

Strengthening Providence with Community Gardens

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Master's Thesis Presentation

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Premise:

- Health & social benefits to gardening
- Gardens served financial purpose during past wars
- Assume social or environmental venture is most successful when economically sustainable

Question:

Can Providence have a financially sustainable community garden network that would promote a healthy city and aid its citizens and itself economically?

Overview:

- I. Community garden harvest accountings
- II. Public value & support for gardens
- III. Providence Community Garden Strategic Plan

I. Harvest Accountings

Determine the net economic value of a community garden plot:

- At the Urban Environmental Lab (UEL)
- Compared to kitchen gardens in Scarborough, ME & Belmont, MA

I. Harvest Accountings

Method:

- Gardeners weighed and recorded their plot harvests for 2008 season
- Recordings aggregated by vegetable
- Each vegetable assigned retail price per pound:
 - Broad Street Farmers' Market
 - Scarborough, ME Farmers' Market
 - Providence, RI CSA
 - RI Farmer
 - Whole Foods

I. Harvest Accountings

Results:

- 17 gardeners and 19 plots participated; July-Nov
- Nearly 700 lbs of vegetables harvested
- UEL garden harvest = \$1,800 to \$2,400
- Extrapolate value to whole garden:
 - One garden plot = \$90 to \$130
 - Whole garden = \$2,600 to \$3,600
- Compare ME garden plot = \$70 to \$80
and MA garden plot = \$125 to \$200

I. Harvest Accountings

- Annual cost to gardener = \$20 to \$45
- Cost (w/ labor) to build Parks Dept. garden:
 - = \$8,000 to \$9,000
 - = \$20,000 to \$24,000 (incl. water installation)
- Alternate cost to build a garden:
 - = \$4,000 to \$5,000
 - Includes neither water installation nor labor

I. Harvest Accountings

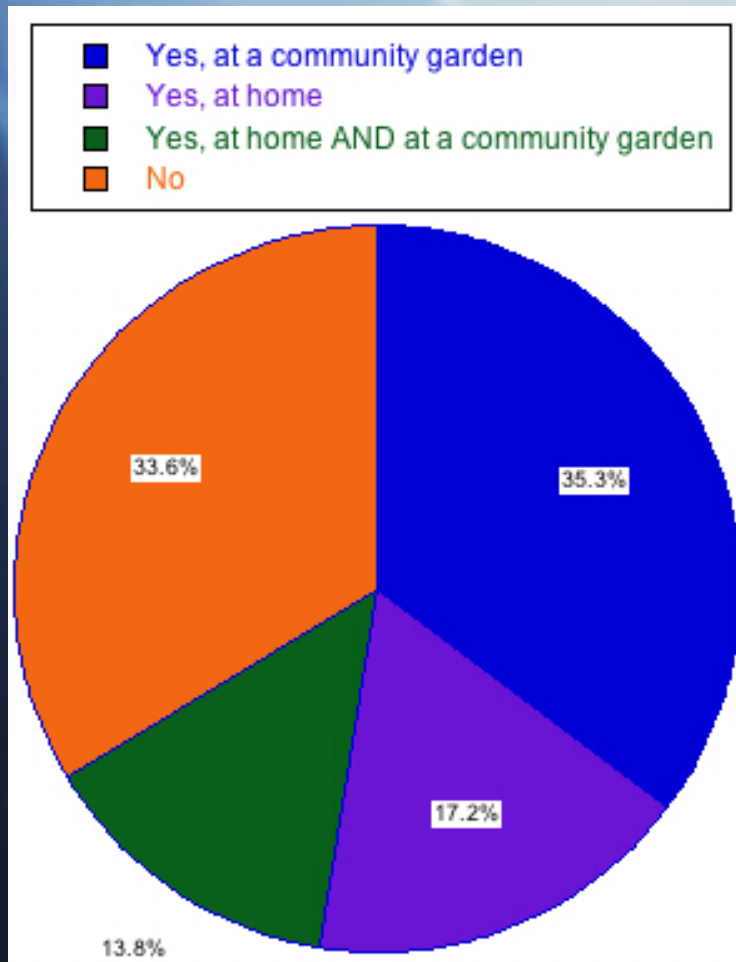
- Annual net worth of individual plot = \$80-\$110
- Assume 100 plots in 1 garden
- One-time cost = \$4,000-\$24,000
- Annual net garden worth = \$8,000-\$11,000
- Assume 20-year garden existence
- Could return \$220,000 to Providence gardeners
- If like MA garden, could return \$400,000

