



Racial Equity Evaluation for Community Gardens

2019-20 Garden Season



October 2018

- MPRB Board of Commissioners passes Community Garden Policy

Background: Implementation Timeline

April 2019

- Temporary Garden Coordinator hired to implement policy

In 2018, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board passed the Minneapolis Parks Community Garden policy, allowing for plot-based community gardens to be established on park land.

In the spring of 2019, a full-time temporary staff person was hired to implement the program.

June 2019

- First MPRB Community Garden installed at Franklin Steele Square

The first community garden was installed at Franklin Steele Square Park in the Elliot Park neighborhood. Built as a demonstration garden, its produce was donated to nearby food pantries.

September 2019

- Plot applications made available for 2020 garden season

Throughout the summer, three additional gardens were established in neighborhood parks in partnership with community.

May 2020

- 77 individual gardeners start tending their plots in 4 MPRB gardens.

These gardens (at Dickman Park, Towerside Park, and Loring Park) were made available to community members for the 2020 growing season through the application process, as defined in MPRB's community garden policy.

Background: Community Engagement and Garden Promotion

MPRB staff promoted the application process and future garden sites using multiple outreach methods. Applications were promoted from September 2019-November 2019, when the temporary garden coordinator position ended. Community members continued to apply through the February 1 deadline.



Flyers in businesses and apartment buildings



Signage in existing gardens and designated urban agriculture zones



Pop-up gardens



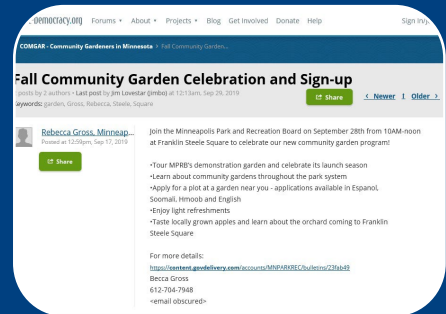
Neighborhood newsletter articles



Tabling at community events



GovDelivery messages



On-line forums

Background: Site Selection



Franklin Steele Master Plan



Franklin Steele Urban Agriculture Site

Factors for site selection

- Community interest and partnership opportunities
- Neighborhood need
- Feasibility

Neighborhoods are prioritized if they include:

- High density of apartment dwellers
- Concentrations of public housing
- Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP50s)
- Lack of existing community garden space
- Food deserts

Urban Agriculture Zone requirement

To implement a community garden, a park's master plan (MP) must include an urban agriculture zone. These zones are limited. Another limiting factor: at some parks with a zone, implementing a community garden also requires other MP components to be implemented.

Background: Application Process and Racial Equity

Racial equity is at the heart of the MPRB's application process for community garden plots. Too often, plots are available on a first-come/first-served basis. This has proven inequitable at other gardens because often, it's older, whiter and more affluent folks who have first access to information – and thus access to land.



MPRB attempts to alleviate this problem by prioritizing applications from Minneapolis residents who don't have access to land outside the parks; plan to grow food; and have a connection to the park where the garden is located.

After the February 1 deadline, applications are reviewed and scored to reflect these priorities. Gardeners must reapply for a plot each year.



The 2020 season deviated from this process due to the vacancy in the Garden Coordinator position (November 2019-March 2020). Instead, garden plots were divided to award a plot to every one who applied before the February 1 deadline. During the inaugural season, there was sufficient space for this.



Racial Equity Evaluation: Introduction

A key part of MPRB's Community Garden Policy is the annual racial equity evaluation. Its purpose is to "examine how different racial and ethnic groups may be affected by this policy and its corresponding program".

The assessment examines:

- how the gardens were implemented
- how outreach was conducted
- the racial make-up of applicants and gardeners compared to the surrounding neighborhood

It will identify potential barriers to success and make suggestions for improvements, on both the program and policy levels.

Applications for community garden plots include this voluntary question: "How do you identify your race or ethnicity?"

Applicants select from the following options: White, Black or African American, African, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Arab, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Multi-racial, or Other.

