

Community farm gets city backing

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Submitted by [Bill Smith](#) on Thu, 04/05/2007 - 12:56pm.

Supporters of the proposed [Talking Farm](#) won a key victory Wednesday in their effort to turn talk into an actual community farm for Evanston.

They talked aldermen on the Human Services Committee into recommending that the city seek to lease land on the east bank of the North Shore Channel just north of Howard Street from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District for use as a farm site.

Talking Farm President Carolyn Zezima said group members have had discussions with MWRD officials who've said the agency would be willing to lease the property to a municipality.

Since the land is actually just across the border in Skokie, the plan likely will require approval of Skokie's Village Board, and Ms. Zezima said the group has begun preliminary talks with Skokie officials.

She said the group is focusing on having Evanston lease the land because most of its members are Evanston residents and access to the property would be through Evanston.

The two vacant parcels involved are directly north and south of a parking lot leased by the MWRD to the Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

The non-profit farm group's pitch focuses heavily on the concept of reducing residents' dependence on commercially-grown produce that travels long distances within the U.S. or is imported from overseas.

Ms. Zezima said the site, about two acres in size, could yield 10 to 20 tons of produce annually, or enough to provide one plate of food per year to about 20 percent of Evanston's residents.

But aldermen seemed more impressed with promises that the farm would also provide job training and educational programs for young people.

If the MWRD agrees to the lease, it would likely cost the city \$1 per year.

The aldermen made no other commitments, but the Talking Farm advocates say they'd like to form a partnership with the city that would involve working with the city's new office of sustainability, having the city provide a variety of in-kind services to the farm and making grant funds available to the farm.

Because five of the City Council's nine members are on the committee and voted for the measure, it appears likely to win approval by the full council.

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