II. Public Value & Support

Method:

- Mail-out survey to 500 homes
- Web survey to approx. 180 gardeners
- Mail-out returned = 60 (13% return)
- Web responses = 56 (31% return)

II. Public Value & Support



- Survey introduced with a community garden focus
- About 70% of respondents garden either at home, at a community garden, or both

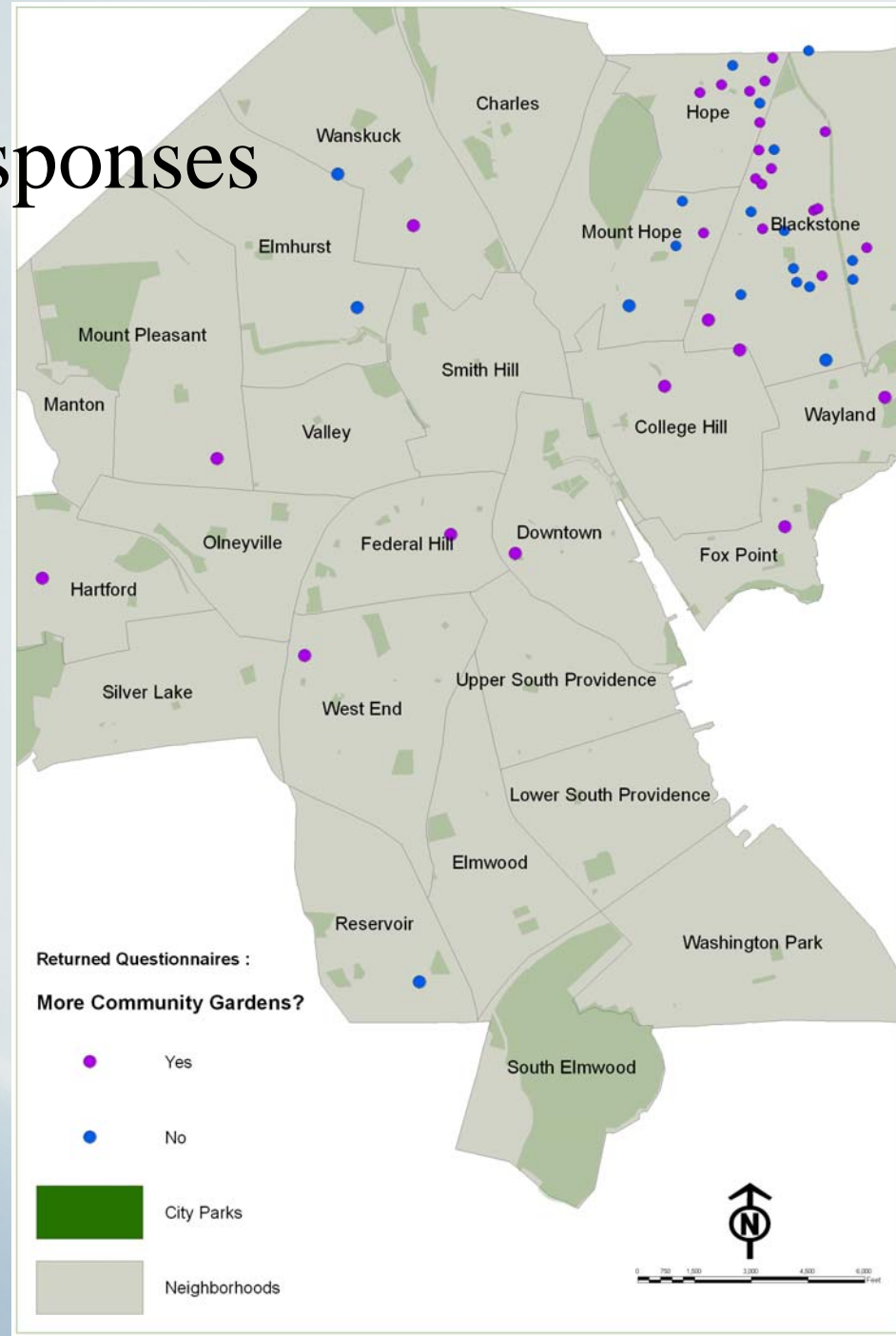
II. Public Value & Support

Nearly 70% of respondents would like more community gardens in Providence

Choices	Number of Responses	Percent (n= 116)
community gardens	78	67%
affordable housing	54	47%
playgrounds	39	34%
other	35	30%
community centers	31	27%
parking	30	26%
single family housing	16	14%
skate parks	12	10%
day cares	7	6%
commercial	7	6%
apartments	3	3%

