

Running Title: COMMUNITY GARDEN

Exploring Opportunities for a New Community Garden in Santa Fe Springs

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INTRODUCTION

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

There are vast benefits of community gardens, as is proven through countless studies and as is reiterated below. Benefits for youth by introducing them to gardening were shown in a study done that compared three formats of learning about nutrition: a nutrition program with a gardening portion, a nutrition program without a gardening portion, and a control group (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002). Children who participated in a nutrition program with a



Image 1: Image of youth working and learning in a garden (Martin, 2010)

gardening portion were significantly more likely to retain information on nutrition after 6 months (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002). Working hands-on in a garden is more effective for the long term retention of information in youth than learning about nutrition in a classroom alone.

Community gardens are not limited to youth; they can function as an outdoor classroom for any age group for members to come learn about proper nutrition and gain a closer connection with their food. A study was done in Milwaukee that analyzed how the trend of vacant lots being turned to community gardens affected the community as a whole. The results show that people who took part in the community garden ate more fruits and vegetables than the general public and “reported a greater sense of community than non-gardeners” (Olson, 2019, p. 96). Growing

food not only increases access to healthy food, but educates gardeners on proper nutrition, leading to long-term healthier lifestyles (Mehta, Lopresti, & Thomas, 2019). One participant of a community garden shared its effect on their health, stating “I never used vegetables and now I like them because I get them out of the bush” (Mehta, Lopresti, & Thomas, 2019, p. 6). Introduction of a community garden provides the opportunity for more members of the community to get involved and reap the benefits associated with community gardens.

There have been extensive studies done on community gardens and their positive affects for communities that work in the garden (Mehta, Lopresti, & Thomas, 2019) (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002) (Olson, 2019). Studies show that the benefits of community gardens do not stop at the garden fence: the positive effects extend out and benefit the whole surrounding area. Having a community garden in a low income area promotes self-respect, in cases where a formal or informal community garden has been started (Schukoske, 2000). It also helps relieve some of the stress in getting groceries in areas without access to a grocery store nearby, often referred to as ‘food deserts’ (Schukoske, 2000).

Having a community garden can work to connect residents as well. A community garden serves as a platform for people to gather and share connections, fostering friendship, support for one another, and a community of people sharing knowledge (Mehta, Lopresti, & Thomas, 2019). A study done in community gardens in Australia shows the large benefit of community strength that comes from community gardens. When people are in the garden together, they teach each other new things about gardening which builds bonds. People also interact with other members of the community more than if the garden had not been there. One participant described their transformation: “we were an individual at the beginning, but then I think we saw the opportunity for it to become much more, a real truly community focus” (Mehta, Lopresti, & Thomas, 2019,

p. 5). The community garden serves the community socially by bringing together the neighborhood in the shared interest of “beautification, local food production, personal safety, health, and group projects” (Schukoske, 2000).



Image 2: Empty lot in South Africa before a community garden was introduced (Agriscaping, n.d.)



Image 3: The same lot 2 months later (Agriscaping, n.d.)

Community gardens have much to offer in terms of revitalizing communities. In America, an estimated one-fifth of urban land is classified as vacant (Schukoske, 2000). This is likely due to de-industrialization, or lots being irregular in shape, too small for development, or undeveloped (Schukoske, 2000). These vacant lots pose threats to the community that surrounds them, being economically unproductive and often times becoming illegal dump sites that can encourage garbage, cause the emission of hazardous gasses and breed disease (Schukoske, 2000). These effects damage the image of the neighborhood and can contribute to the

deterioration of neighborhoods, low-income neighborhoods in particular (Schukoske, 2000). In a study done on the impact of replacing these vacant lots with community gardens, it was found that the introduction of gardens not only beautified the neighborhood, but prevented trash and dumping accumulation, thereby beautifying the neighborhood by reclaiming and/or preserving

space in urbanized neighborhoods (Schukoske, 2000). The introduction of a community garden has a measurable impact on properties within 1,000 feet of the garden:

“We find that the opening of a community garden has a statistically significant positive impact on residential properties within 1,000 feet of the garden, and that the impact increases over time. We find that gardens have the greatest impact in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Higher quality gardens have the greatest positive impact. Finally, we find that the opening of a garden is associated with other changes in the neighborhood, such as increasing rates of homeownership, and thus may be serving as catalysts for economic redevelopment of the community” (Been & Voicu, 2006).



Image 4: Flourishing community garden (Lyons)

Community gardens are an engaging way to educate all age groups on nutrition and proper eating, as well as providing them a platform to grow their own food and build a healthy

relationship with food. Community gardens can also be looked at as a tool to help members of a community connect through learning together, sharing knowledge, and spending time with people with whom they normally would not interact. On top of all of that, community gardens benefit those who choose not to interact with them by positively affecting the neighborhood around them the longer a community garden exists. Community gardens serve as a multipurpose tool to connect and bring long-term benefits to communities.



Image 5: Communities are brought together in community gardens (Agriscaping, n.d.)

ISSUES SURROUNDING COMMUNITY GARDENS

While community gardens provide opportunities to increase land and social capital, as well as benefiting the health of members of the community garden, there are several issues that tend to surround the functionality of community gardens. Funding for land and materials, ownership of the land, and obtaining materials are all several constant issues community gardens have to deal with on a regular basis.

A considerable amount of the maintenance of a community garden that happens behind the scenes is securing funding. Community gardens can form under current organizations within the city, as nonprofit organizations, as unincorporated associations, or as independent

organizations. All of these entities must comply with local law and the requirements for the organization which can constrict the freedom of expression in a community garden (Schukoske, 2000). The main sources of funding for community gardens are grants and support from donors who can write off the donation as tax exempt when the garden meets the requirements (Schukoske, 2000). In order to receive a significant amount of federal grants and be able to provide donors with the paperwork to write off donations, community gardens must be listed as 501(C)(3) (Schukoske, 2000). However, “community garden organizations that have less than \$5,000 in annual gross receipts and meet the requirements of 501(C)(3) qualify for an automatic exemption, and need not file for recognition” (Schukoske, 2000, p. 363).

A common issue among community gardens often surrounds the ownership of the land. If the city owns the land, it maintains control over it if it ever decides to change the use of the lot to something other than the garden (Schukoske, 2000). Privately owned land can be developed by gardening groups if vacant and unused, but gardeners can face trespassing laws in addition to facing difficulties in acquiring water supply and insurance when land is not obtained legally (Schukoske, 2000). Adverse possession—‘squatters rights’ as it is more commonly known—can lead to ownership of land, but the group occupying the land must meet certain requirements, such as length of time on property and showing signs of improvement, in order to gain ownership. Another way the land can be obtained is through a tenancy, which allows the owner of land to lease the rights to a parcel of land for a certain number of years; however, this endangers the long-term possibility of the garden as the owner can end the relationship after the lease expires (Schukoske, 2000). For gardens that have been around a while, the prospect of buying the land is ideal in order to be in control of the future of the land; however this is not as feasible for more recently established gardens or ones that do not have significant savings or

donor support (Schukoske, 2000). One way to acquire land is to obtain it through a donation or purchase, but purchasing the land can be very difficult when community gardens do not make much profit.

