

Open land is at a premium in the Hill Farms area. All residents need a place to exercise and recreate for their general good health and well-being. The Madison Parks Department recognizes that Rennebohm Park in their words is "fully programmed" or, in other words it is at capacity. The park may not be used on occasion but, for good park management, activities need to be cycled like the soccer field to keep the integrity of the park environment. The Parks Department can speak to this point better than I.

The demand for recreational space will increase. The neighborhood plan calls for 900 additional residential living units (apartments) to be built over the plan period. Some may doubt that redevelopment will occur but we have already seen the Stoppie development take place next to the Weston Place with 100 plus apartments.

The Department of Transportation redevelopment is in full swing and it will bring with it apartments and condominiums. The previous general development plan for the DOT included 300 apartment and condo units. The impact of the DOT additional living units was not envisioned in the neighborhood plan. The neighborhood plan did envision increased park use by office workers from the DOT redevelopment. Food carts are anticipated to be placed around the shelter house. They will draw those office workers at lunch who will use the park land around the shelter house for lunch and some relaxation.

Finally, redevelopment in our neighborhood is inevitable. The City of Madison needs tax base. It can no longer grow out thus it must grow up with apartments and condominiums. This will result in greater demands on the park. Bottom line is the choice between a single use/single activity scenario versus a multiple person/ multiple use scenario.

Alder Chris Schmidt has put forth a compromise which may work. It was developed with the help of the Parks Department to identify the section of the park which is not well used. That may be a viable alternative but it will need to be discussed with the neighborhood board.

My name is Ronald Harris. I reside at 4714 Waukesha Street. I oppose siting the community garden in Rennebohm park. The community garden is not an appropriate use of park space, and already the Hill Farms area is underserved by park space, and development to the North of Rennebohm park will only increase demand for park and open space. The very forces that have dislocated the community garden will create new residential housing which will in turn increase demand and usage for Rennebohm park.

In his plan document, Alder Schmid acknowledges that a community garden is not an appropriate park use, noting that deed restrictions in Garner park allow for "park use only." If the garden doesn't meet the definition for "park use" in Garner park, I have difficulty imagining how "park use" gets redefined in the context of Rennebohm park. I suppose the lawyers could turn the phrase for us, but the fact remains that the community garden is not an appropriate use of park space in Rennebohm park. Rather, the plan would take park land out of common use and reallocate the land for the use of a small minority of park users, possibly creating a situation that brings different groups of park users into conflict.

The University Hill Farm neighborhood plan, now in development, suggests that the neighborhood is park-deficient, a situation that will continue to grow with continued residential development to the North of the park. I note that the proposed garden is on the North side of the park, the side of the park with increasing demand. The last ten years has seen the development of hundreds of new units of residential housing (Weston Place, Overlook at Hilldale, Venture, Walnut Grove) plus whatever the new DOT development brings us. To accommodate new demand the neighborhood plan recommends acquiring new park land, perhaps to include a community garden, but the main point is that already we're looking toward acquiring new park land. The proposed garden location will only exacerbate problems by taking park land out of general use. The plan would **reduce** park and open space by ten thousand square feet at a time when we ought to increase park space.

I note that adequate open space exists just a stone's throw from the current garden location, in Indian Hills Park. Though small (about two and one-half acres), the park is on a bike path, is accessible by foot from the current garden, has water and access to on-street parking at least as close as at Rennebohm. While I don't know about underground utilities at the park, I know that the park is under-used. A temporary community garden might both add interest to Indian Hills park and also get nearby residents thinking about about new permanent uses for their park.