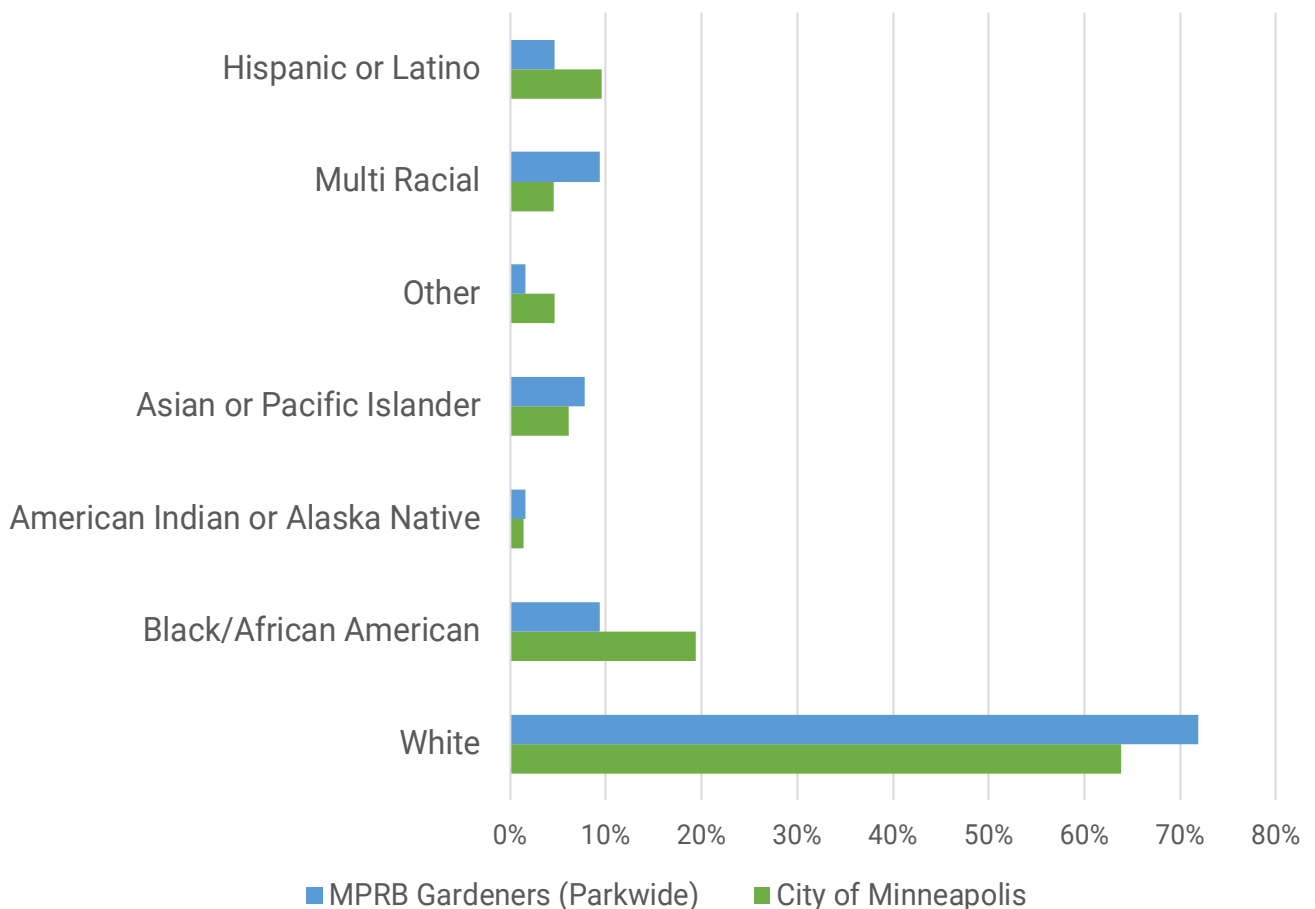
Answers provide the basis for the data in this evaluation. Neighborhood and citywide demographics information is from Minnesota Compass, led by Wilder Research (mncompass.org) from 2014-2018.

Racial Equity Evaluation: Results

When comparing the race of community garden program participants system-wide to Minneapolis racial demographics, the former are disproportionately white.

There are disparities in the numbers of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino people participating in the community garden program, as compared with the general population of Minneapolis.

