Section 7
Design Considerations

Garland Urban Agriculture Center
Garland Urban Gardener Store
INTRODUCTION

Section 7 of this proposal for the Garland Urban Agricultural Center addresses design considerations for the Garland Urban Gardener Store. Ideally this business would be located in the Garland Urban Agricultural Center. Again, think of the entire Garland Urban Agricultural Center as a commercial eco-system where all the businesses complement and support each other.

The Garland Urban Gardener Store would focus on organic supplies and education for urban gardeners. Unlike the hydroponic supply store, this store caters to the traditional organic gardener who uses the soil as a growing medium. But it does have the added focus of emphasizing urban gardening and methods of crop rotation featured by those who use SPIN farming methods.

MORE RESEARCH NEEDED

The establishment of the Garland Urban Gardener store depends in great part upon the location of the Garland Urban Agriculture Center. If it is built in the half-empty shopping mall at Lavon and Naaman School Road, then we would likely want to nourish the establishment of such a business there. However, if we are able to create the Garland Urban Agriculture Center in the downtown area of Garland, we want to consult with and involve the existing garden store of Roach Feed & Seed.

While the purpose of this project is to create jobs and new businesses for our community, we also want to strengthen our local existing businesses as well. That old adage of “make new friends but keep the old ones” certainly holds true here.

We want to add/attach as many businesses as possible to grow out our central hub, which consists of the Garland Aquaponic Farm, Café and Grocery. However, we want to build and add the related businesses at the opportune time to ensure their ultimate success. The heart of this project is the Aquaponic Farm. However when it is designed, it is critical to allow room for the Aquaponic Café and Grocery (a.k.a. The Garland Urban Agriculture Center) either as part of the Farm building or next door to it. The other supporting businesses can and should be within walking distance to The Garland Urban Agriculture Center.

Whether there is a need to have a Garland Urban Gardener store and/or whether the interest and business generated by The Garland Urban Agriculture Center would support such a business is questionable to me at this point. Perhaps the development of this business should initially be put on a back burner.

There will be people who continue to use the traditional soil-based gardening methods with raised beds, rain water conservation, etc. However, much more interest will be generated for urban hydroponic and aquaponic urban farming. And in terms of the needs of our water-deprived community, hydroponic and aquaponic gardening seems to be the best solution for us since it uses 70% less water than traditional gardening methods.
Without a question, we will need to have a locally owned and held hydroponic gardening store that also serves as another education center for the people as well as a place where they can purchase needed supplies for hydroponic gardening. And no, I don’t think that the current set up of the Roach Feed and Seed Company is adequate to handle a very large inventory of supplies specific to hydroponic gardening. They may be sufficient to handle business for soil-based urban gardeners, but not hydroponic/aquaponic gardeners. (But prove me wrong and I’ll say so because I do admire that Roach Feed and Seed and I respect and admire their long history of community involvement.)

Also, to emphasize regarding these proposed businesses: Our goal here is to strengthen our local economy by supporting the growth and establishment of locally owned and held businesses—NOT to bring in Wall Street chains for the community to support with tax breaks and cash incentives. Those days should be over. We need a healthy infusion of locally owned and held businesses.

Because of this, perhaps our downtown area is the very best location for the proposed Garland Urban Agricultural Center.

We want to create jobs that provide our citizens with the tools, education and potential to earn living wages and to assist them in living healthier happier lives. This project is a huge opportunity for all the citizens of Garland to improve their lives and the life of our community.

It is absolutely the only way to build a strong local economy. Furthermore, while these businesses may have a helping hand their first one or two years, neither they nor a Wall Street chain should be handed these breaks on an ongoing endless handout basis. It is absurd that so many communities all over the USA have done this. And, it is one of the several central reasons why our economy is in its current state—ongoing handouts to established profitable Wall Street chains. We do not wish to create more of the same because it does not work—at least not for the majority of us. We need to learn how to distinguish between a temporary helping hand and an ongoing handout that drains the resources of our community.

Today, because of the influx of cheap goods made using slave labor of foreign countries, local grown food is about our best shot as a product that can be competitive and that can be produced with a minimum of investment. As our new food-based economy grows and strengthens, we will add other businesses to support our food-based economy. These products and services, like our food products, will be largely consumed by our local population. The materials used to create these products will also be local and in some cases, regional. For example, although citizens may initially use The Hour Commercial Kitchen, for example, to bake their bread; their bread might take off and the demand could perhaps support the establishment of a bakery. As citizens learn more about hydroponic and aquaponic gardening, they might dream up better designs for reservoirs and start a plant that manufactures them for sale.