

# Heights community garden goes forward

By Tony Cantú  
Contributing Writer

After a year of discussion, Alamo Heights City Council Nov. 8 approved development of a community garden.

The idea of a community garden took root in January, after residents expressed interest in the concept, now popular in various U.S. cities.

Spearheaded by Community Development Director Brian Chandler, the project has been discussed in intervening months among members of a citizens' committee working with the Green Spaces Alliance.

The garden is to be located on a half-acre plot at the southeast corner of Ogden Lane and Acacia Street, an area located at the edge of the Olmos Basin floodplain.

Olmos Park recently endorsed creation of a community garden for its residents, as well.

Garden committee member Gregg Chislett gave an overview of plans before council members voted. Chislett said more than 40 residents were involved in forming the garden plan, studying 17 sites before settling on the

selected parcel.

He cited community building, education, friendship and availability of healthful organic food as among the goals of the program.

Plans call for composting to take place at the site, and the installation of a gazebo, Chislett said. A fence would enclose the garden to keep animals out, he added.

Chislett displayed pictures of raised garden beds and a low-flow irrigation system to be featured at the site.

Chislett said his group would solicit donations from home improvements stores as other municipalities have done, and would search for grant money to create a budget for the garden project.

After Chislett's presentation, Mayor Louis Cooper expressed some unease about oversight of the garden, its aesthetics and whether the chosen location was best.

He compared his concerns over the community garden to similar

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— Mayor Louis Cooper

issues raised on a dog park that the city also plans to develop.

"The concerns I've had are, what are the rules going to be — sort of like the dog park thing — and who's going to have access to it?" Cooper said. "Is this going to be a policing nightmare?"

After reassurances from both Chislett and Chandler, council endorsed the garden idea.

In addition to planting vegetables, plans call for growing wildflowers in the garden's open spaces, Chislett said. The garden should be completed by April 2011, he added.

Last April, Olmos Park City Councilman Jeff Judson spearheaded creation of a community garden for residents there, although no available land was found within city limits.

The targeted plot of land for that garden is situated east of the San Antonio public baseball field at Basse Road and McCullough Avenue on the grounds of the San Antonio Gun Club.

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