Community Garden Process Revision

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Meredith Gauthier
Community Gardens Program Coordinator
City of Austin Parks and Recreation

Slides courtesy of Chris Luedtke, Service Design Lab

Project Goals

- To better understand the City of Austin's Garden Permit Process.

- Identify **pain points** in the public's user experience, while uncovering **opportunities/tools** to assist the Garden Coordinator in **shepherding** (across multiple departments needs) the perspective new gardeners.

- Identify **opportunities** to cultivate **outreach** and build **partnerships,** while still supporting **existing gardens**.

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Background

City of Austin Community Gardens Program

- Created by Austin City Council in 2009 to have a single point of contact and streamline the process for creating community gardens on City land (including school parkland!)

- Parks and Recreation staff can assist community members with land search, license agreements, water tap access, and permitting

- Community gardens and urban green spaces create community, which is a core mission for Parks and Recreation

Deep Eddy Community Garden

Community Gardens in Austin

- 67 total gardens on City, County, State, church, school, and private land

- 26 community gardens are on City land (6 of these are senior community gardens at senior centers/recreation centers), 1 food forest, 1 community farm

- Gardens each have plots available for a seasonal or yearly fee (some have sliding fee scales), plot size varies from 4' x 6' to 10' x 10' or larger
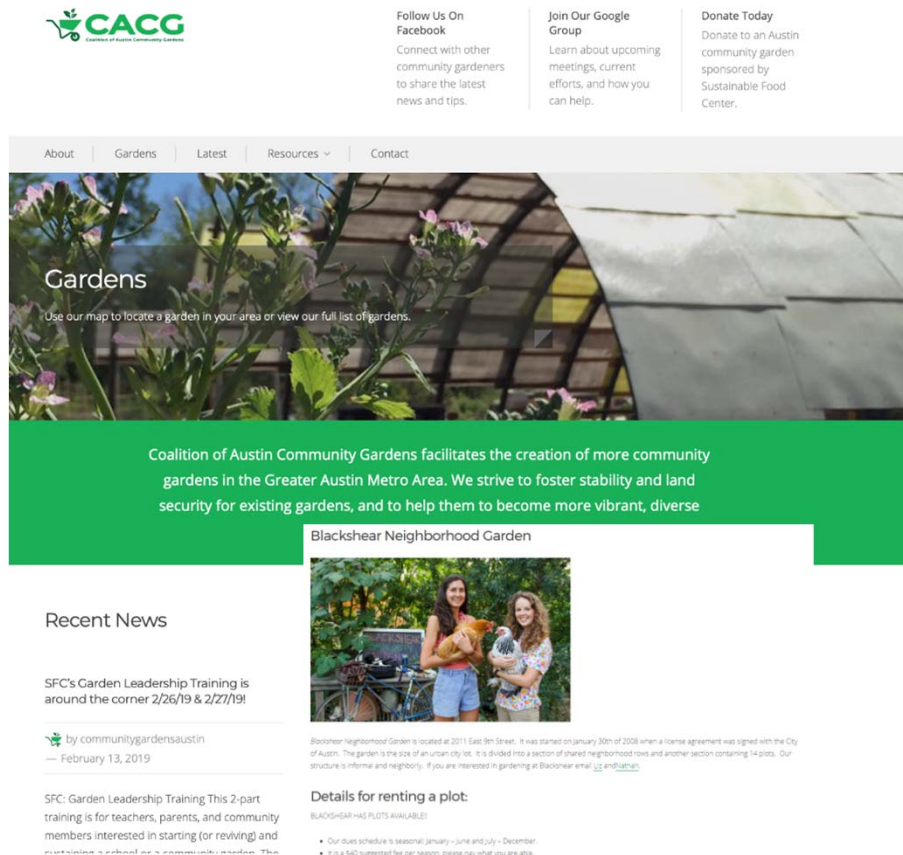

Gardens at Gus Garcia

Festival Beach Community Garden

Coalition of Austin Community Gardens - New Website

In 2017, The Coalition of Austin Community Gardens (CACG) launched a new website. The CACG receives administrative support from Sustainable Food Center and the City of Austin's Community Gardens Program, with the purpose of facilitating the creation of more community gardens in the Greater Austin Metro Area. The website features an info page for each garden, maps of garden locations and eligible future garden sites.

Community Benefits

★ Environmental health of ecosystem

    ○ Improve air and soil quality, increase biodiversity and green space

    ○ Reduce "food miles" required to transport nutritious food

★ Physical and mental health of gardeners and neighbors

    ○ Increase access to fresh foods and improve food security

    ○ Increase physical activity through garden maintenance, improve mental health through relaxation

★ Cultural heritage benefits: Social cohesion, sense of place for new immigrants and refugees who have experienced the traumas of displacement

What Community Gardens Are and Aren't
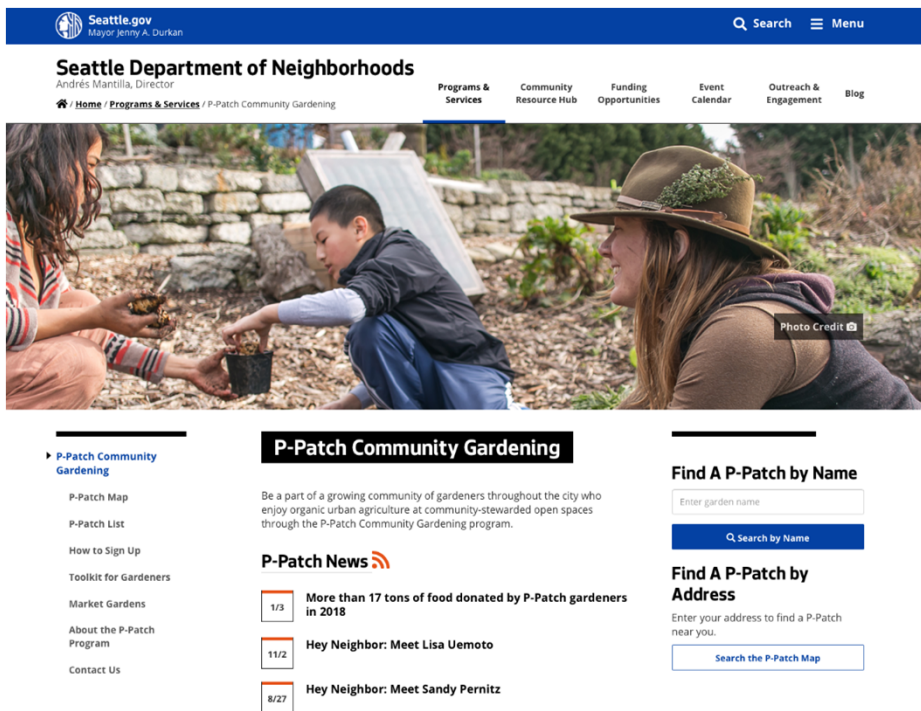
- While community gardens do improve food access, they are only one small piece of the food access puzzle, and we recognize that they don't work for everyone.

- Gardens are about much more than food - they are also for public space, connection and empowerment.

- Community gardens are about building social ties, sharing skills and experience, learning about nature and culture, and taking proactive measures to improve our physical and mental well-being.

- The PARD motto is **"We Create Community!"** - which is perfect for community gardens.

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How are other cities doing this?

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Seattle's P-Patch Program oversees **89 urban gardens** distributed throughout the city on **33.7 acres** of land.

4,400 Community gardeners grow food on **14.9 acres** of the land and **steward** for the public an additional total of **18.8 acres**.

The gardens also provide a way to give back to the community: By supplying **fresh produce** to **Seattle food banks**.

PORTLAND, OREGON

The [Portland Community Gardens project](#) has **47 community gardens** located throughout the city.

Portland is also home to [FarmMyYard](#), a grassroots effort to **connect** those with **yards** to those who are looking for a **space to cultivate**, and [SharingBackyards](#)- a **community food sharing** program

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Service Design Lab Research

Research & Discovery: Design Principles

Users at the Center: We default to **users as our source of truth**. Designing for users means learning everything we can about them—**needs and goals**—and iteratively testing our work throughout the design process.

Research and Discovery: Interviews / Shadowing

Public User interviews are crucial technique of the discovery & research phase of the user-centered design process. They help us gain a **deeper understanding** into **people's behaviors** and why they do what they do. This helps identify **users' pain points** or struggles to answer our problem statement.

