

Emails regarding the Food Forest at Leslie Park

October 8th, 2021

Hi Parks Commissioners and Staff,

My name is Beth Collins and I am on the Elizabeth Dean Fund Committee. The Dean Fund recently worked with the Community Food Forest and Scott to help pay for some fruit trees that have been planted in Leslie Park as part of the Food Forest. It was a pleasure to work with the residents who are involved with this concept and they were so passionate about the project, it really got us excited about it too. They researched which trees would be more sustainable and deer resistant. They researched the nursery and grower of these trees and have done most of the work to get these plantings in the ground.

I am most certain that Elizabeth Dean would have loved this idea and helped to champion other projects like this. As you all know, the Dean Fund has paid for many park and street trees over the years, but I don't believe that any were to help feed people (attached is the map of the recent trees planted).

I would love for this to be a pilot project to address both climate concerns (I CC'd you, Missy :) and community/food equity concerns. It has already provided so many opportunities for free education and building community relationships/resilience.

Thank you for allowing these plantings to take place and I look forward to seeing this sustainable Food Forest thrive and hopefully happen in other areas around town too.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Collins

Ward 5 resident, EDFC member

October 8th, 2021

Hello, parks advisory committee

I live in Arrowwood, right near the food forest project. It's been really wonderful to be able to take part in work days with friends and neighbors and see a corner of the park come alive in a new way.

My two young kids and I have enjoyed visiting the food forest and picking strawberries, and they love to ask questions about and identify the plants that are growing there.

It's also just been nice to see engagement from the community in a project like this, and to see other neighbors and folks in the park admiring the plantings over the course of the seasons.

I spend a lot of time in Leslie park and this project adds another delightful feature that helps to enliven the park and bring more variety, interest, and interaction to the landscape.

I hope you can fully approve the food forest as an ongoing project, and look for more opportunities to introduce these elements of community activation and landscape diversity to this park and others.

Thanks for all you do!

-Evan Daywell

October 8th, 2021

Dear PAC,

I am Devney Hamilton. I spoke at a PAC meeting last October about the importance of the Community Food Forest to me as a Northside Ward 1 resident and co-owner of a small cooperative business in Ann Arbor. Thank you for the opportunity for us to continue growing the project -- and grown it has!

With the food forest I have:

- made many new friends and strengthened existing friendships (more below!)
- developed more confidence in growing more of my own food at home
- learned more about foods that grow easily in this climate
- seen more wildlife in Leslie Park like snakes and toads
- learned more about permaculture
- helped friends apply permaculture concepts in their own yards with what I've learned!
- improved my own physical & mental health

I know Ann Arbor is struggling with a lot of pressures that continue to increase inequality. I see that many of these pressures are larger than the city itself, like pressure on the housing market and on food prices. 4 years ago we moved to Ann Arbor to be closer to our friends. Now all but one of those friends has moved out of the Ann Arbor proper because of rent increases. Yet the

Food Forest has helped me sustain those friendships and create new ones because it's simply a wonderful place to be. Also, through the pandemic, the Food Forest has been the one place I get to meet and hang out with people of all ages - babies to teens to grandmas. In my 30s, I am losing touch with the virtual/media worlds shaping many teens' realities but we can bond over working outside together & the vision The Community Food Forest gives us for the future and what we want for the next generation and generations to come. The Community Food Forest is a homegrown remedy to the pressures driving inequality and disconnection. It is a joyful and hopeful place to be.

Please approve the Community Food Forest moving forward.

Thank you,

Devney Hamilton

October 17th, 2021

Dear PAC,

I am writing to add a post script that I also want to highlight **youth leadership development** happening as part the Community Food Forest. In particular I have been learning a great deal from Nora Berry who is in high school and and Ile' Karoly who is in college. I have seen them grow in knowledge, skills, and confidence as leaders and educators in the Food Forest project. The workdays have also been times when I see elementary and even preschool age kids get to work collaboratively, share their learnings, own a responsibility, and contribute ideas.

Thank you again for your support and please approve the Community Food Forest moving forward.

