Best Practices for a Community Garden

Stellar Examples -

➢ A vacant lot in Elysian Valley has been transformed into a beautiful community garden named the Jardin del Rio, a project spearheaded by David De La Torre and his neighbors with help from the Elysian Valley Riverside Neighborhood Council (EVRNC).
➢ The Central Hollywood Neighborhood Council (CHNC) turned a dumpster lot into a charming community garden with over 125 plots for families. By working with their Council office, they lease the property for just $1/yr.

The vacant lot on Riverdale Street has long been an abandoned playground, functioning as a community eyesore and as a haven for gang members. The process of turning this vacant lot into a gorgeous community garden has brought together the residents of the street and the community at large. By working with the Council office, the EVRNC, and the LA Community Garden Council, the issue of loitering, trash, and safety are no longer an aspect of concern! The neighborhood is adorned with a magnificent garden equipped with a gazebo and custom designed gates!

The lovely garden of CHNC is now often the location of community meetings. The scattered benches and shady trees provide a haven for retreat to members of the community immersed in the heart of Hollywood. The community is very grateful to “have a place to plant, a home away from home!” (Rosa)

Obstacle - CHNC faced problems getting water to the community garden. After a year and a half, a water meter was finally installed. Make sure to constantly follow up with your Council office & DWP!

Benefit - having your community thank you for all your hard work! After a year, David of EVRNC frequently has community members who initially did not support the project come on board and becoming regular donating contributors.

Lesson - the process may be long, slow, tedious & difficult! Don’t give up because the result will be well worth it!

Special thanks & acknowledge to those interviewed:

David DeLaTorre, Board member of EVRNC
Rosa Aguilar, Board member of CHNC

Interpretation of interviews & creation of ‘best practices’ by DONE intern: Helen Leung
Best Practices for a Community Garden:

- **Look for a vacant lot**
  - Especially on city property, securing the property requires only a City Council motion
  - Find a nuisance area, community eyesore, or empty space

- **Create a committee**
  - But make sure to “let the community be a part of the process” (Rosa)

- **Work with the L.A Committee Garden Council**
  - They provide the blueprint & guidelines of the process
  - Can manage your funds and pay for the liability insurance
  - Log onto: [http://www.lacommunitygardens.org](http://www.lacommunitygardens.org)

- **Make a preliminary plan for the garden**
  - Before any needed construction begins
  - Ideas can include a few benches, bird feeders, walking paths, lights, a tool shed, gates, gazebo, water fountain...

- **Distribute plots**
  - To families, community members, or classrooms
  - A 5 ft. by 10 ft. plot of land requires only $20/year for water & insurance if rent does not have to be paid

- **Require a minimum contribution**
  - For all community gardeners to come in at least 2 days a month

- **Solicit sponsors**
  - From local businesses, community members, organizations, and NC
  - Return each year for another donation with updates about the garden and perhaps an invitation to a garden party!

- **Get water for cheaper**
  - Don’t pay more than you need to; it’s possible to get water at a farmer’s rate with DWP.

- **Keep the gates locked**
  - Especially if there is a high potential for vandalism, but remember to give a key to every active gardener and neighbors of the community garden
  - But try to keep them open during the weekend or certain times during the week when the residents are inclined to visit

- **Have a “bring kids to garden day!”**
  - Work with the local schools and arrange for day of events for children to learn about gardening, plants, and nature

- **Recruit local talent**
  - Find out if any local community members can contribute their artistic, landscaping, designing, or building skills!

“The community garden has beautified our community immensely”
David DeLaTorre

Remember to check in with your DONE Project Coordinator for regulation updates, new info, and other resources!