Mail-out survey responses

The distribution of support appears to be citywide

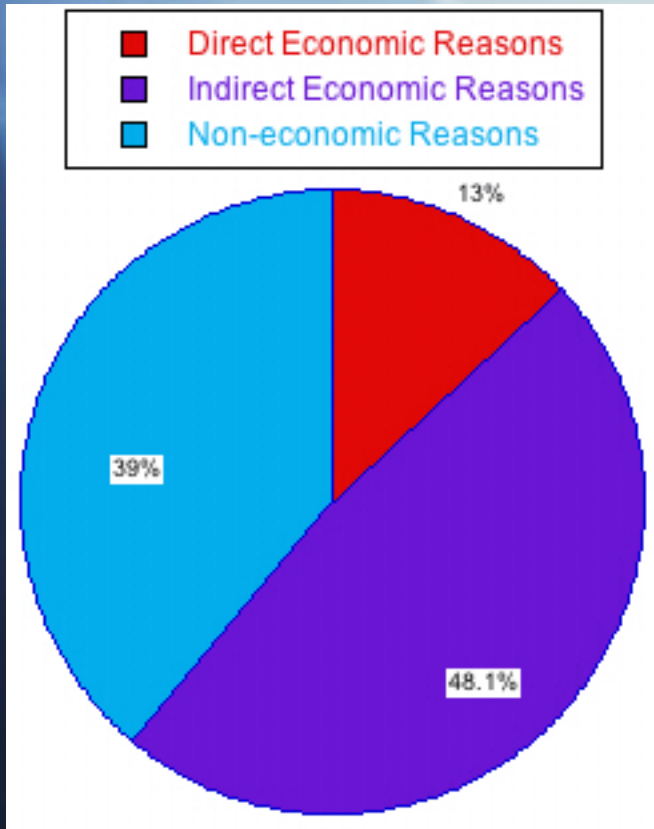


II. Public Value & Support

Lippitt Park Community Garden?

- Half of surveys sent within 1-mile radius
- Received 45 responses
- Nearly 80% support a new garden
- Alternate locations suggested:
 - Summit and 9th Street Park
 - Butler Hospital Swan Point area
 - High-density neighborhoods like University Heights

II. Public Value & Support



Reasons to garden:

60% of the votes indicate economic reasons for gardening.

II. Public Value & Support

Econ vs. Non-econ	Count	Percent (n=231)
Direct Economic Reasons	30	13%
Indirect Economic Reasons	111	48%
Non-economic Reasons	90	39%

Top Reasons to Garden	Top Counts	Percent (n=231)
eat locally	48	21%
relax	46	20%
feed family	34	15%
eat organically	29	13%
socialize	25	11%
save money	23	10%
teach kids	19	8%
trade	6	3%
sell	1	0%

II. Public Value & Support

“Contingent valuation is a survey-based economic technique for the valuation of non-market resources, such as environmental preservation or the impact of contamination.”

- Willingness To Pay (WTP)
- Willingness To Accept (WTA)

II. Public Value & Support

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Distribution of economic value
attributed to a garden plot

- WTP more precise than WTA

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II. Public Value & Support

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Distribution of economic value
attributed to a garden plot

- Most common response = \$50
- Average plot value = \$47
- Median plot value = \$35

