



South Renton Community Garden

SEPT 2011 - BUSINESS PLAN & REQUEST



GREY to GREENs



growing leaders,
building a neighborhood

REQUEST

The South Renton Connection requests that the current parking lot between Houser and 5th Ave S on Burnett Avenue be downsized by half and that the south three lots be leased to the South Renton Neighborhood for use as a community garden.

VISION STATEMENT

Establishment of a South Renton Community Garden will provide a beautiful common space where neighbors can gather. This garden will promote a healthier community and provide a green space where neighbors support each other in growing food, utilizing sustainable garden practices. Our community garden will serve as a classroom for all ages and abilities to learn and practice urban land stewardship and organic gardening skills while developing community leaders.

ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

- Renton “sits smack in the middle of a USDA food desert¹ stretching miles in every direction.” The Economist 7/7/2011²
- According to the comparisons across the United States, “when compared to the 15 most populous metropolitan counties, the magnitude of King County’s health inequities are among the worst in the nation”³.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The South Renton Neighborhood, bounded by 3rd Ave S, Main Street, Grady Way and Rainier Ave, is a residential community surrounded by businesses. Based on 2000 Census data, the community has:

- 60% to 80% of housing is renter-occupied;
- A higher than average percentage of renters who pay more than 30% of their income for housing costs;
- A more stable resident base than would be expected, given the ratio of tenants to owners;
- 20% to 40% of its children under the age of 18 living below the poverty level;
- A majority of households with children have only one resident parent;
- 18% to 36% of its residents living below 200% of the poverty level;
- 80% to 100% of its Hispanic/Latino population living below the poverty level (the highest percentage in the area);

¹ The USDA defines a food desert as a census area where at least 20% of inhabitants are below the poverty line and 33% live more than a mile from a supermarket. The Economist relied, in part, on a recent study from the Centre for Public Health Nutrition at the University of Washington.

² <http://www.economist.com/node/18929190>

³ CDC Communities Putting Prevention to Work King County Health Data 2010:
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/partnerships/cppw/kcprofile.aspx>

- 40% to 60% of its African American population living below the poverty level (one of the higher percentages in the area);
- 26% to 38% of its working-age population (21-64 years old) self-identify as disabled; and
- Among the lowest daily consumption of fruits and vegetables (3.71 servings/day)

ORIGIN AND HISTORY

The South Renton Connection, our neighborhood association, was formed in 2008 to promote community within the boundaries of South Renton. We meet the first Tuesday of each month and plan quarterly activities for our neighborhood including an Easter Egg Hunt, summer picnic, yard sale and neighborhood clean up.

The concept for the South Renton Community Garden grew out of a 2010 neighborhood planning processes that identified a need for active green space, ongoing interest by community members and strong neighborhood leaders. There is increased support and interest in providing families with access to fresh, healthy food and education about nutrition especially as South Renton is bordered by fast food establishments.

Our community garden will bring together neighbors of all different cultural, age and socio-economic backgrounds and increase their pride in our neighborhood. A community garden will be a selling point for people seeking to move to South Renton. As part of Renton City Planning it has been the intent to extend the Linear Park north to Houser creating additional green space.

It is the advice of South Renton Connection that a community garden is a best-use plan for the parking lot on Burnett rather than another expanse of grass that requires upkeep. The community garden will strengthen the north/south connection to downtown, the Farmers Market, river and new library. It will provide visible proof of community involvement in South Renton and in the pride that neighbors take in their community. Because of its visibility it will help dispel the unfounded notion that downtown Renton is not a safe place.

The existing parking lot is primarily used by local businesses and residents and parking needs have been reduced significantly with the Dinner Train no longer functioning. A Parking Count Survey, performed last spring, is attached as Appendix A.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF SOUTH RENTON COMMUNITY GARDEN

The SRC Garden will promote organic, sustainable garden practices through classes, including four season gardening and water conservation.

To obviate the need for possible environmental mitigation, the entire garden will be constructed above ground, leaving the asphalt in place to serve as a barrier. Elements of the garden include:

- The garden will be ADA compliant, with an area of the garden for use by the handicapped.
- A children's area, which can include special small plots for children.
- A watering system will be developed for the community garden focusing on water conservation.