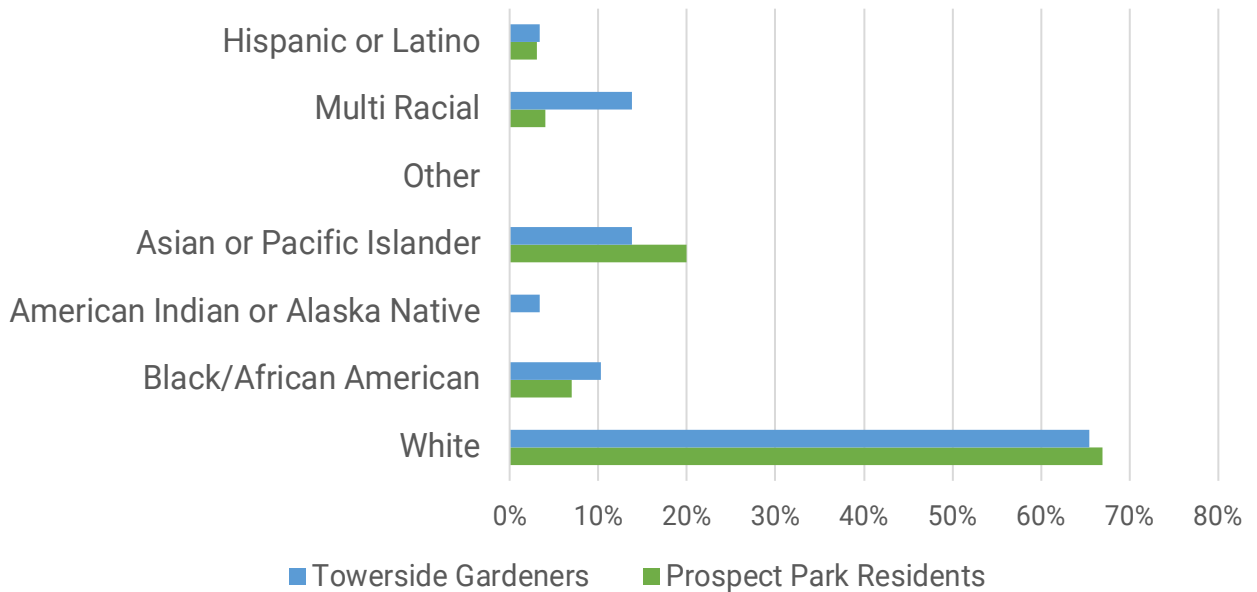
Racial Demographics of Gardeners at MRPB Sites and Minneapolis Residents