Devney Hamilton

Worker-Owner at Sassafras Tech Collective

I use they/them/theirs or she/her/hers pronouns

October 12th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commission:

I am writing to encourage PAC to approve and fully support the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park. My family and I enjoy and benefit so much from this project. We rely on the nourishment and sense of community it provides us.

We live in Arrowwood Hills Cooperative. For years I have noticed what was an unused piece of land in Leslie Park and thought it could be put to better use. I imagined a food forest, a children's garden, or a community meeting space. I wished for fruit trees, food, flowers, and a place for our son to learn and play. I was thrilled and amazed to see it becoming all of those things. Without my mentioning my idea to anyone outside of my family, it became all I dreamed and more.

My seven year old son and I visit the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park at least once a day- it's the first thing he wants to do in the morning- and my husband visits often. Every day we go, we see many others doing the same. We all enjoy pitching in at work parties, harvesting, and just being there.

The Community Food Forest at Leslie Park stands out for how beautifully and thoughtfully it is done and how welcoming, knowledgeable, dedicated, and encouraging everyone creating it is. My family and I have learned more from our time at the Community Food Forest than we have in many years of volunteering at organic farms and a food forest, trying to grow our own gardens, working on building community, and reading many books on it all.

Our city needs the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park and many more like it. I hope PAC approves and fully supports this project, and I feel equity and good conscience require it.

Sincerely,
Tooya Ritchey



Doug Reith
Resource Coordinator
Washtenaw County Conservation District
(734) 302-8713
Doug@WashtenawCD.org

To the Parks Advisory Committee,

The Community Food Forest project at Leslie Park is an inspirational model of community collaboration through growing (food, medicine, and relationships) in a public park space.

I became familiar with the project through my work as Resource Coordinator at the Washtenaw County Conservation District. First they had fundraised to purchase rain barrels from the WCCD for their project and later I got to know the project more while coordinating the 2021 School & Community Habitat Grant (<https://www.washtenawcd.org/schg>).

The Community Food Forest was one of our inaugural grant applicants, led by ShuNahSii and Robin. Our grant evaluation committee ranked them as the top application of seven total applicants. They ranked highly for their educational mission in a public space where they've demonstrated a need and progress, aligning with our grant program to restore native plant habitat in creative ways.

I've found them to be incredibly thoughtful and professional to communicate with. Their commitment and vision have been clear throughout, as they've applied for the application, were selected as one of the grant awardees, and received their award in plant materials through our plant sales. In my visit to the space, it was clear that they are very considerate of the space to be open and accessible to all, as well as making it work for the park's facilities managers.

From my perspective, their dedication goes beyond manifesting the physical garden space, but extends into building meaningful inter-relational connections with their local and extended communities: human, animal, plant and even fungal! Embedded in their project is the intention to provide a space to grow and heal for all the living beings involved. And their demonstrated community support and involvement is a testament to this intention, and promising for the longevity of the project.

I sincerely hope that they can continue to gather the support to develop the space and flourish as an innovative model for public spaces to provide more than just open lawn, but truly facilitate a healthier environment for all.

- Doug Reith 10/12/21

October 14, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Damena Karoly. I live in Arrowwood and my unit backs up to Leslie Park for which I am very grateful. I have always enjoyed the beauty of living in such a location. Since the food forest I enjoy it even more. As I would take walks, which is everyday because I have home daycare, I find the food forest to bring a new sense of interest, especially to the children in my care. We love to run around the paths and experience the smell of the herbs, the lovely flowers and can't wait to see what will happen in the food forest from day to day. I will often take the time to share stories of nature with the children while we visit. The children enjoy being there even more than the playground really. I notice much less tears while in the garden.

I see this project as so many endless possibilities for growth and learning in our community and would hope for continuing support in the future.

Sincerely,

Damena Karoly

October 15, 2021

Hello,

My name is Faith Taylor. I grew up in Ann Arbor and currently live in Detroit. I just recently learned about the Community Food Forest and was immediately enthralled. What a beautiful project and space for the community. Our planet needs as much help as it can get and the need for ecological regeneration is pressing! I believe the Community Food Forest can be a space where people can experience the beauty and learn about the importance of such work. I work with adults experiencing homelessness and mental illness in Detroit and am constantly assaulted by the lack of resources available to our underserved and underrepresented communities. By creating a space where food is available for everyone, brings people together in a way our society needs and acknowledges the necessity of food justice. I ask the Parks Advisory Commission to approve the Community Food Forest going forward.