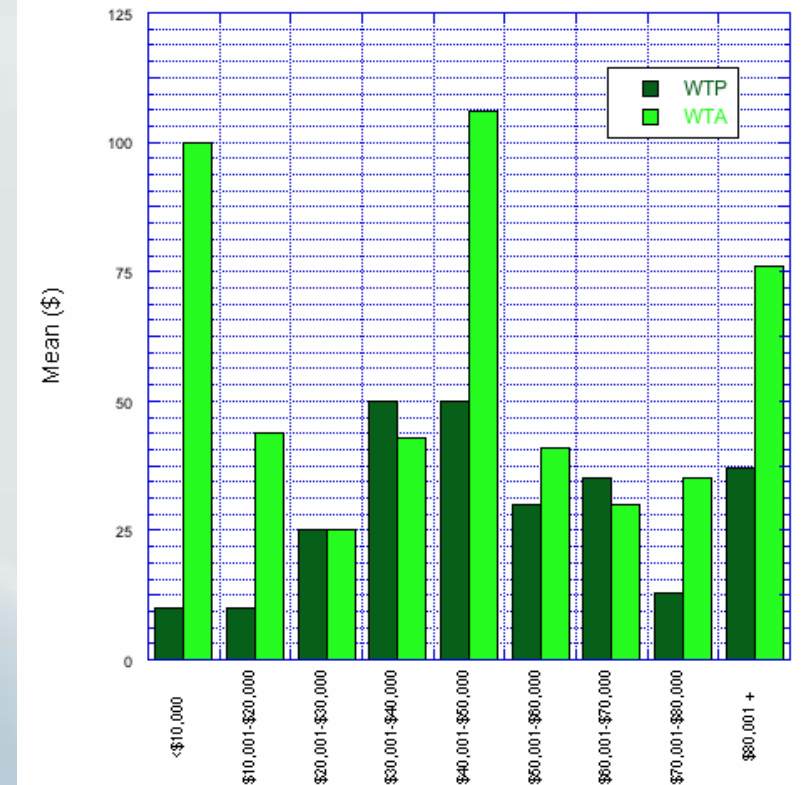
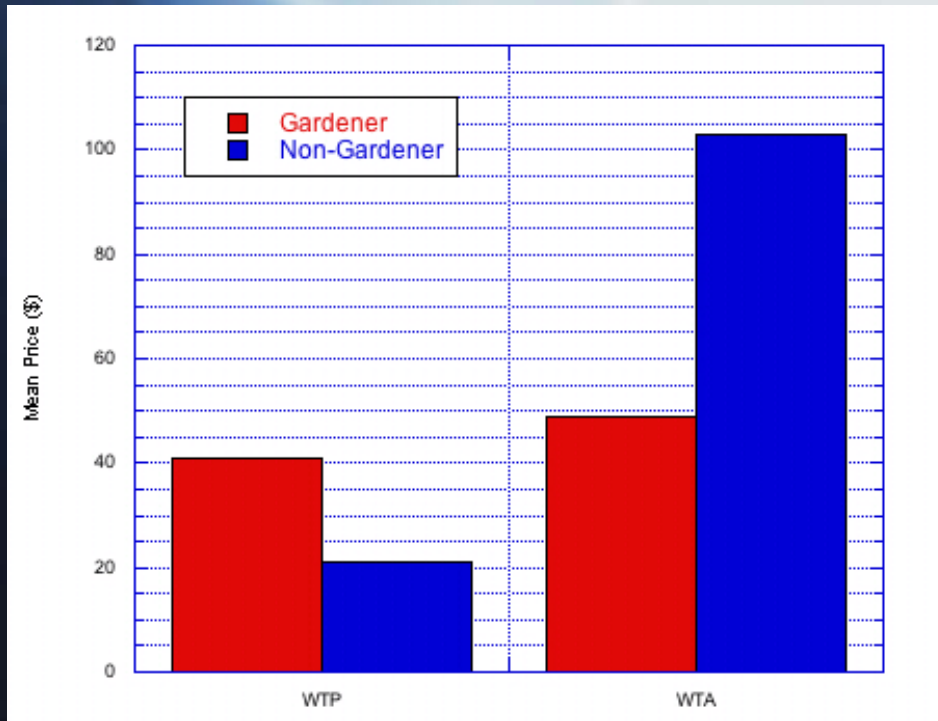
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II. Public Value & Support

Average plot value:

