

December 2, 2024

Jamie Sydoriak, Environmental Analyst III
Land Acquisition & Management Unit
Office of the Commissioner
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm St. Hartford, CT 06106

Re: FY2024 Urban Green & Community Garden Grant Program – Town of Vernon Community Giving Garden

Dear Ms. Sydoriak:

I am writing to express the Capitol Region Council of Government's (CRCOG) support for the Town of Vernon's application to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) Urban Green & Community Garden grant program seeking funding to create a Community Giving Garden. The Town has an exciting plan to develop 8 Maple Street, a vacant municipally owned parcel located within Rockville, Vernon's Environmental Justice (EJ) community, into a Community Giving Garden. The new garden will serve as green space, a place for public enjoyment, and a source of produce for consumption and distribution within the EJ area.

Through community partnerships with the Rockville Public Library, Vernon Parks and Recreation, Vernon Board of Education and other municipal departments, the Community Giving Garden will provide several raised beds for planting native herbs and vegetables, pollinator gardens, and habitats. The garden will also feature an ADA-compliant stone dust trail, benches, and a 'story-walk' for early readers. This project will leverage the Town's recently awarded Urban Forestry grant, which will fund new tree plantings in Rockville.

This project is consistent with the goals and strategies in our newly adopted regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). One such goal is to cultivate spaces that connect people to nature and their community. This project will promote open space as a community, cultural, economic, and health asset, specifically aligning with our action to provide smaller-scale pocket parks and gardens "that can also help increase food access (e.g. community gardens) and support the food system (e.g. pollinator gardens)."

Our POCD also emphasizes how food security remains a significant environmental justice issue in the region. This project aligns with our goal to support a sustainable and equitable regional food system with actions that include encouraging municipalities to convert vacant lots into agricultural uses and to employ strategies that ensure access to healthy and locally grown foods to help eliminate persistent food deserts.

We support the Town's effort to create a Community Giving Garden that will enhance green space within Rockville, encourage pollinators, and provide locally grown herbs and vegetables for consumption by residents of the EJ area for all the reasons

highlighted above. I encourage you to approve this application in the amount requested.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Matthew W. Hart
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Daniel Champagne, Town of Vernon
CROG Policy Board