Earlier I mentioned conflicts between park users at Rennebohm. I note that we have a very tense atmosphere at this evening's meeting, which kind of surprises me, because I think everyone in the room is in favor of finding a location for the community garden, even if we disagree about its location. If the tension is thick in a friendly meeting like this one, what will happen next summer, when the conflicts about park use are real? What will happen when kids climb over the fence to pick strawberries or trample lettuces while retrieving lost balls? Will we have a small army of self-appointed Farmer McGregors shaking their pitchforks at neighborhood children, shouting, "Stay out of my garden!" Picture that. Here we have our community gardeners, and we can see them. What of the children? The neighborhood plan revealed that the neighborhood to the North of Rennebohm park, the neighborhood touching on the proposed garden, is among the most diverse in our city, most diverse culturally and most diverse racially. How will that look when Farmer McGregor shaking his garden tools? How will that look to our neighbors to the North? How will the children understand the meaning of public park? After all, the message will be that public parks, at least some part of them, are in fact private. That is a very interesting tension that sets us up for years of conflict. We can and should avoid creating these avoidable conflicts between and among user groups. We simply don't need and can't afford to give over land in Rennebohm park to a private group dedicated to non-park uses.

The City Policy for in-fill growth is at odds with the City Policy of using City owned land for community garden uses. The policy of City owned land for garden purposes does NOT mean that a Park has to be the site of a garden.

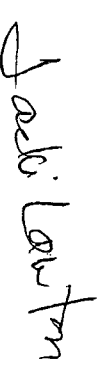
In the spirit of cooperation with the immediate need, I support the Alder Schmidt's proposal for the garden plots near the tennis courts. These plots are to be used by the transit dependent from Sheboygan Avenue who need the garden to meet their food needs.

Rennebohm is a relatively small park with many programmed uses and even more casual uses. These demands on the park will only grow as future development occurs along Sheboygan Avenue, Segoe Road, and other areas in the greater Hill Farms area.

The devil is in the details of how those gardeners will be selected.

It does not seem reasonable to sell off the valuable parkland for \$1/year to private entities, such as Sheboygan Avenue Community Gardens.

My bigger concern is that this opens the door to future demands for additional cannibalization of valued parkland in this part of Madison.





Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Sheboygan garden survey

1 message

Mary Malischke <mmalischke@tds.net>

Sat, Jan 16, 2016 at 7:41 PM

To: Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Community Gardening Project Survey

January 2016

As a neighbor we would like you to know about this project, and we welcome your feedback and/or participation; it is also a part of the application process to show that we have spoken with our neighbors. The following questions will help organizers and other residents think about keeping the garden in our neighborhood.

1. Please give us your name and address. (This information will not be shared outside of the application process.)

Mary Malischke, 4825 Bayfield Terrace

2. Would you be interested in having a garden plot? Please circle: **Yes**

If yes, please provide your phone number or an email address where you can be reached.

mmalischke@tds.net. 238-8976

3. Do you have any concerns or suggestions regarding a community garden at this site?

I think this is a great idea.

What about the area in Rennebohm Park to the right of the path as you face the park from Regent St past the soccer field near the trees?



Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Re: Sheboygan Community Garden - transportation to public meeting

Sarah Rankin <rankinsarahjane@yahoo.com>

Mon, Jan 18, 2016 at 6:53 AM

To: Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Cc: Patricia Soderholm <pm.sode@gmail.com>, Yuhua Li <yuhualius818@gmail.com>, Mary M <mmccarthy@tnc.org>, Ruth Cadoret <rcadoret@earthlink.net>, Geren Zhang <timekeeper@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>, young Lee <2009meet@gmail.com>, Leann Tigges <registration@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>, Jim Baumann <kayakerJB@gmail.com>, "jrkloppe@wisc.edu" <jrkloppe@wisc.edu>, Dawn Springer <fdspringer@gmail.com>

Cindy- I am unable to attend the meeting on Thursday , January 21,2016 re: the Garden. I wish to be counted as a supporter and a participant in any proposed relocation.

