



**TO:** Mayor and Councilmembers

**SUBMITTED BY:** JoAnne Plummer, Neighborhood Services Director

**PREPARED BY:** Justin Wilkins, Parks and Recreation Manager  
Leonel Mendoza-Diaz, Recreation Supervisor

**SUBJECT:** Updates to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Review and approve updates to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy.

**BACKGROUND:**

On June 1, 2024, the City of Goleta opened the gates to its first community garden at Armitos Park located in Old Town Goleta. Along with the opening of the park and garden, the garden plot rental program was established with 50 plots assigned during the initial opening lottery. Gardeners were onboarded into the garden plot rental program with the policy document approved by City Council on September 5, 2023.

The Community Garden has now been operational for 11 months and close to completing the full year through the rental program. As a result of questions from the gardeners during this period of operation, revisions have been drafted to the policy and were reviewed and supported by the Parks and Recreation Commission on March 13, 2025.

**DISCUSSION:**

This report outlines modifications made to the City Council approved garden policy to enhance language consistency across the document. The following areas within the policy were identified in need of further clarification:

Community Garden Plot Payments and Payment Plans

A common question received during the initial eleven months from gardeners was related to where a person can make a payment and what fees were owed. The policy has been updated to identify three (3) locations for payment: Goleta City Hall, Goleta Community Center and online, through Xplor Recreation. Each gardener has an account created for them by City staff to allow for an online payment option. Language was also included to

remind prospective gardeners of the option of a payment plan that can be discussed during the onboarding process.

### Garden Hours of Operation

The Community Garden and Armitos Park are both enclosed with security fencing equipped with automated locks that have been programmed to open and lock at specific points in time throughout the calendar year. Due to safety, the garden hours must be secured during the seasons when daylight is short. The common area section of the policy was updated to include the City of Goleta's Park hours along with clarification on the process for a change in hours of operation and access to the garden. This update also highlights the means of communication that City staff will use to communicate any changes on access to the garden.

### Timely Payments

Under the Non-Compliance section, the policy was updated to include language related to failure of payments for gardeners on a month-to-month payment plan. This update states the steps the staff will take to notify a gardener of overdue payment and a path forward on bringing said overdue fees up to date. Failure to comply with the direction offered by staff, the gardener is subject to violations and/or removal from the garden in accordance with the rest of the non-compliance section which was supported by the Parks and Recreation Commission and approved by the City Council.

### Process for Leaving the Garden

The process for leaving the garden has been updated to provide a path forward for gardeners choosing to leave before the end of their yearly agreement. In an effort to standardize the withdrawal process and alleviate unforeseen workloads on staff, it was determined by City staff to accept withdrawals on a quarterly basis (March, June, September and December). By accepting withdrawals at four points throughout the year, staff can adequately work on adjusting existing agreements to reflect the leave dates and contacting members of the community on the garden waitlist. These efforts will also help with standardizing the start of plot rental agreements and will allow staff to adequately plan for those periods in time while providing flexibility for residents experiencing unforeseen circumstances.

A copy of the redline proposed changes has been provided as Attachment 1.

### **FISCAL IMPACTS:**

The updates to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy document are meant to clarify processes associated with the operations of the garden. While the removal or withdrawal of a gardener can impact anticipated revenues, these updates do not make any changes to the current fees.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

City Council may choose not to approve the proposed changes to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy. In doing so, the Community Garden Plot Rental Program will continue to operate with the City Council approved policy established at the September 5, 2023 meeting.

**LEGAL REVIEW BY:** Isaac Rosen, Acting City Attorney

**APPROVED BY:** Robert Nisbet, City Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Proposed Updates to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

Proposed Updates to the City of Goleta Community Garden Operation Policy



## City of Goleta Community Garden

### **Application and Policies Operation Policy**

The Goleta Community Garden is a beautiful and healthy space for community members to grow their own food. There are over fifty plots available, including 10 oversized garden plots for larger gardening options. Goleta's Community Garden is managed by the City of Goleta, under the Neighborhood Services Department. In addition to the space and resources to create nutritious gardens, Goleta's Community Garden will provide continuing education for gardeners and the general public on topics related to organic gardening, healthy eating, sustainability and more.