We consider the **direct service city staff** in all departments that play a role in delivering this service is also user of the system, just like the public. We need to understand what is happening on the back end and understand if **tools** provided by the city work.

Throughout the interview we explored how users **currently navigate** through the system providing an idea of what **they consider important**, **pain points**, how they **problem solve**, and how they **feel** when interacting with the service. The interview helped us dig deeper into the user reasoning behind their choices and behaviors during review of observations.

Public Interviews

During this project, Interviews were conducted **in person** and **on location** at Community Gardens, resident homes, community centers, as well as grassroot Sustainable farm organizations.

5 public user Interviews: 4 currently garden, 3 utilize community gardens, 3 Successful w/ CG process, 1 failed the CG permit process

Housing Authority of Central Texas: Resident & Community organizer

Sustainable Food Center: Non profit sponsor

Lanier HS/MRC Community Garden- Community Garden Organizer

UT MicroFarm- Youth Gardener

Go Austin/Vamos Austin: Sector Manager- Community Nutrition & Economic Development

Central Texas Food Bank-Coordinator

HausBar Farm Community farm members

Stakeholder Interviews

During this project, Interviews were conducted **in person** and **on location** at other city departments (Watershed, Office of Sustainability, AWU, ORES), with Nonprofit Community Gardens-Sustainable food Center, as well as organizations that help support the community in achieving success in this process.

Parks and Recreation Department: Environmental Conservation Program Manager

Parks and Recreation Department: Community Garden Coordinator

Office of Sustainability: Food Policy Manager

Austin Public Works- Site plan needs

Neighborhood Partnering Program (NPP) : Provides Grants

Office of Real Estate Services: License Agreement

Watershed Department: Program Land manager Green Infrastructure / Flood Plain Office

Central Texas Food Bank

What: "Provide best quality food to the public and give them the opportunity to experience garden space."

How: "Growing food and offering it to people, giving people access to space based on a transitory way, and not having to sign up for a plot, pay for a plot - just being able to come and walk around and take some produce."

What can the city do? "Even I look at that permit and I'm like I don't want to get involved. It takes too much effort, takes too long, and I have to reach out to a city department - I won't do it, even though I love gardening."

Housing Authority Resident

Benefit of Garden: "If you can walk out the door and pick some herbs, for a senior citizen, that's huge. Something as simple as that can make a difference in someone's cooking. I was trying to make the opportunity for them to not have to go to the store. "

Why didn't her community garden work? "The garden wasn't supported and it wasn't implemented right. They didn't have meetings, they didn't have communication. You have to have that. You have to have involvement from the residents, but also people from outside the property that are willing to help too."

HausBar Farm-Lola, Samuel, Dorsey

Do you have a Community Garden outside work? "We don't have the time between family and work. Work 6 days a week, 9-5"

Where do you get your fresh vegetables now? "HEB, Fiesta, no farmers market"

Would people be interested in using land for a community garden if the city made it happen?

"Yes, would really like to do it if there was something really close for my wife and kids. They could go and work on the

Sustainable Food Center

Takeaway: Each garden has different barriers: Time, Interest, Gentrification, Inclusion, Language.

Ex: East Austin is a rapidly gentrifying spot, which is reflected in who's getting involved. People not feeling welcome as person of color or unintended bias.

What can the city do?

Provide staff support, someone who is tasked with being a support role for the garden.

Project Leader of the UT Microfarm

How did you get involved: "I had to start cooking for myself when I came to college and got into healthy eating and became a vegetarian. From there I got interested in sustainability and environmentally friendly agricultural practices."

What to know: "It's a lot of hard work, and a lot of money. UT charges such cheap rates, it's subsidized from a grant we received from the OOS-Otherwise we wouldn't make enough money to pay my wages as a project lead ($10 an hour for 10 hours a week)."

What helps: "The fact that I'm paid… That's a huge struggle for a lot of people. It makes a difference in keeping the student leaders dedicated to the project, having a paid person."

Research and Discovery: Workshop I
(Hopes & Fears / Goal Setting and Needs Identification)
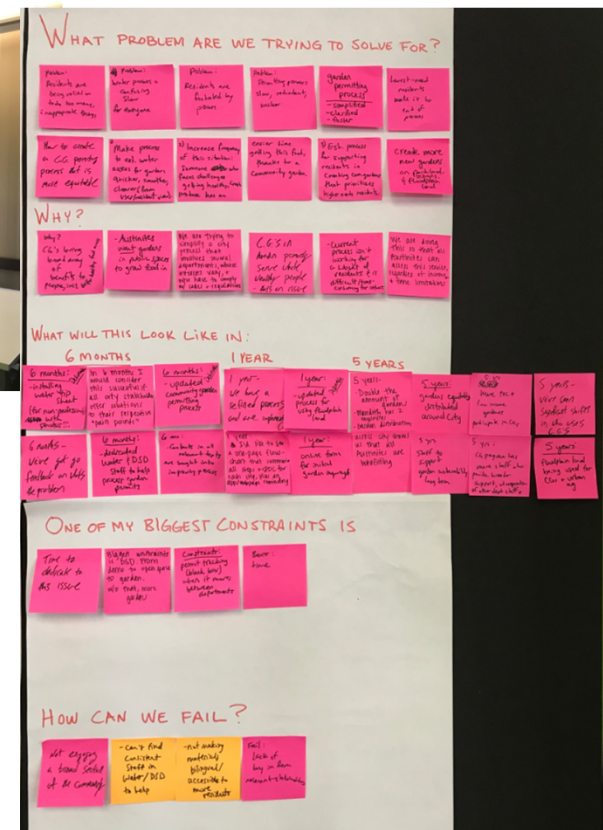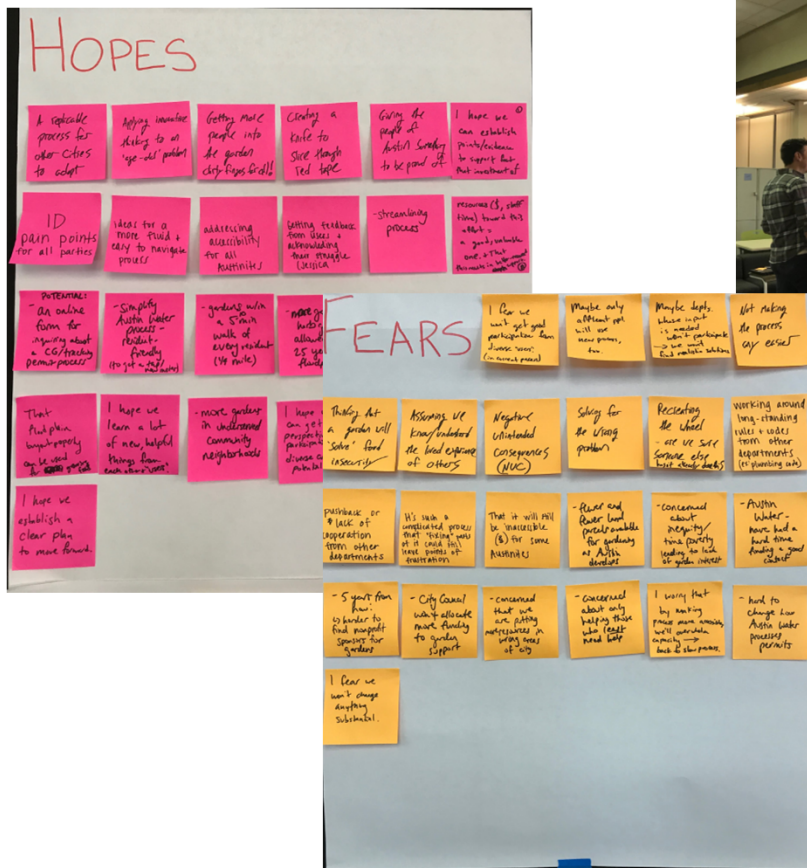
Research and Discovery: Workshop I
(Stakeholder Process Mapping)

