

# **Nebraska Community Garden Task Force Final Report to the Nebraska Legislature**

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## Executive Summary

This task force defines a community garden as a piece of land cultivated for food production by members of a community. What makes them distinct from home gardens is that they involve multiple individuals or families coming together in a given space to grow food. A preliminary survey found 184 community gardens across the state of Nebraska.

The Community Garden Task Force provided in-depth research in three main areas:

1. Identifying policy barriers and innovations that can support community gardens in Nebraska
2. Creating an initial inventory of community gardens in Nebraska
3. Updating an existing community garden toolkit as a statewide educational resource

The Community Garden Task Force recommends the following steps to the Nebraska Legislature and to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture:

**Recommendation 1.** All levels of government bodies in the State of Nebraska should review and consider adopting public policies in the following categories to encourage further expansion of community gardens: 1) Revise land use laws to support food production in urban spaces and prioritize food production as a land use for public and publicly-owned lands where appropriate; 2) Reduce costs and barriers to water access for community gardens; 3) Use tax incentives to encourage the creation and long-term maintenance of food production; 4) Create and support educational campaigns to improve food and agricultural literacy of Nebraskans; and 5) Expand opportunities for residents to donate produce.

**Recommendation 2.** Future policy discussions and proposals in the area of community gardens should use the broader term “urban agriculture” to more comprehensively address the needs of various types of food production in urban spaces.

**Recommendation 3.** The State of Nebraska should continue the work of connecting and growing community gardens throughout the state, through such means as widening the inventory, establishing a communication tool, expanding the Nebraska Community Garden Toolkit, and developing a central community garden contact.

## Overview

### **Legislative Mandate**

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 Legislature gave the following reasons for this act:

(1) The Legislature finds and declares that: (a) Community gardens provide significant health, educational, and social benefits to the general public, especially for those who reside in urban and suburban areas of this state; (b) The community garden movement (i) continues to provide low-cost food that is fresh and nutritious for those who may be unable to readily afford fresh fruits and vegetables for themselves or their families, (ii) promotes public health and healthier individual lifestyles by encouraging better eating habits and increased physical activity by growing food, (iii) fosters the retention and expansion of open spaces, particularly in urban environments, (iv) enhances urban and suburban environmental quality and community beautification, (v) provides inexpensive community building activities, recreation, and physical exercise for all age groups, (vi) establishes a safe place for community involvement and helps to reduce the incidence of crime, (vii) engenders a closer relationship between urban residents, nature, and the local environment, and (viii) fosters green job training and ecological education at all levels; and (c) It is the public policy of this state to promote and foster growth in the number of community gardens and the acreage of such gardens.

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature and the purpose of the Community Gardens Act to foster growth in the number, size, and scope of community gardens in this state by encouraging state agencies, municipalities, and private parties in their efforts to promote community gardens.

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.

The nine members of the Task Force plus additional advisors met regularly over the past year and have explored a wide range of issues surrounding community gardens in the state. In

addition, the task force members inventoried community gardens, developed a list of suggested policy changes and modified the Douglas County Community Garden Toolkit to be applicable statewide.

### **Shaping Public Policies to Support Community Gardens**

The public policy team was tasked with identifying policy barriers and opportunities related to the expansion of community gardens in Nebraska. The team sought examples from other states and local communities. After developing a broad list of over twenty public policy issues, the team narrowed their recommendations down to five key policy areas, in consultation with the full task force.

#### **Public Policy and Community Garden Success in Nebraska**

Public policies can have a major impact on the success or failure of community-led projects, including community gardens. While motivated individuals and groups can work together to overcome policy barriers on a case by case basis, public policy changes have the benefit of institutionalizing support for a desired area over the long-term. Creating public policies that support community gardens allow us to minimize the burden for our creative nonprofits, faith-based organizations, governments, and entrepreneurs so that there are clear pathways for community garden projects.

After careful research, the task force has identified five major areas where public policymakers can have the greatest impact in supporting community gardens. These areas were chosen for their direct relevance to community gardens, strength of potential impact, and feasibility. Policies are labeled for their implementation at the state or local levels of government and examples from other communities are provided.

The task force recommends implementing as many of these policies as possible in Nebraska to create a supportive environment for the expansion of community gardens. Sharing educational resources about starting and maintaining gardens and creating a strong network of gardens is important, but without policy changes these other efforts will not be able to have the maximum impact. Simplifying our public policies to reduce barriers for citizens creating projects we want to support as a state is an important role of government.

**Recommendation 1.** The Community Garden Task Force recommends that the many government bodies in the State of Nebraska reviews and considers adopting public policies in the following categories to encourage further expansion of community gardens:

1. Revise land use laws to support food production in urban spaces and prioritize food production as a land use for public and publicly-owned lands where appropriate.
2. Reduce costs and barriers to water access for community gardens.
3. Use tax incentives to encourage the creation and long-term maintenance of food production.
4. Create and support educational campaigns to improve food and agricultural literacy of Nebraskans.

**Policy Sub-Recommendation 1.1. Revise Land Use Laws (Local Government)**

Agriculture has previously been viewed as an exclusively rural land use. This has resulted in laws and ordinances that either intentionally or unintentionally prevent food from being grown within urban areas. By changing the language in comprehensive and other long term plans, communities can create the authority for food production as an acceptable land use in cities. Additional ordinance changes specifically supporting various types of food production and zoning changes that establish food production as an acceptable land use category for communities can help encourage and legalize garden projects in our communities.

One of the challenges in creating and maintaining a community garden is finding and keeping suitable land. Cultivating land is an investment, and it is difficult to build community and commit to gardening projects without a long-term lease or land ownership for gardening purposes. Standard practice for major community garden nonprofits in the state is a three-year commitment of land before helping to establish a garden. Governments are often major landholders and therefore are particularly well-positioned to help community gardeners with land access issues. This can be done by 1) creating more permissive zoning language that supports food production in as many urban spaces as possible and includes allowing for community gardens in right-of-ways and conservation easements, and 2) inventorying and prioritizing vacant lots, underutilized park spaces, and city-owned land ill-suited to development for gardens.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.1:** To support urban agriculture of various types, cities will want to ensure at least some agricultural uses are permitted in large districts of their communities. Conduct an urban agriculture code audit (covering zoning and building codes) to identify areas for clarification, potential barriers, and areas for additional definition and regulation. Use American Planning Association guidance to develop changes to codes. Include urban agriculture in long-range planning documents as a priority for community design. Establish policies that designate land such as vacant lots and certain government-owned properties as potential garden spaces.