### **Community Garden Rules and Regulations**

#### **Plot Rental**

Goleta residents over the age of 18 may rent a garden plot. All gardeners must agree to, and sign, the Goleta Community Garden Use Agreement, Waiver and Release of Liability form, and a Code of Conduct contract.

**Garden plots are issued on an annual basis.** The annual registration fee of \$120 (\$10/month or \$120/year) and a \$25 refundable security deposit will provide access to a raised ~~bed~~ plot, water, watering supplies, some gardening equipment, and a green waste compost system. Gardeners must pay the fee of \$120 by cash or check to the City of Goleta before they may begin gardening ~~or online through the City of Goleta's new recreational software, Xplor Recreation.~~ Payment can be made in person at Goleta City Hall (130 Cremona Dr) or at the Goleta Community Center (5679 Hollister Ave). Alternatively, payment can also be made online through the City of Goleta's Recreation Software, an account will be provided to gardeners by City Staff. The purpose of the security deposit is to ensure that the gardener cleans up their garden plot prior to relinquishing their plot or the end of the contract period. **Payment plans are available and can be discussed with City Staff during the onboarding process. Quarterly payment plans are available.**

**Plots will be assigned to gardeners by the City of Goleta.** Applicants who indicate on their application a need for the higher, more accessible plots will be given priority for those plots.

**The primary listed garden member is responsible for ensuring that all responsibilities and fee obligations are fulfilled.** Subletting of garden plots is not permissible. Gardeners who are not able to fulfill their contract period should contact the **Recreation Supervisor ~~Parks and Recreation Manager~~** in writing to relinquish their garden space.

**If a plot is rented by an organization, the organization is responsible for ensuring that all members who enter the garden understand the rules and have signed the Goleta Community Garden Use Agreement, Waiver and Release of Liability form, and a Code of Conduct contract form on file with the City.**

**Gardeners in good standing may renew their plot up to two years.** Please communicate your intention in writing to keep or let go of your plot at least two weeks before the annual term is over. Transferring to a different plot also requires written communication with the City of Goleta. When you vacate a plot, it is your responsibility to ensure that the **bed plot** is clear of organic debris and waste. Once the renewal period has been exhausted, **the** gardener will be required to re-apply for a plot.

**If there are no vacant garden plots, prospective gardeners may add their name to a waiting list. Once the waitlist reaches 25, no more prospective gardeners will be added.**

### **Plot Use and Maintenance**

**All garden plots must be maintained year-round.** Plots are to be maintained by the gardener and free from debris, and weeds always. Plots that are not maintained will receive a written notice. Details on this process are outlined in the Non-Compliance section. Please let the **Recreation Supervisor ~~Parks & Recreation Manager~~** know in writing if you need to be absent for an extended period, and appropriate accommodations may be made by the gardener. Gardeners choosing not to plant during a given season must mulch over the entire plot to prevent unwanted weed growth.

Gardeners may grow annual or perennial vegetables, herbs, and flowers in the boundaries of their plot. NO planting is allowed outside of the garden plots. No woody shrubs or trees, cannabis, invasive vines or plants or water gardens are permitted to be grown in the Goleta Community Garden. Your neighbors' access to sunlight is important, do not plant tall crops or create trellises that will cause excessive shading. Plants, trellises or cages may not exceed five feet in height, **the width should not impede other plots or protrude into the walkway and should not be placed in a location where it shades adjoining plots** ~~not placed in a location where it shades adjoining plots and the width should not impede other plots~~. Garden **beds plots** must be fully planted and/or maintained, and pathways surrounding the plots must be free of weeds, overhanging plants, hoses (except when

watering), and debris at all times. Row covers may be used on a temporary basis.