- A shared composting area will be constructed for educational practical purposes.
- Educational programs will be incorporated into the garden, initially in partnership with Master Gardeners of King County, Seattle Tilth, and other non-profits.
- Plots will be available to community members. Plots for individual participation are necessary to achieve long-term community involvement. There will also be communal areas where neighbors garden collectively and share in the harvest.
- Priority membership is open to citizens living or working within the South Renton Neighborhood border. If additional space is available, it will be made available to other citizens.
- A tool shed or other structure for storing tools, supplies, and materials.
- A central gathering area for educational and community events.
- The garden will be landscaped and fenced with edible fruits and native drought tolerant plants.
- The South Renton Community Garden will be an attractive bridge between the downtown area and South Renton neighborhood.
- The Garden's permanent landscaping will be an attractive neighborhood feature, enhancing property values.

BUSINESS PLAN

South Renton Connection has City-held mitigation funds for this project. We anticipate that local businesses will donate goods and services in support of the project. Volunteers will supply much of the necessary expertise and manual labor to implement this project.

As the garden grows, fees from plot rent, memberships, grants, workshops, classes, and donations from local businesses will be available to maintain the garden.

PROPOSED BUSINESS MODEL

The South Renton Community Garden is designed to be interactive, with opportunities for year-round participation of the greater South Renton and City Center communities. Key elements of the South Renton Community Garden structure include:

- Integration of communal and individual garden plots, and educational spaces
- Committee leadership (a steering committee) will provide ongoing direction
- Maintenance of green space primarily taken care of by the neighborhood
- The garden will be open to all, rather than closed off to non-participants
- Integration with the local business community, from suppliers to restaurants
- Partnerships with non-profits and other entities focused on gardening will provide more options for community engagement and education
- As the SRCG will be leasing the property from the City, we anticipate that the City will continue to provide basic services, such as sanitation, water, sewer, and garbage and liability insurance.

The steering committee will take the role of garden manager, overseeing all programming, use of garden spaces, and volunteers. The steering committee will recruit and train volunteers from the community and partner-organizations.

SAFETY

The Garden Plan includes perimeter plantings that will secure the borders of the garden, provide a visual barrier and help secure the site. There will be a fence and locking gate that will limit access to the garden to the participating gardeners. The garden will be open during specified hours. The water access for the garden will be inside the garden perimeter to limit unauthorized use.

The creation of the community garden will encourage increased neighbor contact and relationships. This will create a proprietary feeling and investment among garden participants and neighbors in the security of the garden and enhance the security of the neighborhood overall. Including children and teens from the neighborhood as well as many of the ethnic groups in the garden program strengthens their investment in promoting the security of the garden and making it a safe place in the neighborhood.

Community gardens enhance neighborhood safety, as documented in the study “Environment and Behavior” by Frances E. Kuo and William C. Sullivan from May of 2001. Their findings include:

- “Residents living in ‘greener’ surroundings report lower levels of fear, fewer incivilities, and less aggressive and violent behavior. “
- “The greener a building's surroundings are the fewer total crimes; moreover, this relationship extended to both property crimes and violent crimes.”

OPPORTUNITY WITHIN PROPOSED MODEL

This community garden is being built “from the ground, up” with community members taking part in concept design, construction, and longer-term programming. It will be an effective means of teaching community-building.

The South Renton model offers a blend of services ranging from building and maintaining gardens to providing opportunities for volunteerism and community service. The model also provides gardening classes for all ages to specialized programs that connect children and teens to the outdoors and environmental stewardship.

As the community’s diverse residents gather to garden and learn, they will form relationships that will solidify the South Renton community. The Garden website will provide a forum for neighbors to communicate with each and with the larger community.

CHALLENGES FOR PROPOSED MODEL

The ideal of this proposal – using the garden as a means of developing a sense of community while developing community leadership – also provides its biggest challenges --continued leadership, direction, and coordination of activities. The North Renton Community Garden minimizes the need for community leadership and direction because City staff fills those roles. The South Renton Community Garden Steering Committee will actively recruit and train volunteers and leaders, raising up community leaders along with raising fruits and vegetables.

LEADERSHIP & ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

We have a three year commitment from a group of South Renton neighbors to serve as the initial Steering Committee, taking the Community Garden through construction and implementation. Leadership at the community garden is a vital part of this garden's success. Leadership will involve building strategic partnerships with residents, community leaders and local businesses. The ultimate goal of the garden is to develop community leaders.

BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with the business community of Renton will be a key element in the success of the garden. The main components of the business connection are:

- Recognition program - local businesses including McLendon's Hardware and Cedar Grove Compost have expressed support for a garden project and have committed to contribute materials. Sponsors will be visibly recognized.
- Outreach – the garden facility will be available to local senior housing communities, pre-schools and other organized groups for their programs.