Renting land to community gardens benefits the community greatly, but land owners can be hesitant to lend out their land to this use. If property owners want to maintain the lot to develop it in the future, trying to get rid of a community garden on their lot could create pushback in the future (Hurtado, 2018). Land ownership and domain issues exist on private and publicly owned lots. Once land has been converted into a garden, it is often still zoned in accordance with the surrounding land use, causing the land to continue to be seen as vacant and therefore still developable (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The idea of a community garden is appealing to most, but the monetary value of a community garden is a weak competitor to the possibility of larger development projects (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). When taking into account ownership, it is rarely considered how much the volunteers transform the site to make it presentable and useful (site clearance, building garden beds, plots, and paths, soil clearing, ongoing maintenance) (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). Unfortunately, this maintenance is often disregarded when considering ownership of land (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). One way to induce land donation for community gardens is to foster communication between local agencies and land owners to create a deal that is beneficial for both, such as inducing a tax write-off for donating land, or donating land as a mitigation measure for another project.

Aside from land ownership, assistance is often needed to obtain water and electricity, as well as day to day necessities like tools, seeds, hoses, and soil. These tools can be donated to the

organization, but it is unwise to rely on donations for essential tools to gardening. Expenditure for community gardens will need to include insurance to be able to cover any injuries and accidents that occur at the garden or from using any of the equipment owned by the garden. Funding for gardens can often be found through state revenues, grants, donors, and other methods. Once the garden is established, plants can be raised to be sold in markets to benefit the garden.

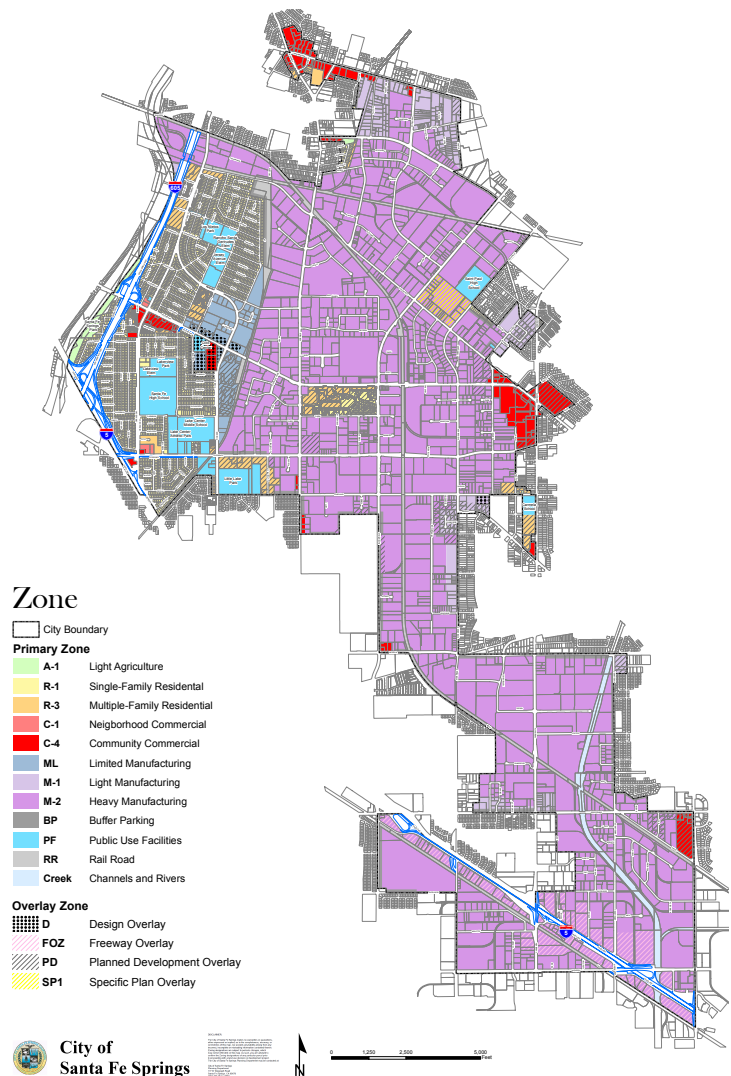
EXISTING CONDITIONS

Currently, the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act (UAIZ) is the prominent act in Los Angeles county to promote urban agriculture. UAIZ works to incentivize the conversion to urban agriculture in urban areas by giving a tax break when land is converted for a minimum of five years (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 2009). This bill was passed on September 12, 2015 and amended to include redevelopment areas on April 12, 2016 (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 2009). To apply for this act, incorporated cities must adopt a resolution or ordinance accepting the UAIZ and enter the program (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 2009). If the city has accepted UAIZ, then the contact for the city will review an urban agriculture application and send it to the county for processing and verification. (Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, 2009).

Santa Fe Springs is a city filled largely with industrial zoned land, shown in the zoning map to the right, represented as Limited Manufacturing (LM), Light Manufacturing (M-1), and Heavy Manufacturing (M-2); all are shown in shades of purple. The General Plan has expressed its goal to move towards less industrial uses, and convert some existing industrial land uses to housing and open space in an effort to accommodate population growth.

There is currently a community garden in Santa Fe Springs. It is located centrally in Santa Fe Springs at 10145 Pioneer Boulevard, and is doing very

well. A phone interview with the community garden director on October 9, 2019 confirmed that all lots were full, and the wait to get a plot was 11 months to over a year long¹. The demand on the existing community garden is proof that people in Santa Fe Springs are interested in this project, and that the new community garden will do well. Santa Fe Springs Community Garden contains over 128 plots on a lot size of roughly 72,000 square feet, or 1.7 acres.



¹ There was an attempt to contact the coordinator of Santa Fe Springs Community Garden more recently, but with the switch to at-home working the message was likely lost and there has been no contact reaching back to me.

A new community garden would work to meet the demand on the existing community garden, as well as engaging groups that have not had the chance to participate in the existing community garden. While the new garden would work to contain overflow of the existing garden, it could also attempt to host classes and events to engage the community in programs. This would help teach residents of Santa Fe Springs about proper nutrition with an organized structure, as well as providing the opportunity for residents to work on their own.



