



Alum petitions for City Hall veggie garden

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by [Anna Sanders](#)

In New York City, you're more likely to see a fire hydrant or a trash can than a garden. But NYU alum Daniel Bowman Simon is working to change that.

A graduate of NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, Simon is circulating a petition asking the city to build a vegetable garden in front of City Hall.

To date, Simon's campaign, People's Garden NYC, has attained nearly 800 signatures.

The petition explains that the garden will be a symbol of the city's "commitment to education, public service, healthy eating and environmental stewardship."

Simon began the effort after the success of a similar appeal to build a vegetable garden on the White House grounds.

"I almost thought somebody else would be petitioning for a vegetable garden at City Hall," he said. "It seemed like such [a good] project to shine a positive light on a lot of other initiatives that New York City is working on."

He hopes that, along with the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation and local farmers, the garden will be cared for by public school students in order to promote healthy eating and exercise.

"There are hands-on educational opportunities that a garden can provide," Simon said.

He added that there are a number of studies that show kids who grow some of their own vegetables and have experience gardening are more likely to eat those vegetables.

According to data from the National Gardening Association, which awards grants to promote youth and community gardens, 96 percent of participants showed an improvement in environmental attitudes and 77 percent demonstrated progress in their attitude towards nutrition and healthy eating.

"They'll actually go home and ask their parents for vegetables if they've had hands-on experience," Simon said.

Simon added that without providing these opportunities, many children in the city would never be given the chance to garden.

"These are the kinds of experiences that are missing from New Yorkers' lives and from young people's lives especially," he said. "It's a way to shine the light on something very positive in the city."

People's Garden NYC would also serve as a reminder for policy makers at City Hall.

"If you put the garden in front of them, then they don't necessarily need to read as many policy papers to see that it would be a good idea to dedicate more resources to school gardening, [or] to dedicate more resources to gardening as a public service opportunity," Simon said.

Andrew Doba, director of communications for Manhattan borough president Scott Stringer, said that Stringer supports this project and recommends the city build such a garden in City Hall Park.

"I don't think that they're opposed to it," Simon said. "This is not their top priority until I can demonstrate to them that it's a desire of a lot of people in the city."