

# Whitaker Farm Project: Frequently Asked Questions

## **(1) Why are we talking about farming at the old Whitaker school site?**

Since 2007, the former Whitaker School site (at the corner of NE 42nd Ave and NE Killingsworth) has sat vacant. The community has long expressed interest in the future of this Portland Public Schools (PPS) property. PPS has indicated that long-term development of this site will not occur within the next five years. City Commissioner Nick Fish has encouraged the community and partner organizations to explore a temporary farm project as a way to activate the space, grow healthy food, and opportunities for job training.

## **(2) Is an urban farm considered the “best and highest use” of this site in the long term?**

No. This property is in a very prominent location and is very important to the community. PPS has heard from many community members about what they would like to see here in the future. The urban farm proposal is a temporary project and will not be the long-term outcome of this site. The farm would operate like a pilot project to help address hunger and poverty in the community. The alternative is to have the land remain as it is.

## **(3) When will the farm open?**

If we receive community support for the project, we will begin building the farm this spring – in time to grow food for the 2013 harvest season. The farm will begin small, but has the potential to incorporate several different community projects over the next 5 years.

## **(4) How will the neighborhood directly benefit from this use?**

Community members are being asked to help shape the project so that it best meets the needs of the neighborhood.

Our plan is to distribute all of the food within the community. For example, food may go to neighborhood school cafeterias, the Summer Free Lunch Program, the Cully Community Market, and community hunger-relief agencies. Local organizations will operate *Community Partner Blocks* where they will pilot different microenterprise projects. Neighbors are invited to join a project, tour the site, or attend a workshop.

People interested in growing food at the production scale are encouraged to apply for the *Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship* program (scholarships are available to those who live in the Cully and Concordia neighborhoods). In partnership with neighborhood leaders, we will also identify additional trainings and economic opportunities that benefit the community.

**(5) How will we measure community benefit and know if community goals are being met?**

Our plan is to form a steering committee made up of community members who want to help guide the project. They will be asked to help finalize an evaluation plan that can be used to measure the success of the project. We will use the Cully-Concordia Action Plan and other related documents as a framework for developing project goals. They will also be asked to lead the selection process for the *Community Partner Block* projects and provide guidance to project partners over the 5-year term.

**(6) What happens after 5 years?**

At the end of 5 years, PPS may extend the lease agreement on a year-to-year basis. However, upon request we have committed to returning the property back to its existing condition. Although the farm will not continue on this site, the steering committee and project partners will develop a transition plan that includes facilitating new projects and relationships with other property-owners in the neighborhood.

**(7) How can I get involved?**

First: Fill out the survey and tell us what you think! The deadline to submit a survey is February 14, but we are interested in hearing from you at any time. There are a number of ways to get involved once the planning is underway:

- Volunteer at a work party this Spring
- Attend or help organize a field trip, farm tour, or special event at the site
- Attend or help organize workshops
- Apply to serve on the steering committee that helps guide the project
- Apply or join a community group who is applying to operate a portion of the farm
- Apply to the *Beginning Urban Farmer Apprenticeship* Program  
[web.multco.us/sustainability/bufa](http://web.multco.us/sustainability/bufa) – Scholarships available
- Contact us and let us know how you would like to be involved!

**(8) Will community members be involved in discussions regarding any future development?**

PPS is developing ongoing communication with neighborhood leaders at *Our 42<sup>nd</sup>* and intends to provide regular updates as new information is learned about long-term development.

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