### **Models:**

Milwaukee, WI: Milwaukee is a leader in urban agriculture in the United States. In 2012 the city conducted a code audit of their building and zoning code to identify strengths and weaknesses for urban agriculture, as well as areas that could be clarified. This project was supported by the EPA and resulted in a detail list of potential changes in regulations to make that community more friendly to agricultural land use practices.

[city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityDCD/Urban-Agriculture/pdfs/MilwaukeeCodeAudit\\_acknowledge.pdf](http://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityDCD/Urban-Agriculture/pdfs/MilwaukeeCodeAudit_acknowledge.pdf)

Portland, OR: Portland is a leader in community gardening and other local food practices. Their Bureau of Planning and Sustainability worked with a diverse group of stakeholders to review city code and recommend updates to support urban agriculture. These changes were adopted in June 2012. [www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/53834](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/53834)

### **Other Resources:**

*Public Health Law & Policy's March 2009 Report, Establishing Land Use Protections for Community Gardens. Retrieved from:*

[www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/communitygardenpolicies\\_303374\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/communitygardenpolicies_303374_7.pdf)

The National League of Cities' Sustainable Cities Institute has several helpful documents.

*Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture. Retrieved from:*

[www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/topics/food-systems/urban-agriculture/land-use-policies-to-promote-urban-agriculture](http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/topics/food-systems/urban-agriculture/land-use-policies-to-promote-urban-agriculture)

*Promoting Urban Agriculture Through Zoning. Retrieved from:*

[www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/topics/food-systems/urban-agriculture/promoting-urban-agriculture-through-zoning](http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/topics/food-systems/urban-agriculture/promoting-urban-agriculture-through-zoning)

### **Policy Sub-Recommendation 1.2. Make Water More Affordable for Gardens (State/Local)**

Water policy, a critical component of community garden policy, aims to reduce the cost of water for food production through waiving fees locally and to establishing a state grant fund for water installation projects. A prime example of a comprehensive state water policy is the California State Water Conservation in Landscaping Act (Assembly Bill 1881) which requires all communities to adopt ordinances regulating landscape irrigation practices and plant use and incorporates community garden projects in its description. The ordinance requires gardens to be installed, constructed, operated, and maintained in accordance with rules adopted by the Public Utilities Commission which establishes the maximum water allowance for outdoor water use.

Access to safe water is a critical component for the success of community gardens. Access can be defined as both a garden's ability to bring water to the garden site and its ability to pay for the cost of water. Community gardens placed on empty or vacant lots often do not have a separate

water source and may not have access to public water systems. Water fees are based on water usage through a tiered system that advances as greater volumes of water are used. Reduction in fees include reductions such as sewer fees or the creation of water use categories/permits that recognize gardens as a select feature and establish a lower use rate commensurate with the seasonal nature and limited run off created by garden. States funding resources such as community garden water installation funds provide grants to community gardens for the installation of connections and meters on garden lots. A combination of these practices guarantees that local community gardens can access adequate safe water for a bountiful harvest.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.2:** Successful local policies assure community gardens have physical access to public water system and have financial access through reductions in local access fees

### **Models**

San Francisco: An ordinance offers a discounted water use rate as long as gardens comply with the Water Efficient Irrigation Ordinance and stay within the maximum applied water allowance. The city has implemented provisions in their water rationing regulations to allow higher rationing levels for gardens and thus assure crop production. Finally, the city subsidizes water connections through a grant process that includes eligibility requirements that define community gardens. [sfwater.org/index.aspx?page=469](http://sfwater.org/index.aspx?page=469)

Ohio: Communities such as Columbus Ohio chose to eliminate some water access fees such as sewer maintenance fees if the only purpose for the lot is gardening. [www.columbus.gov/utilities/customers/Reduce-Your-Bill](http://www.columbus.gov/utilities/customers/Reduce-Your-Bill)

Cleveland and Cuyahoga County offer access to hydrants for irrigation through unmetered permits with a flat rate for water usage throughout the growing season. [cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/water\\_access\\_policy\\_summary.pdf](http://cccfoodpolicy.org/sites/default/files/resources/water_access_policy_summary.pdf)

Minneapolis, MN: The cost to connect to a local water system ranges from \$3500 to \$8000. Minneapolis offers grant funds to support a community garden's efforts to install permanent water hook ups and the meters required to connect to local water systems. Hydrant water permit grants allow gardens to connect directly to city hydrants during watering at no (i.e. no meter is used) or low cost rates. The garden either applies for grant to pay for the water used or the garden is charged a low monthly fee to access the water. [www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-129871](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-129871)

Kansas: Kansas's H2O Grow project provides grants to eligible gardens for water hook up. [www.khi.org/news/article/pilot-project-pay-community-garden-water-lines](http://www.khi.org/news/article/pilot-project-pay-community-garden-water-lines)

Texas: Texas promotes water catchment systems such as rain barrels through a financial incentive system. [www.twdb.texas.gov/innovativewater/rainwater/](http://www.twdb.texas.gov/innovativewater/rainwater/)

## **Other Resources**

A comprehensive review of potential water policies for community gardens is provided by the Urban Ag Law website. The site illustrates policies and programs for installation, water discounts/ subsidies, rationing, catchment, use of gray water and runoff regulations.

[www.urbanaglaw.org/water/#Water\\_Access\\_and\\_Water\\_Use\\_Agreements](http://www.urbanaglaw.org/water/#Water_Access_and_Water_Use_Agreements)

## **Policy Sub-Recommendation 1.3. Tax Incentives to Farmers/Community Gardens (State & Local)**

State and local governments can pass laws that tax urban agriculture in special ways. For example, property can be taxed at the agricultural value of the land rather than the market value; tax credits can also be created. The result is a reduced property tax burden to assist and incentivize community gardens/urban agriculture. Typically, such policies require landowners and renters to meet certain requirements such as committing to a multi-year agriculture use for the property. In Nebraska, legislation would be required by the State Legislature.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.3:** Implement a property tax credit for urban land used for agricultural purposes. Legislation should provide criteria for municipalities to designate qualifying properties.

