



City of Lawrence

**DOUGLAS COUNTY
FOOD POLICY COUNCIL**



January 20, 2015

Dear Mayor Amyx and Lawrence City Commission:

On behalf of the Douglas County Food Policy Council, I am writing to thank you for your support of the Common Ground community gardening and urban agriculture program, and to support a potential collaboration with Habitat for Humanity at 815 Oak St.

For the past three years, the site at 815 Oak St. has been part of the Common Ground Program, and was maintained by Johnson County Community College (JCCC) as an educational farm for the students in their Sustainable Agriculture Certificate program. The three year initial lease term expired in December of 2014, and JCCC does not wish to continue farming the site. They indicated that enrollment of Lawrence students in their program is low, and therefore, does not justify maintaining a Lawrence-based student farm.

Recently, Lawrence Habitat for Humanity approached the City to inquire about utilizing the 815 Oak site to build affordable housing. After meeting with the Planning Department and Sustainability Coordinator, the consensus was that Habitat may explore the option of developing one RS7 lot on the southwest side of the property. This would utilize approximately 7,200 square feet of the lot, leaving 32,000 square feet available for cultivation as a garden or farm within the Common Ground program.

The Douglas County Food Policy Council is supportive of this request, as it still leaves a substantial area for food production. It also opens up the possibility of an innovative partnership with Habitat for Humanity, to create affordable housing adjacent to food production. Preliminary ideas include partnering with Habitat volunteers to help build fences and a shed for the property so that it can become a neighborhood community garden to serve north Lawrence residents.

As always, the Council appreciates the Commission support of our mission to support access to healthy, local food for Lawrence residents. Let us know if any additional information is needed on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Elmers".

Jill Elmers, Chair

Douglas County Food Policy Council