Research and Discovery: Workshop II
(User experience mapping / User and Stakeholder interviews)
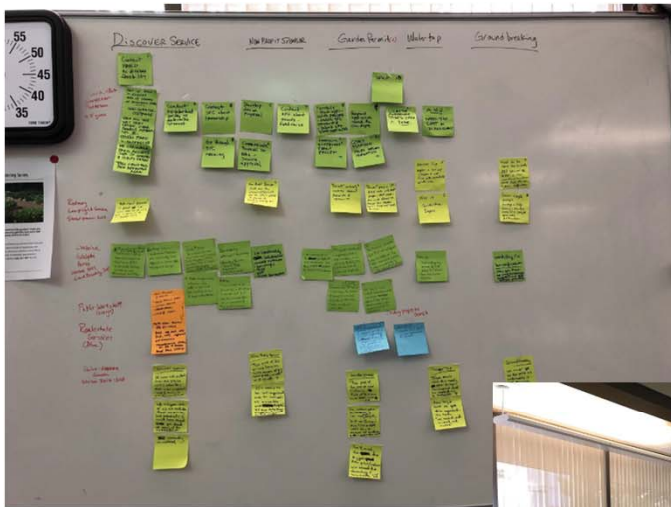
Research and Discovery: Workshop III
(Empathy Mapping, "How Might We...", Storyboarding Solutions)
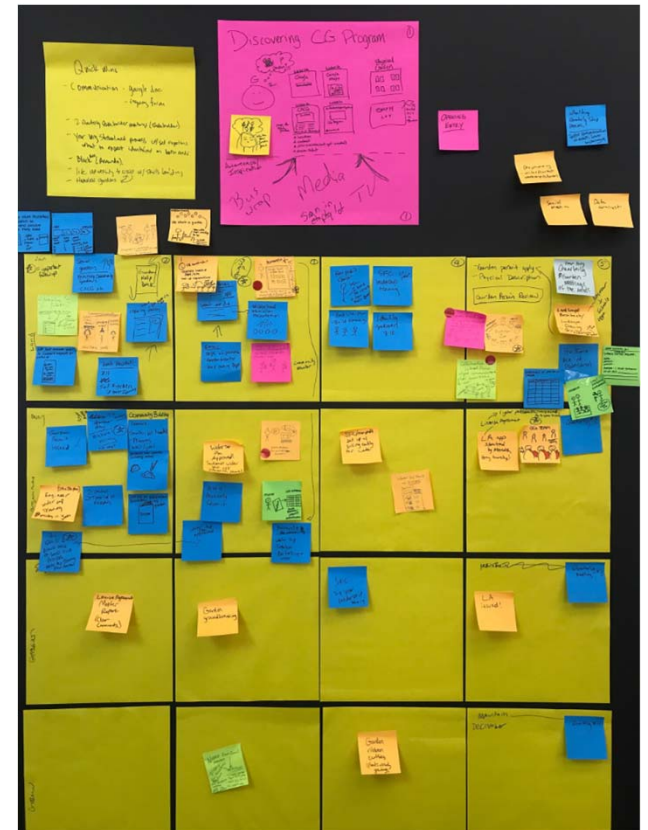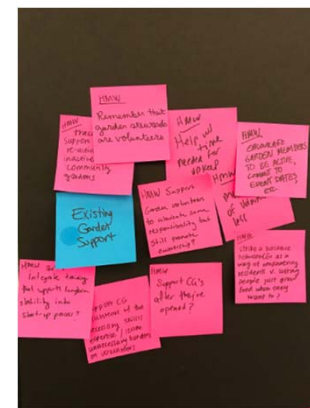
Research & Discovery Workshop III
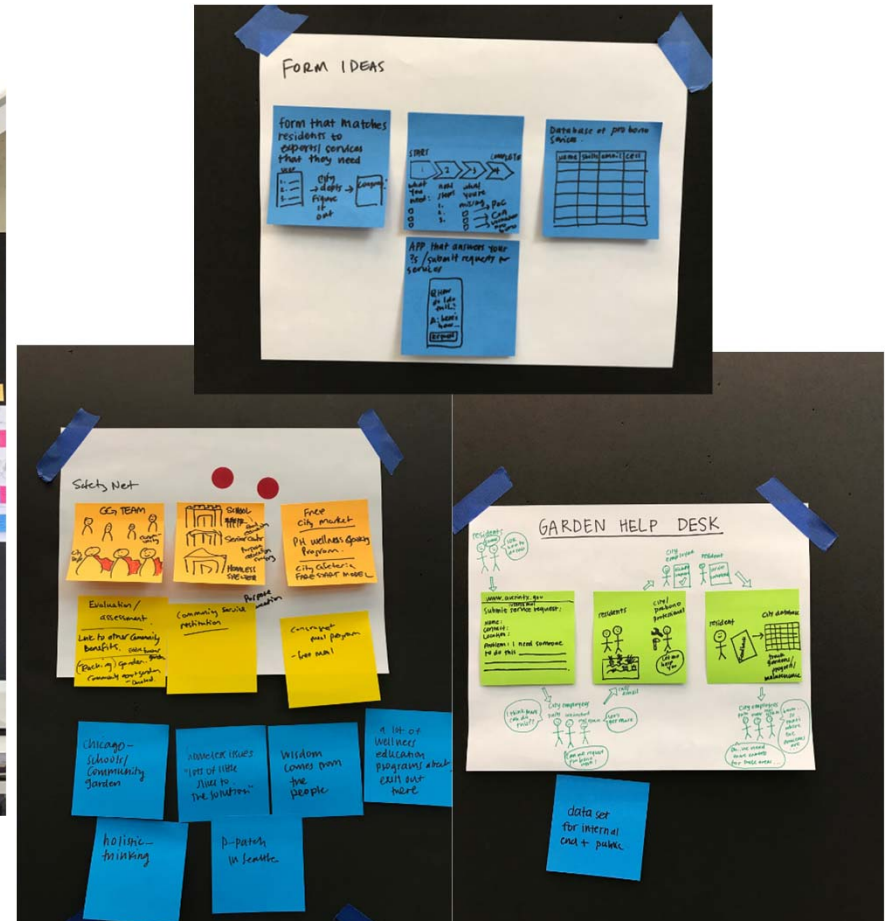
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Service Blueprint

GARDEN PERMIT APPLICATION

Site plan - landscape Architect
Water tap plan - engineer
Site plan exemption - DSD
Garden permit - PARD
License agreement
Water tap application - AWUL

THIS AGREEMENT IS BETWEEN CITY OF AUSTIN OFFICE OF REAL ESTATE SERVICES & Non-Profit-Sponsor on behalf of community garden

New community gardens are required to have a license agreement with a nonprofit sponsor for fiscal agent liability insurance. ☑check

⇨ Then they can apply for City of Austin Garden permit

1. Organize Steering Committee

2. Get Educated
   - Coalition of Austin Community Gardens
   - Sustainable Food Center

3. Identify a Site
   * 6-8 Hours of Sun
   * Location / Size / Terrain
   * Water Availability — Austin Public Utilities
   * Identify property owner
   Call City of Austin Sustainable Urban Agriculture & Community Gardens (SUACG)

4. Outreach

5. Locate Non Profit to Endorse the Community Garden
   - Access city properties
   - Liability Insurance
   Sign license agreement w the City of Austin and community group!

6. Creates/Submit Community Garden Permit Application + Project Timeline
   a. list of steering committee members
   b. list of committed gardeners
   c. Design sketch of garden
   d. Garden by-laws/rules
   e. Budget/fundraising plan (1st year)
   f. endorsing nonprofit letter of support
   g. adjacent landowner support letter

   Submit to Community Garden Coordinator

7. Obtain Community Garden License Agreement

8. Break Ground with Work Party
   GROW

WHAT THEY REVIEW

1. Evidence of Community support
2. Permit requirements
3. Maintenance requirements
4. Implementation & ongoing cost
5. Water availability
6. Planned / Existing use of site
7. Impact on adjacent land

