



Community Gardens Committee

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December 9, 2014

To: Mike Huebsch, Secretary
Department of Administration
P. O. Box 7864
Madison, WI 53707-7864

Summer Strand, Secretary
State Building Commission
P. O. Box 7866
Madison, WI 53707-7866

Re: Sheboygan Community Gardens and RFP #505-004

Dear Secretaries Huebsch and Strand,

We are writing on behalf of the Madison Community Gardens Committee, which provides a public forum where garden advocates and government officials can work together to build a productive and sustainable system of community gardens in our city. It has come to our attention that the Sheboygan Garden is threatened by development proposals requested by the State of Wisconsin that owns the land on which it is located. We respectfully request that you find a way to preserve this garden and honor the community values it represents.

Madison today owes much of the strength and vitality of its community gardens to the determination of Sheboygan gardeners to preserve their plots for the past three decades. They were leaders in forming the Madison Community Gardens Coalition in 1995, which was critical to saving the garden from a proposed parking lot on the current site, and also petitioned the City to form an ad hoc advisory group to support gardens throughout the community. That ad hoc group became the Community Gardens Committee, and the City further expressed the value it places on local food initiatives by creating a Food Policy Council in 2012 on which the Community Gardens Committee has a seat.

Despite its uncertain tenure, the Sheboygan Garden has flourished. Since its founding in 1981, gardeners have enriched the clay soil with compost, mulch and other organic matter. Although there is a waiting list, gardeners have adhered to strict plot limits, and over 100 families tend the 60 plots on the current site. Gardeners are of many races, one-third of them speak a language other than English in their homes and 40% are low income. There are numerous raised beds available for those with accessibility challenges. Sheboygan was one of Madison's first community gardens to organize for self-management, becoming a model for others, and remains one of the most successful community gardens in the city.

The Sheboygan Garden is a successful community endeavor – committed, inclusive, productive and self-sustaining. It is an asset to the immediate neighborhood as well as to gardeners and community-based organizations throughout Madison. The Community Gardens Committee encourages the State of Wisconsin, through its representatives at the Department of Administration and the State Building Commission, to preserve the Sheboygan Garden in whatever development proposal is accepted for the property on which it is located. Many options were explored, and provisions were made, in the previous project that was approved in 2007; we hope and expect that the same level of care and attention will be provided in the current process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Nan Fey, co-chair
Community Gardens Committee



Jill Schneider, co-chair
Community Gardens Committee

cc: Cindy Torstveit, Administrator, Division of Facilities Management, DOA
R. J. Binau, Director Capital Budget & Construction Administration, DOA
State Senator Fred Risser
Mayor Paul Soglin
Matt Tucker, City of Madison Zoning Administrator
Alder Chris Schmidt, Madison Common Council District 11