

SUMMARY

A Proposal for the Development of Community Gardens in Sitka



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Sitka Community Gardens

Last September, the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) adopted its *2022-2027 Strategic Plan* which outlines various goals that the municipality intends to pursue over the coming years. The theme of this plan is 'Growing the Future Together'. Goal 1.5 in the document reads, "Convene community partners to develop an action plan that will address the challenges of food security."

While there are many ways to approach improving our community's food security, and many different individuals and organizations that could be pulled together to work on this goal, there is little reason to wait for the development of an action plan to begin work on the development of a network of community gardens. They are complementary initiatives. And there is no better way for our community to begin growing the future together, we believe, than to begin growing food together.

This summary describes plans for two (2) community gardens on currently undeveloped municipal lands. Each proposed garden site is approximately ½ acre in size and would include 50 or more standard 10' by 20' garden plots, plus various covered areas and small enclosed structures for storing tools and other materials. The sites would be fully fenced and gated, but largely open to the public in daytime during the summer growing season. Community members would be offered the opportunity to rent garden plots for a nominal annual fee.

Even though this proposal details plans for two garden developments, we anticipate that CBS may want to see how one operates before committing to another. Nonetheless, there are good reasons for proposing two. The main reason is that if one garden site is deemed unsuitable then the other may still be considered without sending the proponents all the way back to the drawing board. Another reason is that if both sites are approved for development, then work may proceed on both and over the next few years the two gardens together could be producing twice the food security benefits of a single garden.

Community gardens are considered essential civic infrastructure in many towns and cities across the US, like parks and playgrounds. They are often developed and operated by departments within local government. This proposal, however, assigns these responsibilities to NGOs, with the nonprofits *Sitka Local Foods Network* and *Transition Sitka* undertaking project development and funding, and a cooperative association of active community garden members (yet-to-be-established) undertaking the responsibilities of normal garden operations. Key advisors to the project are the Sitka office of UAF Cooperative Extension Service and local Master Gardeners. Over the long-term, it is expected that the association of gardeners will assume full responsibility for managing and maintaining the developments, with only occasional assistance and continuing oversight from the founding nonprofits.

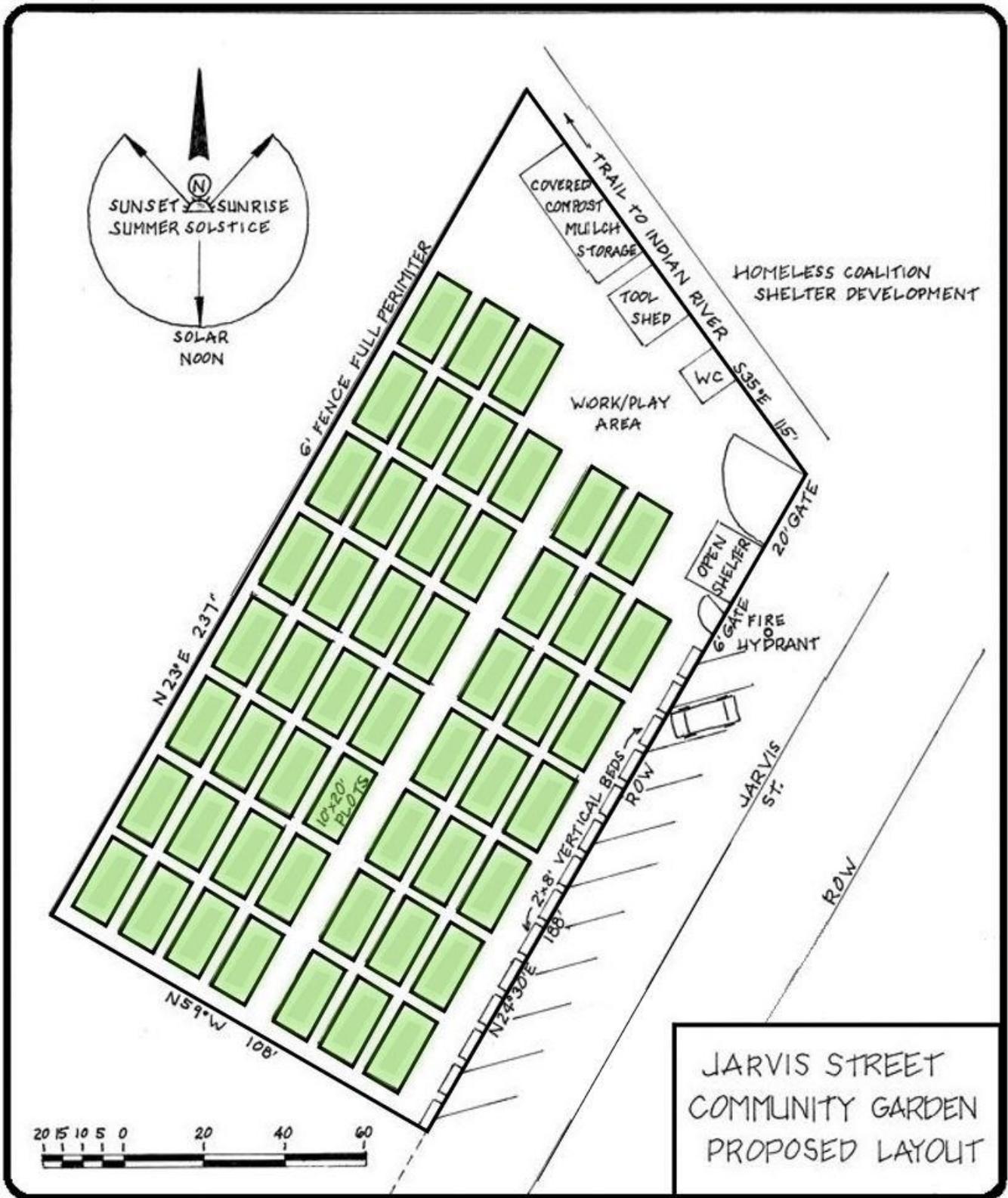
The Juneau Community Garden Association, which has been serving the citizens of Alaska's capital for more than 25 years with a large garden development in the Mendenhall Valley, is also serving as a model for this proposal.

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Jarvis Street Community Garden

Located at the top end of Jarvis Street uphill from the U.S. Post Office on Sawmill Creek Road, this half-acre site is adjacent to the Homeless Coalition Shelter Cabin development and close to neighborhoods along Indian River, around Jamestown Bay, and in the Crescent Harbor vicinity. It will include 50 standard 10' by 20' plots, 15 standard 2' by 8' vertical garden beds for climbing or tall plantings, one teaching plot, onsite water, and toilet facilities. The garden perimeter will be fenced and gated.





JARVIS STREET
COMMUNITY GARDEN
PROPOSED LAYOUT

Osprey Street Community Garden

Located adjacent to the Vilandre Ballfield next to Blatchley Middle School on Halibut Point Road, this half-acre site is close to downtown, Swan Lake and Edgcumbe Drive neighborhoods. It will include 54 standard 10' by 20' plots, 22 standard 2' by 8' vertical garden beds for climbing or tall plantings, one teaching plot, onsite water, and access to nearby public toilet facilities at Vilandre Ballfield. The garden perimeter will be fenced and gated. A small 'fruit tree grove' and berry patch located outside the fenced area along Osprey Street will be maintained by garden members as a public 'food forest' for general use and enjoyment. Because of this garden site's proximity to Blatchley Middle School and to the Vilandre Ballfield where Sitka Parks and Recreation activities are routinely offered, some parking and general access restrictions may need to be applied during weekday school hours and occasional baseball tournaments.