Sarah Rankin

Sent from my iPad

[Quoted text hidden]



Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Fwd: Sheboygan Community Garden relocation

Jennifer Behnke <jennifer1313@gmail.com>

Thu, Jan 21, 2016 at 6:30 AM

To: Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

----- Forwarded message -----

From: "Jennifer Behnke" <jennifer1313@gmail.com>

Date: Jan 21, 2016 12:29 AM

Subject: Sheboygan Community Garden relocation

To: <district11@cityofmadison.com>

Cc:

Hello Alder Schmidt,

I am writing to you to express my full support for the relocation of the Sheboygan Community Garden to the proposed location in Rennebohm Park. As a frequent user of the park and as a member of the Sheboygan Community Garden, I believe the relocation of the garden to the park will be a benefit to both entities and the neighborhood as a whole. Sheboygan Community Garden has been a valuable asset to this neighborhood for 35 years, and as evidenced by its waiting list for available plots and its large but tight-knit gardening community, it is a resource in high demand that this community should continue to support. Moreover, the Sheboygan Community Garden serves a population made up of many ethnic backgrounds, ages, and socioeconomic statuses. On the surface, our garden community appears as a group of gardeners sharing the land to produce food and foster community fellowship. However, academic literature that I've reviewed also reveals that community gardens contribute in a significant way to lowered obesity rates, better overall health status, increased food security and a sense of community well-being. You will find a copy of my literature review on the benefits of community gardening attached. Given that the Sheboygan Community Garden has been providing these benefits to the community for 35 years, it is my hope that the city and neighborhood embrace the relocation of the Sheboygan Community Garden to Rennebohm Park. The majority of our gardeners live within one mile of Rennebohm Park, and many live in multi-family dwellings where space to garden would otherwise be unavailable if not for community gardens. In our previous location, Sheboygan Community Garden was able to provide fresh produce for 100 families on just slightly more than one acre of land. Rennebohm Park is a large and beautiful recreational resource on Madison's near west side, and I think the addition of the Sheboygan Community Garden to this space will only benefit the park, the neighborhood and the residents of this community. I encourage you and the City of Madison to fully support the relocation of Sheboygan Community Garden to Rennebohm Park.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter,

Jennifer Behnke, MPH candidate
314 N Segoe Rd. Unit 201
Madison, WI 53705
Ph. (920)277-7240



community gardens.docx

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Cindy Statz <coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org>

Comments on community gardens in Rennebohm Park

Jim Dudley <jim@berntsen-foundry.com>

Thu, Jan 21, 2016 at 11:46 AM

To: district11@cityofmadison.com

Cc: pehughes@wisc.edu, coordinator@sheboygancommunitygarden.org, Joe Keyes <joe.keyes@tdstelecom.com>, Jim Dudley <jim.j.dudley@gmail.com>

Alder Chris Schmidt,

We have never met, but I have some comments as a neighbor on both sides of this fence.

My wife Nancy and I have lived in the Hill Farms Neighborhood since 1978. The first 20 years on Marathon Drive, where we had a successful garden. In 1998 we moved with our two children to the other end of Hill Farm to Green Lake Pass, where we have a lot of oak trees, which are not conducive to vegetable gardening. About 5 years ago, I got a plot at the Sheboygan Community Garden.

On my way to work on the east side, I drive my car or ride my bicycle past Oscar Rennebohm Park (the "park", our park) twice per day. Past members of the Hill Farm Pool, we have viewed the park from across the street. A past treasurer of the Hill Farm Neighborhood Association, for over 30 years I have assisted at the 4th July picnic in the park with the children's races, balloon and egg tosses, set-up/ take-down, and (in recent years) have tried not to burn the burgers and brats. Over the years, I have walked through the park, cross country skied in the park, climbed on the jungle gym with my children in the park, ice skated on the rink at the park, held soccer practices there when I coached both children's youth soccer teams, marched the 4th of July parade route to the park with the Cub Scouts to begin the Hill Farm picnic, set up a compass course there when I was an assistant Boy Scout leader, barely returned volleys to my son at the park's tennis court, and am a regular attendee at Jim Latimer's Thursday night band concert in the park. I bore you with this amount of detail to show you that I am very familiar with Rennebohm Park, and to tell you that I have **never, ever seen Rennebohm Park over utilized**.