Figure # 1: Santa Fe Springs Community Garden *Invalid source specified.*

CASE STUDIES

EL JARDÍN DE LA COMUNIDAD DE LA PLAYA, SANTA CRUZ, CA

El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa, or the Beach Flats Community Garden, is a garden that lies in Santa Cruz California in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood. The garden was cultivated by immigrants from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador “who have brought agroecological



Image 7: Sign welcoming community members to the Beach Flats Community Garden (beachflatsgarden, On this day of climate action,..., 2019)

knowledge and practices, rare seed varieties, and a generosity in the form of free food distribution to their community” (Glowa, 2016, p. 1). The garden is unique to the area and personalized by the residents to include heirloom seeds and farming methods and traditions from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador. (Hyman, 2019). The garden was created when members of the low income community found the plot, neglected by the property owners and the city. The site was contaminated with trash and had been used as a dumping ground, so a group of neighborhood and garden activist volunteers came together to clean the site and prepare it for growth (Glowa, 2016). The garden is special and customized to its Latinx community, growing traditional crops and continuing the way of life they grew up with (Glowa, 2016). There were

many raids by immigration enforcement agencies in the 1980s, and when Santa Cruz declared itself a sanctuary in 1985, the community felt safe and at home (Glowa, 2016).

El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa is one of the three open spaces in the neighborhood, alongside a small park and a community playground (York, 2018). The community garden contributes to this sense of place and the community members feel strongly connected to their garden.

El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa faced a major obstacle when the landowner, Seaside Company—owner and operator of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, various hotels, and the Cocoanut Grove-- set out to end the lease agreement in 2015 (York, 2018). With the threat of losing their garden, community members rallied by starting petitions to extend their lease and raised money in order to buy new garden lands (York, 2018). They also attended community meetings and gained support of residents in surrounding neighborhoods (York, 2018). The neighborhood campaign worked. In 2016, Seaside Company extended the lease for three years but took over a

small portion of the garden to cultivate their own plants (York, 2018). After the compromise a spokesperson from Seaside made the following statement:



Image 8: Signs calling community to come protest Seaside Company taking the land back (beachflatsgarden, PUBLIC HEARING..., 2015)

‘From our perspective, the shared use of the space has worked out great...[t]he garden is beautiful and the gardeners seem happy and they’re getting to garden and we’re getting to use some of the space for our needs, as well. So, it seems like a great and successful public-private partnership at this point.’ (York, 2018, p. 8).

Through strong drive by the community and the successful efforts of the organizers and the city alike, the garden stands strong today and continues to be a pillar of the community.



Image 9: Don Emilio Martinez Castañeda, a member of the garden since 1994, standing in the garden (Lyons)

Providing a space to grow foods for communities, especially in immigrant communities and communities of color, is more than a tool to get fresh produce. It allows communities to grow food from their own nationality and create a sense of place in their new home. It gives them a connection to their culture and provides a platform for them to pass it down to future generations.

SOUTH CENTRAL FARM, LOS ANGELES, CA



Image 10: The South Central Farms group, the South Central Farmers, logo (admin, 2010)

In the 1980s, a large plot of land in downtown Los Angeles was acquired through eminent domain by the City of Los Angeles to build a trash incinerator plant. The plans for the plant were rejected because of the environmental impact it would have on the surrounding, predominantly minority community (Lawson, *The South Central*

Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public, 2007). Ownership of the land was shifted to another public agency that would also need to find a public purpose for the land, but the plot would lay empty for several years until the South Central Farm was established in 1993 (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The South Central Farm was the largest urban farm in the United States, at an astounding 14 acres serving over 350 households with garden space (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The garden was created by the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank as a way to help reconcile the community after the Rodney King uprising, and helped the food bank's mission of providing food access and higher nutrition to low-income households (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The garden benefitted from the US Department of Agriculture's Urban Resource Program Grant which funds innovative forms of agriculture in urban settings. People were timid to get involved with the garden initially, but interest picked up and within months all 350 plots had been assigned to members of the community (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). "Most participants were from

Mexico, El Salvador, and other Central American countries along with some Caribbean and African American participants” (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007, p. 612).



Image 11: Photo showing size and success of South Central Farm (Reyes, 2019)

Like El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa, the South Central Farm became a staple and a safe place for marginalized communities, and gave them space to grow crops native to their culture.

Even though the land was clearly a public resource, it was never officially designated as a ‘public good’ which was the title necessary to satisfy the requirements for a parcel of land acquired through eminent domain (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The original land owner challenged the use of the land as a community garden. He argued that the land was not for the general public, as there were not enough plots to serve anyone who walked through the garden gates (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). This allowed the original owner of the land successfully to sue the City which had originally acquired it, and buy back the land at the original price the City paid of \$5 million and evict the South Central Farm (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). The gardeners fought this action because the negotiations between the original owner of the land and the City were private, which prevented farmers from having their voice heard (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007).



Image 12: A group of protesters fighting new development of South Central Garden (Ngo, 2018)

The members of the community organized themselves into the South Central Farmers Feeding Families and launched letter-writing campaigns, marches, and protests, spoke out at city council meetings, and eventually occupied the site to show their love and connection to the site

and raise awareness (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). Celebrities like Joan Baez and Daryl Hannah got involved and even arrested at the site occupation, and the city worked with the Trust for Public Land and other foundations to raise money to purchase the land. Ultimately, the owner of the land had been so badly scorned by the protests led by the gardeners that he refused to sell the land back to them (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007). On June 13, 2006, the sheriff's department enforced the eviction and the garden was bulldozed (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007).

Like many other community gardens, the South Central Farm “was conceived opportunistically and without long-term planning and then had to struggle to justify its role as a permanent public resource” (Lawson, *The South Central Farm: dilemmas in practicing the public*, 2007, p. 614). South Central Farm faced the issue that many community gardens face: the issue of landownership. Landowners have the final say, so it is essential to have the landowner's consent confirmed and written into a contract. Ownership of the land is the ideal situation, but

considering community gardens produce low profit margins if any it isn't always viable to buy the land. Long-term contracts are the best way to ensure community gardens are able to thrive into the future.

RESEARCH

BACKGROUND ON C.E.Q.A.

CEQA is the California Environmental Quality Act, a process that evaluates the environmental impact of discretionary projects in California to identify harmful impacts and mitigate said impacts. CEQA was signed into effect in 1970 by the California Governor at the time, Ronald Reagan, and has been carried out by local and regional government agencies (Rosenberg, 2012). CEQA requires that an Initial Study (IS) be done before the more extensive Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The two documents cover the same categories for evaluation, but the EIR goes in depth on each topic, while the IS is used as a tool for quickly evaluating the project to avoid going through an EIR for a minor project. An EIR can sometimes take years, while the IS provides a less time-consuming route for projects that will not have a large environmental impact. Ministerial projects, projects that follow the guidelines set out by cities and are in accordance with local and state zoning, are not subject to CEQA. Appendix G of CEQA requires evaluation of projects based on the following categories:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/ Soils
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/ Water Quality

- Land Use/ Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population/ Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/ Traffic
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities/ Service Systems

The CEQA process does not automatically approve or forbid a project; CEQA acts as a tool to detail all environmental and further impacts so that governmental agencies can holistically review projects and make informed decisions. The CEQA Initial Study is being used for this project to help show feasibility of each site and how it would function as a community garden. It also helps to point out the most common areas of issue with a proposed project and would bring to light any issues with the sites that could prevent the execution of the project later on.