GARDEN PERMIT APPLICATION

APPROVED

fx | Phase

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P
1	Phase			Permission Phase				Community Building Phase		License Agreement Phase				Garden Build Phase		
2	Stage:	Whos at the table	Discover service			Land Review approval		Training	Non Profit Sponsor	Site Meeting #1	Site Plan	Water tap plan submitted	Garden Permit (PARD)	Site Plan Exemption	Water Tap Plan visit	Water Tap Plan wait
3	FRONT END															
4	Time							Sponsorship Application takes 2 weeks				10 week wait for water tap plan		apply / wait / Obtain		
5	Quotes		Humm.. closest garden is a mile away, i wish I ha one closer link in the park here	Do I have to do all of this to get a garden.							Renegard gardening begins (this is taking to long)	Whew!				
6	Assumed Process:	Assumed process as told by stakeholders: Garden Lead/ City Resident Gardner/ City Resident Non Gardner	Google is there a community garden near me	Ask if land Im interested in is available-Request Garden Information Packet	Begin Training about Community Garden Process. The Garden Lead attends garden leadership training at SFC	Site vetting: Discover service / Info gathering/ PARD & WSD Planning	Meet with Neighbors/Next Door /Neighborhood association facebook page: Who wants to Garden?	Garden lead and team completes and turns in sponsership application to SFC Two weeks	Sponsorship application approved	Research done by S/M/L Re: Prospective Project: What is neighborhood like, whis is the situation with land and nearby efforts.	Garden Leaders create by laws plan other aspect of the garden	Submit CG permit application to PARD.	Build Garden Beds / Build Fence / Lay irrigation lines	My Garden needs water. Hire a plumber find local plumber in neighborhood for free		
7			Phone: Austin Coalition of Community Gardners (resource)They route to PARD	Garden lead begins to rally support	Begin Search to find a non profit sponsor	Is it in the floodplain? if so 25 vs 100 year? Easements?	Ask interested gardners help in : Finding a plumber and making a site plan	Take Training With SFC		Need Engineer- Drawn and sealed water tap plan	Go to Waller Creek Center and submit 24 x 36 water tap plan		find engineer / $ to create sealed H20 meter drawing- communicates with city staff to correct comments			
8			Phone Call / Email: SFC	In person meeting heldto discuss scope			# of Gardeners / Size of Garden/ Grants & funding sources/ Restrictions				Public Works- Neighborhood Partner Program: Kevin Sweat to create working tap plan		Obtain license agreement			
9			Phone Call / Email: PARD	Recieve Email /. Phone call from PARD/WSD/ SFC. Send here is basic information to read packet		Texas 811 : Call before you dig	CrowdSource: Engineer/ landscape architect, plumber- conduct fencing/irrigation/ fence build				Complete 24 x 36 plan					
10			Phone Call / Email: WSD	Get garden permit checklist							City Code: Bees					
11	Quotes		We went all the way thru the design, neighborhood approval, SFC etc, then PARD disapproves													
12	Resident experience 1	Mark and Brit: Community Gardeners at Patterson for 5 years	Contact PARD to dicuss feasibility	Conduct neighborhood survey to detrmine interest	Contact SFC about sponsorship	Contact SFC about Sponsorship	Develop Design Proposal	Communicate proposal to NA- Secure approval	Formally: Start application process	meredith shepards permit process	Shepard application throught the city departments	Wait			License agreement takes over a year	AWU Water Tap lost in Bureaucracy
13			Met with PARD 1:1 to explore idea of garden at Patterson Park		Go through SFC Training	Go through SFC Training		Contact APF about grants - Fundraise	Obtain SFC sponsorship		Cory Harmon: Helps design irrigation					
14			Non-Commital Response						Submit APF							
15			We went all the way thru the design, neighborhood approval, SFC etc, then PARD disapproves													
16			We challenge PARD accepts the idea of Garden and helps design it. Then began process of neighbord approvals again.													
17	Resident Experience 2	Rodney: Lamplight Community Garden Gardener: Started process 2017	High level process is good, I.e. can see that city has a process that is supportive.				Non-profit sponsor part was the clearest / easiest due to SFC's process and Meritth working closely with SFC		"Permit" actually includes serveral permit agreements.		Permit process is filled with city department Jargon, and maybe too much detail for thing the garden team does not need to know.					Water Tap Again a lot of jargon and not sure who coordinates with whom.
18	Resident Experience 3	Sabrina : Adelphi Acres (Stated process 2012 Ground breaking 2015)	Original Email bounced but not really- There was a lot of turnover and not backup in PARD so we were always starting over. I would recommend more staff.	Getting help with constraints/utilities was exteremly slow, difficult or came after significant design.	Land Review: For people /groups that dont have resources, maybe a PARD or other GIS analyst could help identify soils, flood, utilities, constraints here	Developing interest/ recruiting volunteers and leaders: special skills/ donations and volunteer match	We constantly celebrated small victories. 1. getting a non profit 2. PARD 3. NPP 4. License agreement	Encouraged us to drum up support and excitement but then never wanted to commit to timelines.		The garden membership and supporters had a different timeline than the city.	Communication to team (meetings, emails, calls) could also be more frequent to assuive volunteers that the city is invested and committed to the process and them.	The steering committee fel that many requests were too difficult. They often discussed feeling like consultants of the city, not volunteers.	Water Tap- Used contingency becasue of rock issue. Thi should have been known earlier.	Water Tap- Used contingency because of rock issue. Thi should have been known earlier.		
19					Help with engineering services were difficult to get and often pushed on us to find volunteers.	Does it need to be drawn by a landscape architect anf if so the city should offer these services or help with the process				Getting the city to commit to dates was difficult.	To many open ended requirements. Providing options (sign sizes, recommendations, for instance would be					

CITY OF AUSTIN COMMUNITY GARDEN PERMIT: Service Blueprint

Phase

Permission Phase: Land	Community Building Phase: Organize	License Agreement Phase: Design	Garden Build Phase: Garden

User Stage

Find out about Service · Land Review Approval · Training · Non-Profit Sponsor · Site Meeting #1 · Water tap plan Submitted · Water tap plan Submitted · Garden Permit · Site Plan Exemption · Water Tap Plan Visit · Water Tap Plan Wait · Water Tap Plan Obtained · Get Water · Ground Breaking Ribbon Cutting · Maintain

Emotional Experience

- Community Garden Leadership Team / Community members inquire about city parcel for garden purpose. **Search web** Request Garden Information packet. **Phone** Austin Coalition of Community Gardeners ACCG / PARD / SFC / WSD. **Email** SFC / PARD / WSD
- Recieve Garden info packet : Permit checklist. Begin to locate neighborhood support- Social Media, web forums, community orgs. EMAIL/PHONE PARD, SFC, WSD setting up application meeting
- Attend Pre App meeting. Garden leadership team/WSD/ NPP. Discuss requirements of GP process. Begin Search for non profit sponsor
- Garden lead and team in sponsorship application to SFC: Two week wait. Sponsorship Application approved by SFC or other. Begin training with SFC
- Attend Site Review meeting. Held at site: WSD-Land Manager, floodplain engineer. PARD-CG coordinator, Forestry, District Land Manager. EMAIL: Feedback, notifying Garden Team of any sit plan issues that need correcting.
- CG Assists Garden Team and Landscape Architect. Re: draw up site plan and irrigation plan. If site plan issues can be addressed. EMAIL: confirmation that Garden Team can pursue nonprofit sponsorship and then submit CG application with checklist coversheet.
- Application must include landscape siteplan and irrigation plan as well as MOUs, and approvals
- Garden Team submits Garden Permit Application
- CG Assists Garden Team to submit Water Tap Application. Plumbing permit needed. Engineer-sealed Water Tap Plan needed if no water tap on site. Final Site Plan Review. Review approval of all parties
- Build Garden Beds. Build Fence. Lay irrigation lines. Find Engineer, $, to create sealed H20 Meter drawing
- CG Assists Garden Team to submit General Permit it: Concrete slab, impervious cover over 200 sqare ft of bldg, handicapped parking space. DSD- Development Assistance Center
- CG Assists Garden Team to submit: License Agreement. Submitted to Andy Halm so that license agreement can be signed between non profit sponsor and CoA (Land Steward Dept). Water tap Plan required. License agreement approved
- Land use permission from COA Granted. List of Steering Committee members (4 or more). List of 10 gardeners. Write description of garden, # of plots, Size, shed and fencing plan
- Complete Garden By- Laws and rules for garden operation. Complete Site plan for garden. Notes: Location, Size of trees, Utilities (811), Water access, Irrigation plan. Obtain Gardener Contracts or membership agreements
- Project Timeline. Budget and financing plan for 1st year. Name Endorsing nonprofit organization and copy of letter of suppport or memorandum of understanding. Garden Application Fee: $50
- Letters of support from Community Organizations and adjacent land owners not represented by Neighborhood association. License Agreement Fee: $100
- Ground Breaking and prep for Ribbon Cutting