## **Models**

**California:** – Legislation created the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act that became effective January 1, 2014. The purpose of the bill is to increase use of privately owned, vacant land for urban agriculture and improve land security for urban agriculture projects. The legislation does this by allowing city governments to designate areas within their boundaries as “urban agriculture incentive zones.” In these areas, landowners who sign a contract to commit their land to agricultural use for at least five years will get a reduction in their property taxes. Specifically, their parcel’s property tax assessment will be based on the agricultural value of the land rather than the market-rate value of the land. The law includes a number of restrictions and guidelines for its implementation:

- Urban agriculture incentive zones can only be established in areas that fall within a US Census designated urban area of 250,000 people or more.
- To be eligible, individual parcels must be at least 0.1 acre in size and no larger than 3 acres, completely dedicated to commercial or noncommercial agricultural use, free of any dwellings and only have physical structures that support the agricultural use of the site.
- Each year the assessment basis of land under contract will be based on the average per acre value of irrigated cropland in California as reported by the US Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service, [www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/California/Publications/Other\\_Files/201209Indvlscshrnts.pdf](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/California/Publications/Other_Files/201209Indvlscshrnts.pdf)
- If a landowner breaks the five-year contract, they are obligated to pay back the tax benefit that they received.



The law enables cities and counties to take action, but it does not create any urban agriculture incentive zones itself. Instead, cities and counties must go through the process of passing ordinances and resolutions creating zones within their jurisdictions. Once those are established, landowners can begin signing contracts with the cities and then begin to see the property-tax benefit (source: SPUR, “California’s New Urban Agriculture Property Tax Incentive” by Eli Zigas, October 2, 2013).

*California Assembly Bill 551, 2014.*

[leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140AB551](http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140AB551)

Maryland: Maryland passed the “Property Tax Credit – Urban Agricultural Property” bill in 2014. The bill authorizes Maryland counties and the City of Baltimore to implement a property tax credit for urban land used for agricultural purposes. The bill identifies Urban Agriculture Property to be any land larger than 1/8 acre and smaller than 5 acres, which is located in a priority funding area and used for urban agricultural purposes. “Urban agricultural purposes” is more broadly defined than California’s bill and also includes community and economic development activities, among others. The bill authorizes local governments to make decisions on the amount of the tax credit, additional eligibility criteria, and regulations and procedures for applications. A time commitment is required and, as in California, repayment is also required if a contract is broken (sources: Baltimore Office of Sustainability website; Community Law Center, The Urban Agriculture Law Project blog, “Urban Agriculture Property Tax Credit in Baltimore City: First Reader Committee Meeting at City Hall” October 2, 2014).

*Legislation: General Assembly of Maryland Bill HB0223 (CH0390) 2014.*

[mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb0223&stab=01&ys=2014RS](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?pid=billpage&tab=subject3&id=hb0223&stab=01&ys=2014RS)

#### **Other Resources:**

*The Urban Agriculture Law Project:*

[communitylaw.org/urbanagriculturelaw/propertytaxcredit](http://communitylaw.org/urbanagriculturelaw/propertytaxcredit)

AB551 Implementation Guide

[ucanr.edu/sites/UrbanAg/Laws\\_Zoning\\_and\\_Regulations/The\\_Urban\\_Agriculture\\_Incentive\\_Zones\\_Act\\_AB551/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UrbanAg/Laws_Zoning_and_Regulations/The_Urban_Agriculture_Incentive_Zones_Act_AB551/)

#### **Policy Sub-Recommendation 1.4. Promote Public Education on Food Issues (State & Local)**

Our current mainstream system of agriculture and food delivery relies heavily on technology and is highly efficient. While this has some advantages, one major disadvantage is that many citizens have become disconnected from food knowledge. Few people today know a farmer and many individuals growing up in urban environments may lack basic awareness of where their food comes from. In addition to these challenges, re-education is needed about how to grow, harvest, cook, and preserve food. Additionally, many of our policy makers need more information about the current needs and challenges faced by consumers and farmers of all scales and locations.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.4:** Develop public education campaigns and learning opportunities (from cooking demonstrations to speaking events on food topics) to help Nebraskans become more aware of food issues and join the conversation.

San Francisco: The Executive Directive on Healthy and Sustainable Food has the following language: “The City and County shall promote innovative programs that educate food system stakeholders and the general public on the value of healthy food, and an equitable and sustainable food system.” [sfgov.org/sffood/](http://sfgov.org/sffood/)

New York: The New York State Community Gardens Law includes education as part of its mandate. [www.agriculture.ny.gov/cg/CGLaw.html](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/cg/CGLaw.html)

**Other Resources:**

[www.conferenceboard.ca/cfic/research/2013/whatstoeat.aspx](http://www.conferenceboard.ca/cfic/research/2013/whatstoeat.aspx)

[oldwayspt.org/blog/common-ground-food-literacy-movement-growing-and-thats-good-thing](http://oldwayspt.org/blog/common-ground-food-literacy-movement-growing-and-thats-good-thing)

**Policy Sub-Recommendation 1.5. Promote Fresh Produce Donation (Local)**

All gardeners know that there comes a time when there's simply more produce in the garden than can be used. In addition, there are families across the state that would welcome the opportunity for more fresh produce, as they are unable to afford it in the store or farmers' markets, or live in a food desert. Nebraska law (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 25-21, 189) provides that anyone who donates “perishable food or raw agricultural products” in good faith to a charitable or nonprofit organization that they believe to be “fit for human consumption” will not held civilly liable for any damages in a civil action for any injury or death because the food’s actual condition.

A total of 56% of respondents to a large survey conducted by AmpleHarvest.org reported that they were both willing and able to contribute their excess garden bounty to a local food pantry. For the approximately 42 million home and community gardeners in the US, excess produce donations could add up to 11.47 billion pounds annually. For local communities, this is a simple way to increase the amount of nutritious food available to families in their community, by making it easy for gardeners to donate the food they are already growing.

**Sub-Recommendation 1.5:** Local governments and communities should set up methods for gardeners to easily donate their surplus produce.