My Janesville grandfather, Albert Nelson Dudley, passed away 59 years ago. He had been a Rock County Supervisor and a local union president of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, and a lifelong gardener. In his basement he had a plaque: If you want to be happy for a Day, get Drunk. If you want to be happy for a Weekend, get Married. If you want to be happy for the rest of your life, Garden.

Sheboygan Community Gardens is (was) an interesting place, with a very diverse group of people bound by the common interest of gardening. (Lots of garden nerds like me.) We each have our favorite crops and we all grow them in different ways. We have a work day one Saturday each month, where you can see about fifty members tending to the paths and common areas. Almost silently like ants, working away. The rest of the month, anytime of day or evening, some of us will be there tending (tilling/planting/weeding) to our individual plot. To me the garden is very contemplative and therapeutic. It seems that way to visitors that I see as they stroll through, sometimes they stop at a plot being worked to ask about a plant or flower.

I looked over the proposal on your blog, it seems very conservative. If I had a vote I would propose placing the gardens along the entire north edge of the park, following the tree line, tapering down around the curve (tweaking the soccer field, if necessary).

I feel that any addition of gardens to the park would be a huge enhancement.

If the city would allow space in Oscar Rennebohm Park, the neighborhood will be in for a treat.

Those non-gardeners that visit, ask questions, and gain an interest can take away a priceless education, or they can simply stroll through and enjoy the views.

And my grandfather would smile.

Thank you for your involvement.

James Dudley

Proud Hill Farmer and Sheboygan Gardener

106 Green Lake Pass

53705

279-4467 cell

My name is Chris Klein and I live at 5039 Marathon Drive. I am the Treasurer for the Hill Farms Neighborhood Association and I serve on the City's Hill Farms Neighborhood Plan Committee. I am here to speak against the Community Gardens placement in Rennebohm Park. I am not speaking against Community Gardens, only this plan to relocate them in the park.

For the past three years, I have fought for increased public and private funding and support for Community Gardens, School Gardens and Farm to School programs in Wisconsin. In my role as Government Relations Director for a non-profit, I worked every day to increase awareness of the benefits of these programs not only for our communities but for our health.

I wholeheartedly believe in the benefits of Community Gardens. However, approving this plan would be a mistake and one the neighborhood would soon regret.

The current gardens have over 60 large plots. The gardens are extremely popular and there is a waiting list every year. There is less than a 20% turn-over rate. Most plots are coveted and not given up. That shows you why these gardens make such an impact in our community. The plan to locate some plots in Rennebohm Park is for 20 smaller plots – one fifth of the current size. For a garden where the plots were already coveted this drastic reduction in available space will make the new plots a “prized” possession. That is not Community.

Because the proposed park space is so small and there will be no space opportunity for expansion, the rarity of these plots will be reserved for a select few people. Is there really any greater community benefit in that scenario? When we lose precious park space, there should be a larger community good and not just providing garden space to a small group year after year – even leaving most other gardeners out.

Next, one only has to look at other large cities and their rules of locating community gardens in city park space to see the mistake we are making. Chicago's rules, for example, state “No existing healthy trees will be removed to accommodate a garden.” This plan will cut down five healthy trees. And, again, just for providing space to a small number of gardeners. Their rules also state “the gardens need to be in an underutilized park space.” I am surprised anyone could make the argument that this space is not utilized. For years, everyone has known that Rennebohm Park is maxed out of available space. Open space in a park is utilized by definition. What makes this space any less utilized than any other available space in the park? Thousands of people utilize our park each year. Once these gardens go in, we know how many people will utilize this space each year – only 20.

