

Ten Tips on Local Advocacy (especially to get gardens preserved)

1. **Develop a plan (or don't wait for crisis).** If your garden is not protected, understand exactly who owns the land. Know exactly what you are asking for and who you are asking. Is there a public process or is it "who knows whom"? Your plan should include the other tips listed below. Meanwhile keep the garden looking great!
2. **Develop allies.** *Community gardens*, low income housing organizations, churches, schools, community development organizations all serve the same constituencies. Introduce potential allies, *including government officials and business leaders*, to the garden. Determine areas of commonality and find ways to have gardeners help your allies. Be sure to ask your allies to take specific actions to help your cause.
3. **Be prepared for opposition.** Acknowledge, in advance, that there will be objections to your efforts. Know both *who is* likely to be in opposition and *what objections* they will raise. Read opposition material, study the newspapers, watch or listen to talk shows, and check websites. Determine if there are any points of commonality. Learn, if possible, if you have contacts with those to whom the opposition listens.
4. **Become known.** Invite decision-makers and the media to your garden. Host activities for neighbors. Share your produce. Do other community service – a children's program; horticulture therapy, conduct neighborhood clean-ups and plant tree-pits. Make presentations at nearby neighborhood and tenant association meetings.
5. **Use the media.** Develop a compelling message which includes what you are asking for and a convincing reason why you should get it. Determine spokespersons and have them practice giving your message. Make a list of the human interest stories of your garden. Write up the stories (with photos!) for neighborhood weeklies. Invite newspaper and TV garden reporters to the garden. Don't forget public access cable TV.
6. **Meetings, meetings, meetings.** Be prepared to attend public meetings of the city council, planning department, parks commission, city planning and zoning hearings, and health department. Whenever possible sign up to speak at these meetings and present your message. Host meetings of your own to inform and motivate gardeners.
7. **Resolutions, plans, and ordinances.** Take the offense. Get friendly local legislators to sponsor and champion resolutions and ordinances supporting community gardening. Be alert for opportunities to have community gardening promoted and sanctioned within neighborhood and citywide planning and re-zoning efforts.
8. **Celebrate successes.** Preservation efforts can take many years. However, there can always be something to celebrate (alliances with new organizations, a successful harvest, a resolution sponsored). To keep up spirits, demonstrate progress, become known, use the media, and involve allies – have press conference, parties, and congratulatory award events.
9. **Be persistent.** The opposition is hoping that you will just *go* away. Don't let them wear you down. This is why having parties (tip #8) is so important. It is really important that gardeners really do go to ALL the meetings!
10. **Be flexible.** Be open to changing your campaign to reflect the needs of allies or what you realize is more realistic long-term success. For example, you may lose a garden, but gain a commitment to the building of a permanently protected and larger garden across the street.

