



600 E Oak Street
Louisville, KY 40203

January 12, 2022

Allison Smith, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
Office of Advanced Planning and Sustainability
Re: Louisville Weed Control Ordinance Changes
§156.052 EXTERIOR PROPERTY AREAS- (D) Weeds

Dear Dr. Smith,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Shelby Park Neighborhood Association to express our formal support for the proposed changes to the Louisville Weed Control Ordinance and adoption of an ordinance that would promote *Native Plant Natural Landscaping*. We would also encourage you to reconsider the five-foot mowed buffer requirement which would severely limit Shelby Park residents from taking advantage of this positive change.

Public health research has supported the positive relationship between trees and green spaces in urban areas and measures of mental, physical, social, and economic health of the community. Scientists and researchers have also made clear that improving biodiversity on private property by planting native species is necessary to slow and stop the continued extinction of wildlife. It is time to break down this inaccurate construct of what good lawn maintenance looks like and to lead the effort to inspire homeowners and renters to change their yards from infertile dead zones to thriving spaces that support our planet and fuel our growth and creativity. Accepting that the aesthetics of these plants may not always meet our social standards is one small concession.

Updating this ordinance to specifically allow for the establishment of native/non-invasive plantings on private and rental property of residential and commercial zoned areas will provide numerous benefits to those who live, work, and visit Louisville, all while leading to reduced costs for Louisville Metro Government.

An abbreviated list of these benefits includes:

- Reduction in runoff to the combined sewer-stormwater system
- Reduction in flooding
- Reduction in litter, chemical use, and improved sense of place and community
- Reduction in air and noise pollution from lawn mowers
- Increase in habitat for beneficial wildlife including insects, birds, and other pollinators
- Increase in local carbon storage
- Increase in locally grown food



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Many Louisvillians, myself included, have been inspired by these benefits to make changes to their yards that support the environment and improve biodiversity. Additionally, the COVID 19 pandemic and subsequent supply chain issues have encouraged many residents to start gardens to grow their own food and focus more on sustainability and our local ecosystems. Unfortunately, residents are often inhibited in taking these steps by the current outdated policy and fear of repercussions. In Shelby Park, several residents have recently been cited and fined by code enforcement for growing food and native plants in their yards, some even in their fenced in back yards! Neighbors who are striving to improve their community through cultivated green space should not live in fear of being fined or forced to cut down plants they have intentionally cared for. Not only does this enforcement of the current ordinance hinder ecosystems and the ability for our neighbors to feed their families, but this is not a wise use of city resources and is incongruent with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

We request that Metro Council follow the lead of many towns and cities around the country by taking prompt action to develop a weed control ordinance that provides for the necessary safety precautions but does not inhibit the ability to grow managed stands of native plants and food. There are many advocates for food justice and environmental protection who stand ready to provide their expertise in crafting this update to the weeds ordinance.

Additionally, as with any change to policy, we advocate that equity be central to the discussions of this update. Specifically, language that requires a five-foot mowed buffer between plantings and the sidewalk may not be a burden for residents in the suburbs but for residents in neighborhoods like Shelby Park, this is a significant barrier. Our neighborhood is comprised mostly of historic shotgun homes, many of which sit very close to the sidewalk with only a small front yard. Requiring a mowed buffer prohibits many residents of neighborhoods in the urban core, like Shelby Park, from being able to design their yards in ways that support the growth of food, native plant natural landscaping, and building ecosystems. We urge you to remove this requirement so that ALL Louisvillians, including those living in the urban core, have the opportunity to support the environment without fear of fines and penalties. Thank you for your attention to this issue and for your consideration of our support. Please do not hesitate to reach out to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Maria Gurren

President, Shelby Park Neighborhood Association

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