This plan is only a one or two year solution until space can be found to accommodate the full demand. When the real location is located will we remove these gardens? Will we keep this smaller area while also managing a larger garden in another park or even this park? How will the gardens decide what current plot owners will get one of these spots? If we keep them, the location of the these gardens will likely draw much bigger demand due to location and will they be managed separately? There are far too many unanswered questions to say “let's just cut down trees and take park space and we'll figure everything else out later.”

Of course, there are many people supporting this relocation. Plot owners will support the gardens at any location that is accessible to them. I understand that. But I'm afraid some neighbors are supporting this plan as a support of Community Gardens. That's not what this is about.

Community Gardens are far too important to our community and are so crucial to many of our neighbors; we shouldn't rush to throw something down to get a select few gardeners in the ground for 2016. I know Alder Chris Schmidt is desperately trying to do anything he can to help, but we should get this right the first time and embrace the spirit of community gardens. Our neighborhood is growing rapidly. A site that can only meet one-fifth of our current need and no room for expansion is the wrong choice. We can do better.

Chris Klein

5039 Marathon Drive

My name is Peter Hughes and I am the current President of the University Hill Farms Neighborhood Association Board.

I would like to personally express my appreciation to Alderman Schmidt for his efforts to find a workable solution to Sheboygan Community Garden's relocation especially in light of his recent announcement to resign as our District 11 alder. Finding a positive voice in politics these days can be challenging so thank-you for that positive voice and for the many extra hours you have invested in making our community a better place.

Our board was initially briefed about the Sheboygan Gardens desire to relocate to Rennebohm Park at our November 2015 board meeting. It must be acknowledged that the Garden at its DOT location was living on borrowed time for 5 to 7 years before the eviction from DOT this fall with the start of construction of the new office building. The presentation by Gardens representatives at our November meeting indicated an immediate need for a relatively unshaded area with access to a water hydrant or other city water source and the desire to re-establish the garden with similar size and number of gardening plots for the 2016 season. Rennebohm park was their preferred location due to easy access from the Sheboygan Ave apartments and because it does have publicly owned, unshaded open space. Subsequent discussions of board members resulted in the board deciding that it was not in favor of dedicating park open space for this purpose primarily due to the amount of space that would necessarily then be off-limits to a host of other activities from band concerts, soccer, softball, ice skating, etc. We were not at that time considering an option for reducing the number of plots as is now being discussed.

Several board members have been involved in meetings coordinated by Alderman Schmidt which included Garden representatives and staff from various city departments. At these meetings a number of alternatives were reviewed including looking at other publicly owned open spaces in the Hill Farms area and various location scenarios within Rennebohm Park. The end result of the meetings is Alderman Schmidt's plan being discussed this evening which is to site a smaller number of garden plots in the area east of the tennis courts. Board members have reviewed this plan and I can truthfully state that there was not a unanimous opinion to support this plan but, there was a majority of the board that feels we should, in the "spirit of cooperation" agree to this compromise plan as proposed by Alderman Schmidt. The board feels strongly that any expansion of the gardens beyond this plan should not take place within current Rennebohm Park boundaries.

Last week the board forwarded a copy of Alderman Schmidt's plan to our neighborhood association members using our list server and requested that comments be forwarded to me for compilation. ~~Since I really dislike spending hours reading email I was thinking I probably made a mistake in not begging someone else on the board to be the contact person.~~ I was rather surprised though that I received only 8 comments from other than board members and that the comments were equally divided between those supporting the garden within the park and those not supporting it. This few number of responses makes it difficult to gage the true response of the neighborhood in general and hopefully this evening's meeting will elicit more of their thoughts.

Thank-you

Can Community Gardens Improve Food Security, Health, and Fruit and Vegetable Consumption
in Wisconsin?

Jennifer Behnke

Des Moines University

Can Community Gardens Improve Food Security, Health, and Fruit and Vegetable Consumption
in Wisconsin?