Thank you,

Faith Taylor

October 16th, 2021

Hello,

My name is Caitie Shaughnessy and I am a resident of Ann Arbor and have been living here for 13 years. Having access to beautiful, fresh produce is a blessing that I do not take for granted. I see the members of the Community Food Forest Coalition working to increase accessibility to beautiful food, building community, caring for the earth and each other. This project is new and gaining momentum. It has already improved the well-being of everyone involved immeasurable. Please do everything you can to help uplift and support these community members in their meaningful project and approve the Community Food Forest as it grows into the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Warmly,

Caitie Shaughnessy

October 16th, 2021

Hello,

My name is Steven Parrish and I am a life-long resident of Ann Arbor. Having access to beautiful, fresh produce is a blessing that I do not take for granted. I see the members of the Community Food Forest Coalition working to increase accessibility to beautiful food, building community, caring for the earth

and each other. This project is new and gaining momentum. It has already improved the well-being of everyone involved immeasurably. Please do everything you can to help uplift and support these community members in their meaningful project and approve the Community Food Forest as it grows into the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Warmly,

Steven Parrish

In Support of Community Food Forest

Rosalie Denenfeld
Scio Township

I write in support of the Community Food Forest. I am the Elder in a national support group that has studied for ten years under the founder of the Ann Arbor Community Food Forest. I hope you will approve this project for another year and many years to come. I truly believe that with each passing year there will be increasing need of the bounty for residents and the biological regeneration of the Earth. The existence of The Community Food Forest is one reason I am proud to be a resident of Ann Arbor.

inspirational
revolutionary
current
reflects positively on Ann Arbor
model and teaching for A.A. + other cities

Yes

we all need food to survive- we all need healthy food to thrive
we all need to feel that we are connected to something bigger than
ourselves
project of voluntary cooperation and investment
inclusive-
welcome all genders, able bodied or differently able,
all ages, races, political affiliations
public generosity/ sweat equity/ LOVE

No

embarrassment
shame
long lines
forms
bureaucracy in supply chain
separations along class and income

Thank you for your consideration of this important project.

October 16th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

I currently live in Philadelphia where we have a vibrant urban gardening community throughout the city. I come to Ann Arbor a few times a year to visit family and I have been privileged to witness the development of the Food Forest at Arrowwood.

I've found it particularly meaningful to see local community members band together to cultivate and create this food forest as a space of refuge, cooperative work and a communal source of food. Now, during COVID19, when more families than ever are experiencing job loss and food insecurity, the food forest is vital.

The Food Forest is essential not just because it provides food, but also because it is a testament to how imagination, creativity, and resolve can show us all that there is hope that large-scale problems can be addressed on the local level.

The Food Forest is a creative solution to meet a need and I hope PAC will support this effort and approve the continued presence of the Food Forest over the long-term.

Warmly,

Dr. Pia Deas

Resident of Philadelphia,

Visitor to Ann Arbor, Michigan

October 16, 2021

Dear Commissioners:

I write in full support of the Community Food Forest located in Leslie Park. I have known the founders of the project for many years and am well aware of their commitment to develop healthful local food sources for all and especially for those of limited income. Further, The Community Food Forest will create a group of knowledgeable citizens who can pass on their knowledge of sustainable agriculture to the future and thus locally help prevent the possible collapse of agriculture in this country.

I have visited the Forest and been impressed with the care and diligence with which the land is being cultivated. When I am fully retired next year I look forward to joining the Forest community as a gardener myself.

Sincerely,

Kris Parnicky, MD
415 Sommerset Ct
Ann Arbor 48103-9294

October 17th, 2021

Hello PAC Members,

My name is Sara, I live in Arrowwood Hills across the street from Leslie Park and I am writing to share my absolute praise of the new Community Food Forest!

I have been able to volunteer at the Food Forest several times and it has always been an amazing and educational experience. I am a gardener on my own and I have been able to share some of my knowledge, as well as learn many new techniques and skills.