**Other Resources:**

Existing programs such as Plant a Row for the Hungry ([gardenwriters.org/Plant-a-Row](http://gardenwriters.org/Plant-a-Row)) provide simple methods to set up a program. It can be as simple as promoting a designated drop off location and integrating distribution into existing food distribution programs.

At [ampleharvest.org](http://ampleharvest.org), listings of local food pantries and programs are available, as well as information on setting up programs to collect fresh produce.

## Looking Towards the Future - Urban Agriculture

This task force was given the charge of focusing its research and recommendations on community gardens in Nebraska and its members have done so to the best of their ability. However, the task force members would like to draw attention to the fact that community gardens are just one facet of the overall trend towards urban agriculture. Urban agriculture is an umbrella term that encompasses community and backyard gardens as well as urban farms (spaces where food is grown for sale to others).

In their eagerness to expand community gardening, some communities have produced policies narrowly focusing on gardens, without making allowances for the other types of urban agriculture. While different rules and regulations may be needed for food grown for sale versus personal consumption, we would encourage governments exploring these issues to seek policy changes that considered this wider range of food production approaches included in urban agriculture. This reflects the larger trends observed in food production in urban areas and will allow for more efficient and effective policies that fully address the needs of their communities.

***Recommendation 2:*** Future policy discussions and proposals in the area of community gardens should use the broader term “urban agriculture” to more comprehensively address the needs of various types of food production in urban spaces.

## State of Nebraska Community Garden Inventory

The Inventory Committee of the Community Garden Task Force identified community gardens in the state of Nebraska. Several methods were implemented to reach out to the people of Nebraska who garden. The committee created a script to introduce the committee and explain its project. A series of questions were asked related to the number of people the garden fed, the square footage of the garden, existence of a water source and contact information. The script was modified for various methods of outreach; newspaper, radio and personal contact by phone or through email. Lists of community gardens were collected from Community Crops, Big Gardens, county Master Gardeners, and each of the counties through their governmental contacts. As much as possible, data was collected based on the questionnaire and compiled.

**Based on these efforts, a total of 184 community gardens were found across the state of Nebraska.** These gardens are at city parks, churches, day cares, schools and many other locations.

The term “community garden” can have different meanings to different people. In general, this task force defines a community garden as a piece of land cultivated for food production by members of a community. Community gardens can take many different forms, be managed by various organizations and individuals, and can have different motivations and destinations for the food they produce. They can exist in urban, suburban, and rural communities. What makes them distinct from home gardens is that they involve multiple individuals or families coming together in a given space to grow food.

Community gardens are gardened by families, by individuals, by Master Gardeners, children or seniors. They are providing food for the gardeners and food is donated to local families in need.

Detailed information on community gardens was collected for as many gardens as was practical given the constraints of the committee members' time, and revealed a wide variety of projects across the state. Some of these include:

- A garden at the Bloomfield United Methodist Church, where church members in the small northeast Nebraska town of Bloomfield are raising food to give to families in need.
- Six to eight families are growing food on land in the town of Madison in northeast Nebraska using water supplied by the city.
- In western Nebraska, the town of Lewellen has hosted a community garden for the past six years. The garden grows food for the pantry but individuals are also welcome to use the space. The garden struggles to find enough help from younger community members who can do the physical work needed.
- Blue Valley Community Action in southeast Nebraska has a community youth garden in Fairbury, where volunteers and youth are raising food. Their biggest challenge is not having a water source on site, so volunteers have to carry water across the street.
- Twelve community gardens managed by Community Crops in Lincoln provide space for almost 300 families to grow their own food. Key challenges include ensuring a reliable water source, and creating a community from a very diverse group of gardeners.

The data collected in the inventory was mapped to help future gardeners find a community garden in the area, to have a point of contact to assist in developing a community garden and to identify how the garden is managed.

The Task Force is confident that more community gardens exist in Nebraska, but without funding to carry out our work, we were unable to do more extensive research to locate all of them. In addition, we found 21 communities who would like more information to start a community garden. We expect that there are far more communities who would be interested in starting a garden if they had the information and resources to do so.

A map of all of the existing community gardens in Nebraska is attached to this report as an appendix. The map provides a visual of areas of where community gardens are dense in metropolitan areas of Nebraska and the need for future gardens where you see few.

The task force recommends that this inventory process be continued to continue connecting to additional community gardens around Nebraska. In addition, we recommend establishing a listserv or other communication tool to allow these gardens to learn from each other.

**Recommendation 3:** The State of Nebraska continue the work of connecting and growing community gardens throughout the state, through such means as widening the inventory, establishing a communication tool, expanding the Nebraska Community Garden Toolkit, and developing a central community garden contact.

**Sub-recommendation 3.1:** The State of Nebraska make provisions to regularly maintain and update the statewide community garden inventory.

**Sub-recommendation 3.2:** The State of Nebraska should establish a listserv or other communication tool so that community garden leaders have a way to connect with and learn from one another.

### **Community Garden Toolkit**

In order to maximize the potential for growth in Nebraska community gardens it is necessary to share educational information with potential gardeners and organizers. The community garden inventory has demonstrated that there is already a wealth of knowledge on community gardens across the state. Making that knowledge accessible for citizens interested in creating new community gardens will help lower the barriers to garden creation by providing important initial guidance.

In 2011, the Douglas County Health Department developed a Community Garden Toolkit to give a comprehensive picture of everything needed to start a community garden in the Omaha area. This toolkit helps both new and existing community gardens to organize, establish guidelines, find resources and operate a successful community garden. Since this publication already covered many of the topics that the Task Force wished to cover, we used the Toolkit as a starting point and modified it to be appropriate to any location in Nebraska. The completed Nebraska Community Garden Toolkit is available at [www.ourbesttoyou.nebraska.gov](http://www.ourbesttoyou.nebraska.gov)

The Community Garden Task Force recommends that this toolkit be further refined and updated based on the work of existing community gardens in Nebraska. Our inventory found over one hundred and eighty community gardens throughout the state, demonstrating that there is a lot of experience with creating and maintaining community gardens within the state. By reaching out to our community garden experts we can continue to improve the toolkit to make it a relevant and helpful resource for our gardeners.