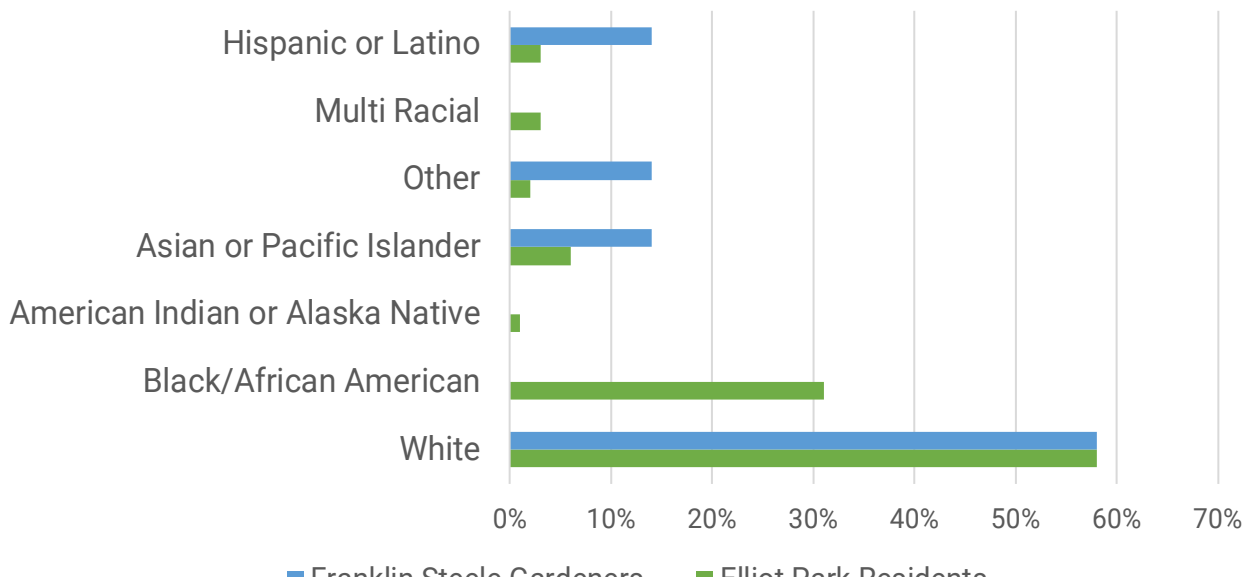
Racial Equity Evaluation: Results

Disparities between program participants at a specific garden and neighborhood residents are less than the system-wide disparities.

