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## PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Estella Espinosa  
Work: (832) 395-7022  
Cell: (832) 465-4782  
estella.espinosa@houstontx.gov

### **Houston Parks and Recreation Department Community Gardens Will Grow For Good** New Grant Funding Will Help Low-Income Families Grow Fresh Produce

The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.) has been selected as a Grow Your Park grant recipient from the Darden Foundation and the National Recreation and Park Association (N.R.P.A.). H.P.A.R.D. is one of fifteen communities awarded this grant in 2014.

"This generous grant will move Houston forward toward a time when all families will have nutritious diets and plenty to eat," said Joe Turner, Director, Houston Parks and Recreation Department. "We believe that our department's participation in this program will be a major factor in improving lives throughout Houston."

"The Grow Your Park grant program and its recipients embody our commitment to give back to local communities, preserve our planet's natural resources and serve food to those in need," said Stephanie Ghertner, Director of the Darden Foundation. "Food banks and other organizations in communities across the country benefit from the fresh produce and educational opportunities community gardens provide."

Community gardens located in parks and other community spaces provide a nutritious source of local and healthy produce while encouraging project collaboration and healthy living. In Houston, several parks have hosted successful community gardens for years through the active participation of community groups and H.P.A.R.D. staff. For instance, the community garden in Freed Park is over twenty years old.

In addition to the production of nutritious foods, community gardens promote healthy lifestyles, connect people to nature, cultivate community ties, and strengthen individual self-sufficiency. The entire process from planting to harvesting helps create a more active, engaged and healthy community.

Houston Parks and Recreation Department gardens which will receive funding through this grant include those at:

Burnett-Bayland Park	6000 Chimney Rock 77081
Cloverland Park	11800 Scott 77047
Freed Park	6818 Shady Villa 77055
Independence Heights Park	601 East 35 <sup>th</sup> Street 77022
Metropolitan Multi-Service Center	1475 West Gray 77019
Shady Lane Park	10220 Shady Lane 77093
Sunnyside Park	3502 Bellfort 77051

For more information about the Grow Your Park program, visit <http://www.nrpa.org/garden/>.

**The National Recreation and Park Association** is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 40,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, N.R.P.A. encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit [www.NRPA.org](http://www.NRPA.org). For digital access to N.R.P.A.'s flagship publication, Parks & Recreation, visit [www.parksandrecreation.org](http://www.parksandrecreation.org).

**The Darden Restaurants, Inc. Foundation** is the charitable arm of Darden Restaurants, Inc. The Darden Foundation's mission is to maintain a spirit of service and community engagement as defining characteristics of Darden's family of restaurants – Red Lobster, Olive Garden, LongHorn Steakhouse, Bahama Breeze, Seasons 52, The Capital Grille, Eddie V's and Yard House. Since 1995, the Darden Foundation has awarded more than \$71 million in grants to leading nonprofit organizations that align with its mission and community priorities: Recipe for Success®, Preservation of Natural Resources and Good Neighbor grants. Through the Darden Harvest program, Darden Restaurants has also donated more than 66 million pounds of food to hunger relief agencies across the U.S. and Canada. In 2011, the Darden Foundation introduced the Restaurant Community Grants program that is dedicated to supporting local nonprofit organizations in the hundreds of communities where we live and serve. For more information, please visit [www.dardenfoundation.com](http://www.dardenfoundation.com).

**The Houston Parks and Recreation Department (H.P.A.R.D.)** stewards and manages over 37,832 acres of parkland and greenspace for the City of Houston and develops and implements recreational programming for citizens of all abilities. For more information on the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, call (832) 395-7022 or visit [www.houstonparks.org](http://www.houstonparks.org).