**Sub-recommendation 3.3:** The State of Nebraska refine and update the Nebraska Community Garden Toolkit as an educational resource for new and existing community gardeners across the state.

### **Central Contact for Community Gardens**

There are already many individuals and organizations doing community gardening work in Nebraska. Finding ways to connect those individuals so that they can learn from each other and teach others is crucial to continued growth of community gardens in Nebraska. Having a stable point of contact at the State of Nebraska for community gardens will help citizens navigate communication challenges and connect with appropriate resources.

**Sub-recommendation 3.4:** The State of Nebraska should designate a central contact person within state government for Nebraska's community gardens, to refer interested parties to more information.

## **Statewide Community Garden Conference**

In addition to a statewide point of contact and an online listserv for community gardeners, creating opportunities for in-person networking by community gardens will help expand knowledge exchange and generate excitement for community gardens in the state. Similar events have been held by the USDA and Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Senator Brad Ashford's office, and the Growing Communities Workshop, hosted by UNMC Center for Reducing Health Disparities and the American Community Gardening Association. Ensuring there is an annual statewide event on community gardening would help grow these efforts in Nebraska.

***Sub-recommendation 3.5:*** A conference focused on community gardens should be held annually in Nebraska for a statewide audience.

## **Support Existing Experts**

As the community garden inventory shows, we already have many great organizations throughout the state working to create and maintain community gardens. The task force recommends these organizations be supported in future state and local government efforts to grow community gardens. By leveraging existing organizational capacities and creating opportunities for partnership, the state can use its resources effectively.

***Sub-recommendation 3.6:*** Statewide efforts should support existing groups in the state such as The Big Garden and Community Crops, who are already working with many community gardens around the state.

## **Conclusion**

The State of Nebraska is fortunate to have a large land base, favorable climate for food production, and a strong agricultural heritage. While Nebraska is already a leader in rural agriculture, these strengths position the state to become a national leader in new and renewed small-scale and urban approaches to food production, including community gardens. Significant work has already been done in this arena, but the assistance of state and local governments will make a tremendous difference toward developing Nebraska's community gardens into a model for the nation.



