

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice-Mayor, and honorable members of the City Council,

I am pleased to speak to you today about saving the Whittemore Ave Community Garden. I presented our petition to you last week. Since then we corrected a clerical error in the counting and eliminated some duplicates, and we've had more signers. I have a document here for the Clerk with the additional signatures and comments. The current total stands at 545 signers; 265 on paper, 276 on-line, and 4 by telephone.

I hope it's clear from the number of signatures, collected in a short time by a small team of neighbors, not professional canvassers, that there is widespread support for this initiative. Please note that these signers don't just live in the immediate vicinity. They live all over North Cambridge and all over the entire City. Why?

We all realize how important preserving pockets of public open space and nature here and there amidst development in an urban environment is. With 3.8 acres of land under development now, and that's before W.R. Grace gets going, how can it not be possible to save this?

We all realize that a place for people to meet-- a reason for people to encounter each other, to be drawn out of large apartment buildings, is essential-- otherwise we are just a collection of bedrooms, not a neighborhood. We've already lost one such location, the Deborah Mason School of Dance.

We all realize that the City's Community Garden program is incredibly oversubscribed, and each Garden serves more than those who just live near it, but gardeners all across the City.

We all realize that being able to grow your own food there when you don't have any soil of your own is a great opportunity.

We all realize the importance of having storage for storm and floor water.

I want to thank Councillor Carlone for putting this order in. Before I even approached the Council with the results of our petition, he'd already begun drafting the order, having seen the petition making its rounds. I also want to thank Councillors Cheung, McGovern, and Kelley for warm replies to my letter to the Council. Councillor Kelley also gets special thanks for his dedicated support last time we tried this in 2011.

Back then, we worked with him and Mayor Davis on this, and Mayor Davis submitted an order that started up negotiations to purchase it. Later that year when Fawcett backed away, Councillor Decker submitted an order to try to get things going again. So I also owe my thanks to all of the returning Councillors who supported those orders in 2011, all of you, and certainly to Mayor Maher who has been very active regarding development concerns in this area.

But if we tried this in 2011, what's different now?

A few things. First, Fawcett's major project has cleared the Planning Board, which means there is less for Fawcett to worry about from the public now. He doesn't need to hold onto the Garden as a political chit to spend. And along with that, he may now have the attention to focus on the sale seriously again.

And of course, there's the possibility of an eminent domain taking of some or all of the Garden land, either by the Council or by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. This tool will enable the City Manager to be more aggressive about preserving this asset, and also signals to Fawcett just how important it is to us. Fawcett has alternately said that he would sell it, and later that he wasn't sure we as a neighborhood deserved it, and later that he needed a way to share the cost with his family, as his father gifted him with the Garden to monetize exclusively himself.

Having tried to negotiate with Fawcett, personally, for over 3 years, I can safely say that without a reason to change course, without a reason to bring him back to the table and explain that this is as good for him and his family's future tenants across the street as it is for those who already live in Cambridge, the Garden will be lost forever.

The site is clean. The time is now. It's good neighborhood planning. Please, help us. Thank you.

Mike Phillips
57 Madison Ave

Addendum to Petition to Restore the Whittemore Ave Community Garden letter

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Vice-Mayor, and honorable members of the City Council:

Here is an update to the letter sent to you on July 24th.

First, due to a clerical error, the number of signatures was slightly overstated. We also identified two signatures that needed to be invalidated due to duplicate submission. Finally, since the time that letter was sent, we have collected additional signatures. Here's the current tally:

To date, we have collected **545 signatures** from Cambridge residents supporting this effort:

- Signatures collected in person: 265
- Signatures collected on-line: 276
- Signatures submitted by telephone: 4

These totals include the removal of non-Cambridge persons and duplicate submissions.

The new submissions are attached. Thank you for your continued support on this matter.

