

From: Pamela Stewart

Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 1:24 PM

To: PAC\_Distribution <PAC@a2gov.org>

Cc: Disch, Lisa <LDisch@a2gov.org>

Subject: Comment of concern about the Leslie Park Food Forest

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Dear Members of the Parks Advisory Committee,

I write to send a comment that I had hoped to enter as an eComment at today's PAC meeting regarding the Leslie Park Food Forest. (While the City website says eComments would be accepted up until 4pm, the window seems to be closed.) I will do my best to attend the meeting via Zoom and hope to be able to give my comment then.

I am a resident of Arrowwood Hills and a daily user of Leslie Park. Since spring 2020, I and others have repeatedly contacted Ann Arbor Parks and our city council reps with concerns about this project.

I had not planned on participating in today's meeting. Every time that I and others have raised concerns about this project in the past we have been dismissed and told that the problems we've voiced were irrelevant or unworthy. So I question the utility of sticking my neck out yet again, but I feel that I must try.

I want to add that I am far from alone in opposing this project and its execution. However, no one else sees the point in speaking up: after the City's repeated dismissal, others do not think their concerns will be heard or treated fairly. They have come to believe - as I do - that this project has always been a foregone conclusion, and that there was never any chance for a real public forum. Indeed, the City has been content to allow True Earth to oversee all planning and reporting, and there has been no independent oversight.

I remain troubled by the precedent this project sets for the retroactive approval of the privatization of public park lands. I am even more troubled by the way that this particular project - however worthy its

stated aims - has been managed. True Earth is a private business, linked to a spiritual organization, and so far the food forest has primarily served its private interests. From the initial taking of this land (in violation of City code), to the theft of water from Arrowwood Hills and a continued absence of any real community outreach or engagement, True Earth has turned Leslie Park into a private garden, spiritual space, and teaching space. It is outward-facing in name only.

At last year's PAC meeting, True Earth committed to extensive community outreach. That has not happened. There has been zero outreach within Arrowwood, the community in which this project is located. The food forest and its maintenance disrupts our use of the park--with members' trucks being driven across the park and parked on paths. Contrary to the group's statements last year, the space the food forest occupied was formerly used by many members of our community. I am in Leslie Park multiple times a day: I have never seen anyone engaging with the food forest other than the True Earth group. Their work days were never advertised within Arrowwood. They have never once tried to approach the community that they have alienated. As a result, many Arrowwood residents now feel excluded from the park we used to enjoy as a community, and we have lost faith in the City.

I have no trust that my words today will have any effect, but I hope that the City will see fit to more rigorously oversee the management of this project, to insist upon real community engagement and outreach, and restore a democratic process to our parks. I absolutely see the merit in a community food resource. But I remain very skeptical that that is what this is.

Respectfully,

Pamela Stewart

**From:** Ayshia Abinojar <

**Sent:** Tuesday, October 19, 2021 1:28 PM

**To:** Robin Greenwood <ShuNahSii Rose <PAC\_Distribution <[PAC@a2gov.org](mailto:PAC@a2gov.org)>>

**Subject:** Support Community Food Forest

This message was sent from outside of the City of Ann Arbor. Please do not click links, open attachments, or follow directions unless you recognize the source of this email and know the content is safe.

Dear Parks Advisory Commission,

My name is Ayshia Abinojar and I live in Taylor MI. My connection to the Community Food Forest has been so amazing. I found out about it through another offering True Earth provides to the community and support the Community Food Forest with their lovely visions.

I know and understand that everything that True Earth does is so meaningful and well thought out. I love that it is a permaculture garden and all the space is used so beautifully. Also, I appreciate it's open to the public and people are free to learn, harvest and support the Community Food Forest. My family and I benefit greatly from the Food Forest. I've learned a lot about different plant allies and vegetables. Also how to use them and preserving and sharing seeds. This makes our lives better due to us truly learning about the soil we stand and live on. By building a better relationship with the land we then build a better relationship with ourselves and each other. The goals to address food injustice and sustainability is important because I know that food deserts affect many families in Michigan. Also, if we take care of the land in a