Garden Workbook:

Climate & Sustainability Alliance

AMERICAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

Sustainable Community Development is the intersection of the business community, local government, environmental groups, community members and others working to make their community more livable, inclusive, affordable, and economically competitive. This Attribute focuses on strengthening communities with green design, infrastructure, and education while preserving their unique identity, history, and culture. Through these efforts, nature is protected as both an economic and community asset that provides sustenance, open space, jobs, economic opportunities, and important cultural and historic ties. By providing funding and technical expertise, public gardens can work with valued community resources to help them achieve their goals for sustainability.

This document lists the goals and key performance indicators that have been identified as standards for gardens to better address this attribute in their policy and practice. Please refer to this document as a workbook for what items gardens should try to prioritize (as it makes sense for your garden's needs).

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The Public Gardens Sustainability Index is intended to share examples of how gardens are contributing to specific SDG goals and to inspire gardens to advance their own garden programs to further the mission of their institution while connecting to local, national, and global sustainability efforts. This Index is a first step guide on how to "get started" with implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2015. It aims to help gardens of all sizes and governance models understand the SDG Agenda, to start an inclusive dialogue on SDG implementation, and to prepare SDG-based local or national development strategies (or align existing plans and strategies with the goals).

Enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

Why Does it Matter?

From 2000 to 2015, in all regions of the world, the expansion of urban land outpaced the growth of urban populations.

As a result, cities are becoming less dense as they grow, with unplanned urban sprawl challenging more sustainable patterns of urban development.

4,000,000,000

People, or 54% of the global population lived in cities in 2015

Community Goal 1: Enhance capacity for participatory and inclusive sustainable community development.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Outcomes
a. Garden staff involved in off-site programming/projects attend community-based events/meetings to identify mission-relevant community needs. b. Garden develops evaluation processes for all off-site community programs/projects including educational training programs, volunteer opportunities, and events. c. Garden collaborates with like-minded external institutions for community projects/programs off-site. d. Garden offers free or discounted programs and educational offerings off-site geared towards low-income families/individuals (income below 150% federal poverty level).	a. Garden engages and attends meetings of mission-relevant leaders of public, private, and independent institutions, This includes government officials, faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, local institutions, etc. b. Garden does a pre-survey/mid-course/post-survey/evaluation of projects off-site, establishing metrics for evaluation c. Garden collaborates with mission-relevant public, private, and independent institutions/organizations for community projects/programs off-site such as colleges/universities, research centers, government agencies, other cultural institutions (i.e. museums). d. Garden frequently (multiple times per year) offers free or discounted/affordable educational programs, training, or events off-site or accepts those that qualify for social service and financial aid benefits (SNAP, EBT, etc.) at all educational programs, training, or events off-site.

Suggested Strategies

Figure out what your garden could provide to identified community needs. This could be more green spaces (parks and recreation), healthy food sources (vegetable consumption), stormwater infrastructure (green roofs), community gardens/backyard gardening, drought tolerant plants, school gardens, etc. This could be an area your garden already has existing programming or is part of future plans and is mission relevant. From there you can get more specific in understanding accessibility to healthy grocery stores, green spaces, community gardens, etc (Community.1.a).

Your garden can connect community members to resources and tools online and in person in the following ways:
• Educational videos and webinars online on sustainable horticulture practices.
• Demonstrations, workshops, events on how community members can install sustainable infrastructure and practice sustainable agriculture at home.
• Urban Gardener or Master Gardening program(s) that do work off-site
• Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) off-site
• Composting and Recycling program(s) off-site (Community.1.b).

Mobilize mission-relevant organizations, networks, agencies, and clubs connecting them to projects of interest. The garden can play a facilitating role in a number of networks:
• Local garden clubs, birdwatcher, nature and hiking groups concerned with environmental issues
• Citizen Science Networks
• Volunteer Networks
• Local and State government agencies
• Colleges and Universities
• Preschool and K-12 Schools
• Regional organizations interested in land use and planning
• Nonprofit conservation and/or social service organizations
• Regulatory or State Heritage programs
• Neighborhood Associations in Public Housing (Community.1.b).

Suggested Strategies Continued

Take on a facilitator role instead of imposing an institutional objective by supporting existing organization's missions, small and large, in providing practical tools, resources, and equipment that can aid sustainable community development. This could be helping support a government initiative or an environmental NGO that aligns with your garden's mission. Other possibilities are social or community-based nonprofits in the area dedicated to supporting marginalized groups (Community.1.c).

Strategy In Action

The Encinitas Environmental Education Cluster (E3 Cluster) is a memorandum of understanding signed by the Encinitas Union School District, Leichtag Foundation, Magdalena Ecke Family YMCA, Seacrest Village Retirement Communities, San Dieguito Heritage Museum and San Diego Botanic Garden. The agreement takes advantage of the groups' proximity to one another, with all members owning property between Quail Gardens Drive and Saxony Road on the east and west and between Leucadia and Encinitas boulevards on the north and south. The school district opened an agroecology learning center on a 10-acre site on the southeast corner of Quail Gardens Drive and Ecke Ranch Road, just across the entrance to the San Dieguito Heritage Museum.