EVALUATION

The South Renton Community Garden anticipates adopting an evaluation process, in partnership with the City, to ensure that the goals of the Community Garden are met and that the Community Garden continues to serve the needs of the South Renton Community and the City of Renton. If this project is approved, the South Renton Community Garden's initial steering committee will develop evaluation forms based on those developed by the American Community Gardening Association.

TARGET DATES

Final plan and budget adoption	September – November 2011
Construction begins	January 2012
Permanent landscaping and irrigation installed	March 2012
Gardening begins	May 2012

Updated proposal completed Sept. 16, 2011 by

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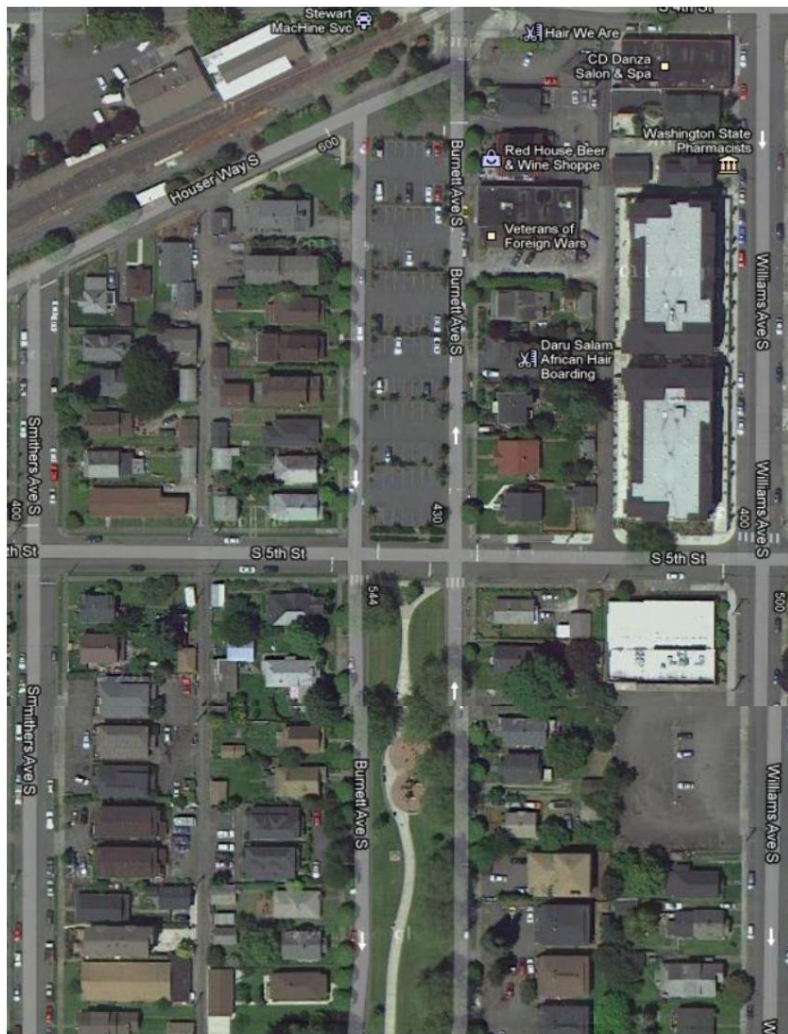
PARKING COUNT SURVEY FOR SOUTH RENTON COMMUNITY GARDEN PROPOSAL

Parking Count Methodology

- ◆ In person count of vehicles parked in the proposed garden area, the southern 3 sections of the 6 sections, of off-street parking north of Burnett Park between 5th and Houser.
- ◆ 40 parking counts conducted during varied day-time hours during one month time period.
- ◆ Count empty vehicle spaces in the non-garden off-street parking area (west of Redhouse, VFW, etc) to see if parked vehicles in proposed garden-area had stalls available to park in.
- ◆ View available on-street parking on South 5th within one block (to Williams Ave & Smithers Ave) at same time of off-street vehicle counts in proposed garden area to see if parked vehicles in garden-area had stalls available to park in.
- ◆ This count did not take into account free on-street parking options greater than one-block away.

Findings:

- ◆ 13 of 40 counts showed there was not sufficient parking in the non-garden northern parking area.
- ◆ Of the 13 counts when space was not available in the northern parking area for vehicles parked in the proposed garden area, there was sufficient on-street parking available within one-block for all vehicles in the proposed garden area, on Burnett between 5th and Houser (both northbound and southbound) and additionally on South 5th between Smithers and Williams Avenues.
- ◆ Historically, the parking area was also used by the now defunct Washington Dinner Train visitors.
- ◆ The city's transportation group has a downtown parking study that covers this area that shows there is more than sufficient parking availability for users.