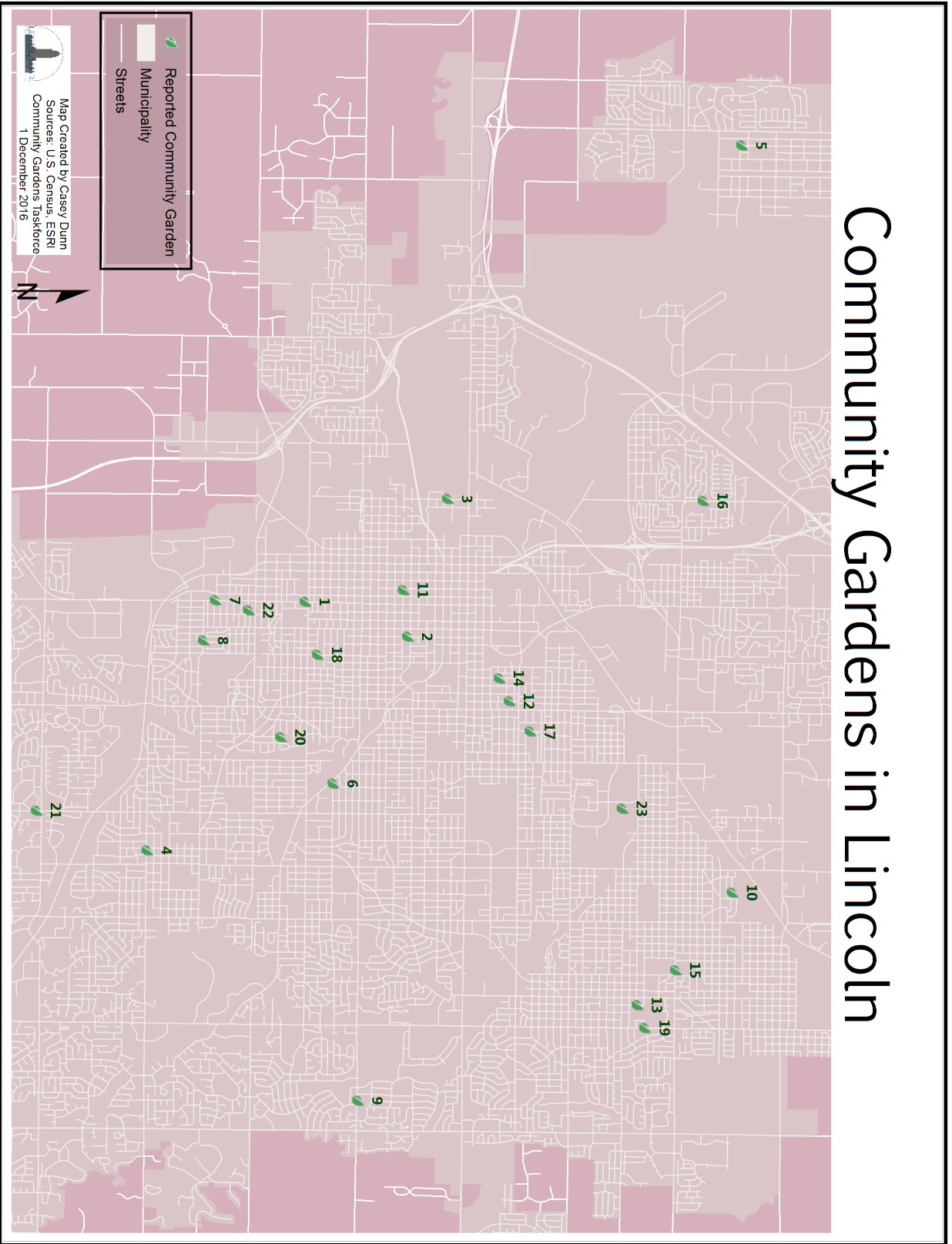
## Nebraska Community Garden List

Community Garden Name	Garden Address	City	Zip
Freeman Community Gardens	One block north of Main Street	Adams	68301
Auburn Public Schools Greenhouse		Auburn	68305
Auburn 1 - Eden's Garden	Auburn	Auburn	68305
Auburn 3 - Lords Acre	63800 730 Rd	Auburn	68305
Scotty's Garden - Ariens Company Nature Explore Classroom	1903/1905 N Street	Auburn	68305
UMC Garden of Eden	1104 A street	Aurora	68818
Homestead National Monument		Beatrice	68310
Community Gardens St John Lutheran Church		Beatrice	68310
Seeds of Hope Community Garden	608 Elk Street	Beatrice	68310
Bellevue Housing Authority: Main Office Site	8214 Armstrong Cir	Bellevue	68147
Bellevue Housing Authority: Robyn Drive		Bellevue	68147
Caritas Cottage, Bellevue Nebraska	8255 S 42nd St,	Bellevue	68147
Immanuel Lutheran Church	104 Galvin Rd N.	Bellevue	68005
New Life Baptist	801 Kayleen Drive	Bellevue	68005
St. James United Methodist Church	1501 Franklin St	Bellevue	68005
Youth Emergency Services	2616 Edwards St	Bellevue	68005
West Garden Street Community Garden		Bennet	68317
Bloomfield Community Garden		Bloomfield	68718
Chadron Community Garden	800 block of West 6th	Chadron	69337
Camp Norwesca - God's Garden	79 Camp Norwesca Road	Chadron	69337
Air Vista Community Garden	2755 7th Ave.	Columbus	68601
Crete Community Gardens	10th and Thornwood	Crete	68333
Douglas, NE - BUM	245 W. 3rd Street	Douglas	68344
Elkhorn Hills United Methodist Church		Elkhorn	68022
St. Andrews United Methodist Church		Elkhorn	68022
C.O.P.E. (St. Patrick's Church)	20500 West Maple Rd	Elkhorn	68022
Village of Elwood Community Garden		Elwood	68937
Community Youth Garden		Fairbury	68352
First United Methodist Church		Falls City	68355
Camp Calvin Crest Garden	Calvin Crest Camp 2870 County Road 13	Fremont	68025
Community Ever Green House	1210 D Street	Gering	69341
Community Action Partnership of Western Nebraska (CAPWYN)		Gering	69341
Cherry Street Community Garden		Grand Island	68803
Nuestro Jardin at Third City Community Clinic	1107 N Broadwell Ave # B,	Grand Island	68803



Grant United Methodist Church - The Peoples Garden	927 Central Ave, ESA/NRCS Office	Grant	69140
SilverRidge Assisted Living - Gretna UMC Garden	20332 Hackberry Drive	Gretna	68028
Hartington Community Garden		Hartington	68739
Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor & Agricultural Learning	4705 DLD Rd	Hastings	68901
Grace United Methodist Church - Grace Community Garden	1832 W. 9th Street	Hastings	68901
Henderson Community Garden		Henderson	68371
Caring Cupboard		Holdrege	68949
Master Garden at Phelps Co Fairground		Holdrege	68949
Dana Point Development Garden		Imperial	69033
Kearney United Way Giving Garden		Kearney	68847
Community Garden	E 7th St	Kimball	69145
Lewellen Community Garden		Lewellen	69147
Lexington Regional Health Center		Lexington	68850
Madison Community Garden		Madison	68748
Camp Fontenelle Garden	9677 CR2	Nickerson	68044
Norfolk Community Garden	406 W Phillip Avenue	Norfolk	68701
North Platte Community Garden		North Platte	69101
Panama Presbyterian Garden	201 Pine Street	Panama	68419
Plattsmouth - Garden of Eatin	700 S 18th Street	Plattsmouth	68048
Park Drive Apartments		Ralston	68127
Christ United Methodist Church	1922 Colfax St	Schuyler	68661
Bryan School Site Community Garden		South Sioux City	68776
South Sioux City Community Garden	3201 Dakota Avenue	South Sioux City	68776
South Sioux City Orchard		South Sioux City	68776
Bette and Dwight Trumble's Acreage		Springfield	68059
Church Land Children's Raised Bed Garden		Springfield	68059
Columbans Missionaries Community Garden	1902 Calhoun Street	St. Columbans	68056
Valentine Community Garden	west of Main Street (between Comfort Inn and Wells Fargo)	Valentine	69201
Wahoo Community Garden at First Presbyterian of Wahoo		Wahoo	68006
Waverly Community Garden	14410 Folkestone St	Waverly	68462
Wayne Community Garden		Wayne	68787
Gardens	25 local gardens	Winnebago	68071
1st Presbyterian Community Garden		York	68467
York - FUMC Community Garden	8th Street and Buhdington Ave	York	68467
Epworth Village Community Garden	2119 Division Avenue	York	68467
Omaha Reservation		Walthill	68067
Santee Sioux Reservation		Niobrara	68760