**Gardeners must practice water conservation.** ~~Hoses, quick-connect bibs, and water is provided by the City.~~ Water is provided by the City with hoses and quick connect bibs subject to availability. Watering is only allowed for gardening purposes, with the gardener present (i.e. no automatic or timed watering). You are welcome to make arrangements for someone else to water your plot during an extended absence. Organic, plant-based amendments and heavy mulching are encouraged to reduce the need for water. Please observe posted watering use instructions. In the event of a line break, contact City Hall immediately at 805-961-7500 during regular business hours and the non-emergency dispatch number 805-683-2724 after hours and on the weekend.

**Plots Beds must be maintained according to organic standards.** Organic gardening relies on techniques such as crop rotation, compost, and biological pest control. The use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides is not allowed. Only products that are labeled as OMRI approved, or USDA Organic approved, are acceptable. For more information and a list of approved products, visit the Organic Materials Review Institute at [www.omri.org](http://www.omri.org) or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program web site. In addition, feel free to email any questions to [communitygarden@cityofgoleta.org](mailto:communitygarden@cityofgoleta.org).

**Composting green waste is encouraged in shared, on-site compost bins locations.** Compost is available to the garden community as a whole and should be used responsibly. Compost materials may NOT INCLUDE material NOT grown at the Goleta Community Garden. Compost piles are allowed only in the designated areas or in approved containers on individual plots. Please be mindful not to introduce weed seed into the compost—it will not get hot enough to kill the seeds, and they could be transferred to another plot. Weeds that have gone to seed should be bagged and disposed of in the trash cans available on site.

**Gardeners have access to a garden shed with shared tools—please do not store tools anywhere in the garden except for the shed.** Since tools are a community resource, please take care to properly use and maintain them, returning them to a garden shed after use. Any tools belonging to the gardener may be left in the shed but it is the responsibility of the gardener. The City of Goleta is not responsible for items left in the sheds. If you have any questions or issues, please contact the ~~Parks and Recreation Manager~~ Recreation Supervisor.

### **Common Areas**

~~The garden is open from 8am to sunset. There are locks on the gates and tool shed. The access code will be changed occasionally for security reasons, and that change will~~

~~be communicated to gardeners in good standing. The gates will be on a timer and will only open during park hours. All tools are to be returned to the sheds after use and gardeners must leave the property at sunset.~~

**The garden's hours of operations align with the City of Goleta's Parks hours:** 8:00 a.m. to sunset per the Goleta Municipal Code (GMC) 12.15.090. The gates to the garden are equipped with automated locks accessible with an access code communicated to all gardeners during their onboarding process. The access code is subject to change for security reasons, and that change will be communicated to gardeners in good standing. Access to the garden outside of the above-mentioned hours will be restricted, regardless of code input. The timer on the gates will also take into account daylight savings, closing earlier in the winter to align with sunset. All tools are to be returned to the sheds after use and gardeners must leave the property at sunset.

**Do not harvest from anyone else's garden plot.**

**The picnic area and shaded pergolas are available to all.** These areas are available on a first-come, first served basis, unless previously reserved for classes, workshops, or other reserved uses. Please respect shared space and keep these areas tidy. Please notify the ~~Parks and Recreation Manager~~ **Recreation Supervisor** of any maintenance issues.

~~The community bulletin board is a place~~ **Community bulletin boards, when available, provide a place to post relevant upcoming classes and events, as well as requests or trades within the garden community** (i.e. exchanges of surplus produce, extra plants available, etc.). Please respect this limited space, and keep all postings relevant to garden related events, activities, resources, etc. Recreation Supervisor shall remove outdated or inappropriate postings without notice, at his or her sole discretion.

**No personal property is to be left in the garden.** The City is not responsible for any lost or stolen items.

**Children and guests are welcome in the garden.** Children must be supervised at all times.

**No pets are allowed in the cultivated garden areas, including near the raised plots, fruit trees, or other plantings.** Dogs visiting the park or using the multi-purpose path must always be on a leash. Service animals may be exempt but still must be leashed at all times. Please appropriately dispose of your pet's waste.

