
Capital Area Food Network

1001 Blair Dr.
Raleigh, NC
(919) 390-1975



Summary Report:

Wake County Community Gardens Survey

March 2018

OVERVIEW

As [Capital Area Food Network](#) (CAFN) implements and tracks the [Wake County Food Security Plan](#), baseline data about local food systems are being collected. From December 2017 to January 2018, information was gathered to develop a comprehensive list of community garden locations as well as each garden's point of contact, practices, and needs. This report reveals the findings of that study.

BACKGROUND

The 2017-2020 Wake County Food Security Plan calls for a significant amount of baseline data collection to track and measure the Plan's impact. One of these needed datasets is a comprehensive list of all community gardens in Wake County. Specifically, CAFN needs to know the garden's name, host organization, location, and manager point of contact.

Because community gardens are often run by volunteers and lack sufficient funding, they may face challenges like loss of property, insufficient education on growing or pest control, and a need for more volunteers. While many of the Wake County Food Security Plan action items advocate for support of local gardens, little is known about the specific problems and needs of these organizations (see Action Items 2.1, 2.4, 2.7, 3.1, 3.3, 3.7, 3.9).

Therefore, due to the need for knowledge about community garden challenges and a desire to connect and hear from community garden managers, the CAFN AmeriCorps VISTA member added and implemented a qualitative/quantitative survey to the basic research required. The result of this 57 participant study reveals the needs and goals of local community gardens.

PROJECT GOALS

1. Collect information about Wake County community gardens for Food Security Plan requirements through a series of emails and surveys.
2. Analyze collected data to identify relevant barriers that community gardens face, and highlight their most critical needs.
3. Distribute basic, comprehensive list of gardens to interested parties to increase awareness of gardens and increase volunteer participation.
4. Create research-backed recommendations that will support Wake County community gardens at the city, county, and state level.

DATA COLLECTION

Process

1. Collect all existing lists of Wake County community gardens and combine with original research to create initial contact list.
 - a. Sources of lists: Wake County GIS, Community Food Lab, Advocates for Health in Action, City of Raleigh, NC Community Garden Partners
2. Create survey to gather information about general operations, produce donation, and outreach on Google Forms.
3. Contact each garden via email, confirm basic information, distribute survey.
4. Analyze and share research findings.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, a community garden is defined as a garden that is maintained and supported by volunteers, used to produce edible plants, and at least a quarter of the garden's produce is consumed by the gardeners.

The only gardens that were not included in the study were school gardens and gardens maintained by volunteers who do not receive the food they produce. These gardens were excluded because CAFN will end up studying these categories at a later time and in more detail.

Survey

General Information:

1. Garden name
2. Garden structure

-
- a. Individual plots (individual/family maintains their own plot)
 - b. Common plots (participants work on the garden as a whole)
 - c. Individual and common plots
 - d. Other:
3. Does your garden have a composting system or participate in a composting program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No, but we want to learn more about how to make this happen
 - d. Other:
 4. Requirements for gardeners (annual fee, required work hours, etc.)
 5. Does your garden operate year-round or only during warmer months?
 - a. Year-round
 - b. Only during warmer months
 - c. Other:
 6. Estimated number of gardeners/volunteers in 2017
 7. Total pounds of produce harvested in 2017 (if counted)

Produce Donations:

8. Does your garden donate produce to families in need (through Plant A Row, food bank/pantries, or directly)?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. No, but we want to learn more about how we can donate produce
 - d. Other:
9. If your garden donates produce, where is it donated and how much has been donated in 2017? (if counted)
10. Are there any barriers that prevent or make it difficult to donate produce? (example: not enough produce, transportation, don't know where you can donate, etc.)
11. Are there any barriers/issues that your garden faces regularly? (Example: no funding, bad location, not enough volunteers)

Outreach:

12. Would you be willing to act as a mentor to help others to start a community garden?
 - a. Yes
 - b. Maybe
 - c. No
13. Do you want your garden and contact info to be displayed on online databases like Wake Network of Care and NC Community Garden Partners?
 - a. Yes

