



# City Council Referral Request

Tracking Number 2021-0047 Date of Referral 11/23/2021 Requester Dani Madrone  
(Provided by Susan) \_\_\_\_\_

- Referral To
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Study Session                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Work Session                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Ad Hoc Committee on Public Safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Government Committee     | <input type="checkbox"/> Finance Committee                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land Use & Environment Committee | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advisory Committee UAC |

## Problem Statement

*A clear concise description of the issue(s) that need(s) to be addressed.*

Access to water is a significant barrier to urban agriculture. Water rates for irrigation are high during the dry season, rising from \$2.80 to \$8.26 per 100 cubic feet for the months of July through October. While these rates are designed to help conserve water, they also inhibit our ability to achieve goals in the Comprehensive Plan related to local food production by adding to the cost of operations and impacting affordability. In addition to water rates, there could be other opportunities for the city to address the irrigation needs of urban agriculture with access to hydrants or reclaimed water.

## Request

*What is being requested to assist in addressing the issue described in the problem statement?*

This referral directs the Utilities Advisory Commission to:

- Create a separate classification for urban farms and community gardens for irrigation rates to address the affordability of urban food production.
- Research and advise on a program that would allow urban farms and community gardens to get permits to access hydrants.
- Connect with the Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston (LOTT) Clean Water Alliance to explore opportunities to use reclaimed water for food production.

## Relationship to City Business or Proposed City Business/Services

*Describe how this will enhance what is already offered and/or what it will provide that is not currently available. Why is this the City's issue to address? How will this create a more adaptive and resilient organization? How will this enhance the City's work to further equity, climate, and social justice?*

This referral aims to address the affordability of water for urban farming and community gardening. Both the Climate Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plans identify agricultural components for carbon sequestration and community resilience. The National Young Farmers Coalition developed tools and recommendations for racial equity in agriculture. Their recommendations specified the inclusion of urban agriculture, with a focus on land access for BIPOC farmers. The recommendations of the Olympia Farmland Workgroup highlight racial equity as the first priority, with the Land Use Committee also including the needs of veterans. The recent survey from the Parks department showed that low-income households and younger residents showed higher interest in prioritizing the protection of farmland.

## Connection to Comprehensive Plan

*Choose all that apply.*

- Community, Safety and Health**  
*Inclusive, respectful, civic participation; a safe & prepared community; health and wellness; adequate food and shelter; a quality education*
- Downtown**  
*Vibrant, attractive urban destination; a safe and welcoming downtown for all; a mix of urban housing options; a variety of businesses; connections to our cultural & historic fabric; engaging arts & entertainment experience*
- Economy**  
*Abundant local products and services; a thriving arts and entertainment industry; sustainable quality infrastructure; a stable thriving economy*
- Environment**  
*Clean water & air; a daily connection to nature; preserved quality natural areas; a toxin-free community; a waste free culture*

**Neighborhoods**

*Distinctive places & gathering spaces; nearby goods & services; neighborhoods that are engaged in community decision making; safe and welcoming places to live*

**Options**

*Describe proposed options for moving the idea or issue forward for the meeting body to consider.*

The irrigation rates should be addressed through the city’s regular process to update rates, which will need to consider definitions and criteria for urban agriculture and community gardens. A review of other city policies on hydrant access (ex: Cleveland, Minneapolis, Redding) should inform what a hydrant access program could look like in Olympia. Exploring opportunities for using reclaimed water for urban agriculture should be done in partnership with LOTT.

**Timing**

*Is this issue time sensitive, are there other timing factors to consider?*

Other than the schedule for the ratemaking process, these issues are not time sensitive. But moving this forward will align with other work taking place around urban agriculture in Olympia.

**Supporting Documentation (Work Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Parks Plan, etc)**

*Are there documents that support your request or that should be considered?*

The support of urban agriculture is well documented in Olympia’s Comprehensive Plan through value statements for urban design and economy. Specific actions include: PL25.3 (walking distance of a place to grow food), PL25.4 (encourage for-profit gardening and farming), PR9.1 (provide opportunities for participation in local food production), and PN8.7 (encourage local food production). The specific action to address the affordability of irrigation for urban agriculture is a recommendation from the Olympia Farmland Work Group report. Urban agriculture is included as a strategy for resilience in the Thurston Climate Adaptation Plan, with regenerative practices identified in the Climate Mitigation Plan.

**Councilmember Signatures**

*Two Councilmembers must support the request including the Chair of the Committee of referral. (Cannot be a committee quorum unless discussed at an open public meeting of the committee.)*

Dani Madrone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sponsoring Councilmember

Lisa Parshley

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Councilmember

Clark Gilman

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Councilmember

**Staff Supplement**

*Staff will review the request to generate administrative impacts to be considered as part of proposal (staff to initial after their review):*

Budget Impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Legal Review (to include regulatory authority): Click or tap here to enter text.

Policy implications: Click or tap here to enter text.

Implementation Considerations: Click or tap here to enter text.

Staff Liaison: Click or tap here to enter text.