LINE OF INTERACTION

Parks & Rec PARD

- Answers intital inquiry with standard **phone / email**. Outlining steps of application process
- Check CG Help Log: **Google Doc**. CG Process: **Google Doc**. Cut & Paste information into a shared (SFC) **Google Doc**
- Send Garden Information Packet **Email / Mail**
- SFC/PARD **meet bi-weekly** to share CG projects in progress. Site Review needed so hold at garden. PARD connects with **Austin Resource Recovery** to complete soil testing with Soil kitchen. SFC extends invite to garden training. **Phone / Email**
- Pre Application Meeting. City land owner approval recieved: Public Works/ PARD/ WSD. Chat by phone about project with the garden leader, Explain process and connect with existing. SFC Reviews and Approves sponsorship application- Creates MOV letter signed by ED. **Conduct garden leadership training**
- Land Steward department approval to use land for CG. **Development Services Dept : Urban Forest Program**. **Communicate floodplain restrictions early on in the process**. WPD Review floodplain -Status & water quality measures (CWQZ, Erosion, Impaired stream) -Tree canopy -811 Utility location -Soil testing (ARR)
- PARD Meredith sets up site meeting with garden lead to discuss garden vision. PARD meets with **Neighborhood Partnering Program: NPP** on site to dicuss funding
- CG Coordinator contact ORES (Andy Helm) who facilitates request from CG program to Land owner requesting Usage of parcel. TCAD Details Neighborhood info, aerial photo. **Approve sponsorship Application**
- Help applicant find Outside contractors: Plumbers, Landscape Architects, Engineer. Assist with completing the Garden Permit Application. Begin new folder, add liaison and garden into to database set up orintation meeting with liason. The Grant Assistance Program (GAP) will provide City matching funds that will enable applicants to meet cost sharing or matching requirements for external grant opportunities.
- CG Assists Garden Team to prepare Water Tap Application. Plumbing permit needed. Engineer- sealed Water Tap Plan needed if no water tap on site. Onboard meeting with new sponsored garden. Need OK from the flood plain engineers and planners. EMAIL CG Coordinator. Need help to facilitate AULCC approval for license agreement.
- CG Recieves CG Permit. Permit serves as waiver for Free AWU water tap installation. Write L.O.S for grant app. Begin back an forth between ATX water, Re:site exemption and tap app. CG Assists Garden Team to submit General Permit it: Concrete, impervious cover over 200 sqare ft of bldg, handicapped parking space. Need to funding to comply with FP regs
- Final Site Plan Review. Review approval of all parties. Review if property is available for garden
- CG Assists Garden Team to submit Site Plan Exemption Permit if larger. Attach explanatory memo DSD- Development Assistance Center. Need engineers (floodplain) to review SP for proposed structures for no adverse impact. PARD Coordinates. L/A stuff
- CG Assists Garden Team to prepare Water Tap Application. Plumbing permit needed. Engineer- sealed Water Tap Plan needed if no water tap on site. Need evidence of interested gardeners and community / neighborhood support. (People organized In the defense of earth and her resources / Community HOA). Connect to funding to comply with FP regs
- PARD submits license agreement application. (LA is between city and non profit sponsor on behalf of the garden). PARD meets with **AULCC** clears comments from utilities. Submitted to Office of Real estate Services- Andy Helm. PARD submits water tap application, gets a zero sum invoice. Need signatures to acknowledge from Non Profit sponser to acknowledge restrictions. Work with meredith on proposed gardens on COA property
- Approve/ Filed with Travis County/ PARD Pays Fee. Process the license agreement. Zero Sum invoice. Need to obtain SP Exemption to Comply with DSD. Create and issue license agreement for garden
- Finalize water tap plan
- **Austin Water Department:** water utility analysts, issue water tap. **Austin Water Utility AWU**. **Travel to Waller Creek center**
- PARD/SFC Open water account in SFC Name for CG. CG Assists Garden Team to submit: License Agreement. Estimates cost of H20 for 1st year of Garden. Approved. PARD, AWU, ATD, DSD, WPD
- Need permits acquired befgore ground breaking and media stories begin.
- PARD/SFC Open water account in SFC Name for CG. Visit Quarterly for compliance more if chicken/Bees

Sustainable Food Center SFC

- Answers intital inquiry with standard **phone / email**. Outlining steps of application process. If prospective site (on public land) will email directly to PARD
- Check CG Help Log: Google Doc. CG Process: Google Doc. Reason: see if there is a nearby project that exists that this resident could be directed to. If on list: Pre-application meeting proceeds. If NOT on list: On parkland CG determines eligibility. If Not onlist: On Watershed, WPD land Manager determines eligabilty
- Check CG Help Log: Google Doc. CG Process: Google Doc. Reason: see if there is a nearby project that exists that this resident could be directed to. Cut & Paste information into a shared (SFC) Google Doc. **Get internel interest**
- SFC/PARD **meet bi-weekly** to share CG projects in progress. **Sponsorship Application Recieved**
- **Recieve NPP Grant application**
- Contact CG coordination Meridith. Grid Match $$$. **Stip plan review**

Watershed WSD

- If prospective site (on public land) will email directly to PARD

Office of Real Estate Services OORES

Parks Works Neighborhood Partnering Program NPP

- Austin Code Compliance. SFC Hold active water account / apply for grants/ comanager/ dispute resolutions. Check-ins to monitor right of way and flood plain restrictions

Take Away- Identified Needs

1. **Process Improvement** meeting multiple City department permit needs

2. **Equitable** Involvement of Community

3. Improved **accessibility** for both front / backend users

4. User **Feedback** with **data capture**

5. **Online form** / Online information-Process

6. **Increase** in **number** of Community Gardens in Austin

7. **Simplify** Austin Water Utility Process

8. **Increase** Health, Wellness, and Education of Public

9. **Increase** in CG **Staff**- With Simplified permit process provide greater community partnerships.

10. **Messaging:** Web / Social Media / Community

Insight #1

External frustrations with long, inefficient processes mirrors **internal frustrations** with the same processes

    a. Multiple city departments struggling to communicate and share information.

    b. Large part of Coordinator's role is technically the ask we place upon the public to obtain the garden permit.

    c. Multiple nonprofit and other city departments funnel to CG but lack starting point

Insight #2

1. **Employees** spend an inordinate amount of time on **manual data entry**, and **travel** to meet the needs of other internal city departments. This could be avoided by understanding department needs, sharing retained information and city resources thru better communication.

    a. Water tap- this is a time intensive process (black hole of time)

Insight #3

There are **barriers** to **accessing** garden permit process. The system is set up to **meet the needs** of those who have the **time and money** to **dedicate time** to the process, over those who don't.

    a.   CG are obtained by those with the time, money, and resources

    b.   Having to take time off work, and secure landscape architects, engineers, and plumbers is meeting the needs of the city, not the public.

Insight #4

There are many ways the **permit process** can be i**nconsistent** in service delivery due to implementation of policies and process, and burden is on the public.

    a.   Construction, easements, etc.
    b.   "Case by case" / "one offs"
    c.   Policy inconsistencies

Insight #5

There's a **preference** for mitigating between departments like a **member of the public** not as another **entity of City of Austin**, and therefore creates a lack of institutionalization of processes that makes it difficult for the Community garden permit process to do its work **consistently** and **sustainably**.

Ex: Multiple Department Permits needed to get the one Garden Permit.

Insight #6

Information is available but challenges with **capturing** and **sharing across departments** in a way that's useful prevents CG permitting from functioning in a data driven way

EX: 811, APU, DSD, OORS, Code

(7)

Recommendations & Next Steps

Identified Needs

- Better coordination between City departments
- Equitable access to gardens for entire community
- A more streamlined overall process
- Simplification of the water permitting process
- Increased staff support

Recommendation: Quarterly Permitting Roundtable

Landscape Architect
Site Plan

Engineer
Water Tap Plan

Identified Non Profit Sponsor

Sustainable Food Center (SFC)
Non profit sponsor/ support

Garden Lead Organizer
Identified contact

Development Services
Department (DSD)
Site Plan Exemption

Parks and Recreation (PARD)
Department- Garden Permit

Office of Real Estate Services
(ORES)
License Agreement

Austin Water Utilities (AWU)
Water Tap Application

Identified Non Profit Sponsor
Insurance / Billing

Sustainable Food Center
Non profit sponsor / Community

Public Works / Neighborhood
Partnering Program (NPP)
Grants

- Set Goal for **1 year** permit process with **Quarterly meetings**, each will have the materials necessary to make recommendations, and justify decisions.