Racial Demographics of Gardeners at Towerside Park and Prospect Park Residents

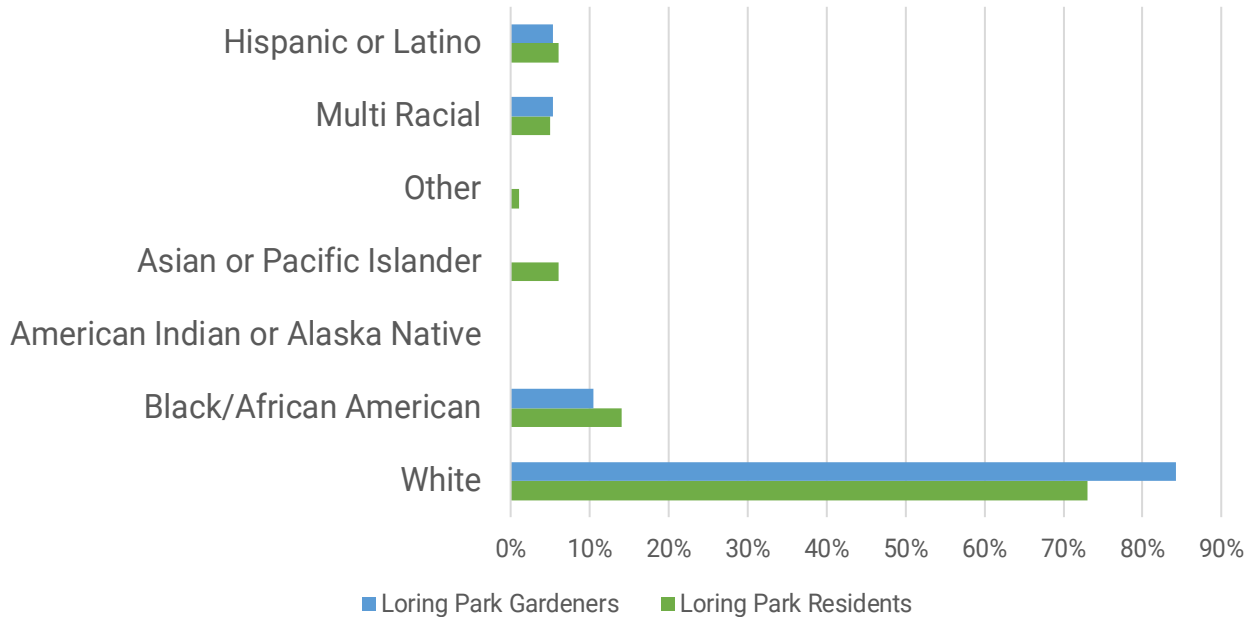


Racial Demographics of Gardeners at Franklin Steele and Elliot Park Residents

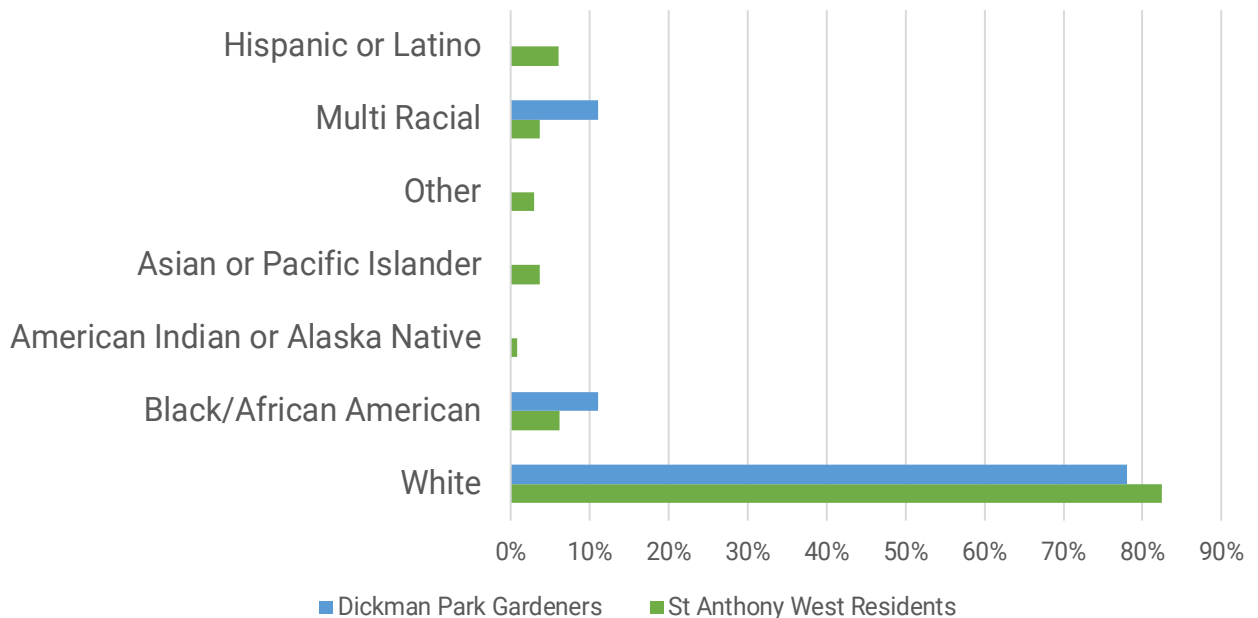


Racial Equity Evaluation: Results

Racial Demographics of Gardeners at Loring Park and Loring Park Residents



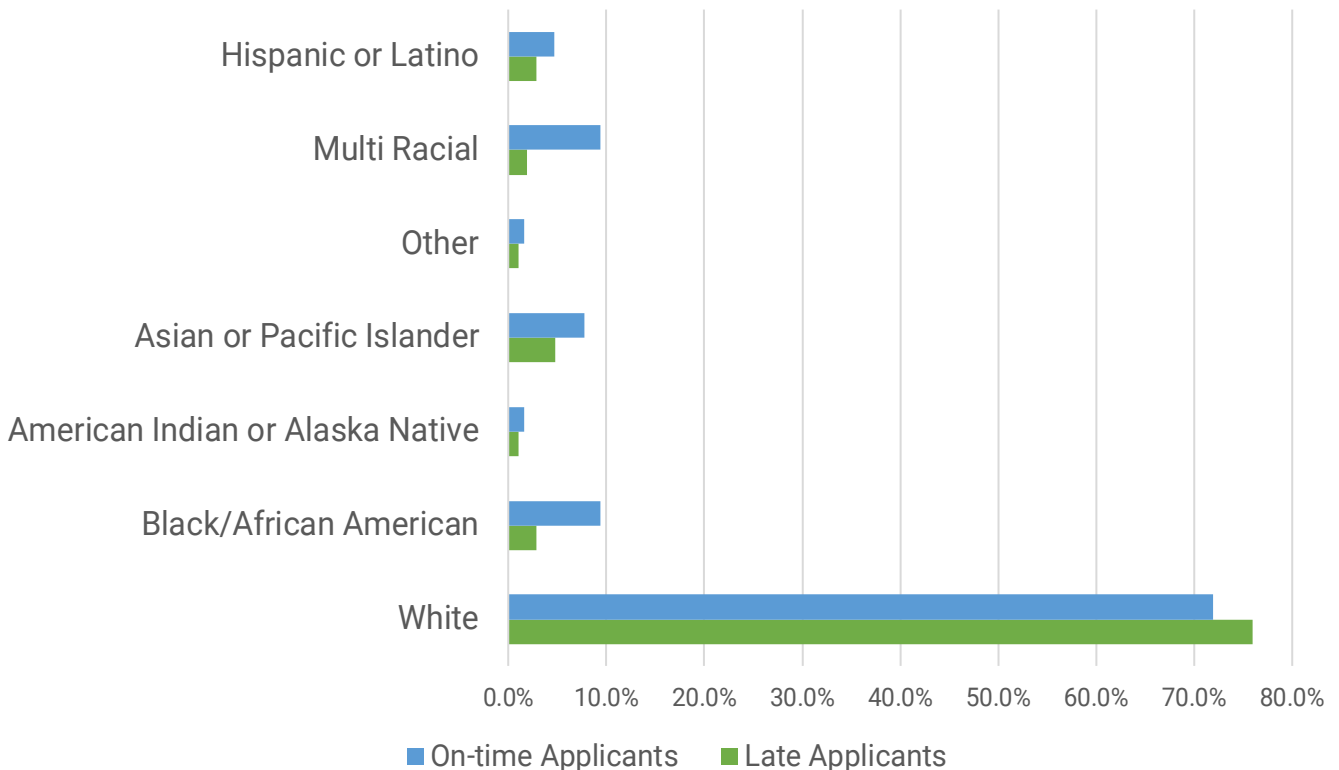
Racial Demographics of Gardeners at Dickman Park and St. Anthony West Residents



