

**Graduate School of Education**  
Educational Leadership & Policy

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October 10, 2014

RE: Comprehensive Plan Testimony for Green Thumb (6801 SE 60th Avenue)

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

We strongly support the re-designation and re-zoning the 12.8 acre urban agriculture and education site known as "Green Thumb" (6801 SE 60th Avenue) from Low Density Multi-Family Residential with an Alternative Design Density Overlay (R2A) to a designation that best reflects its actual use: Open Space (OS).

For almost a decade faculty and students in the Leadership for Sustainability Education master's program at Portland State University have been deeply engaged in community-based sustainability work at the Learning Gardens Laboratory (LGL). The Learning Garden Laboratory (LGL) is a garden-based education program that is located at the 12 acre Green Thumb site. The mission of the Learning Gardens Lab is to support academic achievement, leadership development, and a local sustainable food system by providing garden-based education for public school students and their families, university students, and community members. Established in 2005, LGL exists as a unique partnership between Portland State University, Portland Public Schools, The City of Portland's Parks and Recreation, and Oregon State University Extension Service.

The Learning Gardens Laboratory at Green Thumb provides a wide array of programs that serve the local community:

- **Garden-based education:** Lane Middle School students learn about the principles of sustainability especially as they relate to growing food via integration of school subjects.
- **Courses and workshops for PK-12 educators** about how to create garden-based sustainability curriculum.
- **Service-learning capstone courses** with over 100 Portland State University students each year.
- **Hands-on gardening and sustainable living skills** with local neighbors in the Lane Family Garden and the OSU Master Gardener Demonstration Garden.
- **Community events** open to everyone: The fall Harvest Festival and the April Earth Day Festival.
- **Economic development** and a local sustainable food system development through our Farmer-in-Residence program, our weekly farm stand, and through OSU Extension's Beginning Urban Farming Apprenticeship Program.

Given the scope and breadth of educational programs and partnerships at the Green Thumb site, we strongly urge that the site be rezoned, so as to protect the space from residential development. This

is important for several reasons. First the Learning Gardens Lab at Green Thumb aligns with the city of Portland's long-term sustainability goals. Learning gardens are rich learning sites due to their ecological and sociocultural benefits, and provide a hands-on way for university students and school children to engage in complex sustainability issues such as the development of sustainable local food systems and clean watersheds. Second, the Green Thumb site serves a diverse and disenfranchised community, often comprising new immigrant and refugee families. Each week nearly 200 middle school students from diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds participate in direct, hands-on learning at Green Thumb. These racial and ethnic minority students study science, math, writing, and social studies in the garden, experience the process of growing and harvesting food, and learn the importance of good nutrition and eating habits. Research at LGL has shown that this engagement in garden-based learning increases students' motivation and achievement in school. Third, the site also serves to help mitigate food insecurity in the neighborhood by offering garden plots for neighborhood families, garden-based and urban farming education, and a weekly farm stand for the community.

Portland State University has dedicated considerable resources to the Green Thumb site over the past ten years and is committed to continuing our strong relationships and programs to address the needs of outer southeast Portland. In close partnership with the Brentwood Darlington Neighborhood Association, we urge you to rezone the Green Thumb site to OS, in order to protect and reflect its actual use.

Sincerely,



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