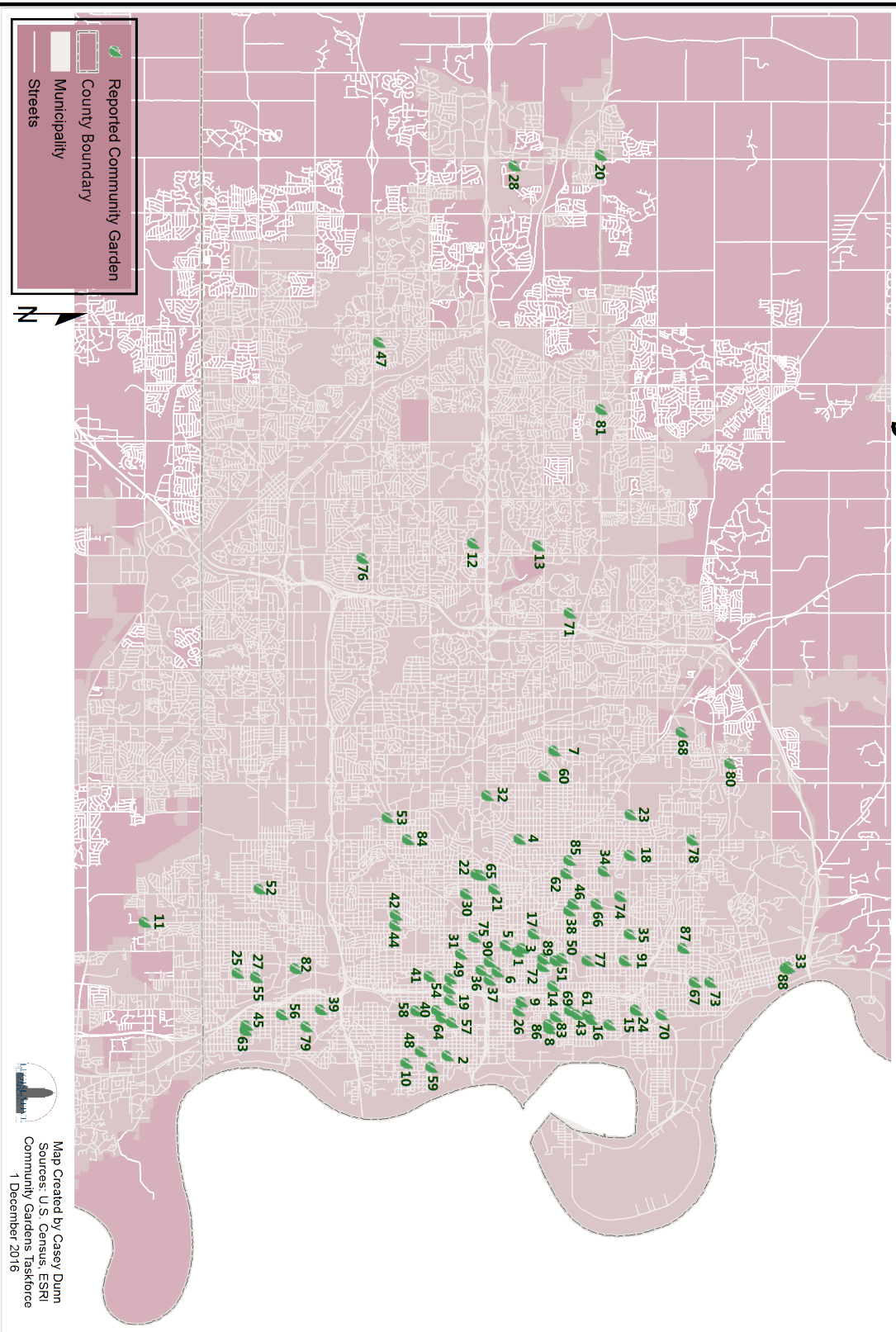
# Community Gardens in Lincoln



## Lincoln Community Garden Key

Community Garden	Address Matched	Map Number
Mickle Middle School	2500 N 67th St, Lincoln, NE, 68507	1
Oak Lake Church	3300 N 1st St, Lincoln, NE, 68521	2
Rosemont	2600 N 70th St, Lincoln, NE, 68505	3
Southern Heights Food Forest	5750 S 40th St, Lincoln, NE, 68516	4
Air Park Community Garden	3720 NW 46th St, Lincoln, NE, 68524	5
Arapahoe Community Garden	3315 South 14th St, Lincoln, NE, 68502	6
Northeast United Church of Christ	6200 Adams St, Lincoln, NE, 68507	7
Newman Church	2300 S St, Lincoln, NE, 68503	8
Southminster	1550 Otoe Street, Lincoln, NE, 68502	9
Peter Pan Park	936 North 30th St, Lincoln, NE, 68503	10
Crestwood Methodist Church	8000 A st, Lincoln, NE, 68510	11
18th & F	840 S 18th St, Lincoln, NE, 68508	12
Dawes Middle School	5130 Colfax Ave, Lincoln, NE, 68504	13
Sheridan Elementary	3100 Plymouth Ave, Lincoln, NE, 68502	14
Antelope	3645 Sumner st, Lincoln, NE, 68510	15
46th & Pioneers	4618 Pioneers Blvd, Lincoln, NE, 68506	16
1st & L	335 S 1st St, Lincoln, NE, 68508	17
Hawley Hamlet	631 N 26th Street, Lincoln, NE, 68503	18
Prescott Elementary	1930 S 20th St, Lincoln, NE, 68502	19
14th & Hudson	2150 S 14th St, Lincoln, NE, 68502	20
Beattie Elementary	1901 Calvert, Lincoln, NE, 68502	21
F Street Community Garden	1225 F Street, Lincoln, NE, 68502	22
UNL East Campus	38th St & Huntington Ave, Lincoln, NE	23

# Community Gardens in Omaha Metro



Map Created by Casey Dunn  
 Sources: U.S. Census, ESRI  
 Community Gardens Taskforce  
 1 December 2016