In order to address Cultural Resources, Mineral Resources and Tribal Cultural Resources sections, access to confidential county data is needed, as the material these sections are referencing are sensitive so the public does not have access to it. In light of this, those sections are omitted in this report. In the following site analyses, the CEQA checklist is gone over briefly, and any sections without in-depth analysis will have a brief summary of why the impact is considered less than significant. For the sake of brevity and an emphasis on analysis rather than reporting, this report contains one Initial Study Checklist for all four of the proposed sites.

MASTER INITIAL STUDY:

Much of the Initial Study relies on the type of project. Thus, if an Initial Study were done for each of the four sites, it would be highly repetitive. To streamline the process and guide the city in this decision-making process, one Initial Study will be created for all four sites, allowing this report to dive deeper into a comparison of the sites and the opportunities and constraints of each site. When a site differs from the Master Initial Study, a note will be included notifying the reader that a difference exists, and details of how the site differs from the Master Initial Study will be detailed under the site description.

Aesthetics: Depending on the location of the community garden in the site, removal of trees or rock outcroppings may be required. However, the addition of the community garden would make up for any aesthetic resources lost. Overall, the addition of a community garden would positively affect the aesthetics of its surrounding neighborhood.

Project sites that vary: 12211 Greenstone Avenue

Agricultural and Forestry Resources: There are no agricultural or forestry resources in Santa Fe Springs, so there would be *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: none

Air Quality: The introduction of a community garden would not create or expose the population to any hazardous pollutants, so there would be *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: none

Biological Resources: The proposed site has been previously developed and the only potential for the support of wildlife would be for urban species. A sweep of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's GIS services shows that no biological significant resources or

sensitive lands are found on the site. The city may request additional information in a Biological Resource Report from a certified biologist, but we see *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: none

Geology/ Soils: To complete the geology section, a Los Angeles County GIS webpage mapping all soil types in Los Angeles County was used. The map gave a number which correlated to a soil type in Appendix C. Refer to individual sections to find soil type as well as any additional information.

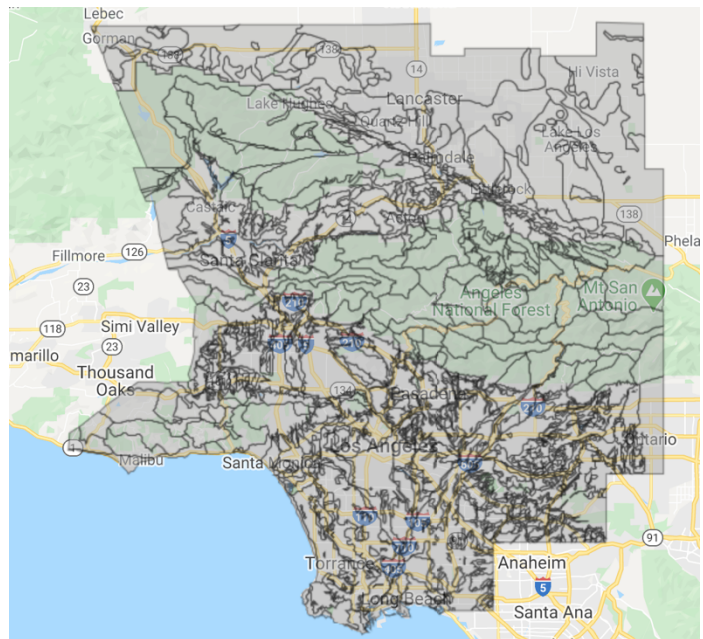


Image 13: A map showing all soil types in Los Angeles County, found at <https://data.lacounty.gov/Shape-Files/LA-County-Soil-Types/sz94-meiu>

Greenhouse Gas Emissions:

Greenhouse gas emission are expected to be produced by the daily use of this project through transportation to and from the site, and some are expected to occur during the construction of the site. However, this level of emissions are considered negligible, so there is *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: none

Hazards and Hazardous Materials: There are no hazardous materials created by the proposed project. The future use of any fertilizers or soil supplements must be approved by the city to ensure the public will not be exposed to hazardous materials. The proposed site will not be on any previously or currently listed hazardous materials sites. It has been determined that there is *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: 12211 Greenstone Avenue

Hydrology/ Water Quality: The project will need to connect to a municipal water source in order to water the garden beds and plants in the community garden. In order to ensure responsible water usage, drought tolerant crops and smart irrigation will be used. The daily functions of a community garden would not severely deplete water supplies and all runoff created by one portion of the site would be absorbed back into the site as the majority of it will be permeable.

Project sites that vary: none

Land Use/ Planning: A community garden would add to the connectedness and sense of place of a community. The project would take place on a site that is not currently being used, so no community would be uprooted or displaced in order to complete this project.

Project sites that vary: 12211 Greenstone Avenue

Noise: After completion of the construction period, it is not predicted that any high noise-producing activities will take place. If the members of the garden want any work done with heavy equipment, they will need to get a permit. If the garden hosts sales or other events, a permit will be needed as well. Outside of these occasions, no noise exceeding the noise element's maximum limit is expected to come of the project. Refer to each site for specifics on noise level emissions per zone.

Project sites that vary: 12211 Greenstone Avenue

Population/ Housing: The inclusion of a community garden would make the neighborhood more attractive to live in. However, beautification of a neighborhood is not a strong enough force to cause stress on the existing housing surrounding the project. No housing would be destroyed or created by this project, so there is *less than significant impact*.

Project sites that vary: none

Public Services: The project would not cause a significant stress on the current fire protection, police protection, schools, parks, or other public facilities. The increase of activity on the project site would be limited to day-time hours and would not include large crowds of people needing protection above the current levels. The garden members will be members of the community who already pay fees into these service systems. There will be *less than significant impact* on public services offered.

Project sites that vary: Los Nietos Park, Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center

Recreation: The introduction of a community garden would not increase the use of any park, and would likely absorb some foot traffic from the other parks in the area, taking the stress off of other parks in Santa Fe Springs. The project requires the construction of recreational facilities

such as a storage shed, garden beds, composting facilities, etc., and underground work such as an irrigation system, gopher wire, and plants roots that go deep into the earth. The new facilities required by the community garden will be paid for by funds raised for the community garden and will have no adverse effect on the environment.