- b. Maybe
 - c. No
14. Would you like to learn more about how to get involved with Capital Area Food Network?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

FINDINGS

Garden List

In total, 61 garden managers were contacted. As of March 2018, we are aware of 49 operating community gardens in Wake County:

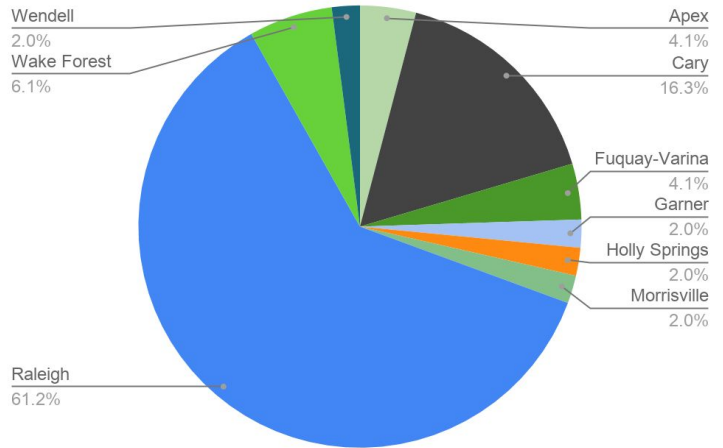
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|---|---|
| 1. Agroecology Education Farm | 26. Liberty Community Garden |
| 2. Alliance Medical Ministry | 27. Lifepointe Community Garden |
| 3. Alpha Bayer Community Garden | 28. Lourdes Bounty Community Garden |
| 4. Asbury Church Community Garden | 29. Morrisville Community Garden |
| 5. Becanna Community Garden | 30. Nativity Community Garden |
| 6. Camden Street Learning Garden | 31. Neighbor to Neighbor Outreach |
| 7. Carpenter Park Community Garden | 32. New Hope Community Garden |
| 8. Cary Senior Center Community Garden | 33. New Restoration Outreach Christian
Center Garden |
| 9. Cary's Pocket Community Garden | 34. North Raleigh UMC Community Garden |
| 10. Community Connections Garden | 35. Northeast Coalition Community Garden |
| 11. Community Teaching Garden | 36. Planting on Whitaker Community Garden |
| 12. Community UCC Garden | 37. Poe and Grow Garden |
| 13. Community Workforce Solutions | 38. Seeds of Faith Community Garden |
| 14. Covenant Community Garden | 39. Simple Gifts Community Garden |
| 15. Dickson Foundation Community Garden | 40. SOUL garden |
| 16. Disciples Community Garden | 41. Shepard's Bounty Community Garden |
| 17. Franciscan Community Garden | 42. St. Eugene Community Garden |
| 18. Garner Grows Community Garden | 43. Spanish Trace Apartments |
| 19. Gracious Harvest Community Garden | 44. Victory Garden (Highland UMC) |
| 20. Healing Transitions: Men's Campus | 45. Well Fed Community Garden |
| 21. Healing Transitions: Women's Campus | 46. WFPC Community Garden |
| 22. Inter-Faith Food Shuttle Farm | 47. Wildwoods of Lake Johnson Gardens |
| 23. King's Harvest Community Garden | 48. Yes Solar Garden |
| 24. Kirk Community Garden | 49. 12 Oaks Community Garden |
| 25. Kraft Community Garden | |

An updated list of community garden locations and relevant information can be found on Wake Network of Care under the Food Resources category: WakeNetworkofCare.org.

