

Saint Paul Audubon Society Grant Application

Please complete all fields. Use N/A if not applicable.

Organization: Eleanor Graham Community Garden

Tax ID#: N/A

Fiscal Agent (optional): Union Park District Council

Tax ID# (optional): District Council 13, Inc's Minnesota Tax Identification Number - 3162133

The person making the request: Patrick Hamilton, leadership team member, Eleanor Graham Community Garden

Email: patleehamilton@gmail.com

Phone: 651-356-1212

Project name: Eleanor Graham Community Prairie **Amount requested:** \$2,000

Date of request: September 15, 2024

Date funds needed: January 1, 2025

A brief overview of the organization, including its mission statement (links to information are acceptable):

The Eleanor Graham Community Garden occupies a triangular parcel of land nearly three acres in size that is bounded by Ayd Mill Road, Hamline Avenue and Ashland Avenue in Saint Paul. This land was cleared of homes and businesses by eminent domain in the late 1950s to make way for the construction of the Hamline Avenue Bridge, Ayd Mill Road and the Ashland Avenue interchange that connects them and then sat forsaken for several decades until a community organizer - Eleanor Graham - in the early 1980s began employing gardening as a way of reclaiming this land for surrounding neighborhoods from the de facto dump site that it had become.

The community garden operates under a memorandum of understanding with the Union Park District Council 13 (which also serves as its fiscal agent). The District Council in turn has a contract with the City of Saint Paul through the Public Works Department to allow a community garden to operate on city property within its district. The garden is governed by a seven-member leadership team, which is solely responsible for the management of the garden plots, the operation and maintenance of all gardening equipment and infrastructure, and the overall care and upkeep of the entire property.

The mission of the Eleanor Graham Community Garden is to provide a safe, welcoming green space for local residents to garden and gather, creating a cohesive community with an appreciation for sustainable agriculture and fresh, healthy food.

A description of the project, including location, activities, goals, timeline, and expected completion date (or is it for operational expenses?):

The Eleanor Graham Community Garden leadership team first reached out to Great River Greening in summer 2023 to explore the potential of a partnership to enhance the biodiversity and bird habitat of several parcels of land on its property that were not occupied by garden plots or by the orchard. Attention quickly turned to the large, grassy embankment along the east side of the Hamline Avenue Bridge as being the parcel of land with the most promise of being transformed from a pollinator and bird habitat desert to a biologically diverse prairie planting. Great River Greening tilled the site on July 11 and then a team of garden volunteers led by Great River Greening staff seeded it with a dry, mesic seed mix on July 13, 2024. During the September 7 Saturday morning workday, community gardeners transplanted 200 plant plugs provided by Great River Greening into the prairie site.

The garden seeks support from the Saint Paul Audubon Society for the following:

- In winter 2025, support interested gardeners in germinating pollinator- and song bird-friendly prairie seed mixes in their homes for spring transplanting into the prairie site.
- In spring 2025, purchase and plant in spaces adjacent to the prairie site a bur oak and other insect- and song-bird friendly trees to help compensate for the loss of an enormous legacy bur oak tree in the community garden in June 2023.
- Contract with Great River Greening to provide staff to advise gardeners on prairie management during the garden's May and September 2025 monthly Saturday community work days.

Commented [1]: Can you please explain at the meeting, Pat, why you are requesting additional prairie seed mixes for the same area?

Commented [2]: Will do, but briefly for now more transplants help ensure that the prairie plants take hold more quickly.

If approved, will these dollars be the sole funding mechanism for this project? If not, please list other partners and funders.

Great River Greening to date has covered all staff and material costs associated with the conversion of about 3,000 square feet of a biological desert into a diverse prairie planting.

Which of SPAS's priority focus areas does this project address?

This project will address two of SPAS's priority focus areas:

- Environmental education - The important environmental benefits of this project will be shared regularly with the community garden's 60+ members through in-person

meetings in the garden and through the garden's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/groups/190788680936173), and garden members will be encouraged to get involved in the upkeep of the prairie planting as part of their required two hours of community service per month during the growing season.

- Providing nesting or native plants - This project supports the conversion of 3,000 square feet of inner-city land that was described by Great River Greening staff as a biological desert into a flourishing, biologically diverse landscape for insects, the birds that depend on them, and other wildlife.

Is this a one-time request, or are future requests anticipated? (Include frequency):

This is a one-time request.

How will you determine whether the project is successful?

This project will be determined to be successful if after several years the former 3,000 square feet of lawn has matured into a thriving prairie planting that attracts a diverse population of insect and bird life and the deciduous trees planted adjacent to the prairie site have survived being transplanted and are thriving.

Who will benefit from this project, and how will you measure these benefits?

The Eleanor Graham Community Garden is more than just a garden. It is an important reclaimed green space in the midst of several Saint Paul neighborhoods with a paucity of public green space. It is prized not only by its gardeners but by birders, dog walkers and many others who simply enjoy admiring its remaining legacy bur oak tree, wandering through its orchard, and exploring its diverse quilt of garden plots. The garden and its new prairie planting, furthermore, are highly visible amenities for the many people who pass by them on the bike/pedestrian path connector between the neighborhood and the Ayd Mill Road bike/pedestrian trail. The garden leadership team will include the prairie planting in its annual survey of its gardeners to gauge their opinions on this new addition to the landscape.

How can Saint Paul Audubon assist in the success of your project/organization?

The garden leadership team would welcome recommendations from Saint Paul Audubon on how to further improve the prairie planting to support more bird species and would welcome Audubon members assisting in the tabulating of bird species that use the site.

Commented [3]: I have incorporated this important point into the narrative.

Approved by __ Board __ Committee Name _____ Amount:

v.7 6/20/23