## Omaha Community Garden Key

Community Garden	Address	Number
Augustana Lutheran Church	3647 Lafayette Avenue, Omaha, NE, 68131	1
Bemis Center for the Contemporary Arts	724 S 12th Street, Omaha, NE, 68102	2
Bemis Park Community Garden	3715 Hamilton Street, Omaha, NE, 68131	3
Benson Community Garden	1302 N 60th Street, Omaha, NE, 68132	4
Bhutanese Grocery Store - Druk	901 N 38th St, Omaha, NE, 68112	5
Bhutanese Refugee Apartment Garden	3205 Webster St, Omaha, NE, 68131	6
Bhutanese Refugee Garden	2339 Benson Gardens Blvd, Omaha, NE, 68134	7
Black Magic Garden	2214 Florence Blvd, Omaha, NE, 68110	8
Blackburn Alternative School	2606 Hamilton St., Omaha, NE, 68131	9
Blue Flamingo Thrift Store	1716 S 10th Street, Omaha, NE, 68108	10
Bryan Middle School	8210 S 42nd Ave, Omaha, NE, 68147	11
Burke High School	12200 Burke St, Omaha, NE, 68154	12
Candlewood Kindercare Garden	1735 N 121st Street, Omaha, NE, 68154	13
Charles Drew Health Center	2915 Grant Street, Omaha, NE, 68111	14
Children are First Child Care	3823 Florence Boulevard, Omaha, NE, 68110	15
Christ Child North	2111 Emmet Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	16
City Sprouts	4007 Franklin, Omaha, NE, 68111	17
Clair United Methodist Church	5544 Ames Ave, Omaha, NE, 68104	18
Completely Kids (Formerly Campfire USA)	2620 St Marys Ave, Omaha, NE, 68105	19
COPE (St Patrick's Church)	20500 West Maple Rd, Omaha, NE, 68022	20
Dundee Community Garden	4902 Underwood Ave, Omaha, NE, 68132	21
Dundee Elementary School Garden	310 N 51st St, Omaha, NE, 68132	22
Earth-Sheltered Garden	4510 N 65th Ave, Omaha, NE, 67102	23
Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership	2406 Fowler Ave, Omaha, NE, 68111	24
Educare of Omaha at Indian Hill Elementary	3110 W Street, Omaha, NE, 67107	25
Educare of Omaha at Kellom Elementary	1311 N 24th St, Omaha, NE, 68102	26
Element Learning Center	3010 R St, Omaha, NE, 68107	27
Elkhorn Hills United Methodist Church	20227 Veterans Dr, Omaha, NE, 68022	28
Farnam Farm Community Garden	4838 Farnam St, Omaha, NE, 68132	30
First Central Congregational Church Garden	421 S 36th street, Omaha, NE, 68131	31
First United Methodist Church Omaha	7020 Cass Street, Omaha, NE, 68132	32
Florence Community Garden	3023 Bondesson St, Omaha, NE, 68110	33
Fontanelle Elementary School	3905 N 52nd St, Omaha, NE, 68104	34
Freestone Primitive Baptist Church	4023 Ames Ave, Omaha, NE, 68111	35
Gifford Park Community Garden	3416 Cass Street, Omaha, NE, 68131	36
Gifford Park Teen Market Garden	3028 Cottage Grove Ave, Omaha, NE, 68131	37
Girls Incorporated	2811 North 45th Street, Omaha, NE, 68104	38
Grace United Methodist Church	2418 E St, Omaha, NE, 68107	39
Habitat ReStore	1003 South 24th Street, Omaha, NE, 68108	40
Hands to Harvest Community Garden	1113 S 31st Street, Omaha, NE, 68105	41
Hanscom Park United Methodist Church	4444 Frances St, Omaha, NE, 68105	42
Heart Ministry Center	2222 Binney Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	43
Heartland Family Services Ruth Solomon Center	2101 South 42nd Street, Omaha, NE, 68105	44
Heartland Hope Mission - South Omaha	2021 U St, Omaha, NE, 68107	45
Holy Name Community Garden	2901 Fontenelle Blvd, Omaha, NE, 68104	46

HOPE (Faithful Shepherd Presbyterian Church)	2530 S 165 Ave, Omaha, NE, 68130	47
InCommon Community Development	1258 S 13th Street, Omaha, NE, 68108	48
Jackson Elementary School	620 S 31st Street, Omaha, NE, 67105	49
JC Wade Senior Villa	3464 Ohio Street, Omaha, NE, 68111	50
Karen Community Garden	2400 N 34th Street, Omaha, NE, 68111	51
Kids Can! Community Center	4860 Q Street, Omaha, NE, 68117	52
Kinghorn Gardens	6464 Center Street , Omaha, NE, 68106	53
Kountze Food Pantry Garden	29th Street and St Marys Street, Omaha, NE, 68105	54
LaFern Williams South Omaha YMCA	3010 R Street, Omaha, NE, 68107	55
Learning Community of South Omaha	2302 M St, Omaha, NE, 68107	56
Liberty Elementary School	2021 St Mary's Ave, Omaha, NE, 68102	57
Little Blessings	1502 S 24th St, Omaha, NE, 68108	58
Little Italy Community Garden	1105 South 9th Street, Omaha, NE, 68108	59
Lollipop Patch	7240 Blondo St, Omaha, NE, 68134	60
Lothrop Magnet Center	3300 N 22nd Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	61
Lutheran Family Services/Benson Garden	5128 NW Radial Hwy, Omaha, NE, 68104	62
Marrs Elementary School	5619 S 19th Street, Omaha, NE, 68107	63
Metropolitan Community Church	819 South 22nd Street, Omaha, NE, 68108	64
Montessori Learning Home	5103 Capitol Ave, Omaha, NE, 68132	65
Nebraska Children's Home Society	3549 Fontenelle Blvd, Omaha, NE, 68104	66
Nelson Mandela School	6316 N 30th St, Omaha, NE, 68111	67
Omaha Northwest High School	8204 Crown Point Ave, Omaha, NE, 68134	68
OOIC Family Garden	2724 N 24th Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	69
Pearl Pantry	2319 Ogden Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	70
Presbyterian Church of the Master Garden	10710 Corby Circle, Omaha, NE, 68164	71
Prospect Village/REC Garden	3322 Blondo St, Omaha, NE, 68111	72
Ruth Soloman Center/HFS	6720 North 30th Street, Omaha, NE, 68112	73
Sahler Street Community Garden	4212 N 48th St, Omaha, NE, 68104	74
Santa Monica House Garden	130 N 39th St, Omaha, NE, 68131	75
Second Unitarian	3012 South 119th Street, Omaha, NE, 68144	76
Shabazz Community Garden	Malcolm X Ave and Bedford Ave, Omaha, NE, 68111	77
Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church	6201 N 60th, Omaha, NE, 68104	78
Spring Lake Elementary School	4215 S 20th St, Omaha, NE, 68107	79
Springbrook Community Garden	7322 N 76th Street, Omaha, NE, 68122	80
St Andrews United Methodist Church	15050 W Maple Rd, Omaha, NE, 68116	81
St Francis Assisi Catholic Church	4513 South 32nd Street, Omaha, NE, 68107	82
St John's African Methodist Episcopal Church	2402 N 22nd Street, Omaha, NE, 68110	83
St Matthew Evangelical Lutheran Church	1725 South 60th, Omaha, NE, 68106	84
St Paul United Methodist Church	5410 Corby St, Omaha, NE, 68104	85
The Hope Center	2200 N 20th St, Omaha, NE, 68110	86
Tri-Community United Methodist Church	6001 Fontenelle Blvd, Omaha, NE, 68111	87
Universal College of the Healing Arts	8702 N 30th Street, Omaha, NE, 68112	88
Wesley House Community Center	2001 North 35th Street, Omaha, NE, 68111	89
Yates Community Center	3260 Davenport, Omaha, NE, 68131	90
YMCA Teen Center Site	4344 N 34th Street, Omaha, NE, 68111	91