**The City of Goleta's municipal ordinances for public parks apply (Chapter 12.15 of GMC).** Smoking, glass, fires, alcohol, and littering are prohibited.



## **Non-Compliance**

Please **always** keep the comfort and safety of your fellow garden members in mind. **Failure to maintain plots, or other violations, will result in a warning.** Any rule violations must be corrected within two (2) weeks. If the situation is not corrected, a second warning is issued. If the violation persists after two (2) weeks from the second warning, the gardener shall be dismissed from the garden, unless there are extraordinary circumstances. Any three (3) warnings within a given nine-month period are also grounds for dismissal.

Gardeners selecting to pay on a month-to-month basis are responsible for timely payments. Gardeners will receive emails from the City's recreational software with reminders on payment status. If overdue fees persist, staff will contact gardeners with a pay by date. Failure to pay on the designated date will result in a violation. If violation persists after two (2) weeks, a second warning is issued as indicated above. If the violation persists after two (2) weeks from the second warning, the gardener shall be dismissed from the garden and the deposit on file will be retained by the City of Goleta.

**Immediate termination from the garden will result for the following violations:** false or misleading information on application, theft, violent behavior, drinking or drug use, urinating on premises, harassment of any kind, or any other behavior deemed hazardous to the health and safety of members.

## **Leaving the Garden**

Please give written notice to the ~~Parks and Recreation Manager~~ **Recreation Supervisor** at least two (2) weeks in advance of the end of the one-year term. Ensure that all organic matter and debris are removed from the plot before you leave, so that it is in an immediately rentable state for the next gardener. **Gardeners choosing to withdraw from the garden before the end of their yearly agreement must also communicate their intention to withdraw in writing. Withdrawals will be accepted on a quarterly basis (March, June, September and December), at the beginning of the aforementioned month. All fees must be paid leading up to the designated withdrawal month mentioned above. Deposits on file will be returned to gardeners who leave their garden plot free of all organic matter and debris as mentioned above. No refunds of garden fees are available.**

**Refunds for garden fees will be assessed on a case-to-case basis and will be at the discretion of the Director of the Neighborhood Services Department.**

## **Questions?**

Contact:

The Community Garden Team

805-961-7500

[communitygarden@cityofgoleta.org](mailto:communitygarden@cityofgoleta.org)

## Goleta Community Garden Plot Application

Applicant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

List family members of your household (name and relationship) who will be gardening with you. If an organization, state the primary members:

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- ☐ I require a wheelchair accessible raised bed, if available. Provide any additional comments on your needs in the garden, as they may relate to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:

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- ☐ I do not otherwise have access to space to garden.
- ☐ If email address is provided above, I agree to receive any notices regarding this agreement by electronic communication.
- ☐ I understand that I have the responsibility of maintaining my own garden.
- ☐ I understand that anyone working in my plot must have a signed City of Goleta Form on file.
- ☐ I intend to garden the following types of items (specific to high/low vegetation):

\_\_\_\_\_

## Goleta Community Garden Use Agreement

This agreement is made and entered into on \_\_\_\_\_, between \_\_\_\_\_ hereinafter referred to as "Gardener," and the City of Goleta, hereinafter referred to as "City." Subject to the terms and conditions listed herein, City allows the use to Gardener, for organic gardening purposes only, a garden plot at Armitos Park, Goleta, CA 93117. The term of this Use Agreement shall continue for a period of twelve months thereafter, with the option to renew for gardeners in good standing. Should Gardener not pay their annual fees, violate any of the Rules and Regulations (attached to this Agreement), or abandon the plot, this Use Agreement can be terminated by the City and Gardener will lose the privilege to use the plot. Upon signing this Agreement, Gardener shall pay to City a use fee in the sum of \$120 every twelve-month period. The City has the right to terminate use without cause. All terms of the Use Agreement are subject to change. Fees may increase from time to time.

I have read, understand, and accept the above terms and conditions.

Gardeners' Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Gardeners' Name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_