- Permits where there's an **issue / disagreement** are flagged early, and the Garden Coordinator can take **discretionary actions** (i.e. obtain new site plan) in advance of writing a recommendation / providing timelines.

- Ensures **consistency** in review of new garden needs with **transparency** by ensuring each CG application has **documentation** on both sides specifying if garden can move to next stage or if the garden still has needs of the department to meet.

Recommendation: Quarterly Permitting Roundtable
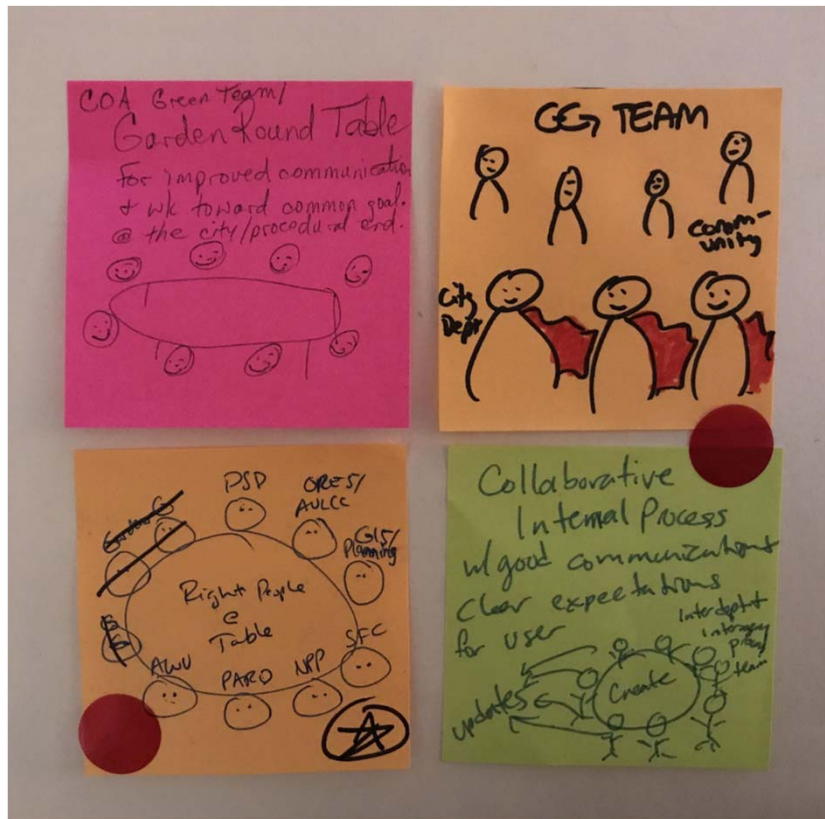
At **Quarterly consensus meetings- Stakeholders** review with **CG coordinator** and pass/fail permit documentation required of their specific department, and document agreements / disagreements/next steps. Garden lead will be updated what stage, department and timeline after each meeting.

- Ensures there's a **paper trail of analysis** that could be important if there are disagreements that persist
- Ensures there **aren't delays** for a permit because the Garden Coordinator is contingent on receiving materials and green lights from other city departments.

Recommendation: Additional City staff support

Community Gardens is the touchpoint between the public and other departments.

Example: Water tap plan is set up between Engineer and CG coordinator and the engineer doesn't call members of the public directly.

- Garden coordinator calls to schedule landscape architects, engineers with a garden lead (any civilian), sets expectations.
- Reduces intimidation factor. This can be a big step especially with out of pocket asks.

Bonus: These needs met by in house engineers and public just knows about the garden permit process.

Need: Research Analysts / data analyst interns Comb through the open data portal regularly looking for trends, and regularly generate numbers on trend growths of interest.

- Examine areas where development is occurring but gardens are not finding space.

Need: Policy Analysts take the data generated and cross reference it with national best practices to write **policy recommendations**, both in the form of memos to powers that be, and in the form of reports, infographics etc. for the public.

This can be a catalyst for change in how city departments work with one another, to share information.

Need: Community Liaison / Communications Manager uses the same data and recommendations to pursue **proactive education**, **engagement opportunities, and new partnerships** in the community.

Works with the team to publicize events & reports on **social media**, forges relationships with community partners, and **answers public questions** about the office **online** and in the **community**.

Recommendation: Project Management Tools
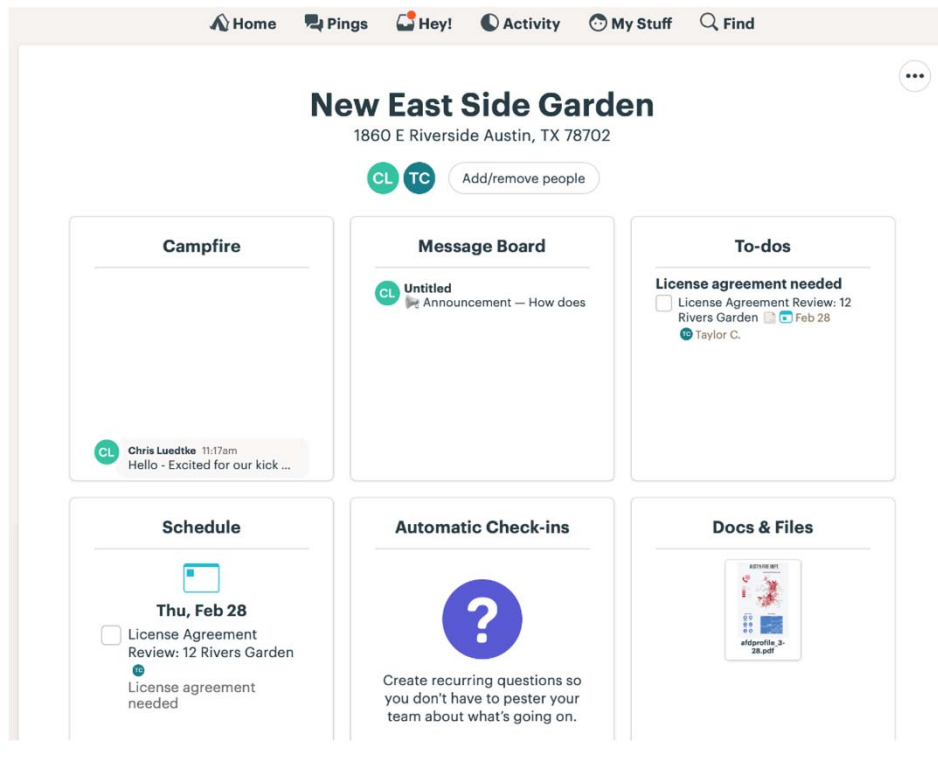
Need: Increase **accountability** and **Communicate** efficiently.

Need a backend that can support **project management** across departments. (Until one built)

Recommend: A product like Basecamp.

Reason: View tasks from every project (garden) together on one screen to easily see where things stand because conversations are organized within each project.

Recommendation: Update City Website

Begin with Home page update. Review PDF'S and as better structure interdepartmental communication-build out process and service pages.

Clear process, expectations and benefits of community gardens.

Recommendation: Digital Form for Initial Intake

Want to begin a garden in your Community- Begin Here!

Name (required)

Address

Email (required)

Zip Code

Phone

Website

Message (required)

Submit

Begin with a **simple form** from the homepage to begin data storage and new garden files on the back end.

As build out process and service pages have each step of input be matched with automated expectations and process feedback.