Community gardens are communal spaces for growing food that have a long, rich history, with the concept most recently revived in the form of Victory Gardens during World War II (McCormack, Laska, Larson, & Story, 2010; Twiss, et al., 2003). Community gardens are advantageous because a gardener does not need to own their gardening space and tools to be able to grow their own fruits and vegetables; therefore individuals and families living in multi-family residential units such as apartments are still able to fully participate. Community gardens are able to furnish large quantities of fruits and vegetables for very little startup cost (Alaimo, Packnett, Miles, & Kruger, 2008). For this reason, they have the potential to improve fruit and vegetable consumption, improve health outcomes such as obesity and overall perception of health, and foster community involvement and cooperation. The benefits of community gardens can make an even greater impact on those who experience food insecurity, defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as limited access to sufficient food supply due to economic limitations or other reasons (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh, 2014). Food insecurity threatens one's ability to receive enough nourishment to sustain normal desired activities of daily living, and can be caused by a lack of financial resources to purchase adequate food, or by other geographical barriers such as not having transportation to travel a reasonable distance to a place that sells food (Kropf, Holben, Holcomb, & Anderson, 2007; Stuff, et al., 2004). By examining how community gardens can affect these indicators, their potential benefits can be illustrated and public health can be improved.

Residents in Wisconsin could benefit from improved access to fresh fruits and vegetables and reduced rates of obesity and chronic diseases. In 2009, just 22.7% of adults in the state

consumed the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables per day; in 2013, one in four adults consumed less than one serving of vegetables per day (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). The rate of obesity among adults in Wisconsin is 29.8%, slightly higher than the national rate of 28.9% (CDC, 2015). The prevalence rate of cardiovascular disease in adults in Wisconsin is 4.9%, higher than the national rate of 4.1%. However, the prevalence rate of diabetes in adults in Wisconsin is 8.2%, lower than the national rate of 9.8% (CDC, 2015). Nevertheless, participation in a community garden could improve all of these metrics for the residents of Wisconsin.

Food insecurity can threaten health and affects a significant portion of the population. In 2013, 14.3% of U.S. households were food insecure, with 9.9% of these households having children, and 5.6% being very food insecure, defined as when food intake and diets are specifically restricted in response to lack of resources (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014). Of these food insecure households, 62% reported receiving some sort of food assistance in the previous month (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014). In comparison, 11.6% of households are food insecure, and 5% are very food insecure in the state of Wisconsin (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2014).

Having access to healthy food, such as from a community garden, can improve food security and health status. One study found that when families participated in a community garden, the frequency with which those families worried about having adequate access to food dropped from 31% to 3.1%, strongly suggesting that their involvement in the community garden drastically improved their own perceptions of their food security (Carney, et al., 2012). Further, Alaimo et al. (2008) concluded that the benefit of community gardens to food security is twofold, not only through the direct provision of fresh fruits and vegetables, but also by

overcoming the transportation barrier that can result in food insecurity when gardens aren't readily accessible.

Food insecurity is tied to poor quality diets and can thus affect health status and academic performance. A study by Kropf et al. (2007) found a strong association between poor perceived diet quality and being food insecure. The authors also discovered that the provision of vouchers for purchasing fresh fruits and vegetables from grocery stores or farmers' markets improved subjects' perceptions of their diet quality (Kropf et al., 2007). Food insecurity is also a strong predictor of poor health. In self-reported assessments of health status, 36.8% of U.S. adults who were food insecure reported being in fair or poor health, in contrast with only 16% of food secure adults; this was tied to an increase in disease and disability while reducing ability to fight infection (Stuff et al., 2004). Another study found similar results, adding that academic performance was poorer in U.S. children who experience food insecurity (Eisenmann, Gundersen, Lohman, Garasky, & Stewart, 2011). This study found, however, that involvement in supplemental nutrition programs was found to be a protective factor for perception of health status and academic performance (Eisenmann et al., 2011).