Sincerely,

Mike Phillips
on behalf of the Whittemore Action Committee
57 Madison Ave
North Cambridge

Petition to Conserve and Restore the Whittemore Ave Community Garden

* We, the undersigned, do hereby petition Robert R. Fawcett, Jr., and the City of Cambridge to resume and complete the process started in 2011 to sell the Whittemore Ave. Garden site to the City.

* Furthermore, we, the undersigned, do hereby petition the City Council, the City Manager, and the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority that if this cannot be done in a reasonable period of time, the sale be forced via eminent domain, compensating Fawcett fairly, based on an independent appraisal.

Name (Print clearly)	Signature	Address (Cambridge)	Email / phone for updates (Will not be shared with City)
Sue Fisher Saeger		28 Seagrave	
N.Y. Carone		15 Seagrave	
HENNA CARONE		15 Seagrave Rd	
BRANDY SAUER		7 Seagrave Rd	
Zachary St Lawrence		26 Seagrave Rd	
Natasha Oldhouse		26 Seagrave Rd	
Madhu Patel		51 Madison Ave	

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Name (Print clearly)	Signature	Address (Cambridge)	Email / phone for updates (Will not be shared with City)
D. Mantis		31 Madison Ave	
Benjamin Kretetz		24 Madison Ave	
Sarah Dowry		11-13 NE ENGLAND ST ROUSE, MA	
MOLLY HANNIGAN		31 Madison Ave #2	
Davin Lyon		31 Madison Ave	
Joan Green		30 Alewife Brook Pkwy	

Name	Location	Date
Ben Brophy	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Quinten Steenhuis	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Ken Clary	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Rickland Powell	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Erin Johnson	spokane, WA, United States	2014-07-23
Aimee Bonanno	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Katherine Reid	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Stuart Moss	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Sophia Emperador Schrauwen	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Jane Katz-Christy	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-23
Bear Capron	Mountain View, CA, United States	2014-07-24
william gramby	cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-24
Carolyn Roosevelt	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-25
Thomas Dame	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-25
Jennifer Rosenbaum	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-25
Helen Mirra	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-26
Lahra Tillman	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-26
Quinton Zondervan	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-27
Elizabeth Gilmore	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-27
Carolyn Stack	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-27
Angelynn Grant	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-27
Claudia Majetich	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-28
Anand Mehta	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-28
Lois Solomon	Cambridge, MA, United States	2014-07-28

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Name	Location	Date	Comment
Rickland Powell	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-23	I used to live on Whittemore Ave and "loved" the garden plot. It was an essential piece of community in the neighborhood and its loss is devastating to the quality of life of the residents. This is starting to reflect in the perceived property values as well, and can be reasonably argued as a negative effect.
aimee bonanno	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-23	I coordinate the Field of Dreams garden in Cambridge. It is such a wonderful community space, but we also have a long waiting list.
Stuart Moss	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-23	I had been a long time member of the community garden. I lost one plot to pesticide use by a bordering neighbor and would really like to be able to garden nearby; I started gardening when I was 5 yrs. old and get great pleasure out of growing my own produce.
Thomas Dame	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-25	Live very nearby. The six units being built across the street is more than enough for the area.
Jennifer Rosenbaum	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-25	Gardens and green spaces are part of what makes living in an urban space tolerable for me. Please save this as open space!
Helen Mira	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-26	Because I believe in community, ecology, and food justice.
Lahra Tillman	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-26	I live in this neighborhood. There has been a lot of development in recent years and little thought about balancing out the neighborhood with green space.
Carolyn Stack	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-27	I am concerned about over-development in Cambridge and the loss of green space.
Angelynn Grant	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-27	Garden spaces, especially public ones, help make cities livable and social. I would like the opportunity to garden a small plot one day and, if not me, others. They are lovely to walk past; the sight lowers the stress in one's day.
Anand Mehta	Cambridge, MA	2014-07-28	Our food matters, and local gardening is one of the best food sources.

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