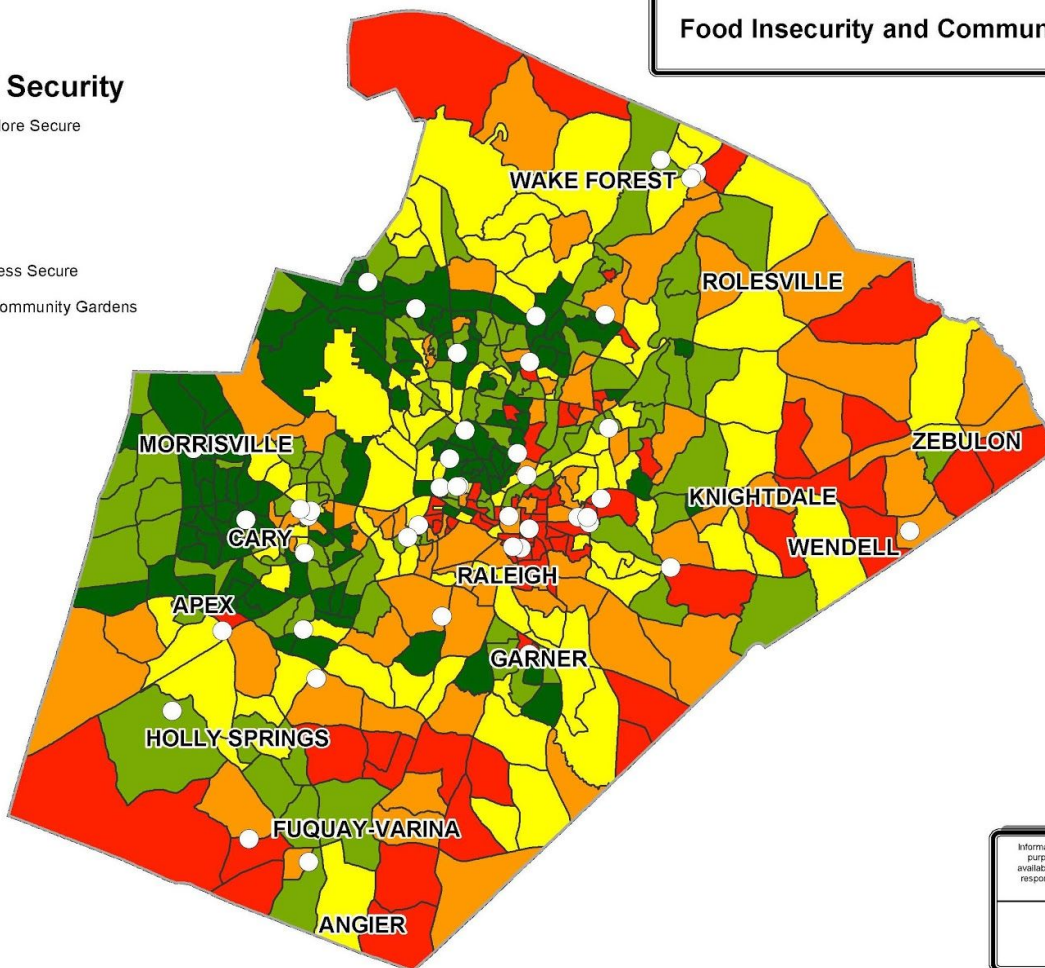
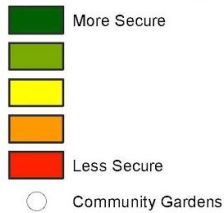
Locations

The addresses of the 49 operating gardens were collected and broken down by municipality. No gardens were found in Knightdale, Rolesville, and Zebulon, yet Raleigh and Cary are collectively home to nearly 80% of the county's community gardens. When the garden locations are overlaid with county food security rates by block group, the map shows a that the majority of community gardens are located in areas that tend to be more food secure.

