P-Patch Program Policy on Surveillance Cameras in P-Patches

The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' (DON) P-Patch Program has received requests from gardeners to install privately owned and operated surveillance cameras in various P-Patch community gardens. The reasons for these requests have ranged from gardener interest in capturing time-lapse photography of P-Patch growth and development to monitoring for theft and other criminal activity occurring in gardens.

The P-Patch Program currently oversees 90 community gardens across the City of Seattle. The scale and design of each garden – as well as the lived experiences of the more than 3,000 individuals that participate in the Program – varies widely. Implementing an equitable, anti-racist, program-wide surveillance program would require a multi-step community process as well as financial, technical, and staffing resources that DON does not currently have nor expect to have in the near future.

The City of Seattle has adopted SMC Chapter 14.18 that restricts the use of surveillance technology that all City departments must follow. Privately owned and operated cameras in P-Patches could be subject to the same restrictions on surveillance technology that apply to City-operated cameras. As the operators and managers of all 90 P-Patch gardens, DON does not have the ability to monitor the appropriate use of private surveillance cameras and respond to related concerns or complaints. Therefore, DON will not permit gardeners at individual P-Patches to install and monitor cameras in the gardens at their own expense. Such cameras, and the data they generate, pose risk of misuse, and have the potential to compromise the privacy and security of individual gardeners, their family members (including minor children), and members of the public.

Effective immediately, the P-Patch Program's surveillance camera policy is as follows:

> ***"No privately owned and/or operated surveillance cameras may be installed in P-Patch Community Gardens that are managed by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods."***