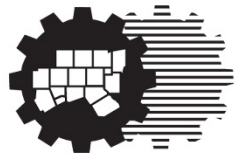


July Online Public Input Opportunity

Community Gardens Public Program Guide

Sydnee Mangini | July 6, 2023



**North Central Texas
Council of Governments**

Project Background & Activities

Project goals:

- Provide solutions for addressing issues related to food deserts and food access
- Provide a framework for creating publicly-led community gardens programs
- Encourage location of potential community garden sites on public land near transportation infrastructure such as rail stations
- Act as a resource for conversations between local governments and community stakeholders

Guide development:

- Reviewed current research, literature, and examples related
- Interviewed various staff with city-led gardens programs
- Researched food access and various strategies for addressing food insecurity



Garden grow boxes
(photos courtesy of DART and City of Grand Prairie)



Project History

Inspired by project from the NCTCOG Blue-Green-Grey funding initiative in 2019

Project used programmatic approach to convert small, unused parcels in a DART-owned right-of-way into community garden

Community garden is in a food desert near transit center and farmers' market



Hatcher Station Community Garden Pilot Project



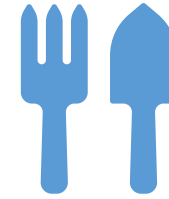
Community Gardens Overview

Characteristics:

- Locations can be urban, suburban, or rural
- Can grow a variety of plants throughout the year in TX
- Consists of either communal or individual plots
- Managed or owned by various types of organizations

Benefits of community gardening:

- Can improve quality of life
- Catalyze neighborhood/community development
- Create opportunities for social interaction, community-building, recreation, exercise, therapy, and education
- Reduce family food budget
- Increase food access/healthy food options
- Promote local food production/economies
- Conserve resources



44% increase in garden plots in city parks since 2012

More than 29,000 plots in city parks in largest 100 U.S. cities



Around 62 community gardens sites in the region currently

Sources: Trust for Public Land & American Community Gardens Association (ACGA)



Types of Community Gardens



Local Government-Led Programs

Public programs can:

- Have dedicated staff, funding, and resources for the program
- Identify plots of land for gardens which can be a strategy for low-cost redevelopment
- Provide consistent maintenance/upkeep
- Manage the regulatory aspect of plots/land use
- Support collaboration through established relationships and partnerships
- Provide city-wide educational opportunities

The guide focuses on:

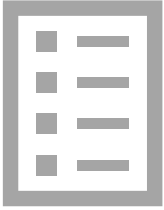
- Implementing city-led garden programs (likely plot gardens) near transit with bicycle and pedestrian access
- Cities initiating, implementing, and managing the garden program



Allen Community Garden
(photo courtesy of City of Allen)



Community Garden Public Program Guide



Guide components



Site Analysis

Site criteria:

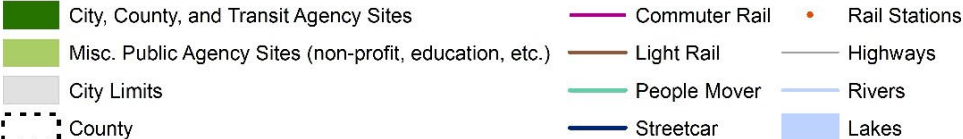
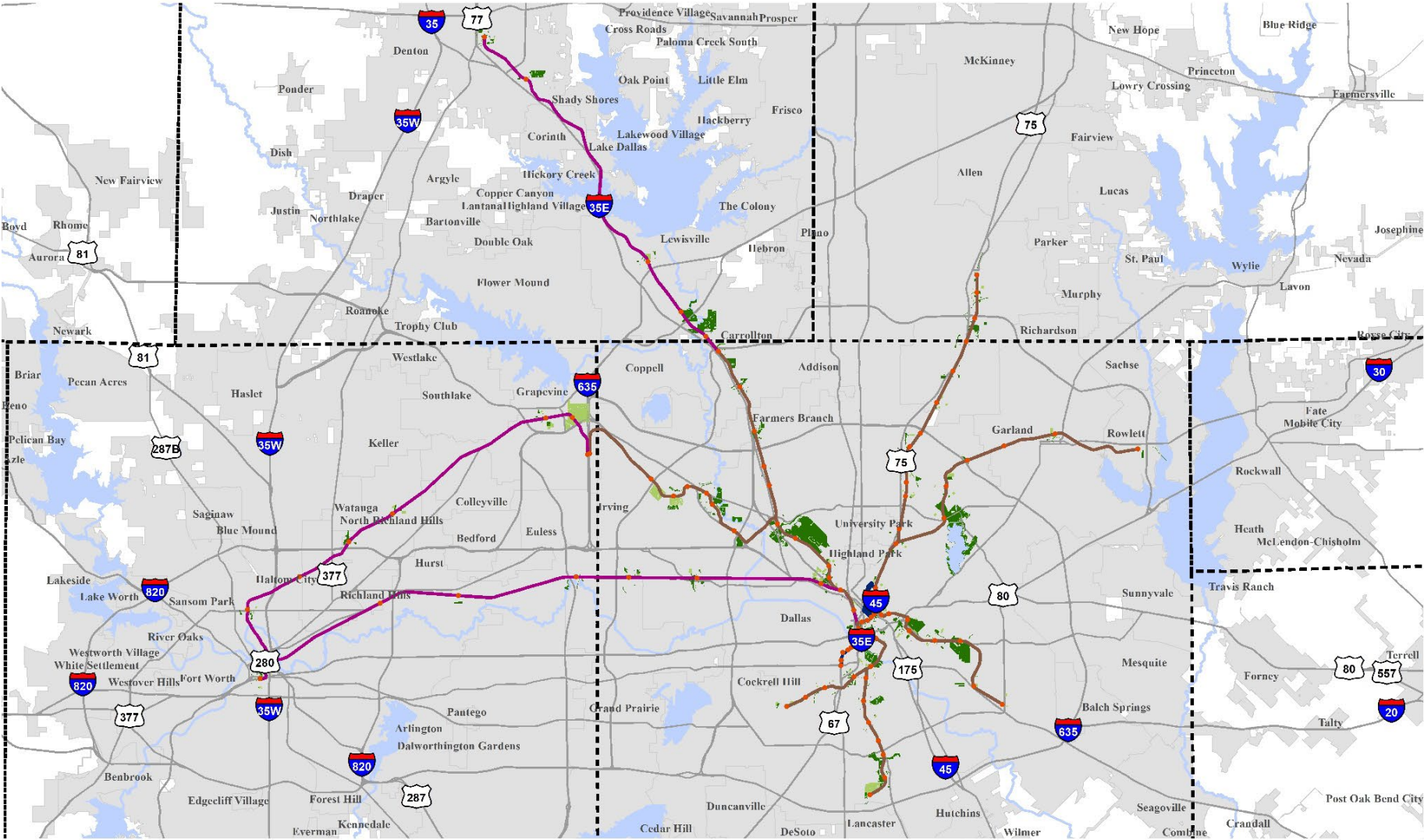
- Publicly-owned properties (city, county, transit agency, non-profit organizations, ISDs, etc.)
- Located within 0.5 miles of transit station and existing bicycle/pedestrian facilities
- Less than 10% slope

Summary statistics:

