

**Community Garden Task Force  
Preliminary Report to the Nebraska Legislature  
December 15, 2015  
Submitted by Ingrid Kirst, Community Garden Task Force Chair**

The One Hundred Fourth Session of the Nebraska Legislature created the Community Garden Task Force with the passage of LB175 on May 21, 2015. The Task Force was given the following charge:

(3) The goals of the task force may include, but are not limited to, the study, evaluation, and development of recommendations (a) to encourage the establishment and expansion of community gardens by state agencies, municipalities, and individuals, (b) to encourage cooperation between the activities and operations of community gardens and the provision of donated food to local voluntary food assistance programs for the poor and disadvantaged, and (c) to increase the benefits that community gardens may provide to the community in which they are located.

(4) In carrying out its duties under subsection (3) of this section, the task force may consider recommendations that (a) encourage the execution of conservation easements by state agencies, municipalities, or individuals to establish or protect community gardens, (b) encourage the donation or lease of lands for community gardens, (c) encourage development of model zoning codes, local land-use laws, or other municipal policies that could encourage the establishment or retention of community gardens, and (d) provide for any other activity to achieve the goals deemed appropriate by the task force.

To this end, Task Force members and other interested parties have discussed the current status of community gardens in the state, the challenges they face and the resources available to them. The task force has developed four subcommittees to focus on the following topics related to community gardens:

1. Inventory

Develop a list with contact information for all existing community gardens across the state, and explore the idea of creating a statewide listserv

2. Public Policy

Broadly review relevant public policies that would encourage or protect community gardens. Special emphasis will be given to reviewing zoning issues for land access, conservation easements, land banks and other issues related to using land for community gardens, including identifying model zoning codes and land use law language.

3. Resources and Money

Research challenges related to starting a garden, other than policy issues, including water access, insurance, and funding.

#### 4. People / Mentorship

Address the challenges of managing a garden and the people involved. Look for training and mentorship opportunities as well as best management practices. Explore educational role of community gardens. Focus on bringing the community together to strengthen relationships and decrease crime.

As part of the work of these subcommittees and of the Task Force as a whole, recommendations will be developed to be presented to the Legislature to further community gardens in the state of Nebraska, as community gardens promote healthy habits, develop stronger communities and create jobs, as stated by the Legislature in their LB175 Community Gardens Act. Best practices for anyone wishing to start and run a garden will also be provided.

For additional information, please contact Ingrid Kirst, Task Force Chair, at [ingrid@communitycrops.org](mailto:ingrid@communitycrops.org) or (402) 474-9802.