Project sites that vary: Los Nietos Park

Transportation/ Traffic: The introduction of a community garden

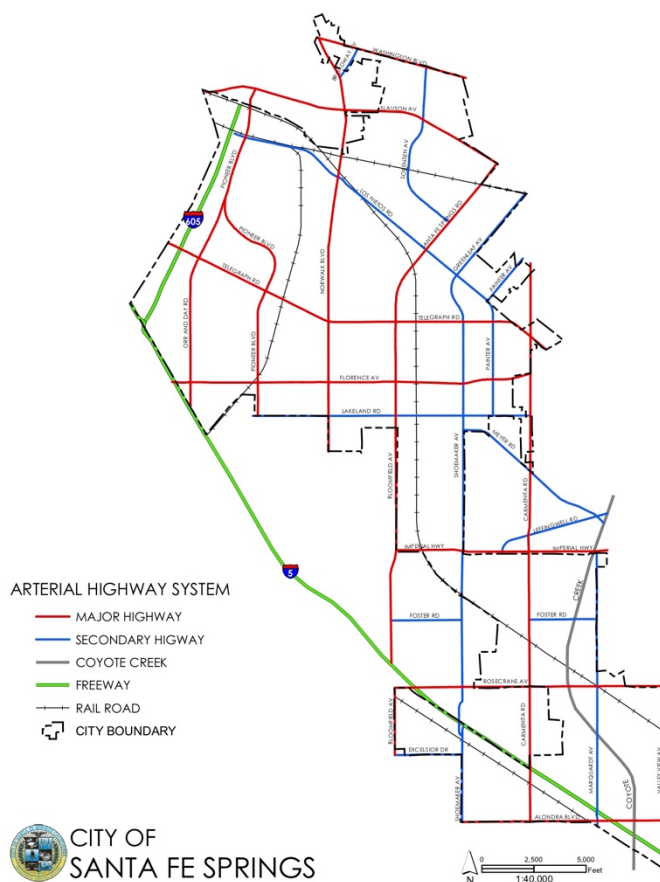


Image 14: Map of Santa Fe Springs showing major roadways

would not in any way alter the existing roads, or create such traffic to and from the site that it alters the existing traffic conditions surrounding the site or any applicable plans. The traffic component brought to the site would be consistent or less than the traffic standards for the current zoning of the land, so impact if *less than significant*.

Project sites that vary: none

Utilities/ Service Systems: Many community gardens do not produce any wastewater, as they find new uses for it such as watering the plants or watering the pathways to prevent dust, so approval by the Regional Water Quality Control Board is not needed. The project may require the construction of new water facilities or the expansion of existing facilities, but the construction shall be done in such a way that it has minimal environmental impact and abides by all relevant construction standards. The project would not require any stormwater management facilities. The predominant source of waste from this site would be green waste, and the site will have composting facilities to deal with a large amount of this. A small amount of green waste, trash, and recycling will be produced by the site, and for this, a letter of compliance is needed from the landfill.

Project sites that vary: none

LOS NIETOS PARK

Los Nietos Park lies in a residential neighborhood in the Northeast neighborhood of Santa Fe Springs on a lot zoned for Public Use Facilities. The park is on a square block of approximately 424,000 square feet, or 9.7 acres. It is bordered by Miller Grove Drive to the west, Charlesworth Road to the south, Ranch Santa Gertrudes Elementary School to the east, and Broaded Street to the north. Currently, roughly half of the park is fenced in and used as a baseball field, as well as additional space being occupied by two basketball courts, a bocce ball court, a playground, and several picnic tables and park benches. A large activity center is also located on the site bordered by Charlesworth Road to the south and Ranch Santa Gertrudes Elementary School,. Excluding the above uses from the potential community garden project site, there is approximately 55,850 square feet, or 1.26 acres.

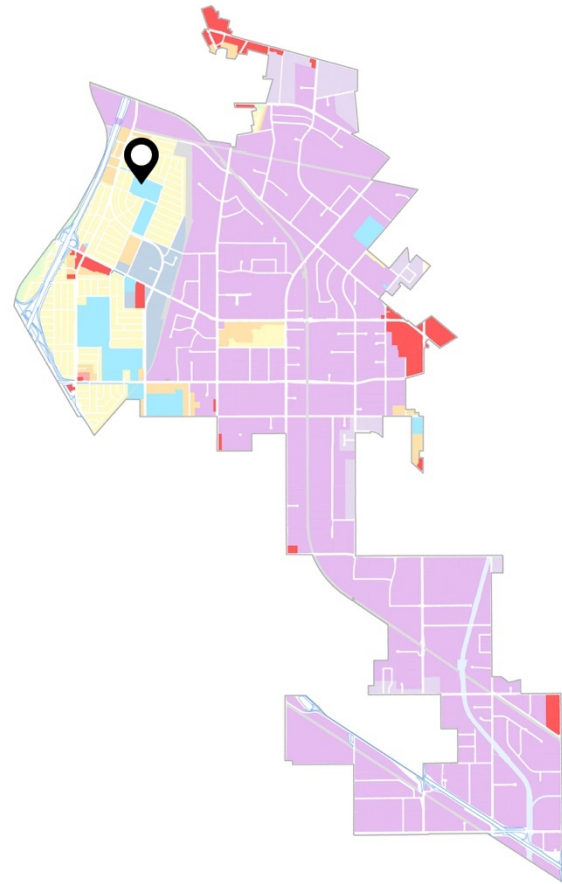


Image 15: The black marker indicates where Los Nietos Park lies in Santa Fe Springs

Placing a community garden in this existing park would work well with the existing uses; providing a community garden would attract adults to the site while the activity center and elementary school attract a younger population. There is also already a parking lot with 40 marked spaces in addition to ample street parking, as well as a pedestrian path connecting the surrounding neighborhood. The park is established and welcoming, and already receiving heavy



Image 16: Los Nietos Park outlined to show existing uses and space to develop. Map is oriented to the cardinal points

foot traffic because of its proximity to the activity center and elementary school. The addition of a community garden in this public space would complement the existing uses.

The proximity of the elementary school to the community garden offers a unique opportunity for young children to engage in gardening and nutrition programs. Five years old is an impressionable age, and it has been

shown that teaching children about nutrition with a hands-on program has lasting effects on their knowledge of proper nutrition.

One constraint at this location is the size of the community garden. The park is fairly developed and lacks any major open spaces. Several singular park benches and tables could be removed to create space, or the community park could be placed behind the elementary school, with permission of the school board. If the park were to be placed behind the school, issues could arise with ownership, as is seen in both of the case studies. This situation is different, as the landowners are public entities, not private, so the likelihood of being uprooted for new development is not as extreme. However, displacement is still a possibility and should not be ignored.

Compliance with Master Initial Study:

Geology/ Soils: The entire park lies on Hanford Fine Sandy Loam soil which is suited for this type of development (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, 2018). The development of the garden would alter the soil. In order to know the full extent of the impact, a Geological Survey Report by a certified geologist is recommended. There are *potentially significant impacts*, and the site should be examined more thoroughly.