Outside of work days, I love walking the Food Forest paths to gather herbs, observe beneficial insects and chat with neighbors who are also enjoying the new space.

The community space this offers is invaluable, and feels so important right now with the pandemic and issues of climate change. The project feels hopeful and exciting when so much of the world right now feels discouraging and heartbreakingly.

I hope you will support this project moving forward, it's already been a great addition to the community and will only grow better over time!

Best,

Sara

October 18th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commissioners,

I am writing to thank you for your initial support for the implementation of the Leslie Park Community Food Forest, and to encourage you to continue to endorse the project. The activity at the Food Forest brings individuals and groups together, engaging their involvement with understanding the interactions of natural systems.

The Food Forest implementation embodies community, with group efforts to identify requirements to support the gardens, and group efforts to address the needs identified. I saw the educational benefit of understanding interactions of plants and animals, and excellent support for working together to assure the success of the gardens.

Community is embodied in the generosity of growing plants, the fruits of which are available to anyone. The process of growing and giving is beautify to see, and will assure the ongoing success of the Food Forest.

I ask for your ongoing support of the Community Food Forest effort, and of the community volunteers who are giving their knowledge and time, showing a way that could be implemented in larger scope.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Rita Mitchell
621 Fifth St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

October 18th, 2021

Hi there -

My name is Jill Dimond, and I live in Touchstone cohousing just west of Ann Arbor. The Leslie Park community food forest is a beautiful, and important community space in Ann Arbor. I find it a place where myself and children can learn about plants, while also participating in community and food justice in the city. It models a beautiful way people can co-create a beautiful garden space, while also providing education and access to fresh, seasonal food and medicine.

Please approve the Community Food Forest going forward, it is incredibly important to me and my family.

With thanks,
Jill

October 18th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

I fully support the continued flourishing growth of the Community Food Forest. This effort has already brought local awareness about food issues and proper care of the earth. Another aspect of this education involves public reclamation of common land for this additional community use.

The Food Forest promotes biodiversity and does not deplete the soil with farm chemicals. There is no extraction of monetary value from this land.

I hope all of you as Commission members and as individuals will continue to support this community effort. Thank you.

Kathleen Peabody

2810 Verle Ave

October 18th, 2021

Hello!

My name is Maro Beauchamp (pronouns: they/them/their) and I am a member of the Community Food Forest coalition. I live in the Arrowwood Hills affordable housing cooperative next door to the CFF, working at the site frequently and consistently. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, quarantining, and lockdowns, being involved in this citizen-led project has been an absolute saving grace for me. We've all experienced a very recent example of "global weirding" in the form of 80-degree weather in October. As individuals and as a city, we need to be doing better by the planet and this Food Forest is a fantastic example of moving in a direction that is not only sustainable but regenerative. Before working with the coalition, I knew absolutely nothing about what it meant to grow and tend food (turns out food comes from the earth, not the grocery store). But now I feel a greater sense of confidence in myself because I am learning skills I never thought I could learn or enjoy. Working at the CFF has kept my spirits afloat in this time of isolation and global disease.

Please don't just "approve" the project, SUPPORT the project. Food Forests are putting cities and towns on the map around the globe because of how they are working to address climate change in their

sphere of influence. If [Los Angeles can work with Ron Finley](#), Ann Arbor can work with the Community Food Forest. Let's imagine a world full of gardens, not parking lots.

Thank you and stay warm,

Maro

pronouns: [they/them/their](#)

October 18th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

Please approve the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park and Arrowwood going forward.

Last Saturday I attended an event at the Community Food Forest and it was an absolutely spectacular demonstration of an abundance of community benefits! People of all ages and all walks of life were there together singing, talking, and learning about growing and harvesting food.

It was clearly a part of the solution to resilience and sustainability in the future and we need exponentially more of these programs all over the city.

Thanks for listening!

