

INSTITUTE ON THE  
**ENVIRONMENT**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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## MINI GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY

Please complete the project summary and return the completed form to April Snyder, Associate Administrator for the Institute on the Environment at [aprilsnyder@umn.edu](mailto:aprilsnyder@umn.edu). Paper copies will not be accepted. Please also attach any photos, publications, brochures, event agendas or other materials that were a result of the mini grant summary.

<b>Date of Report Submission:</b>	14 July 2015
<b>Project PI &amp; Dept/School</b>	Dan Svedarsky, Center for Sustainability, U of MN Crookston
<b>Project Title:</b>	Campus/Community Garden for Crookston (CCGC)
<b>Grant Amount \$:</b>	\$ 2,520

### Project Context & Purpose

*Please include the original project purpose statement and revise for any changes that occurred in the project after the start date with a short explanation of the changes.*

**Overview:** The Crookston campus has been exploring the concept of a campus garden since 2011, but a sustained effort is lacking. Students come and go and most leave campus for work experiences presenting questions about who would maintain a garden in the summer season so that a harvest would be possible in the later summer and fall. There are pockets of interest around campus in various departments and also within the Crookston community. There has been difficulty in identifying a plot of land or perhaps more than one where the project can be launched. The major supporters are in place, especially Sodexo, the food service provider; they are willing to purchase everything produced in a campus garden. A series of 4 brain-storming sessions were conducted at the request of Chancellor Fred Wood during the summer of 2013 but there was minimal student and community representation. Other campus and community supporters are expected to come forth once an initiative gains traction. What is needed is an action plan patterned after successful initiatives in operation at other campus and community settings. The action plan would identify financial, personnel, and equipment resources; and benefits to the campus and community.

## Work Completed

Please provide a summary of the work that was completed for the mini grant project.

### **Pedersen Garden Progress Report for 2014 - the first year.**

**Overview.** The topic of a campus garden has been under discussion by students, faculty and staff since 2011. Chancellor Wood called for a launching of further discussions on 16 May 2013 which resulted in 4 meetings leading up to a final meeting summarizing finding on 10 July 2013. These sessions were to identify potential opportunities, locations, partners, advantages, and disadvantages of a campus garden.. A series of informational seminars pertaining to gardening were also conducted in the 2013-2014 academic year and were supported by a Mini-Grant from the U of MN's Institute on the Environment. These sessions included supper and considered the topics of High Tunnel gardening, local gardening initiatives in the greater community, the campus garden at U of MN Duluth, school and local gardens and college gardens. Allen Pedersen, a Master Gardener from Crookston contributed a \$ 50K endowment in June of 2013 to help support a named campus garden with partial support for an intern and a horticulture scholarship program. He was also a special guest at some of the seminar suppers. The Chancellor's Cabinet approved the campus garden project on 21 April 2014 to be located on the city land next to the Valley Tech Park with Peter Phaiiah volunteering to be the point person. Dan Svedarsky would be the implementation assistant. Wordage for the signage honoring Allen Pedersen was also approved and a dedication date was set for 21 May 2014. A nice turn-out of perhaps 60 people showed up for the dedication in spite of a cold, blustery day in May, but was followed by a nice lunch in warm, Brown Dining Room. This cool day would be a sample of weather conditions to come in the spring-early summer of 2014. The garden was dedicated as the Allen and Freda Pedersen Garden to honor Allen and his late wife. In 2014, The garden was managed primarily by UMC's Center for Sustainability in collaboration with the UMC offices of Academic and Student Affairs, Northwest Research and Outreach Center, Sodexo Dining Services, UMC Grounds Department of Facilities and Operations, U of MN Extension, a local gardening consultant, the city of Crookston, Polk County Public Health/Wellness Coalition, and volunteers. Over 6,500 lbs. of produce was grown; most of it processed through Dining Services. Two, 5' x 2' x 20' raised beds were constructed to grow herbs commencing in 2015. A smaller raised bed was constructed for the UMC Children's Center as a learning aid. One of the larger grow boxes bears a sign, "Growing Good Food for Golden Eagles" and the one at the Children's Center reads, "Kids eat what they grow." Two campus apple trees produced 39 apples this year and were part of the apple crisp served at the dignitary luncheon event in conjunction with the Wellness Center dedication on 22 September. Tashi Gurung, a fall 2013 graduate was a part-time Sustainability Assistant in spring and summer of 2014 working on the local foods initiative, CSSD projects, NW RSDP, and community engagement and outreach. The overall success of the gardening project in 2014 exceeded expectations and perhaps surprised some of the critics. Through hard work, committed problem solving, and the engagement of a team of resource personnel, the garden became a reality after a long discussion period. This illustrates what is possible for a campus garden on the University of Minnesota Crookston campus. Much more is possible with a committed campus community working together with local community partners. In May of 2015, a community garden was officially launched in the Crookston community on open space created by the removal of houses in the flood zone. In a real sense, the community garden was propelled by the success of the campus garden which is now off to a great start in its second year along with the installation of a 24 x 72 ft. high tunnel on campus that will be funded by Sodexo.