Noise: The maximum noise level permitted for Los Nietos Park is 65 dB, as stated in the noise element. Any noise emissions up to 75 dB will require a detailed analysis of the noise emitted by the site, and any noise emissions over 75 dB are not permitted.

Public Services: The addition of a community garden in Los Nietos Park could cause an increase in the use of the park. The main factors are how large and how many beds the final site plan has, and how many people are visiting the site daily. If there are 25 or less people using the site daily, there will be a negligible amount of increased use on public facilities, so there would be *less than significant impact*. If there are more than 25 people using the garden daily, additional studies are needed to study the impact of the community garden users on the park as a whole and there will be *potentially significant impacts*.

Recreation: The park surrounding the community garden may experience increased usage as a result of the introduction of the project. If there are 25 or less people using the site daily, there will be a negligible amount of increased use on public facilities, so there would be *less than significant impact*. If there are more than 25 people using the garden daily, additional studies are needed to realize the impact of the community garden users on the park as a whole.

12211 GREENSTONE AVENUE

12211 Greenstone Avenue lies in the industrial section of Santa Fe Springs on a lot zoned for Heavy Manufacturing. It is bordered by Production Transport—industrial use—to the north, Greenstone avenue to the east, Robertson’s Ready Mix—industrial use—to the south, and railroad tracks to the west. The lot stands at approximately 202,540 square feet, or 4.64 acres. Currently, the lot is completely vacant.

Building on a vacant lot provides the unique opportunity to start from scratch and build out to include whatever specifics the community wants; most community gardens are not given this opportunity. Community gardens are a way of

uniting the community and this lot provides ample space to include many people from across the community. It also has room for groups such as girl and boy scouts, or youth groups, to tend to a plot. Building the community garden from the ground up will bond people to the garden and to one another. This also allows the community to include low income members by allowing them to trade labor in building the garden for a garden plot once the project is complete. Like El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa, the building of a garden in a vacant lot will foster relationships in the community and bring them closer together. It will also provide a place for Santa Fe Spring’s unique demographic to grow specialized crops.

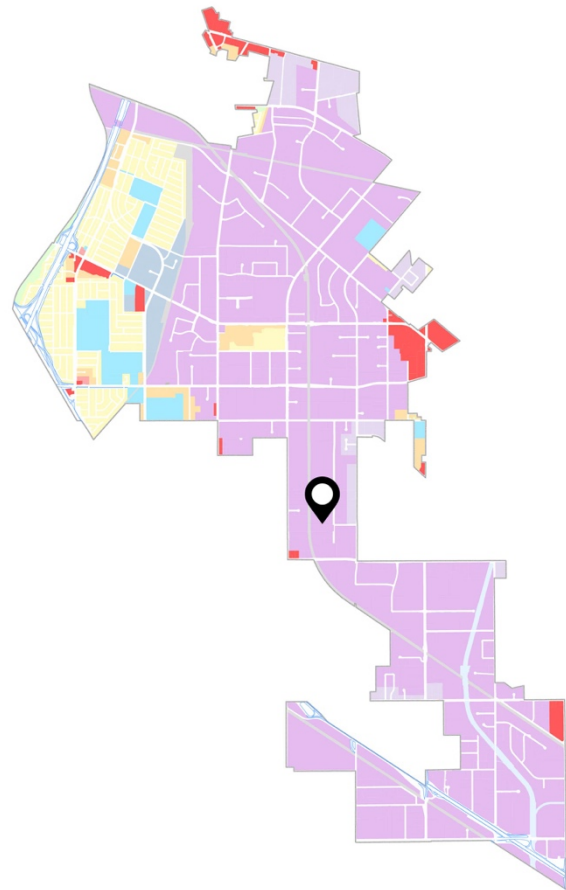


Image 17: The black marker indicates where 12211 Greenstone Avenue lies in Santa Fe Springs



Image 18: 12211 Greenstone Avenue outlined to show existing uses and space to develop. Map is oriented to the cardinal points

With this unique opportunity does come several logistical issues. The lot is vacant, which means there may be no plumbing, which can be very expensive to install. There is no parking on the site and the surrounding street parking is not ample enough to support traffic

brought to the area because of the garden. This means a certain portion of the site will have to be converted to parking so as not to disrupt the surrounding businesses. Unlike the other proposed lots, this location is further away from the existing community garden, and therefore spreads out the resources to more residents of Santa Fe Springs.

Compliance with Master Initial Study:

Aesthetics: No tree removal is required for this site. This project site is in the industrial district and is surrounded by industrial buildings on all sides. The introduction of urban agriculture would disrupt the aesthetics of the surrounding area; however this is a push in the right direction for Santa Fe Springs. The General Plan of Santa Fe Springs wants to incorporate more diverse uses in the industrial area of Santa Fe Springs, including more open space. The introduction of a community garden would directly work towards this goal and is a progressive new way of introducing a more interactive greenspace, so the impact is *less than significant*.

Geology/ Soils: This project site lies on Ramona Loam Soil (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, 2018). The project lies within an industrial zone, which brings into

question the soil health of the lot. In order to get a full picture of the potential impacts of the project on the site and the existing conditions of the site, a Geological Survey Report by a certified geologist is recommended. There are *potentially significant impacts*, and the site should be examined more thoroughly.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials: There are no hazardous materials created by the site. The future use of any fertilizers or soil supplements must be approved by the city to ensure the public will not be exposed to hazardous materials. The proposed site will not be on any previously or currently listed hazardous materials sites. There are two sites listed on a Cortese List within $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile of the site, but neither are active, so it has been determined that there is *less than significant impact*.

Land Use/ Planning: A community garden does not comply with the list of uses permitted in a M-2 zone. However, the Land Use Element describes the city's goal to work towards additional housing in the industrial area to suit future growth, as well as the emphasis on additional open space. A community garden would be a direct interpretation of additional open space, and would also make housing in the industrial area a more attractive option. Though a community garden is not explicitly permitted in an M-2 zone, the addition of a community garden would support the General Plans vision of the future of the industrial zone. Because of the compliance with the General Plan's vision, it is determined that the impact on land use is *less than significant*.

Noise: The maximum noise level permitted for 12211 Greenstone Avenue is 70 dB, as stated in the noise element. Any noise emissions above this level will require a detailed analysis of the noise emitted by the site, but are not prohibited. The surrounding uses of the site are held to the same noise emission standards. A noise study should be done by an expert to analyze

potential impacts of the surrounding areas on users of the site. There are *potentially significant impacts*, and the site should be examined more thoroughly.

SANTA FE SPRINGS PARK

Santa Fe Springs Park lies in the only agricultural zone, A-1, of Santa Fe Spring, in the Northwest portion of town. It is bordered by the San Gabriel River to the west, Highway I-5 to the south, single family residential units to the east, and Horizon Nursery to the north. It measures out to approximately 453,400 square feet or 10.4 acres. The site currently contains a cell tower, baseball and basketball facilities, picnic tables, a playground, and a wading pool.

