

INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide Springfield Community Gardens (SCG) in developing a network of gardens and a healthy food corridor.

BACKGROUND

Springfield Community Gardens began when a small group of residents, planning students and professionals joined together with the idea of forming a neighborhood garden in the Grant Beach Neighborhood. In partnership with Springfield-Greene County Parks Department and the City's Planning and Neighborhoods Office, plans were developed to build an accessible garden on recently acquired school-park property, between Weaver Elementary School and Grant Beach Park. Construction of the garden was funded in 2011 via the City's Neighborhood Assessment Program. In addition to the garden, activities were implemented such as seed swaps, a literacy-horseback riding program, garden parties and various educational classes.

SCG experienced explosive growth in 2014 when they officially formed as a 501(c)(3) with the mission of expanding their model to new areas across the City. Ozarks Food Harvest partnered with SCG in the summer of 2014 to create a weekly supplemental fresh produce distribution for the Grant Beach Neighborhood. By the end of 2014 the neighborhood received over 46,000 pounds produce to complement the 2,000 pounds gleaned from the Grant Beach Neighborhood Garden. In addition, the distribution created a solid volunteer base of 40 garden members, which logged over a 1,000 volunteer hours in just 5 short months.

VISION

To establish a network of community-led garden food hubs to empower neighborhoods by:

- Addressing food insecurity
- Building relationships and social capital
- Improving their food environment and choices
- Creating a sense of place
- Attracting and retaining families, businesses and young professionals

GOALS

The goals of SCG are to:

- Support and connect community gardens throughout the city
- Establish a thriving neighborhood food corridor
- Promote successful food production, garden education and healthy eating
- Collaborate with community partners and initiatives that promote sustainable activities
- Support healthy food cooperatives

ACTION PLAN**1st Year SCG**

- Establish multiple community gardens
 - Foster a volunteer base
 - Identify garden leaders
 - Activities such as annual seed swap, garden festivals and youth programs
 - Collaboration with health department for data analysis
 - Provide supportive documentation (land use agreements, by-laws, liability insurance, waivers, membership applications, etc.)
 - Mentoring and expertise
 - Facilitate site planning and design of gardens
 - Strive for the design, planning, site preparation and utility coordination
- Replicate Ozarks Food Harvest produce distribution as a supplemental program in conjunction with Springfield Community Gardens
- Establish the Fairbanks as the official home of SCG and explore growing new services and programs, such as cooking, canning and other educational venues
- Pursue grants and sustainable funding sources
- Develop a Marketing plan for SCG, such as building a website and other forms of social media
- Reach out to local universities and colleges to increase civic engagement
- Create new partnerships and maintain current relationships that support SCG's vision, such as Ozarks Food Harvest GleanTeam and relationships with other area farmers.

2nd Year SCG

- Maintain established community gardens while exploring additional garden sites
- Pursue grants and additional funding sources
- Charrette with C-Street businesses, Moon City District, and other organizations to build the healthy food corridor
- Promote entrepreneurship with mobile food trucks, cafes, farmer's markets, and other cottage industry developments
- Continue effort with the City of Springfield to develop a land transfer program based on success of the gardens
- Advocate public policy and city ordinances that promote community gardens
- Support food cooperatives through supplemental produce from the community gardens and buying power from SCG's membership pool for other food resources (i.e. cheese, milk, meat)

3rd Year SCG

- Strengthen the interconnectedness of volunteers and gardens to create unity among the community gardens
- Manage garden resources to include volunteer and membership databases, garden tools, plant distributions, supply purchases
- Coordination of education efforts (i.e. cooking and gardening classes)
- Promote framework for community grocery store(s)

Measurable Outcomes

- Build the food corridor with 5 community gardens in 3 adjacent center city neighborhoods.
- Foster the growth of 5-10 community gardens at various locations within the city or on the periphery, providing varying levels of support