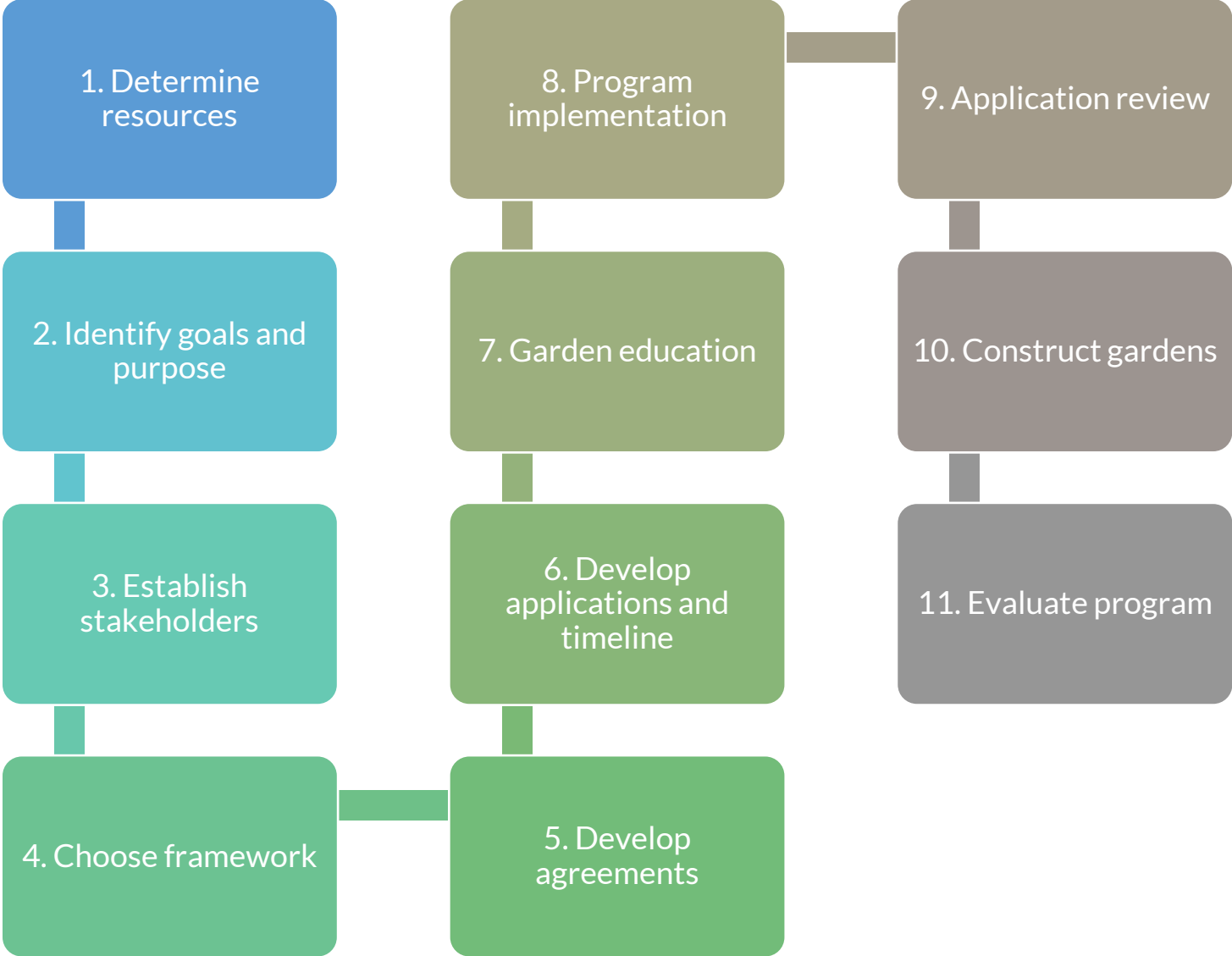
- 12,555 acres identified across Collin, Dallas, Denton, and Tarrant counties
- 68 different cities and organizations own properties



Potential Community Garden Sites



Steps for Implementation



Program Considerations

Recommendations:

- Ensure you have a dedicated staff member/person for program
- Establish stakeholder group
- Select the framework and goals that work best for your city and stakeholders
- Engage the public/promote the program

Challenges:

- Funding/budget constraints
- Garden locations/use conflicts
- Lack of staff time/availability
- Consistent maintenance and upkeep
- Regular coordination



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