Because the site is so long and narrow, the layout of the community garden could support either garden beds or orchards or a combination of the two. This location also provides the

opportunity for more diverse uses, as A-1 Zone District § 155.036 (A) permits not only farms, but also greenhouses, aviaries, and the keeping of poultry and rabbits for noncommercial uses. This allows a community garden in the area to expand and have the option to work with livestock. As seen in the South Central Farm case study, having a large plot of land and supporting diverse agriculture and uses of the land makes for a stronger garden with more opportunities for members to learn about new topics and find new interests.

The proximity to the highway could cause some issues relating to noise and emissions specifically, but with proper measures, this underused strip of land could support a thriving

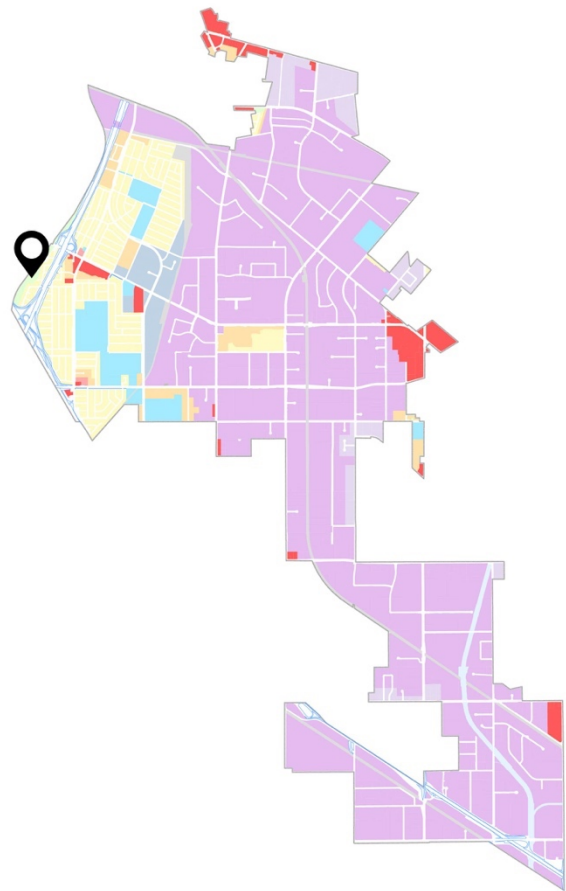


Image 19: The black marker indicates where Santa Fe Springs Park lies in Santa Fe Springs



Image 20: Santa Fe Springs Park outlined to show existing uses and space to develop. Map is oriented to the cardinal points

ecosystem. Trees are being used directly between the residential neighborhood and the highway, minimizing significant impacts of the noise reaching the area of the park. There are waste and water facilities serving the site which would require expansion, but new service lines would either not be required or would only require a small expansion, saving on the cost of building the community

garden.

The park has over 80 parking spaces in a parking lot going into the site and an ample number of street spots on Cedardale Drive, the street bordering the park to the east. The site is also easily accessed by all residential houses surrounding it, immediately serving a large population in such a close proximity.

There is another strip of A-1 zoned land to the north, bordered by Telegraph Road to the south, San Gabriel River to the west, and Freeway 605 to the east, creating a triangle shape. This second strip of land measures out to 304,000 square feet, or 6.9 acres. The



Image 21: Secondary Site north of Santa Fe Springs Park. Map is oriented to the cardinal points

northernmost tip of the northern open space lies approximately one mile from the southernmost end of Santa Fe Springs Park. At the point of least distance, there is 900 feet between the two open spaces.

The northern section of open space has more complicated access. Because it is bordered by a highway entrance/exit and Telegraph Road, a major arterial road, creating a turn-off into a parking lot could pose a traffic hazard. It is recommended that the initial community garden be built on the existing Santa Fe Springs Park, and if demand continues to stay high or expansion is needed for another reason, to then more closely examine the northern open space.

CEQA is a process of evaluating discretionary projects, or projects that require more judgement. Because the Santa Fe Springs Park lies in an A-1 zone of the city, the community garden project is a ministerial project in this zone and an Initial Study is not required, as it is in compliance with A-1 Zone District § 155.036 (A), permitting farms. Ministerial means that the nature of a project is already approved and has been considered for the specific zone in which a project is proposed.

One potential issue could be the eight cell towers that currently exist on the site. Development around cell towers is typically subject to special zoning such as setbacks and limited development type.

CARMELA PRESCHOOL AND EARLY LEARNING CENTER

The fourth and final site is an empty green space at the eastern end of Santa Fe Springs. It lies between two Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center buildings and is owned by the school on a plot of land zoned PF – Public Use Facilities. It lies on a block bordered by Carmenita Road to the east, Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center and single family residences to the south, single family residences to the west, and Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center to the north. The site area is approximately 220,000 square feet, or 5 acres.

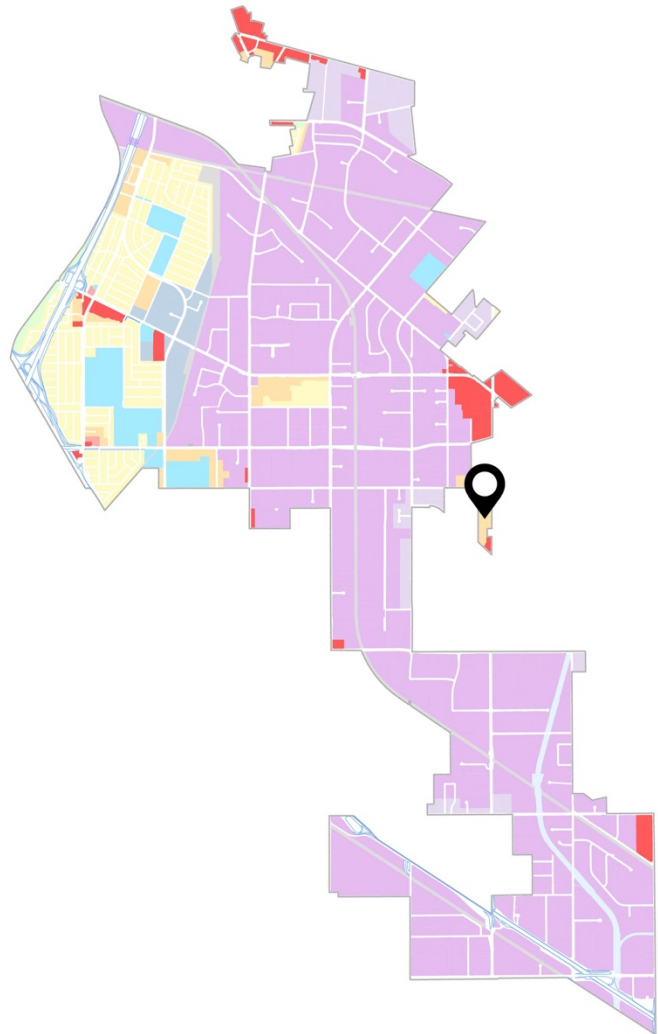


Image 22: The black marker indicates where Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center lies in Santa Fe Springs