Academic institutions are another great option to explore to gather information and collaborate on off-site programs/projects. Universities and colleges may already have data and information that your garden can utilize to its advantage when deciding what role it can play in its programming and educational outreach off-site. Environmental studies, horticulture, ecology, agriculture, and regional planning departments are likely to have student research projects that have investigated topics in your garden's region. Research colleges in the area with a focus on social justice or urban affairs – many graduate programs have professional outreach projects that could aide a smaller organization in establishing metrics for evaluation (Community.1.c).

Invest in personnel that have community ties. Proven program leaders in the community should become garden ambassadors and in some cases should be hired or become volunteer leaders to lead that program on a regular basis. Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, Virginia, for example, has a Community Engagement Coordinator to help establish a trusting relationship with a network of leaders that work in different areas in Richmond. Having a full time employee or team of employees/garden volunteers dedicated to community engagement will help your garden cast a wider net and have a larger, more diverse impact. This will also help in identifying leaders from these communities that want a career in public horticulture and that you could potentially hire (Community.1.d).

Community Goal 1: Enhance capacity for participatory and inclusive sustainable community development.

Suggested Strategies

Staff involved in off-site programming should devote time to attending community meetings/public forums to gather better insight into what the community desires are and where the garden might be able to help. (Community.1.d).

Use the strategic planning process and meetings with your board and leadership staff to create policy and guidelines for potential collaborations and to help guide personnel responsible for community-based programming (Community.1.d).

There are many conferences and workshops dedicated to sustainable community development all over the country, and sending a staff member to participate and report back is an alternative way of gaining insightful information (Community.1.d).

Community Goal 2: Contribute to the environmental, social, and economic health of the city/town/municipality that the garden resides in.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Outcomes
a. Garden off-site projects/programs are planned for long-term continuity. b. Garden has job training components built into programs/projects off-site.	a. Garden has other partners that financially support and help lead and sustain off-site projects/programs long-term or trains community members to sustain off-site long-term programs/projects and develops community leader volunteers to pass knowledge, skills, and training onto others. b. Garden provides applicable job training to community members for career development, job training counts for certification or continued education units for participants.

Suggested Strategies

Identify community programs/projects, past and on-going, that are in close proximity to your garden. Equally important, consider programs/projects in more distant communities. Accessibility should be a main consideration, especially for those that cannot be involved due to financial constraints and distance. Think about how your garden could engage those community members and fulfill a need that is relevant to them. This process can start by contacting clubs, faith-based organizations, environmental organizations, or other external organizations to see if you can host a workshop or event within that community to determine the level of interest (Community.2.a).

Utilize program pilots to build momentum and provide flexibility to adjust programs in response to lessons learned. If a particular approach does not seem to be working and is not garnering the support that was expected, either by the number of participants or people expressing anecdotally less-than- positive feelings about it, move away from it and move on to another approach. Avoid rigidly adhering to a program that does not seem to be the appropriate one for community members you are trying to engage (Community.2.a).

Community Goal 2: Contribute to the environmental, social, and economic health of the city/town/municipality that the garden resides in.

Suggested Strategies Continued

Track and evaluate distance from garden to project sites. Be sure to also evaluate and monitor site facilities, land leased, and other important factors to ensure safety and quality control (Community.2.a).

Establish metrics/scorecard for programs in order to compare over the course of time how a program is impacting participant's attitudes, practices, and overall lifestyle (Community.2.a).

Perform a mid-course evaluation of a community outreach program. If a program is not working as had been intended, do not be afraid to report the issues for fear of losing funding. Go back to that funding agency, indicate what the situation is, and see if there is a mid-course correction that can be made (Community.2.b).

Revise survey questions and other methodologies to evaluate participants in long-standing programs outside garden walls (e.g., age, education level, interest in horticulture, environmental concerns, etc.). Be sure to also interview program/project participants to collect qualitative information on what needs to change or what requires more staff time or financial resources (Community.2.a).

Through surveying and gathering feedback from program staff, determine future goals that can address a community need and ways to measure success. Organize information and data you ascertained to formulate metrics, indicators, and relevant SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) (Community.2.a).

