

# Local and Regional Context

## Opportunities for Expansion

Many urban agriculture programs similar to St. Johns Woods Foodworks have been funded nationally to provide job training and entrepreneurial experience for youth and adults, and some private enterprises are making money growing food on urban lands. One model replicated in cities such as Olympia, WA; San Francisco, CA; and Boston, MA includes establishing an urban farm that serves to train and employ youth, educate school children, and develop products for sale. Sometimes other value-added opportunities exist to process the food grown, as in the popular salsas from Los Angeles' *Food From the 'Hood* project.

Zenger Farm envisions expanding its operations so that it can utilize a collection of vacant lots for an apprentice farmer training program. The three-year program would build farmers' skills and business savvy, and would graduate them to higher-rent lands by the end of the program when they have an established business and client base. Zenger Farm is



Wisteria Loeffler, Zenger Farm

#### **Local Resources**

#### **Growing Gardens**

www.growing-gardens.org/

#### **Oregon Food Bank**

www.oregonfoodbank.org/

# Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Culture, and Learning (Portland State University)

www.piiecl.pdx.edu

#### Zenger Urban Agricultural Park

www.zengerfarm.org/

#### **Other Resources**

## GRuB - Garden Raised Bounty, Olympia, WA

www.goodgrub.org

# SLUG – San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners' Youth Garden Internship Program

www.grass-roots.org/usa/slug.shtml

# The Food Project, Boston, MA

www.thefoodproject.org

## Food from the 'Hood Program, Los Angeles:

www.foodfromthehood.com/

"Gardening is an important part of our culture that connects Portlanders to the natural environment and Oregon's agricultural heritage."

- City of Portland's Urban Agricultural Resolution

# What's Happening in Portland and the Region?



fundraising for the program that would train refugees and immigrants who either have or would like to learn farming skills. Many American models of such programs are successful in creating jobs, training youth and adults for food-related careers. Portland's land inventory could become a low-cost source of land to jump-start similar projects locally.

# **Educational Urban Agriculture**

Urban agriculture is a form of land use that lends itself to education. From water quality to soil quality, wildlife habitat and plant names, there are many chances for learning in a participatory way.

Nonprofit organizations such as Growing Gardens and Zenger Farm provide additional opportunities for experience with growing food. Growing Gardens partners with several schools to provide 8-week, after-school gardening programs and summer garden camps. Last year, the summer camp served 77 children, and 7 after-school programs served dozens more. Zenger Farm is an educational working farm in the City of Portland, which welcomes school groups to see agriculture in action through farm visits. In 2004, Zenger Farm hosted almost 1,500 students. In an informal survey of farmers' market customers, 87% said they would be "somewhat" or "very" interested in visiting an urban demonstration farm.

Strong community interest in increasing the nutrition of school food is evident from recent community forums with high attendance on the topic, and a wealth of programs cropping up to address these issues. The programs highlighted below offer a small but promising first step to realizing this potential.

#### School Gardens

Most schools in the Portland Public School (PPS) system do not currently offer their students opportunities to learn about growing food. However, there are many programs underway to build new school gardens and incorporate food issues into curriculum. There are now 47 school gardens within the City of Portland. Eventually, these programs may lead to growing food for consumption at schools and healthier food choices at home.

#### School Farm

An exciting new project with at least a ten-year commitment is being developed at the 13-acre campus jointly owned by Portland Public Schools and the City to create a learning garden laboratory to be used in educational programming for PPS students in partnership with Portland State University (PSU). The site was the home of the former Green Thumb horticultural program. The project is funded by the City of Portland and PSU's Portland International Initiative for Leadership in Ecology, Culture, and Learning (PIIECL) program with eight PPS schools as initial partners.

## Oregon Food Bank

In addition to providing hunger relief services, Oregon Food Bank (OFB) offers a series of programs related to Community Food Security. OFB has learning gardens in Portland and Hillsboro that educate citizens about various gardening methods. Other OFB Community Food Security programs include nutrition education, gleaning and food redistribution programs.

The educational benefits of urban agriculture are substantial: children can learn more about the foods they consume while in school, how



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food is grown in both personal and large-scale ways, and how nutrition and the local food system impact their lives.

# **Subsistence Urban Agriculture**

Refugee and immigrant groups are an important audience for subsistence urban agricultural opportunities. Zenger Farm makes several quarter-acre plots of land available to Laotian immigrants for subsistence gardening. The Somali-Bantu Resettlement Project has considered doing the same. At the past two Immigrant Farmer Direct Marketing Workshops, organized by a coalition of organizations including the Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council, land availability has arisen as a major barrier for immigrants growing their own food to consume or sell.

Growing Gardens is a Portland nonprofit organization that helps low-income people to garden on their own land. These gardeners have been able to create stronger local communities because of their gardens: a survey of Growing Gardens gardeners indicates that 86% of them share food with people who do not live with them and 32% say they have met neighbors through gardening. Among Growing Gardens participants, there was a 44% increase in the number of households that ate fresh vegetables five or more times a week, and an 80% increase of the number of households that spent time outside more than five times a week after their garden was installed. These benefits can be shared with more people using public lands targeted to the low-income community. City-owned land on or around low-income housing projects is another excellent opportunity for this land use.

Community gardens and other plots of land are made available for

members of the public to grow food to support themselves and their families. However, Portland community gardeners surveyed in 2004 ranked "food savings" last in a list of eight motivations for participating in a community garden. Using public lands to target residents interested in agriculture for subsistence addresses the City's pursuit of social equity in public spaces.

# **Other Programs**

## Portland's Community Gardens Program

Portland's Community Gardens Program, created in 1975 through an ordinance passed by Portland City Council, includes management of 29 community gardens totaling 13 acres. About two-thirds of the land used for community garden plots is owned by the Parks Bureau; the rest is owned by other government agencies, private landholders and institutions.

### **Multifunctional Programs**

Zenger Farm in SE Portland, Luscher Farm in Lake Oswego and Sauvie Island Organics on Sauvie Island are three multi-functional farms on publicly-owned lands. Each plays host to a CSA operation and offers educational programming for people of all ages.

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#### **Local Resources**

Somali-Bantu Resettlement Project www.bantusupport.pdx.edu

Portland State University MURP workshop project – New Arrivals: Options for Successful Resettlement of the Somali Bantu www.pdx.edu/media/u/s/usp\_FinalProductRefugEEE.pdf

Immigrant Farmer Direct Marketing Workshop Report www.sustainableportland.org/stp\_food\_multi\_lingual\_040302\_report.pdf

### **Portland Community Gardens program**

www.parks.ci.portland.or.us/Gardens/Community/CommunityGardens. htm

'Community gardens are important neighborhood gathering places that contribute to the city's parks and open space system and support neighborhood livability."

- City of Portland's Urban Agricultural Resolution



Reed Community Garden, SE Portland



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