Anne Bannister

Former Ward 1 Councilmember

612 N. Main Street

Ann Arbor, MI 48104

October 18th, 2021

Dear PAC,

My name is Charmin Archer. I am a 44 year old Black woman who grew up on the west side of Ann Arbor in the 80's. I currently live in Ypsilanti and for the past almost 2 years have been

enrolled in a Bioregional Community Herbalism apprenticeship with Shunahsii Rose. Through the class, I learned about the Food Forest and have enjoyed and benefited from this community space since.

I have made medicine for family and friends using materials from the Food Forest and have built up an herbal apothecary with items either personally sourced from the Food Forest, gifted from community care or collectively made with community members. I have also attended events in the Food Forest and enjoyed connecting with people, the land and learning more about food sovereignty and how to have a right relationship with the environment.

What I find most meaningful about the Community Food Forest is that it is a *public* food forest. When I think about food insecurity as a long standing social issue, the way food insecurity has been exacerbated during the pandemic and the rising food prices, I know the Community Food Forest is a right model for sustainability, self reliance, equity and community care. I also appreciate that the food forest is located in Arrowwood, one of the last affordable housing communities in Ann Arbor.

In these critical times it's inspiring and necessary to see a project like the Community Food Forest. I urge PAC to not only approve the Community Food Forest going further, but to demonstrate that PAC also sees the present and long term impact and value of the Food Forest by increasing overall support and resources.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions and/or seek additional information.

Best,

Charmin Archer

October 18th, 2021

Dear Park Advisory Commission,

I am writing to your group today in **support** of the **Community Food Forest at Leslie Park**.

I have volunteered my time to help work at this wonderful project. I feel this is a great use of our community parks and land use.

I have found my time there to be very educational. It's a fun way to share in the community activities of planting and enjoying the diversity of people and the food offered.

I have just eaten some of the fresh food and great tasting Sun Chokes this past week end, Mmm good!

I would urge your commission to continue to support this local group. Please keep this great idea and project going with my local tax dollars.

Thanks for your time

Michael J Peabody

Verle Ave, Ann Arbor MI

October 18th, 2021

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

I am writing to encourage your approval and continued support of the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park.

I live in Ann Arbor, and regularly visit friends who in Arrowwood Hills Cooperative, by the Community Food Forest. The Food Forest is a wonderful, inspiring project and I am so happy for everyone who is part of it and lives nearby.

I have personally experienced the positive impact a community food forest can have. I myself have been a volunteer in my neighborhood's food forest (the Buhr Park Food Forest here in Ann Arbor) for five years. My entire family has benefited from having this food forest in our neighborhood: my children and I have learned practical skills related to food, plants and the natural world; we've also had the opportunity to watch how, over time, our labor can transform the land and have a positive impact on our community; and we've enjoyed eating and sharing with others the food that the land, and our work, has produced. We've become more deeply connected to our community--our neighbors, our fellow volunteers, and just folks who stop by to ask about what we're up to when we're at work--and that's a direct result of the food forest. The food forest has been a gift to our whole family and to our neighborhood.

The Community Food Forest at Leslie Park is a wonderful project--one that likewise stands to be a gift to many in Ann Arbor--and I strongly encourage the Parks Advisory Commission to approve it going forward.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Mary Ross

October 19th, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

My family and I live within a mile of the Community Food Forest located at Leslie Park, and I am writing today to ask for its continued support.

The Food Forest makes a genuine contribution in several ways to the lives of Ann Arbor residents. It serves as a space in which people can find connections to each other and the environment. Its benefits include many, including the ever important cultivation of children's familiarity, awareness and healthy understanding of how food is grown, the seasonal cycle of food production, and permaculture, all in an inclusive setting which provides access to any who are interested. I also feel that it brings balance to other areas of Leslie Park (the golf course and pickleball courts).

As someone who grew up in Ann Arbor, went to Ann Arbor Public Schools, and eventually U of M, I remember the day in college (!) that I realized that the season drove produce availability at the Farmer's Market. Although currently we see school gardens in many of our schools around town, and Project Grow is thriving, the Community Food Forest at Leslie Park serves to enrich people's lives in a different way through educational, humanistic, and community building opportunities, as well as bring community attention to often overlooked land stewardship. Please continue to support it and to allow the many ambitious goals and concepts which people are working on to come to fruition.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Judy Takasu

October 19th, 2021

To Parks Advisory Commission:

Re: Letter of Support Northside Food Forrest Project

I wish to thank you for your support of this vital community project which enhances and enriches the lives of many of people, families and the greater community living in the Ann Arbor/Northside community.

