

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Rachel Waldron
Parks and Recreation Director

Re: Dunwoody Community Garden and Orchard Annual Presentation

Date: November 12, 2024

Summary

The City of Dunwoody Guide for Non-Profit Partners was adopted in 2021 to strengthen the relationship between the non-profits that utilize city-owned facilities and the City of Dunwoody. Per the guide, Partners are to prepare an annual report and presentation to City Council, orally or in writing.

The Parks and Recreation Department is proud to call Dunwoody Community Garden and Orchard a Partner. Dunwoody Community Garden and Orchard provides an opportunity for members to grow food organically year-round, educates and mentors others in the community about sustainable growing practices, and dedicates a portion of its space for growing food for charitable purposes. Their core tenets include using organic growing methods, modelling environmental stewardship, being simple and scalable, enabling access for all, and fostering a learning environment.



DUNWOODY COMMUNITY GARDEN & ORCHARD

Annual Presentation
2024

Introduction

- Dunwoody Community Garden and Orchard, a registered 501(c)3 corporation, was established in Brook Run Park in 2009 with the mission of providing members a safe place to grow food organically year-round, educate and mentor others in the community about organic and sustainable growing practices, and dedicate a portion of its space for growing food for charitable purposes.
- 2024 is our 15th year of operation. DCGO continues to meet its mission with a vibrant membership of over 100, a dedicated corps of volunteers, increasing year-over-year contributions to our local food bank, Malachi's Storehouse, and much more.



2024 in Review

- Dedicated Pantry Bed Volunteers and Harvest Team farmed and harvest 35 raised beds, delivering over 2,300 pounds of fresh organic produce to Malachi's Storehouse.
- Presented 11 Master Gardener Talks to the public, attendance totaled over 400.
- The DCGO main garden was a host site for the 2024 MLK, Jr. Day of Service, with over 60 volunteers participating.
- In conjunction with Dunwoody Parks and Recreation, DCGO hosted the 3rd annual “Snap! Dragon’s Garden” fun day for families. For 2024 we added special guests from “Dino-woody”.
- Our Spring Plant Sale was attended by over 800 shoppers from Dunwoody and beyond. This is our primary fundraiser.



2024 in Review

- Provided guidance (plant selection, care instructions) to the Dunwoody Woman's Club "Sun-woody" project.
- Funded and installed upgrades to the Greenhouse infrastructure:
 - Irrigation upgrades - new PVC, low-voltage timers
 - Supplemental grow lighting to compensate for increasing opacity of the existing polycarbonate skin
 - Reconstruction of several grow beds inside the Greenhouse
 - Reconstruction of ADA raised beds outside the Greenhouse
- Implemented a new Point-of-Sale system for plant sales
- Thanks to funding from Dunwoody P&R, we were able to greatly improve security at the Garden by installing self-closing push-button entry access gates.
- Replaced/upgraded all the main Garden hoses.

Factors: Positive Impact

- DCGO enjoys a great relationship with the City of Dunwoody, especially Parks and Recreation! P&R supports DCGO by providing access and needed maintenance to the Greenhouse area and the main Garden property. P&R assists with greenhouse ventilation, utilities, concrete work, chairs/tables for events and increased security at the main Garden among other things.
- DCGO ensures strong governance with a dedicated 9-member Board and adherence to published Bylaws.
- The Garden serves as the project site for two DeKalb County Extension Service Master Gardener groups - the DCGO Orchard and Pollinator Beds, and the DCGO Demonstration Garden. These two sites log thousands of volunteer hours and provide much knowledgeable support to the community.

Factors: Positive Impact

- Donations in memory of DCGO founding member, Rod Pittman, provided the funding for the new Rod Pittman Gazebo at the Greenhouse. Additional donations in memory of past members will fund a new shade structure at the Garden.
- DCGO won a \$1,500 grant from Food Well Alliance which funded the new grow lighting in the Greenhouse.
- Food Well Alliance and DCGO enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship with DCGO providing a popular worksite for corporate volunteer groups.
- Ongoing investments in Soil3 humus compost and an organic pest control program have greatly improved the member gardening experience.

Factors: Positive Impact

- DCGO is in good financial shape, with all operating funds provided by membership dues, plant sale proceeds, grants and donations.
- DCGO community outreach includes member and “Friends of the Garden” email communications, participation in local media (e.g., Dunwoody D-News and other Dunwoody publications) and a vibrant social media presence (Facebook, Instagram).



Factors: Negative Impact

- Continued security issues (primarily theft by 2-footed critters) at the main Garden required upgraded access controls. We are optimistic that the new gate locking system will solve much of this.
- We continue to experience issues with the aging Greenhouse structures: lack of light, fragile “skin”, poor ventilation (especially in the summer). While we are compensating somewhat to the increased opacity of the skin with grow lighting, we are concerned about the deterioration of the fragile Greenhouse exterior structures.
- DCGO experiences the same challenges shared by **all** community gardens: weather uncertainty, pests, plant diseases, lots of different gardening styles in a very compact space and theft.

2025 Plans

- We will be constructing a new shade structure at the back of the main Garden.
- We will complete construction of a new picket fence separating the main Garden and the organic orchard pollinator beds.
- To further our mission of educating the community about sustainable growing practices, we are researching the possibility of providing “mini-grants” to Dunwoody teachers to purchase materials and provide lessons pertaining to botany, ecology, sustainability, organic gardening and related topics.



QUESTIONS?