## Partnerships & Collaborations

*Please provide a summary of the project personnel, partnerships and collaborations that worked directly on the project or were started as a direct result of the mini grant project.*

There is a common saying, “It takes a village – (to do whatever).” Nothing could better describe what has transpired with the garden project over the last 2-3 years. First, the students who enthusiastically supported the idea of local foods that might be grown on campus and that could be served in Dining Services. Linda Kingery and the NW Regional Sustainable Development Partnership materially supported some of these student assignments. Craig Hoiseth, Executive Director of the Crookston Housing and Development Authority supported a cooperative University and community gardening project that would be located on the Crookston city land next to the Valley Technology Park on the north side of campus; this included the use of city water for irrigation. The guidance of Todd Cymbaluk and Terry Nennich was indispensable in the garden effort from the initial planning stage, to site prep, to planting, growing and irrigation, and harvest. The 50 K donation of local Master Gardener, Allen Pedersen, was key for encouragement and material support along with the benefit of Allen’s many years of experience. (To be able to honor someone within their lifetime was especially gratifying for a whole lot of people on campus and within the greater community.) The support of the staff of the NW Research and Outreach Center was key in the use of equipment. The active support of Albert Sims, NW ROC Director of Operations, was especially important as he allowed Svedarsky to take on the extra duties of launching the garden project in addition to other responsibilities. The many suggestions of attendees at the various input and discussion sessions were most helpful and appreciated. Horticulture lab services and Greenhouse coordinator, Theresa Helgeson, ably assisted in growing plants for transplanting and helping in many incidental but essential ways. Ron Del Vecchio, Department Head and faculty of the Agriculture and Natural Resources were supportive in many ways (use of greenhouse resources, gardening equipment, construction of storage building as a class project, and use of lab space for various construction projects). The UMC Facilities Department was helpful in assisting with grow box construction, moving resources to the site, sign installation, grounds maintenance, and a number of other items. Dining Services, through Sodexo Director, Doug Pedrick, was very supportive and adaptable in receiving garden produce at odd hours and preparing it in tasty and nicely presented ways. A number of student volunteers assisted with periodic maintenance and harvesting along with the more regular help of employees Alex Nemmers, Tashi Gurung, and Josh Bruggman; their learning, adaptability, and commitment is appreciated. Finally, and most importantly, the support and encouragement of UMC Chancellor Fred Wood; Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Barbara Keinath; and Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Peter Phaiah made the successful launch of the Allen and Fred Pedersen Garden a reality. This has added measurably to UMC’s legacy and commitment to students and the greater community.

## Project Outcomes & Impacts

*Please provide a summary of the outcomes and /or impacts of the mini grant project including future plans for the project.*

### **Summary and recommendations for the 2015 season.**

The project was successful beyond the expectations of most with a minimum of 6,500 lbs. of vegetables produced, most of which was served through campus dining service. The success of the garden led to several follow-up developments summarized as followed with recent developments in bold:

#### **Long Term Considerations in Management of the Garden**

1. Need for a practically oriented manager who knows basic biology of growing things, has mechanical savvy, and can manage summer help. Possibilities: the new Horticulture faculty member, existing staff person whose responsibilities might be modified, a new staff person who might work with Dining Services in the academic year and the garden in the summer (would simplify use of produce by Dining Services), someone from Extension like Noele Hardin, any connections with Northwest Regional Sustainable Development Partnership, Todd Cymbaluk, others? Could there be a summer joint appointment with Extension and some UMC campus position? Could work in combination with Terry Nennich. This manager will also address the need for continuity of information so it can be a continual learning enterprise for students, staff, faculty and the greater community. Svedarsky could assist during a transition in the summer field season of 2015 but has other research responsibilities requiring a greater portion of his time in the summer. **(A new Horticulture faculty member has been hired and will have on-going responsibilities for management of the campus garden.)**
2. There needs to be an on-going connection/coordination with the UMC Greenhouse operations due to the source of transplant materials and use of some basic equipment items.
3. Most of the equipment and infrastructure items were one-time purchases. These included the following; storage building, push planter, hand sprayer, fertilizer spreader, gardening tools, irrigation equipment, hose and reel, poultry wire and posts. Expendable items needed to be purchased annually will include seed, fertilizer, and chemicals.
4. Grow boxes will be used for planting small seeded crops such as spinach, lettuce, radishes, and herbs since soil conditions can be managed more precisely. A watering system is in place in cooperation with the city of Crookston which has responsibility for the Valley Tech Complex. Summer interns, one supported by Sodexo, manage the grow box at the Children's Center.
5. High Tunnels have been discussed from time to time but this represents a significant commitment of resources and a space. Sodexo is involved in 4-5 high tunnels at the Bottineau campus of Minot State and has expressed an interest in having one at the Crookston campus as well. **A recent development is the approval of a high tunnel to be located on Northwest Research and Outreach Center land adjacent to the existing campus greenhouse. Initial purchase costs will be covered by Sodexo with on-going management provided by the Ag and Natural Resources Management Department; specifically the new Horticulture faculty member. This will significant enhance the fruit and vegetable education component of the Horticulture program. Again, this development was aided by the successful launching of the campus garden in 2014.**

#### **Ripple effects.**

When a project such as launching a campus garden is initiated, there can be ripple effects, that is, actions that are stimulated to happen that may not be anticipated. The symbolism and reality to the campus community, especially students have been significant. This was an effort that several students had discussed and planned for over 2 years; and it finally happened. More recently grant monies were secured to fund a part-time

**community sustainability outreach assistant** with the primary task of the city of Crookston attaining the designation of a “GreenStep City.” At the city council session where the resolution was presented, at least 3 city council persons had followed the progress and success of the garden over its inaugural year and made mention of it as an example of what could be done in Crookston as well. *Seeing is believing*, and active discussions led to the launching of a community garden; one of the check-off categories to attain GreenStep status.