



February 1, 2022

Dear Metro Councilman Arthur,

The purpose of this letter is to express formal support from the **Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District** for proposed changes to the **Louisville Weeds Ordinance (§156.052 D)**.

We believe that this Ordinance as currently written and enforced does not coincide with our mission, or the *Louisville 2040 Comprehensive Plan*. This has resulted in a disconnect where Louisville Metro funding is provided for the protection of our environment and pursuit of emission reductions, while also continuing to prohibit simple actions that added together would result in significant improvements towards these goals.

If approved, this Ordinance will support people who are striving to help their community by creating intentional spaces for nature and biodiversity. The existing Ordinance leads to a fear among residents that they will be fined and forced to mow or cut down plants they are purposefully caring for. These plants may be in the middle of feeding endangered Monarch caterpillars, providing nectar for hummingbirds, moths, and butterflies, and food for cardinals, wrens, blue jays, and so many others.

Further, in practice current enforcement disproportionately impacts Louisville's systemically under-resourced neighborhoods, where renters become easy targets for eviction. While this Updated Ordinance is in no way a guarantee of equitable enforcement, the definitions and specifications provided should minimize ambiguity.

Numerous scientific studies from around the world conclude that trees and green spaces in urban areas improve a community's mental, physical, social, and economic health. Scientists have also made clear that improving biodiversity on private property by planting native species is necessary if we are 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. It's time to change our 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.

Allowing 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.

A shortened list of the benefits of native plants:

- 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 and food security

There is a drive among city residents to take action to help support our environment, but unfortunately, they are held back by the current outdated policy and fear of repercussions.



With this Updated Ordinance, Metro Council will be following the lead of many towns and cities around the country who have successfully adopted similar policies. Louisville is ready, with numerous local groups and individuals on deck to provide the necessary expertise to support this update.

More specifically, and to the extent possible, the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District will support this Updated Ordinance with programming that provides residents with:

- 1. Signs indicating their site as a native garden**
- 2. Education and technical assistance for planting and maintaining native plants**
- 3. Funding assistance for native gardens**

We express our sincerest gratitude for those who have worked diligently to get to this point, and for your leadership in sponsoring this ordinance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Becca Trueman", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Becca Trueman
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