Moines examples and explore ways to allow urban farming on such land.

We see a 3-step process to explore and hopefully implement a right-of-way community gardening initiative:

1. Create an inventory (or update an existing one) of right-of-way parcels that could be used for urban farming and community gardens. Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, who founded the city's community garden program and ran it for 35 years, indicated that such a mapping inventory was had commenced in 2009.
2. Identify stakeholder groups to involve in this process, such as SE Uplift, neighborhood associations, neighbors, and other interested parties.
3. Develop policy and code to allow the use of public right-of-ways to more easily allow for community gardening by adapting the City of Portland policy on "Encroachments in Public Right-of-Way" of the Bureau of Transportation

Portland can follow the examples set by other cities, and expand on that experience to create innovative policies and programs to more effectively use our urban landscape to grow healthy, nutritious and organic food all around us. The SE Parks Committee and the Friends of Portland Community Gardens look forward to an opportunity to discuss this exciting prospect with you.

Very truly yours,

Allen Field, SE Parks Committee

Anne Dufay, SE Uplift Executive Director, Robert McCullough, SE Uplift Board Treasurer

Paul Leistner, SE Uplift Vice-Chair, (The SE Uplift Board will not meet to vote on this letter until July. In the interim the Executive Director and board members, above, are signing as individuals.)



Leslie Pohl-Kosbau

Friends of Portland Community Gardens

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