



March 26, 2015

University of Illinois Student
Sustainability Committee
284 Illini Union, MC-384
1401 W. Green Street

Makerspace Urbana is pleased to offer its support for the proposed Illinois Gadget Garage. Established in December of 2009, Makerspace Urbana, a working group of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center, is a community electronics lab dedicated to the blend of arts, humanities, science and technology. Our mission is to provide an open community lab where people of diverse backgrounds can learn, teach, tinker, collaborate, share, innovate, socialize, and create. We believe that technology should not be a mystery and should be available for exploration to all people.

Since its inception in December of 2009, Makerspace Urbana has been dedicated to community education for people of all ages. Once a week, Makerspace Urbana offers a Computer Help Desk. This is a free service offered to people who bring in their computer issues and are assisted by a volunteer to understand and fix the problem. Rather than a traditional help desk model where an expert fixes the computer, the Makerspace volunteer sits with client and explains the steps to fix the problem so they can understand what, why and how things are happening in their computer.

In April of 2011, we hosted the first annual UC Mini Maker Faire, which featured maker booths, performances, and demonstrations by 13 area makers and was attended by 150 community members. In 2012, the 2nd annual Urbana-Champaign Mini-Maker Faire was attended by over 400 people while the 3rd annual UC Mini Maker Faire in 2013 had over 600 attendees. There were approximately 1000-1200 attendees at the renamed Heartland Maker Fest in 2014. The 2nd annual Heartland Maker Fest will be held on October 3, 2015.

Makerspace Urbana also hosts workshops and collaborates with community groups year-round. Our 2014 "Summer Make-a-tion" workshops series included activities such as sewing, knitting, cross stitch, 3D printing, Arduinos, beer brewing, and soldering is easy. We've done collaborative programming with Living Letter Press, Innovation LLC, Unit One, Urbana Free Library, and the "Outta the mouths of babes" summer youth radio project.

The proposed Illinois Gadget Garage is a project that is in keeping with our values and current projects and we look forward to collaborations with Garage including workshops on basic skills for repairing electronics. We urge you to provide seed funding for this timely endeavor.

Best regards,

Emily Knox
Member - Makerspace Urbana