

## **Grow to Share City Plans Statement**

With the recent release of the outdoor recreation draft plan, we are reaching out to respectfully express our "growing" concerns. As our organization works diligently to procure grants to continue operations and seek out further high level funding to improve sustainable living and learning throughout Western Wisconsin, it is time for true collaboration between the City of River Falls and Grow to Share.

Most critically, the draft plan notes that a city the size of River Falls needs 1.8 units of community garden space, while Grow to Share (GTS) is noted to have 7 units. This erroneously implies that there is an unnecessarily large amount of community garden space. This number needs to be changed to accurately denote 1.0, as GTS is one community garden organization.

Furthermore, the current GTS location supports space for future development for the community of an educational facility providing restrooms, shelter, classroom, greenhouse and a kitchen to provide educational opportunities on sustainability, healthy cooking and food preservation. The healthy soil our volunteers have nurtured for over a decade is an increasingly rare natural resource. Over the years the overall quality of the soil has improved. The sustainable crop rotation practices and soil improvement practices have resulted in a reduced weed seed bank, increased biota, improved soil structure and increased organic matter content. The reality is that healthy soil begets healthy food and it continues to be lost at an alarming rate. The land we currently use is alive with invertebrate organisms and free of pesticides, herbicides and chemicals.

We request a seat at the table to discuss the future of GTS and the River Falls community. The two options that we have unofficially been made aware of will harm GTS and the River Falls community and surrounding area. Presently, we are nestled amid other wonderful community offerings such as First National Bank Field, camping, TriAngels Park, and hiking. We are also in easy walking and biking distance for much of the city making the community garden accessible to those who benefit most by its location.

As the U.S. (and the world) moves towards sustainability, Grow to Share stands as a solitary beacon in Western Wisconsin. We intend to be a flagship for River Falls and the surrounding community. To quietly tuck GTS away is unsuitable and myopic both now and for future generations. There is much more we look forward to discussing and processing once we are in open, transparent dialogue.

Respectfully,  
Grow to Share Board of Directors