Community Gardens by Municipality



Food Security



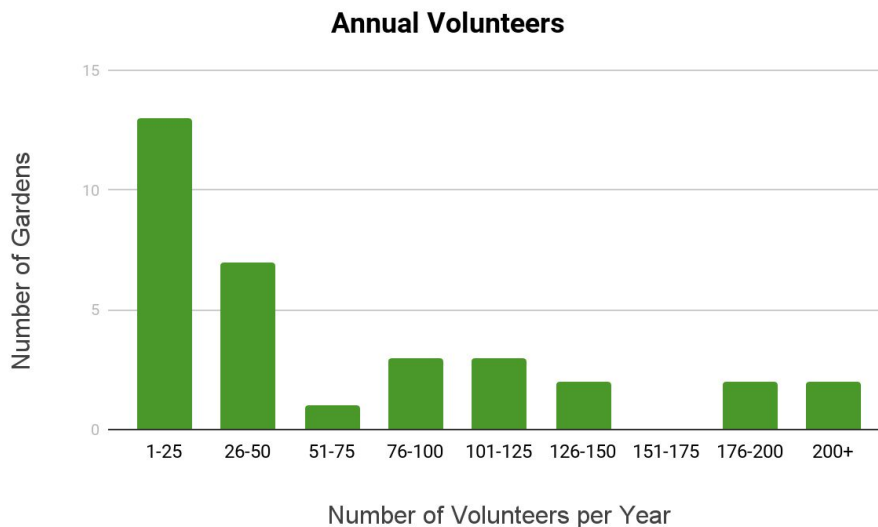
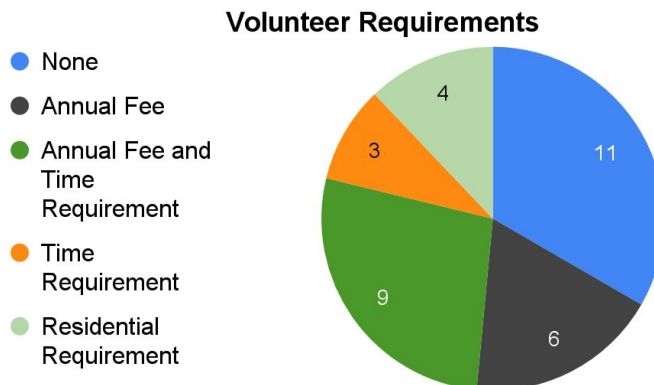
Information depicted hereon is for reference purposes only and is derived from best available sources. Wake County assumes no responsibility for errors arising from misuse of this map.

3/2/2017

Survey Findings: Numbers

36 gardens were represented in the Google Form survey, 33 of which qualify as operating community gardens. The answers from these 33 surveys revealed the following information:

- 20 gardens have common plots, 5 gardens have individual plots, 8 gardens have both common and individual plots.
- 88% of gardens have a composting system or use a composting service.
- 64% of gardens operate year-round
- Gardens that track pounds of produce harvested an average of 1,913 lbs/year/garden.
- 25 gardens actively donate produce through Plant-A-Row or another nonprofit program and several gardens report wanting to learn more about how they can start donating. In 2017, the 15 gardens that weigh their donated produce provided a total of 16,111 lbs of food to local hungry families. This averages to about 1,074 lbs/year/garden.
- 25 garden managers said they are or might be interested in acting as a mentor for start-up or struggling gardens.



Survey Findings: Barriers

The two open-ended questions were posed to 33 garden managers in order to determine what barriers their gardens frequently face regarding produce donations and general garden operations. The results are as follows:

Produce Donation Barriers

- 69% of responders said their garden has no problems donating produce to local nonprofits. The other 31% cite problems with logistics (having the time/volunteers to transport produce) or having too little produce to donate.

General Garden Barriers

- While 19% of gardens surveyed reported not facing any barriers, the rest disclosed having problems with:
 - Volunteer recruitment and retention (by far the most common issue)
 - Funding
 - Community outreach and marketing
 - Pest control
 - Garden location or design
 - Other problems such as a lack of equipment, produce storage space, or, in one case, volunteers breaking garden rules

CONCLUSION

Apart from the comprehensive list of gardens and their locations, this survey has generated information about traits of Wake County community gardens. Some major themes revealed in the survey include that local community gardens:

- Are usually located in or near food secure neighborhoods
- Often face problems involving volunteer retention and recruiting
- Express desire for increased funding and marketing
- Harvest an average of 1,889 lbs of produce per year
- Donate an average of 508 lbs of produce per year to local nonprofits

With this information, Capital Area Food Network can look for potential partner organizations and support for these gardens, distribute relevant information to garden stakeholders, and make informed recommendations to Wake County about how to best support local community gardens.