



Proposal for the Expansion of the University of Richmond's Campus Garden



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Proposals for UR Sustainability Strategic Plan

Abstract

In today's society the growing, buying and consuming of local foods is skyrocketing in demand. It provides for a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle that the University has stated its interest in promoting. This project to expand the current community garden on campus would not only promote the University's strives in sustainable practices, but also draw the community and campus together. This garden could produce foods that could be sold to the current dining services, and to the local community generating some profit from this community garden while also reducing the University's spending on food for the dining hall. Furthermore, a graduate certificate program could be created at the University for those interested in some sort of agricultural practices at the school. This garden could be an outside lab for biology, ecology and other sciences while also giving the University the potential to create new classes in the science curriculum, for example an introduction to agriculture class. By expanding the current garden the University will reap the many benefits that it brings, while also appealing to the future generations that will be applying to the University in the years to come.

Growing Demand for Locally Grown Food

- University of Richmond Dining Hall refers to "local" food as anything within a 500 mile radius (Not very local)
- 69% of people who grow their own fruits and vegetables for consumption or profit have a degree in something other than agriculture showing an increasing demand for the knowledge of how to grow crops (Dewey, 2017)
- Sustainable gardening and agriculture is a growing interest in perspective students and future generations

The University of Richmond has always wanted to be a leader in sustainability amongst the other liberal arts schools. With campus gardens and farms becoming more popular every year Richmond needs to get ahead of the curve in order to meet this current demand for learning about sustainable agriculture and the growing demand for locally grown food for consumption. The University would be able to continue to attract more students with an on campus garden while also being able to demonstrate its sustainability efforts. 84% of students who answered a survey demonstrated interest in an on campus garden showing that many schools like Furman University and Duke University have already implemented an on campus farm/garden. Both of these schools use a plot of land no bigger than 1 acre, while the University of Richmond has the potential to expand its current community garden up to 4 acres. Duke University uses classes and community programs like the CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) to maintain their gardens while also using them for experiential learning opportunities (Figure 1).



Figure 1. View of Duke University's on campus garden . Source: Duke University.

The Expansion of the Garden

I am recommending that the University of Richmond expands it's current community garden on the same plot of land it currently lays, which can be upwards of 4 acres. In Figure 2. the highlighted green area is the proposed area where the garden can be expanded.

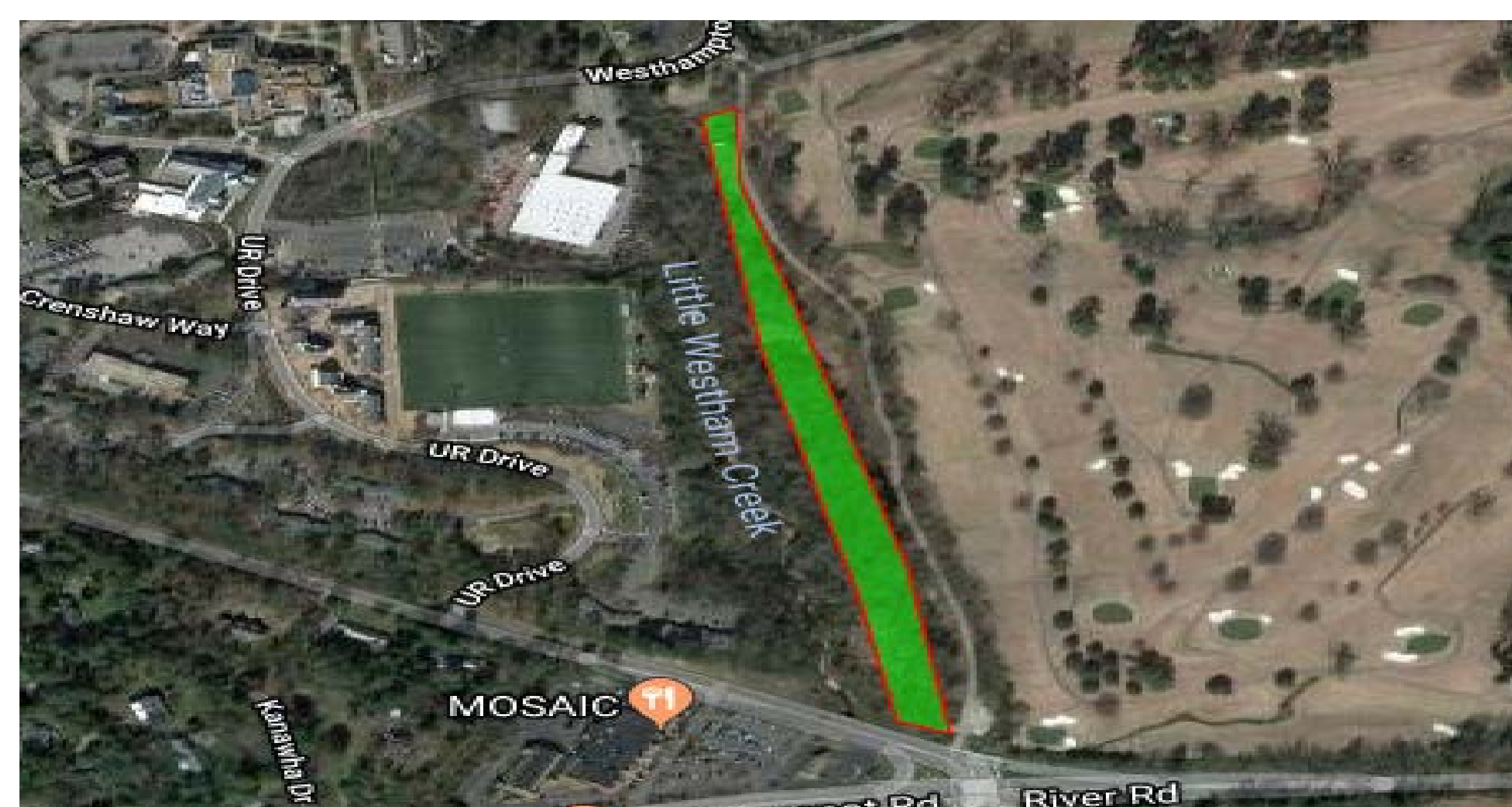


Figure 2. Proposed area the garden can be expanded. Source: Google Maps

CSA Program

- University of Richmond can start a Community Supported Agriculture program where community members can pay a monthly or yearly price to receive fresh produce from the garden every week
- This would generate revenue and community awareness
- More community awareness would bring in more volunteers to help work the garden while learning sustainable agriculture practices

Curriculum

- The garden would allow the University to use it as an on campus living lab giving students in biology, ecology and other sciences easy access to experiential learning
- New courses, for example Introduction to Agriculture, can be offered to students with the expanded garden
- Hands on gardening and science based activities are proven to be the most effective way for students to learn (Ahmed et al, 2017).
- The garden would allow the University to create a graduate certificate program in the fields of agriculture

University of Richmond Dining Hall

- Richmond dining services spent 6.1 million dollars in 2016 (Stars-University of Richmond Report, 2016)
- Having food grown in the garden available to eat in the dining hall is 86% cheaper than buying the food and would cut down the spending on "local" foods from dining services (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).



Figure 3. Furman University's on campus garden. Source: Furman University

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