The site is owned by the Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center and lies in the middle of their campus. Placing a community garden at the preschool would be beneficial for the preschool because it would allow children to work hands-on with their food and teach them at a young age. Studies have shown that nutrition programs are most effective immediately and long term when the children are able to work hands-on in a garden (Morris & Zidenberg-Cherr, 2002). Placing a community garden in this space would allow the children to start learning about their food and where it comes from,



Image 23: Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center outlined to show existing uses and space to develop. Map is oriented to the cardinal points

proper nutrition, and creating a healthy relationship with food. El Jardín de la Comunidad de la Playa shows how a community garden can be a place for learning and for all age groups to come together under a common goal. Placing the community garden at the preschool is the perfect way of showing how generations can connect at a community garden.

One issue with this location is the fact that it is at a location where children occupy the space from morning to afternoon, sometimes night. Parents sending their children may be uncomfortable with other adults on school grounds during the day. To accommodate for this, use of the community garden during the day could be limited to family members of the students or an approved group of people. The hours could be extended on the weekend and post-school day to accommodate for the lack of access during the day. This may not be

requested by the school or parents of the students, but in any case an alternative plan is a good measure to have.

Another issue with this location is, again, the ownership of the park. The land is owned by the school so it would have final say on the use of the land. It is unlikely that, once the school begins a gardening program, it would later choose to remove the garden, but land ownership is still something to consider.

Access to the park is currently limited to the parking lot for the Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center off of Carmenita Road. The parking lot has a mere 23 parking spaces. In order to serve the community garden, an expansion of parking is needed. There is a portion of the site adjacent to an existing road that is suitable to be turned into expanded parking, so space is not an issue.

Compliance with Master Initial Study:

Geology/ Soils: The entire park lies on Ramona Loam soil which is suited for this type of development (Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, 2018). The development of the garden would alter the soil. In order to know the full extent of the impact, a Geological Survey Report by a certified geologist is recommended. There are *potentially significant impacts*, and the site should be examined more thoroughly.

Noise: The maximum noise level permitted for Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center is 60 dB, as stated in the noise element. Any noise emissions up to 75 dB will require a detailed analysis of the noise emitted by the site, and any noise emissions over 75 dB are not permitted. In order to abide by these noise limitations, if construction work requires heavy machinery, it shall be done outside of school hours either before or after school or during school breaks.

Public Services: The addition of a community garden at Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center could cause an increase in applicants for the school, as the community garden would make it more attractive. However, it would not require any new schools to be built, so there would be *less than significant impact*.

SUMMARY

The following chart was created for ease of comparing the proposed sites on certain issues. In all comparative ranking categories below, 1 represents the closest or highest (depending on category), and 4 represents the furthest or lowest (depending on category).

	Los Nietos Park	12211 Greenstone Avenue	Santa Fe Springs Park	Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center
Distance from existing community garden ²	1 mile	3 miles	1.2 miles	3.2 miles
Estimated cost of construction	3	1	2	4
Amount of additional studies required	2 ³	1	4	3
Public or private landowner?	Public	Private	Public	Private
Lot size	9.7 acres	4.6 acres	10.4 acres	5 acres
Largest Opportunity	Ideal location	Most freedom in design concepts	Largest space	Educating youth
Largest constraint	Lack of developable space	Multiple environmental studies needed	Existing cell towers	Potential limited access to garden

The Los Nietos Park location is one with high accessibility and foot traffic, and would complement the existing uses of the park. The proximity to the elementary school provides the opportunity for children to use the garden as well as community members, and foster stronger connections to food. The main constraint of this site would be the amount of developable land, as

² This measurement was taken by using Google Maps directions and setting the existing community garden as the origin point and the proposed garden site as the destination point. The shortest measurement was chosen; the distance is not based on time of travel for each trip.

³ Los Nietos Park was marked as second highest with amount of additional studies needed because, based on the number of users of the site, it will either need the same number of studies as the Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center, or it will require one more, which is the same number as 12211 Greenstone Avenue.

the existing park facilities and community center takes up much of the land. Turning this land into a community garden would not cost as much as the other sites, but the amount of developable space is limited by the other uses of the site.

12211 Greenstone Avenue is a unique site, as it is a vacant lot, but it sits in the industrial district of Santa Fe Springs and is surrounded by industrial uses. The vision of Santa Fe Springs is to reduce the amount of industrial buildings and incorporate more housing and open space in the area. The introduction of a community garden in this area would make significant strides towards this vision. Because it is industrial, there are significant studies needed to show the viability of building a site here while not exposing users of the site to any hazardous matter. The lot is completely empty, and unlike the other sites, contains all developable land. The garden in this lot would cost more due to the studies required, but provides more freedom for design than the rest of the sites.

Santa Fe Springs Park is the largest proposed site at 10.4 acres and is the only site currently zoned for light agriculture use. It contains mostly open space and ample room for development, as well as lots of existing parking spaces for the park. One potential issue could be the cell towers spread out across the site. Development around cell towers is often more restrictive than other areas. This site does not require an Initial Study because it is already zoned for agricultural purposes.

The Carmela Preschool and Early Learning Center site includes highly developable land adjacent to the Carmela Preschool. The site is large and open, providing a large opportunity for development, but the land belongs to the school so it would have final say on the site design. Access to the site would need to be extended, and the school could set limitations on when people come to the garden and who comes, because it lies on school grounds.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of four potential sites above was compiled in order to serve as a recommendation for the City of Santa Fe Springs to create a secondary community garden. While each site has its own opportunities and constraints, the ideal site for the next community garden will depend on the needs of the city. The groups that are pushing for the next community garden will also have input on which site would work best for them. The analysis of the four sites above are meant to be guidelines for the next site, and the descriptions are included to show how factors outside of the Initial Study are important when choosing a site location.

The environmental analysis above has been provided to show the ease of adopting a new garden, and provoke ideas for a new community garden. Several implementation measures can also be completed to promote the creation of community gardens. To obtain land for a community garden, the city should reach out to land owners and advertise a tax write-off for the donation of land for a community garden. The city should also adopt a UAIZ compliance ordinance to allow landowners to take advantage of the tax break for leasing out their land to community gardens. To promote people getting involved in starting a community garden, it should be advertised that community gardens that earn below \$5,000 annually and meet the other requirements automatically qualify for 501(C)(3) status. To provide the opportunity to make money, the city should consider a farmers market to highlight production of community gardens, or allow sales on site. These are just a few of the many steps the city of Santa Fe Springs can take to promote a new community garden.

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