Ensure there are regular meetings and consistent communication between external partners, volunteers, and staff that are involved in community-based projects to ensure missions are aligned and leadership roles are clearly defined, especially if the project/program continues to expand into new areas and involves more stakeholders. This should include an update on program/project status and estimated date of completion (if applicable) and post-evaluation criteria (Community.2.b).
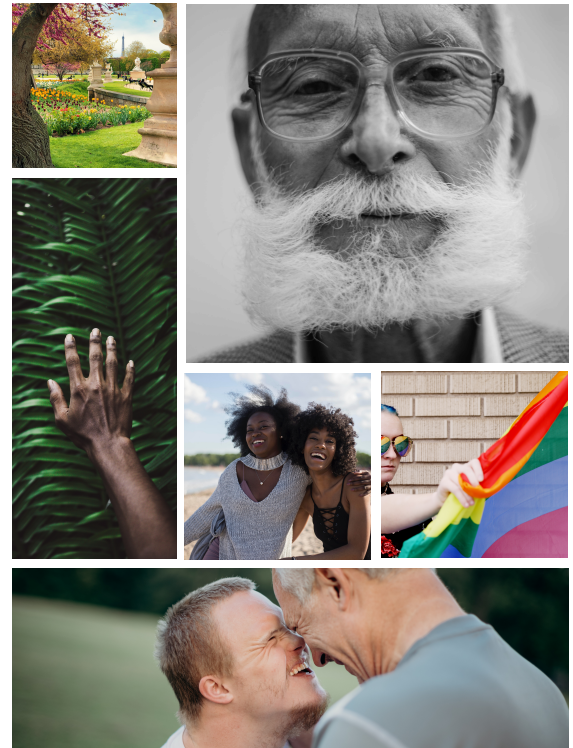
Community Goal 3: Develop educational programming and community outreach projects/programs in direct response to identified community needs

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

a. Garden educational programming and community outreach projects/programs fulfill identified community needs relevant to mission.

Outcomes

a. Garden focuses on providing programs that are mission-relevant and fulfill community needs, this could include sustainable agriculture to address food deserts, water-wise gardening, waste management, mental/physical health, job disparities, green space/recreation, protection of cultural/natural heritage, native plants, or people with disabilities.

Suggested Strategies

Do not brand any of your community projects as distinctly "YOUR GARDEN'S" project. Every project should be understood as part of a larger collaborative leadership model and effort. Community-based projects outside garden walls are a collective of like-minded organizations and individuals. This also helps build trust amongst the communities you hope to work with long-term (Community.3.a).

Consider the different kinds of programming that can be offered off-site. Some might focus on providing emerging professionals and youth with career advancement opportunities, others might focus on retired individuals looking for volunteer opportunities, or those that are unemployed and looking for career opportunities (Community.3.a).
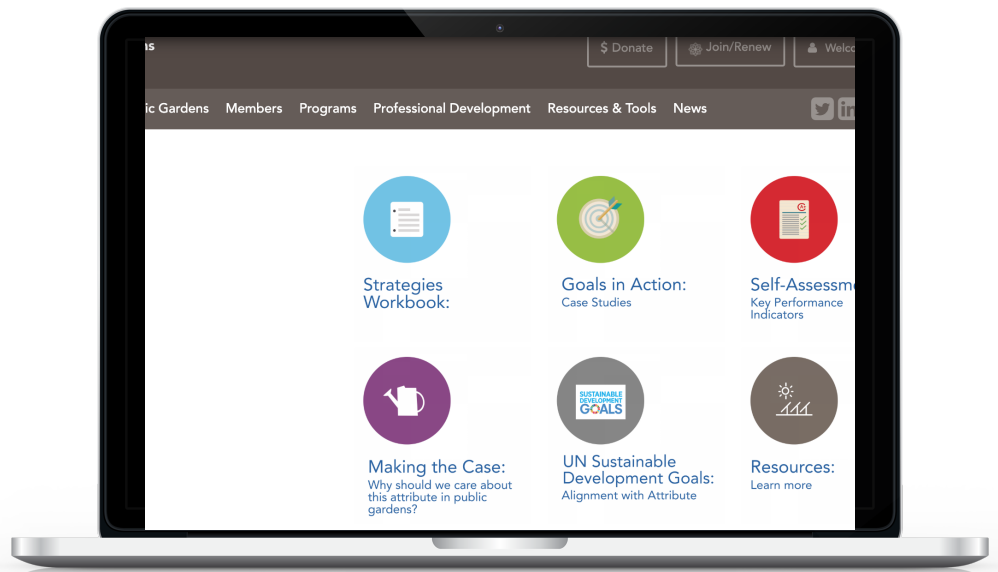
Strategy In Action

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens Growing to Green program started in 2000 to promote sustainable community garden development and city beautification. Since then, they have helped establish almost 300 gardens in the Columbus area and have expanded to include the central Ohio area. The program offers a free 8-week training program for community garden leaders, publishes the "Columbus Community Garden Resource Guide", and partners with the city's Get Green Columbus program to pair trained community garden leaders with no workable land to vacant lots throughout the city. Growing to Green has helped build a more sustainable Columbus in many ways. The community gardens created by the program have not only revitalized neighborhoods, but they have also improved food security throughout the city. In just 2010, the community gardens donated over 15,000 pounds of fresh produce to local food banks and soup kitchens. The program also features health and wellness education and works to unite diverse cultures throughout the city.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit the sustainability index attribute pages for more case studies, resources, and a self-assessment!

Go To: https://www.publicgardens.org/sustainability-index/attributes/sustainable-community-development