Parking
Counts

Time	Day	Date	Month	Number of vehicles parked in proposed garden area	Is there sufficient space available in the northern non-garden area?	Is there parking space available on Burnett, same block north of S. 5th?	Is there parking space available on S. 5th within one block of 5th and Burnett (to Shattuck and to Williams)?	Is there parking space available on Burnett, south of S. 5th?	If not sufficient parking space available in northern non-garden parking area, is there enough available with on-street parking with both Burnett and S. 5th?
11am	Tue	15	March	6	Y	Y	Y	Y	
6pm	Tue	15	March	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1230pm	Wed	16	March	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
730pm	Wed	16	March	22	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
530pm	Thur	17	March	20	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
8am	Sat	19	March	30	Y	Y	Y	Y	
9am	Mon	21	March	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1230pm	Tue	22	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
830pm	Wed	23	March	30	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
12pm	Thur	24	March	6	Y	Y	Y	Y	
5pm	Thur	24	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
730pm	Thur	24	March	5	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
1240pm	Fri	25	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
430pm	Sat	26	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
10am	Sun	27	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
12pm	Mon	28	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
5pm	Mon	28	March	9	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
7pm	Mon	28	March	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
12pm	Tue	29	March	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
8pm	Tue	29	March	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	
530pm	Wed	30	March	10	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
6pm	Thur	31	March	10	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
8pm	Thur	31	March	3	Y	Y	Y	Y	
7pm	Fri	1	April	35	N	Not Southbound, Yes Northbound	Y	Y	YES
10am	Sat	2	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
4pm	Sun	3	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
1230pm	Mon	4	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
9am	Tue	5	April	6	Y	Y	Y	Y	
7pm	Sat	9	April	1	Y	Y	Y	Y	
5pm	Sun	10	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
5pm	Mon	11	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
530pm	Wed	13	April	24	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
620pm	Wed	13	April	35	N	Not Southbound, Yes Northbound	Y	Y	YES
5pm	Thur	14	April	5	Y	Y	Y	Y	
630pm	Thur	14	April	5	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
5pm	Fri	15	April	5	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
630pm	Fri	15	April	5	N	Y	Y	Y	YES
630pm	Sat	16	April	4	Y	Y	Y	Y	
430pm	Mon	18	April	6	Y	Y	Y	Y	
610pm	Tue	19	April	2	Y	Y	Y	Y	

South Renton Community Garden Proposal Development List of Meetings

October 11, 2010: Meeting to prioritize association's interest and commitment to garden concept.

November 4, 2010: Meeting with city's transportation group to officially say the community garden idea is the neighborhood association's number one project to focus on.

December 7, 2010: Meeting included discussion of next steps for garden concept.

January 12, 2011: Meeting to start forming vision and concept for garden.

January 27, 2011: Meeting about vision and concept development.

January 28, 2011: Meeting with Salvation Army Food Bank and Captain Terry to discuss garden opportunities for community and possible partnerships.

January 28, 2011: Meeting with city staff to introduce project concepts and understand next steps.

February 9, 2011: Meeting to further develop vision, concept, potential property locations, etc.

February 18, 2011: Meeting with city staff to propose priority garden site location.

February 25, 2011: Discussion with Cedar Grove and King County bio-solids about possibilities with potential garden.

March 3, 2011: Meeting to further develop garden programming, concept, vision, rules, etc.

March 10, 2011: Meeting with Executive Director of Seattle Tilth in Seattle to discuss possibilities of Seattle Tilth's assistance in helping establish a garden as the city was going to partner with them on 6 community gardens through a grant process.

March 16, 2011: Meeting to further develop garden programming, concept, vision, rules, etc.

April 6, 2011: Meeting with city regarding City Center plan and communication to city staff present about garden concept, steps neighborhood have been asked to take, location, next steps, etc.

April 14, 2011: Meeting with Sustainable Renton to discuss possible partnerships.

May 3, 2011: Meeting included discussion of next steps for developing garden plan.

June 2011: Meeting at Interbay Community Garden in Seattle with gardeners to discuss their process and garden elements, construction, etc.

June 2011: Meeting with Seattle University gardening lead on the Southend Wastewater Treatment plant garden who offered volunteer interns.

July 7, 2011: Update of where garden plans are, discussion of elements, next steps.

July 11, 2011: Meeting on business plan elements.

August 4, 2011: Meeting about business plan elements.

August 15, 2011: Meeting about business plan elements.

August 17, 2011: Meeting at City Hall with city staff to present draft business plan and discussion of next steps.

August 21, 2011: Meeting on next steps as discussed by city staff.