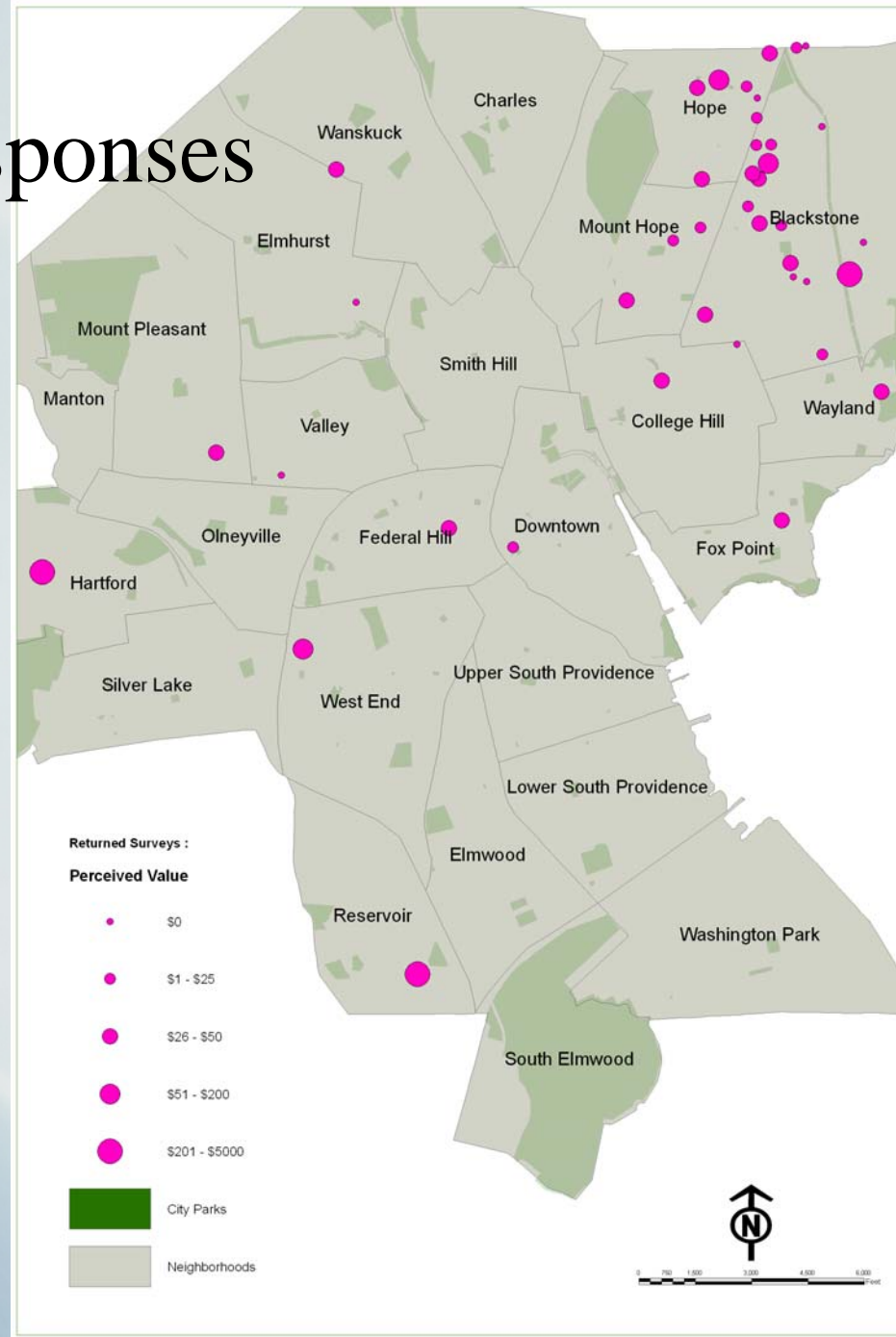
- Gardener = \$45
- Non-gardener = \$62

Income does not appear to influence value



Mail-out survey responses

Location does not appear to influence value



II. Public Value & Support

- Annual perceived worth of individual plot = \$25-\$45
- Assume 100 plots in 1 garden
- One-time cost = \$4,000-\$24,000
- Annual perceived garden worth = \$2,500-\$4,500
- Assume 20-year garden existence
- Intrinsic value of \$50,000-\$90,000 for all of Providence
- Demonstrated public support for more community gardens

III. Providence Community Garden Strategic Plan

Present:

- Status quo
- *Greenprint* = 3 City gardens in 3 years

Recommendations for Future:

- Providence Garden Network and Council
- Continuous garden building to support demand