Recommendation: Data
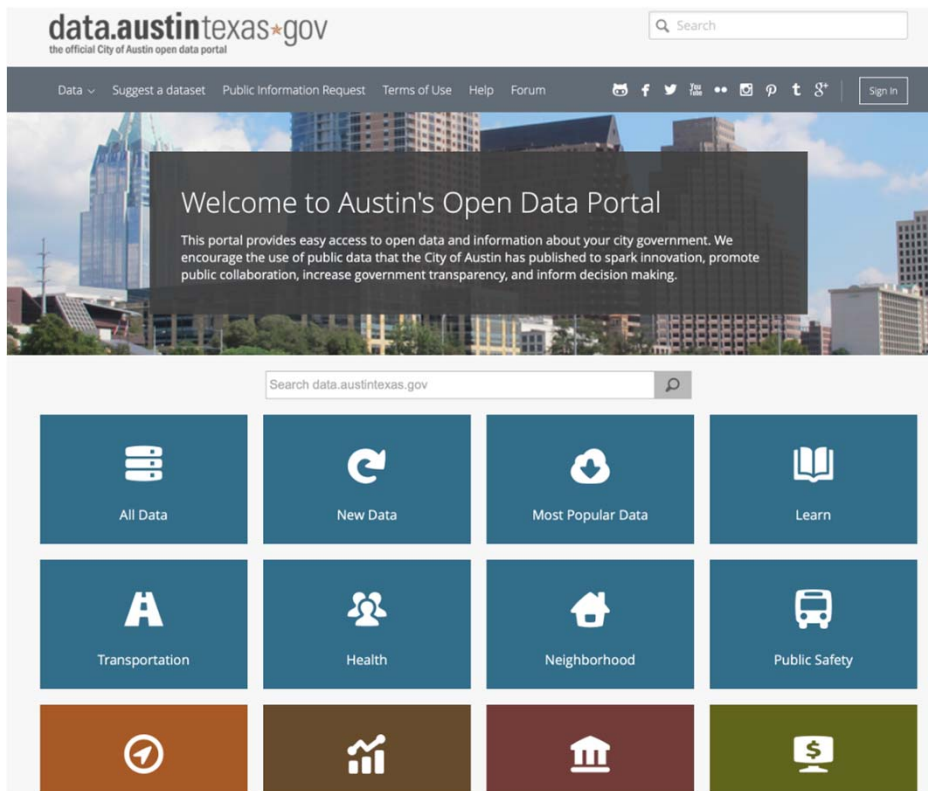
Create a Open Data Portal that contains Austin Community Garden data, food bank, community data, and other relevant national, community data sets that might be useful.

Members of the **public** can pull **data** directly, and use interactive front end visuals to explore different data sets.

Utilize data: Data on garden production, water usage, City donation by site etc to generate trend reports and annual reports and used to push for necessary policies.

Recommendation: Set Expectation and Demystify the Process

Provide a **"pizza-tracker"** and **Confirmation number** received **upon submission** that allows the public to see what stage and time expectation in the process their request for information, garden permit, or grant application is in.

Recommendation: Set Expectation and Demystify the Process
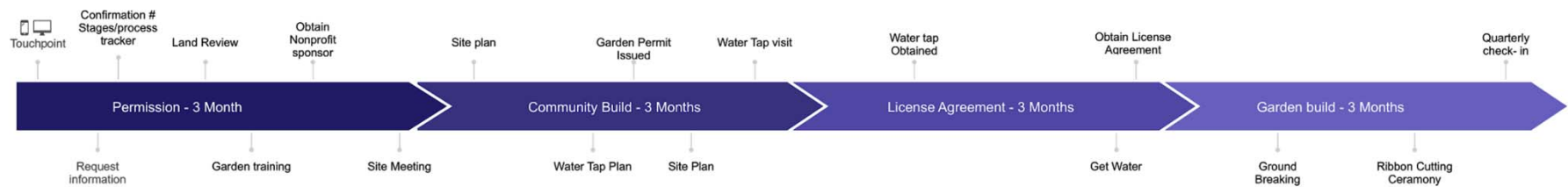
Members of the public can call with their confirmation number, which on the back end is their case number.

The stages of the process are in plain language and explanatory, so the member of the public gets some transparency.

STAGES

Permission	Community Build	License Agreement	Garden build

INTERACTION TOUCHPOINTS

Touchpoint

Top row labels:
- Land Review
- Obtain Nonprofit sponsor
- Site plan
- Garden Permit Issued
- Water Tap visit
- Water tap Obtained
- Quarterly check- in

Bottom row labels:
- Request information form
- Garden training
- Site Meeting
- Water Tap Plan
- Site Plan
- Get Water
- Ground Breaking
- Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

LAND — Permission

Public discovers (All request for info funnels to CG cordinator intake

Google-Website
Form request information
See signs in emply lots

CG reviews info in intake- asses needs of departments: create set expectations and timeline (pizza tracker)

CG users recieve email listing process and tasks of user and CG coordinator - Identified garden ambassador to assist. (Equitable examination here)

Begins new Digital folder (shared drive) for garden shared with identified deptartments (basecamp) (AMANDA)

CG assists with neighborhood association presentation

Non profit sponsor connected to CG

SFC 2x Per year Leadership Training

CG Need: Begin Rough site plan

Build community and identify 8-10 gardeners

Quarter 1 Meeting: Assesses needs of CG applicants
DSD/ORES/AULCC/SFC/ AWU/ PARD / NPP/ OIS planning

Review CG Garden permit
Create database of pro bono professionals -Assist in finding Landscape Architect for lanscape drawing in house.

ORGANIZE — Community Build

Reasure and respect phase
Garden Permit issued
Engineer create 24x36 water tap drawing (4-6 weeks)
CG User: Recieve status update for permit step.

Water Tap Plan Approved
Submit Water Tap Application-Travel to AWU

CG user: Recieve status updates for permit step
CG User: Garden Pot lucks, Planning, Meet and greet

Begin educational mentorship

Life university- vocational training at open gardens.

SFC / Non Profit set up as sponsor and billing entity for water

Water Tap Process with Pictures online for reference

Quarter 2 Meeting: Assesses needs of CG applicants

DSD/ORES/AULCC/SFC/ AWU/ PARD / NPP/ OIS planning

MEETING OF CG DEPT GROUP: Review Applicant needs

License Agreement issued

DESIGN — License Agreement

Reasure and respect phase
License Agreement: Master Report (clear comments)
Reasure and respect phase of
CG Ground Breaking
and begining of planting

SFC 2x Per year Leadership Training

Quarter 3 Meeting: Assesses needs of CG applicants
DSD/ORES/AULCC/SFC/ AWU/ PARD / NPP/ OIS planning

