

Item No. 14

Supplemental Material

For
City of Sacramento
Planning Commission
Agenda Packet

For the Meeting of: 1/11/07

- Additional Material
 Revised Material

Contact Information: Joy Patterson

Project Name: M06-052

Subject:

**SACRAMENTO
HUNGER COMMISSION**

January 9, 2007

City of Sacramento Planning Commission Members
Historic City Hall
915 I Street, 2nd Floor Hearing Room
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: M06-052 - Zoning Code Amendment Relating To Landscaping Requirements

Dear Planning Commission Members:

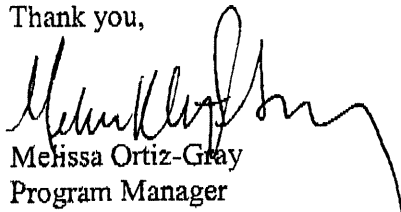
The Sacramento Hunger Coalition is committed to creating sustainable access to affordable nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for everyone.

Hunger and food insecurity place daily burdens on many residents of the city of Sacramento due to many reasons, including a lack of access to affordable and nutritious foods. As a result, both health and quality of life are greatly compromised.

In the spring of 2004 the Sacramento Hunger Coalition in collaboration with Mercy Housing, Kennedy Estates residents and staff, initiated the Edible Landscape project at the Kennedy Estates housing complex. Edible landscaping, like front yard gardening creates a renewable source of nutritious affordable food. Over the course of this project we found that due to the immediate access and availability of fresh fruits and vegetables, knowledge and consumption of fresh produce has increased by residents, thus helping to alleviate hunger and malnutrition. Because front yard gardening also provides immediate access to fresh fruits and vegetables, it stands to have the same impact.

We hope that you find this information helpful in considering the revision of front yard landscape code 17.68.010. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Thank you,



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Staff services provided by the Community Services Planning Council

January 11, 2007

To: City of Sacramento Planning Commission

From: Muriel Strand

Re: **Proposed Changes to City Ordinance on Landscaping for Front Setbacks**

My opinion about edible landscaping in general, and this ordinance in particular, is just the same as at last June's public hearing. The equation of dying annual plants such as corn with the kind of blight that has the power to cause crime and sabotage economic development seems rather farfetched to me. Evidence that it truly is farfetched is outlined in the attached document "Illusion of Order in Homeward." The common use of fake dead cornstalks as part of various Halloween and Thanksgiving decorations adds some comic relief to this soap opera.

The future constraints of **sustainability will require many changes more challenging than a few sunflowers in the front yard.** Worrying about the appearance of the deck chairs on the Titanic distracts us from the approaching iceberg, although of course our iceberg is, in the reality of global climate change, the one that isn't there anymore.

Secondly, I am even more convinced of the **negative social effects of the anonymous complaint process.** In fact, the city's practice of stepping into neighbors' individual conflicts allows residents to bypass the conflict resolution process that is one of the building blocks of a blight-resistant community. If people cannot figure out how to live with a neighbor that bothers them, then no amount of police protection or blight reduction will solve our crime problem.

My comments [of June 2006] address two areas of concern, the proposed landscaping standards, and the process for handling complaints about code violations. In general, I strongly recommend that the city define and state explicitly in any ordinance the goals which motivate both the ordinance and any proposed changes.

I can't see any reason to limit the edible species which gardeners choose to grow. Any constraints should be phrased in terms of the goals, e.g., no dead plants, and no plants which could unsafely or unduly obstruct the vision or path of drivers, bicyclists, or pedestrians.

In view of the city's recent adoption of sustainability goals, any official prohibitions of homegrown food seem particularly odd and inconsistent.

Terms such as "overgrowth," "junk" and "debris" should be objectively defined or deleted, as they are overly judgmental and general, and invite subjective, even discriminatory, enforcement.

There is no lack of existing violations of the existing ordinance. As with many code violations, there are far more actual transgressions than anyone can enforce, and cities and counties depend on complaints to target offenders.

I gather from Neighborhood Services staff that concern about 'blight' is a major motivation for the political sensitivity about the content of this landscaping ordinance. However, this concern usually is expressed by an oversensitivity to visual symptoms of blight – untidy plants, junk, debris, loitering, etc. - rather than by action to alleviate the actual dangers to the community.

Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing

by Bernard E. Harcourt

Harvard University Press, 2001

Book Review by Muriel Strand

Nowadays, many residents and business owners in Sacramento are concerned about various kinds of blight - weeds, graffiti, abandoned cars, illegal dumping, loitering, drugs, gangs, etc. Recent random shootings have increased fear in the community as well as the desire to clean up the blight that is thought to lead to crime and violence. However, if the true cause of both violence and blight is economic and social poverty, then just replacing windows won't do any good.

In March 1982, the Atlantic Monthly published "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety" by James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling, arguing that blight leads to crime. In July 1994, New York City began implementing an order-maintenance policing campaign called the "quality-of-life initiative" based explicitly on this article and subsequent research. Other cities such as Chicago also implemented similar efforts.

But it turns out there is no good evidence that the untidy or blighted appearance of a neighborhood is causally related to its rate of violent crime. In his 2001 book "Illusion of Order: The False Promise of Broken Windows Policing," Bernard Harcourt describes his critical analysis showing that the available statistical evidence fails to support the 'broken-windows' theory.

First, Harcourt reviews the existing empirical evidence, and describes his statistical re-analysis of that evidence. Unable to reproduce the results posited by Wilson and Kelling, the author concludes that the data doesn't support the theory. Just because crime may have declined after implementing order-maintenance policing doesn't prove that such policing caused the decline. Statistics can only show association, not causation. Other, deeper, aspects such as poverty, neighborhood instability, and collective inefficacy may well be the causes of both disorderly appearances and crime.

The popularity of the "broken windows" theory is one of many instances where fearful reactions and political expediency short-circuit accurate collection and thoughtful analysis of statistics about crime and violence. Badly-defined categories are a common pitfall, such as combining nonviolent drug crimes with aggravated assaults, or categorizing parole violators by their original crime rather than by the often-trivial violation. Both of these statistical offenses make crime seem worse than it really is, and since innumeracy is widespread such illogic is often unnoticed.

Next, Harcourt traces the theory to its intellectual roots, and describes its emphasis on the social norm of orderliness which is hypothesized to influence crime. While consideration of social norms and social meaning should deepen and expand the study of criminal justice, the specifics of the order-maintenance strategy have led to a simplistic and inaccurate division of the world into disorderly vs. tidy, law-abiding, middle-class people. This oversimplification overlooks the