There is a well-documented positive association between community garden access and fruit and vegetable consumption. While studies varied in the magnitude of that association, all found that having access to fresh fruits and vegetables increases their intake (Carney, et al., 2012; Castro, Samuels, & Harman, 2013; Chaufan, Yeh, & Sigal, 2015; Lackey, 1998; McAleese & Rankin, 2007; McCormack et al., 2010); (Nanney, Johnson, Elliott, & Haire-Joshu, 2007; Twiss, et al., 2003). Carney et al. (2012) found that the percentage of subjects reporting consumption of vegetables "several times a day" increased from 18.2% to 84.8% over the course of their study. McAleese and Rankin (2007) noted that fruit and vegetable consumption more

than doubled (from 1.93 servings to 4.5 servings) in school groups that participated in a community gardening program. These subjects were also found to increase their intake of vitamins A and C and fiber. These findings provide strong evidence in support of using community gardens to increase fruit and vegetable intake among subjects.

Community gardens have beneficial effects beyond improved food security and fruit and vegetable intake. In one study, subjects that had access to a community garden consumed fewer sweets and sweetened beverages (McCormack et al., 2010). Another study of families participating in a community garden reported that 17% of children from these families dropped into a lower body mass index (BMI) status (from obese to overweight or overweight to normal); none of these children went into a higher BMI status during the course of the program (Castro et al., 2013). These indicators could be explained by increased fruit and vegetable intake, and they are promising observations. Hale et al. (2011) also found a psychological benefit from community gardens including a sense of wellbeing from the very act of gardening, and these experiences encourage gardeners to increase their involvement to reap more of these benefits. The positive psychological benefit has been found to benefit overall health, due to the intertwined nature of physical and psychological health (Hale et al., 2011).

Many studies have found health benefits beyond individual health indicators that reinforce community health. The benefit of this is a safer, more cooperative community that supports and reinforces collective wellbeing. While this is harder to quantify beyond subject perceptions, there is an overall positive benefit in better physical and psychological health and a sense of community wellness, belonging and safety. Teig et al. (2009) found that these benefits included social connections, civic engagement and community building, a sense of reciprocity, collective decision making and mutual trust. These benefits were built through activities in the

community garden such as garden events, sharing garden bounty, and sharing tips and recipes on food preparation and storage (Teig et al., 2009). Twiss et al. (2003) adds that community gardens foster a sense of community ownership, engagement and pride.

Several factors support the success of community gardens, and potential challenges must be identified in order to maximize this success. Alaimo et al. (2008) noted that the benefits of community gardens are especially significant in areas where open land is available, even though the area might be home to a large renting population. An analysis by Zoellner, Zando, Price, Bonner, and Hill (2012) found that churches, organizations, and schools are especially suited to host community gardens and related activities due to their community-based nature. Potential participants expressed a desire to participate in a community garden and eat the produce grown in that garden. Loopstra and Tarasuk (2013) analyzed the challenges of community garden involvement that resulted in poor participation, and found that adequate promotion of community garden activities, including what was involved or how and where to participate, helped improve involvement. When an existing community garden is not close enough to make its use practical, locations for new, nearby gardens should be explored to expand access. This helps to overcome the lack of access problem that was identified when community gardens were found to not be close enough to make their use feasible (Loopstra & Tarasuk, 2013). Identifying these challenges and providing workable solutions maximizes the benefits of community gardens to the greatest number of potential participants.

In conclusion, community gardens offer several health benefits, including enhanced fruit and vegetable intake, food security, health outcomes and community wellbeing. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of existing community gardens in increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and improving food security, obesity rates and health outcomes in Wisconsin. We

hypothesize that participating in a community garden will lead to significantly increased fruit and vegetable intake, improved food security, decreased obesity rates, a reduction in chronic health conditions, and an improved sense of community wellbeing among participants living in Wisconsin. If changes in these indicators due to community gardens are significant, it will provide evidence for supporting the expansion of community garden opportunities, garden facilities, and funding for such programs.

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