Racial Equity Evaluation: Results

A significant number of people submitted their application after the February 1st deadline, though this did not disproportionately impact people of color.

Racial Demographics of On-time and Late Applicants



Recommendation: Promote community garden opportunities in more diverse neighborhoods.

Challenge: Community garden location options are limited by the master plans. Master plans were developed before MPRB passed the ordinance allowing community gardens in parks, with the exception of the Southwest Master Plans. Case and point, 26% of the master plans for Southwest have designated community garden spaces, compared to 19% of master plans for the rest of the city. Amending the master plans at parks without urban agriculture zones creates another hurdle for both staff and community members.

Strategy: New garden opportunities were established in 2020 for use in 2021 at Sumner Field, Lovell Square, and Powderhorn Park. Sites like Jordan Park, Central Gym, and Peavey Park should be considered for future gardens, in partnership with community organizations and schools. When health and safety guidelines permit more in person gatherings, staff should focus on promotion of these urban agriculture sites located in communities of color.

Strategy: Amend the community garden policy to allow small, temporary gardens in parks without urban agriculture zones if they do not interfere with other park activities or amenities in the master plan. This would provide opportunities for people to garden while pursuing an amendment and would create a pathway for staff to connect interested gardeners in the community.

Recommendation: Develop a targeted outreach plan to promote application process

Challenge: Recreation center closures, event cancellations and other impacts from COVID-19 have reduced opportunities to connect in person with community members.

Strategy: Engage community garden leads to assist with application outreach in their neighborhoods.

Strategy: Contact rental management offices in surrounding neighborhoods to share information with tenants (especially focused on Public Housing).

Strategy: Attend in-person community events when possible, post-pandemic.

Strategy: Install drop boxes and literature boxes with paper applications in 4 languages at all existing garden sites (completed by September 2020).

Strategy: Host garden open houses as allowed in 2021, with interpreters, youth activities, and food when possible.

Recommendation: Develop strategic partnerships with community organizations for future garden sites

Challenges: Organizations are stretched thin and focused on providing essential services to their communities (food distributions, rental assistance, etc.) who have been impacted by COVID-19.

Strategy: Promote garden opportunities at food distributions and school events, as permitted.

Strategy: Build connections with Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council members, who are actively working on these issues in communities of color.

Strategy: Promote partnership opportunities with senior services. Gardening is an ideal intergenerational activity.

Strategy: Create more connections with recreation and environmental education programs.

Conclusion

MPRB's community garden policy provides a framework for an equitable program that connects community with food, nature, and recreation. The annual application process prioritizes folks without access to land and alleviates the problems associated with first-come/first-served programs.

As the garden program grows, resources should focus on establishing and improving garden spaces in Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP50s) and USDA Food Deserts. Site-specific outreach plans should be developed and implemented to connect with neighbors in apartment buildings and public housing. Staff should continue to grow relationships with external and internal partners rooted in the community. Staff must continue working to identify and address barriers that prevent people of color from accessing community garden space through the annual racial equity evaluation.

This evaluation will be shared with MPRB's Board of Commissioners and published on the community garden webpage.