License Agreement application submitted

BUILD — Garden Build

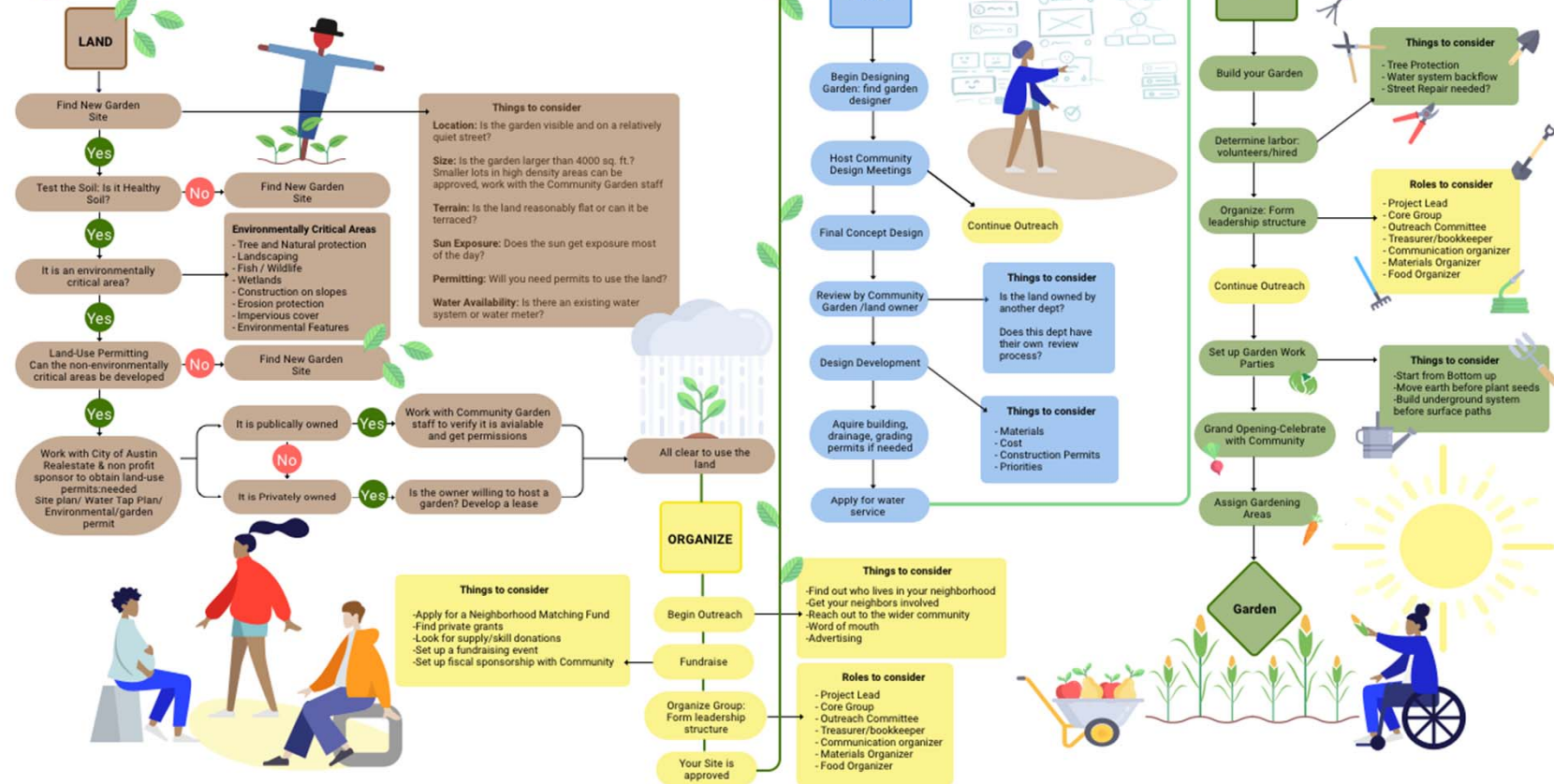**Excite and amuse phase**

In this section, indicate the actions the company can take to improve the customers experience.

Nudge from Council members
Nudge from Food Policy
Create interdept team for CA process: DSD, OORES, WSD, OOS, PARD, APU
Edit JDs to include CA support roles.

Ribbon Cutting

Quarter 4 Meeting: Assesses needs of CG applicants
DSD/ORES/AULCC/SFC/ AWU/ PARD / NPP/ OIS planning

Garden Permit Process

LAND

Find New Garden Site

↓ Yes

Test the Soil: Is it Healthy Soil? → No → **Find New Garden Site**

↓ Yes

It is an environmentally critical area?

↓ Yes

Land-Use Permitting Can the non-environmentally critical areas be developed → No → **Find New Garden Site**

↓ Yes

Work with City of Austin Realestate & non profit sponsor to obtain land-use permits:needed Site plan/ Water Tap Plan/ Environmental/garden permit

- **It is publically owned** → Yes → **Work with Community Garden staff to verify it is aviable and get permissions**
- → No →
- **It is Privately owned** → Yes → **Is the owner willing to host a garden? Develop a lease**

→ **All clear to use the land**

Things to consider

Location: Is the garden visible and on a relatively quiet street?

Size: Is the garden larger than 4000 sq. ft.? Smaller lots in high density areas can be approved, work with the Community Garden staff

Terrain: Is the land reasonably flat or can it be terraced?

Sun Exposure: Does the sun get exposure most of the day?

Permitting: Will you need permits to use the land?

Water Availability: Is there an existing water system or water meter?

Environmentally Critical Areas
- Tree and Natural protection
- Landscaping
- Fish / Wildlife
- Wetlands
- Construction on slopes
- Erosion protection
- Impervious cover
- Environmental Features

ORGANIZE

Begin Outreach

↓

Fundraise

↓

Organize Group: Form leadership structure

↓

Your Site is approved

Things to consider
- Apply for a Neighborhood Matching Fund
- Find private grants
- Look for supply/skill donations
- Set up a fundraising event
- Set up fiscal sponsorship with Community

Things to consider
- Find out who lives in your neighborhood
- Get your neighbors involved
- Reach out to the wider community
- Word of mouth
- Advertising

Roles to consider
- Project Lead
- Core Group
- Outreach Committee
- Treasurer/bookkeeper
- Communication organizer
- Materials Organizer
- Food Organizer

Design

Begin Designing Garden: find garden designer

↓

Host Community Design Meetings → **Continue Outreach**

↓

Final Concept Design

↓

Review by Community Garden /land owner

↓

Design Development

↓

Aquire building, drainage, grading permits if needed

↓

Apply for water service

Things to consider
Is the land owned by another dept?

Does this dept have their own review process?

Things to consider
- Materials
- Cost
- Construction Permits
- Priorities

Build

Build your Garden

↓

Determine larbor: volunteers/hired

↓

Organize: Form leadership structure

↓

Continue Outreach

↓

Set up Garden Work Parties

↓

Grand Opening-Celebrate with Community

↓

Assign Gardening Areas

↓

Garden

Things to consider
- Tree Protection
- Water system backflow
- Street Repair needed?

Roles to consider
- Project Lead
- Core Group
- Outreach Committee
- Treasurer/bookkeeper
- Communication organizer
- Materials Organizer
- Food Organizer

Things to consider
- Start from Bottom up
- Move earth before plant seeds
- Build underground system before surface paths

Recommendation: Policy Change / Interdepartmental Communication

Need: Engage city leadership for help to make change with **internal communication** blockers and blackhole time consuming process **(more department accountability).**

How: Provide **Training** for **Staff/Department leaders** who touch on the **CG process** so they understand how **their service effects internal city processes**. Creates Unified workforce utilizing shared resources for one goal.

Need: Engage city leadership to approve workers to work across departments as **shared resource**- an engineer in one department can provide work in another.

Or

Provide pro bono list for professional services re: engineer/architect.

Big System Ideas
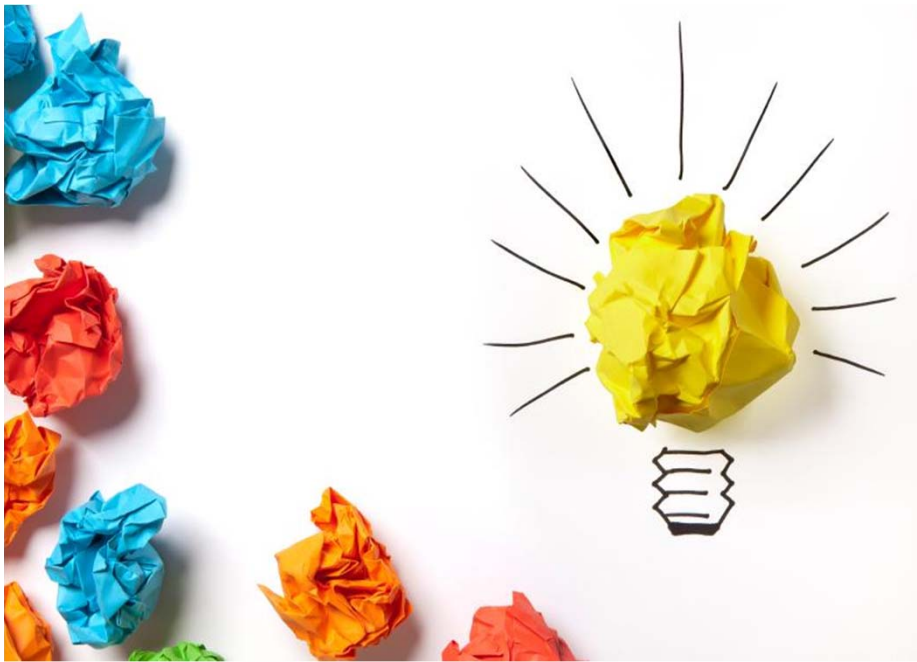
Need: Fund garden steward volunteers- the permit process is a big ask.

- **Idea:** Fund residents to organize neighbors around community garden projects- Pay a Garden lead/Ambassador ($10-15) for a number of hours a month? (model the UT microfarm)

- **Benefit:** Could this group actively assist in shepherding new garden groups thru the permit process. Use their experience to help.

- Coordinator could focus on assist with grants, outreach and public Partnerships.

Next Steps

- Service Design Lab will complete Service Blueprint
- Alpha Team working on online forms and other online content
- Community Gardens Program will publicize new process
- Sara Hensley will send memo asking for quarterly interdepartmental Community Gardens Permitting roundtable
- Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board Advocacy

Thank You

Sari Albornoz, Sustainable Food Center

Leah Gibson, Watershed Protection Dept.

Dr. Cynthia Klemmer, Parks and Recreation Dept.

Edwin Marty, Office of Sustainability

City of Austin Service Design Lab:

Chris Luedtke

Taylor Cook

Mark Janchar

Manlin Yao

Stephanie Gates