The Community Food Forrest at Leslie Park embodies the mission of Ann Arbor parks to, "...enrich life by cultivating exceptional experiences.", through stewardship, integrity, community, innovation, beautiful spaces, and a welcoming atmosphere. For me and my family, the Food Forrest is far more than a community garden. It is a living connection to the land we live on. It is a welcoming classroom and place of refuge. It is a meeting place and open air market that recalls the oldest traditions of community. It is, in short, important.

On behalf of the Denomme Family, I would like to thank you for your past support and encourage permanent support going forward.

Regards,

David Denomme
2307 Arrowwood Trail
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

October 19th, 2021

To Parks Advisory Commission:

Re: Letter of Support Northside Food Forrest Project

I wish to thank you for your support of this vital community project which enhances and enriches the lives of many of people, families and the greater community living in the Ann Arbor/Northside community.

Since our founding in 1921 the scouts and leaders of BSA Troop 7 Ann Arbor have provided exceptional experiences and leadership opportunities to hundreds of young men (and now women) ages 11-18. As part of our charter with the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, we are committed to a monthly program of community service. To date in 2021, scouts in our troop have logged 885 work hours on various projects, including the Community Food Forrest.

The Boy Scouts of America are known for their involvement with land stewardship, sustainable environmental practices and practical hands-on learning. The Community Food Forrest at Leslie Park encompasses all these activities. It is truly inspiring to watch scouts engage with the learning available at the food forest. It links their classroom knowledge and outdoor skills directly with important world issues of food stainability, nutrition, and equality.

Additionally, the highly valued Eagle Scout Rank requires each scout to undertake a capstone project that encompasses significant planning, fundraising, and on-site leadership of at-least 40 hours in an activity that benefits their home community. The long-term plans for the food forest would provide ample opportunity for Eagle Scout projects. These projects would translate into 80-120 hours of support and fundraising per project per year.

On behalf of the Scouts and Adult Leadership of BSA Troop 7 Ann Arbor, I would like to thank you for your past support and encourage permanent support going forward.

Regards,
David Denomme

David Denomme | Scoutmaster, Troop 7

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
Michigan Crossroads Council

Great Lakes Division

Dear Park Advisory Committee

I am writing this letter in support of the food forest project at Leslie Park.

I have been an Ann Arbor resident since I moved from India to the US to pursue my graduate studies at the University of Michigan in 2007. I have been part of the food forest project from the beginning and through the many workdays have made new friends, deepened existing bonds, been introduced to, and learned so much about the local plants and their uses in food and medicine. This has deepened my sense of belonging, making me feel less like a foreigner.

Walking through the food forest, I routinely encounter birds looking for insects and worms to snack on, nectaring bees, rabbits nibbling on something from the vegetable beds, and even the odd deer looking for a snack. It's incredible how one-fifth of an acre can change the frequency and quality of my interaction with the fellow inhabitants of the planet. It's even more amazing to watch little kids walk through the food forest with their parents pointing to the toads, bees, caterpillars, mushrooms, flowers, and other sights of the food forest with wonder in their eyes, the kind of wonder a nature documentary on a big screen TV cannot quite conjure. Growing up with this wonder and love for the natural world will ensure they make better choices to protect the environment while considering plants and animals as equal stakeholders. As the journalist and author Richard Louv points out "We cannot protect something we do not love, we cannot love what we do not know, and we cannot know what we do not see. And touch. And hear".

This project shows how the parks can be so much more vibrant without displacing any of the "traditional" activities, leaving space for bike paths, dog walkers, kids' soccer, and everything else.

I urge the committee to support and encourage this project. Let's build something great together. Let this be the first of many food forest projects across the city. Let's not be satisfied by merely copying what other cities across the US might be doing. Ann Arbor has been a pioneer in many respects. Let's harness that pioneering spirit and set an example that others across the country can look up to and emulate.

Warm Regards

Vishnu Nair