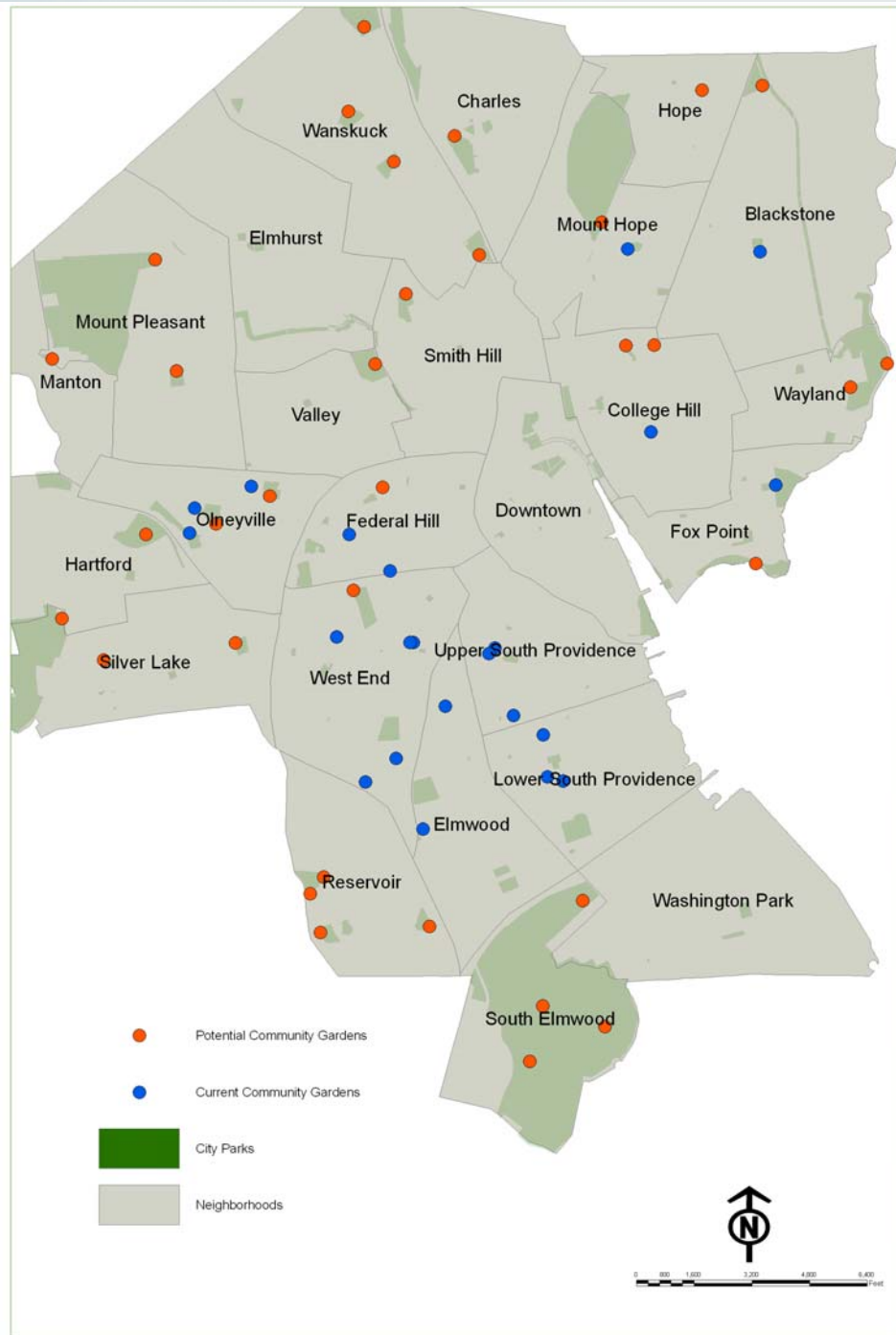
III. Providence Community Garden Strategic Plan

Take advantage of locations:

- Providence Planning Dept. & foreclosures
- Interested school properties
- City Parks compatible with gardens
- Non-taxable & non-productive land
- Water accessible land

Current and potential community garden locations according to Parks Dept. criteria:

- Size
- Existing activities
- Natural features
- Historic landscapes



III. Providence Community Garden Strategic Plan

Take advantage of resources:

- Southside Community Land Trust's
Erika Rumbley, new Community Garden
Network Coordinator
- Active gardeners to create Garden Council
- Clay Rockefeller of The Steel Yard
- Innovative construction financing

III. Providence Community Garden Strategic Plan

Community Garden Financing:

- Garden construction loans
 - City-backed bank loan
 - CDC loan
 - Capital Good Fund micro-loan
- Garden-development partnerships
 - Evolving garden cityscape
 - Portable Steel Yard garden beds

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UEL Gardeners

Fox Point Gardeners

Mt. Hope Gardeners

Sessions St. Gardeners

Summit Neighborhood Association

Sarah Zurier, Bill Maynard, Roger Doiron, Marie-Christine Couët

Farm Fresh Rhode Island

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