

To the Town of Garner Council members and Staff,

We, the members of Garner Grows Community Garden and advocates of community gardens in urban spaces, are pleased to appear before you today. Garner Grows has a history of providing educational and volunteer opportunities and donates produce to area nonprofits.

We seek to bring your attention to the ongoing difficulties of starting and operating a community garden within the Town of Garner and to the many benefits community gardens convey to the Town and its citizens. We are here today to ask the Town of Garner to support the creation of community gardens within town limits by doing the following:

- research opportunities to make town-owned property available for community gardens
- explore partnerships with local organizations such as Garner Grows to operate these community gardens
- amend the UDO so that it is more favorable for community gardens

Each community garden is different, but for our organization, our needs are:

- approximately an acre of land
- a water supply
- parking for 10-15 vehicles

We have taken some time to research town property for viable locations for community gardens and have identified 13 potential sites and these are also in the information packet.

We feel you should consider our request because we have seen that the demand for community gardens in Garner is strong. We recently petitioned residents and in less than a week, we have received over 240 signatures asking the town to help with community gardens. A list of those who signed the petition is with the Town Clerk and in this packet.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Garner Grows Community Garden

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Leaders of Garner Grows Urban Community Garden -

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Tammy Kennedy

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## Benefits of Community Gardens

Community gardens provide a number of lasting benefits to individuals, families, and communities:

- Community gardens have been shown to increase property values in the immediate vicinity where they are located. In Milwaukee, properties within 250 feet of gardens experienced an increase of \$24.77 per square foot and the average garden was estimated to add approximately \$9,000 a year to the city tax revenue (Bremer et al. 2003, p.20; Sherer, 2006).
- They reduce erosion, lessening flooding, and provide a community-positive use for underutilized land.
- Community gardens enable people without suitable land of their own to grow food for themselves, their families, and their communities.
- Community gardens provide access to fresh, traditional produce and nutritionally rich foods. Gardeners save a significant amount of money on produce. One project calculated that community gardeners saved up to \$380 in food costs every season. (Hlubik et al.1994; Armstrong 2000) As we are in a three-season growing area, that equals \$1140 per year. The savings are even more now as the cost of fresh produce continues to increase.
- Studies have shown that community gardeners and their children eat healthier, more nutrient rich diets than do non-gardening families (Bremer et al, 2003, p.54), and people who garden or live with someone who gardens tend to eat more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis (Alaimo et al., 2008)
- Simply viewing plants has been shown to reduce fear, anger, blood pressure, and muscle tension, improving overall mental health. (Relf, 1992 p. 161; Ulrich, 1979; Ulrich, 1986).
- Gardening is considered a moderate to heavy intensity physical activity, and has been linked to significant beneficial changes in total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, and systolic blood pressure (Armstrong, 2000).
- Besides being a great way to exercise, gardening motivates people to stay active longer than other activities. In one study, participants spent significantly more time gardening (225 minutes/week) than doing other leading forms of exercise, such as walking (160 minutes/week) and biking (170 minutes/week) (Caspersen et al., 1991).
- Community gardens instill a sense of community, offering unique opportunities to establish relationships within and across physical and social barriers. (Bremer et al, 2003; Tranel & Handlin, 2004).
- Community gardens are great places to host social and cultural events, helping to strengthen local communities (Krasny & Saldivar-Tanaka, 2004).
- Community gardens can serve as an outdoor classroom where youth can learn valuable skills involving practical math, communication, responsibility and cooperation. They also provide the opportunity to learn the importance of community, stewardship and environmental responsibility.

**Specific to Garner Grows**, the garden has provided educational and volunteer opportunities, as well as donated produce to area nonprofits, persisting through many difficulties and two changes of location for more than ten years. As Garner grows in population, we see even more need for the unique benefits that community gardens offer. The core group of our organization has a proven track record of community engagement. We take seriously our role as educators and facilitators. Please read the comments included in this packet to see the impact that we have had, both on the lives of our members, and on people in the general community. We leave you with some further thoughts from the community and our gardeners:

Garner Grows is a standard and inspiration for my own garden and I love walking through and driving by and seeing the different stages of growing fruits, veggies and herbs in the community garden. I love to follow the timing of plantings in my own garden. I was part of the garden before my kids took over my schedule with their interests. I loved working in the beautiful garden with all the master gardeners!  
- Laura Rogers

I'm loving the progress of the garden, I see it every morning when I deliver the newspapers.  
- Donna Kingman

Mental health! My mental wellness is immeasurably boosted every time I go hang at the garden, get my hands dirty, learn about plants, enjoy being part of the community, try new foods, etc. And that's on top of the benefit of all the produce we bring home!  
-Jessica Jordan

Promoting healthy lifestyle (gardening is a exercise plus big variety of fruits and vegetables), and what I like is that my kiddos are learning how everything is growing, that fruits and vegetables are not made in store where you buy them normally but you have to work hard to get it, and it's fun for them!  
-Daniela Armbruster

My daughter loves going to the garden. She gets to see where her food comes from, play with other kids, and do "heavy work" which is vital for children with sensory challenges (she has oversensitive hearing, which can affect balance). Working in the garden is good for me too, since I get exercise, stress relief, and the satisfaction of better food security.  
- Michael Whaley

For me personally, stress relief, camaraderie and so so much gardening knowledge that I never had before. For the community: we live in a world where people are very removed from their food sources. Not only do they not know how much effort, water, etc., go into producing their food, a lot of times they don't even know what grows on trees or what grows in the ground. Even if they don't join just walking or driving by they get exposed to how food is produced.  
- June Hanson

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Hlubik, W.T., Hamm, M.W., Winokur, M.A., Baron, M.V., (1994). *Incorporating research with community gardens: the New Brunswick Community Gardening and Nutrition Program.*

Sherer, P.M. (2006). *The benefits of parks: Why America needs more city parks and open space.* Retrieved October 31, 2006, from <http://www.tpl.org>