

# MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN

April 8, 2010

## **BY E-MAIL**

Hon. Victor DeLuca  
Mayor  
Maplewood Municipal Building  
574 Valley Street  
Maplewood, NJ 07040

Dear Mayor DeLuca:

On behalf of the Maplewood Community Garden, we thank you and the other members of the Township Committee who voted in favor of establishing a community garden in Maplewood. The community garden will bring neighbors together to grow organic food and provide opportunities for positive social interaction, recreation, and education. We have worked very hard as a group to develop a plan for the garden and we believe a community garden will be a great benefit for our town long into the future.

We write to you to request that the Township Committee reconsider the location of the garden. At the committee meeting, a number of residents registered their concerns and objections to the Orchard Park location and the process by which it was approved. In particular, many residents felt that they were unfairly excluded from the approval process and that they did not receive adequate information about the garden in advance of the approval. While many of the objections have been based on misinformation, some of the concerns raised may be legitimate given the short notice received only by a limited number of neighborhood residents and park users.

Our goal has always been to develop a community garden that benefits the community and, most importantly, that has the support of the community. We certainly never intended to exclude anyone from the approval process. While we recognize that there may never be unanimity of opinion, we believe the long term success of a community garden ultimately depends on developing the consensus support of the people of Maplewood. Given the vitriolic reaction against the proposal, both at the Township Committee meeting and in the time since it was approved, we have grave concerns about the long term success of the garden if it were to be located at Orchard Park under these circumstances. Indeed, some of our own members have indicated that they may drop out of the garden if it proceeds at Orchard Park. We therefore request that the Township Committee consider re-locating the garden.

MAPLEWOOD COMMUNITY GARDEN  
APRIL 8, 2010

Specifically, we request that the Township Committee reconsider the lot behind Town Hall that was the focus of the original proposal. There are no competing uses for that location and the only real objections to having the garden there was the potential for exacerbating the drainage problems that exist at the site. If the conditions identified by the Town Engineer can be reasonably remediated, perhaps the garden could be located there.

We stand ready to work with the town and its residents to develop a community garden that all residents can support. We hope you will continue to support this effort and that you will give every consideration to our request.

Thank you.

Irene Dunsavage  
Ben Chapman  
Matthew Schwartz

cc: Kathleen M. Leventhal, Vice Mayor  
Fred R. Profeta, Jr., Deputy Mayor  
Lester Lewis-Powder  
Gerard W. Ryan