



Community Gardening: Expanding Opportunities for Portlanders to Grow Healthy Food

Declaration of Cooperation June 2, 2010

Background

At the request of Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish, Oregon Solutions completed an assessment in June 2009 of the potential to expand community gardening and food growing opportunities in the city. In July 2009, Commissioner Fish, Mayor Sam Adams and others formally requested Governor Ted Kulongoski to designate the Portland Community Gardens program as an Oregon Solutions project.

In a letter dated August 19, 2009, the Governor officially designated the “Portland Community Gardens mission” as an Oregon Solutions project and appointed Commissioner Fish as the convener. In his letter, the Governor stressed the importance of bringing partners together in a “neutral and collaborative way” in order “...to strengthen our food security and increase local food production to help feed our communities” and to “...strengthen the ties between the public, private and civic sectors on the ground... by integrating and leveraging investments” and by “...expanding community garden access....”

Oregon solutions invited approximately 30 representatives from a diverse group of public, private, and non-government organizations (Attachment A) to participate, and the team met for the first time on October 2, 2009. The team discussed the scope of the project, including giving greater numbers of Portlanders the ability to grow their own food by expanding the City’s community gardens program and by solidifying partnerships to make it easier to grow food and garden in general. Three key focus areas were identified and the team divided into three workgroups: defining an organizational structure to support growing food and community gardens; meeting current and future demand for gardens and growing food; and, identifying resources to support and enhance the current City program.

Following the October 2 kick-off meeting, Commissioner Fish provided further clarification of his vision for the project in a memo dated October 26, 2009:

“There is an understanding that gardening has the power to reconnect us with our food, with nature, with culture and community. How do we expand our capacity to meet this need in a way that uses community space efficiently and provides access equitably? ...There are many opportunities to partner with schools, churches, non-profits and businesses. ...Together...we can make it easy for anyone, regardless of their race, age, income, or neighborhood, to grow their own fresh, healthy food.”

The Oregon Solutions process resulted in the following key findings:

- The City’s community garden program is only one component of “urban agriculture” in the Portland metropolitan area – many organizations play a role;
- The City-owned gardens provide a place to grow food and help build a sense of community, but there are other ways for citizens to grow food that should be encouraged;
- Cooperation, coordination and communication among organizations who have an interest in growing food and gardening could help meet demand for garden space and provide information about alternatives for growing food - a unifying network is needed;
- Future growth of community gardens and provision of outreach and education should strive to ensure equitable access to growing food and gardening for low-income, diverse and under-served populations of the city;
- The City’s current community gardens program does not have the capacity to meet citizen demand and expectations, or to meet the goal of the city’s Climate Action Plan to create 1000 new garden plots by 2012;
- To meet demand and expectations, the City’s program needs additional resources, but changes to policies and procedures could help increase access, e.g. size of garden plots, allowing more temporary gardens, establishing guidelines/priorities for access to plots, enforcing the “one plot per household rule,” etc;
- Cooperation among City bureaus would help remove barriers and reduce costs of establishing community gardens;
- Although Board members have desire and commitment, the current Friends of Portland Community Gardens (FPCG) non-profit organization does not have the capacity to generate sufficient resources to support the community gardens program or adequately supplement city resources.

In addition to the commitments made in this Declaration of Cooperation, Team members spent many hours building relationships and sharing information. Oregon Solutions provided an extensive web site that contains several links as well as a variety of background information. The web site is:

<http://www.orsolutions.org/metrohood/portlandcommunitygardens.htm>

With technical assistance from Jason King, landscape architect, and Maren Murphy of Depave, and input from several Team members, mapping of community gardens and

growing food needs and resources was begun and will be maintained within the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

A task force chaired by Alexandra Eastman, a farmer and board member of Growing Gardens, conducted two phone banks to call through the current waiting list for plots in the city's community gardens program and, working with Leslie Pohl-Kosbau, community gardens program manager, was able to reduce the list by 50% - from almost 1400 to just under 700.

With leadership from Weston Miller of OSU Community & Urban Horticulture, and staffing provided by Kat West of Multnomah County's Office of Sustainability, several members of the Oregon Solutions Team agreed to continue to work together on building a Regional Food Network.

Portland Community Gardens Declaration of Cooperation

A. The following organizations are making financial or in-kind pledges:

\$1,000,000 minimum in capital dollars to expand Portland community gardens, subject to future bond approval by voters

Commissioner Nick Fish

Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau

\$50,000 by June 30, 2010 toward asphalt removal and soil amendment at three new gardens in the East Multnomah district

\$1,750 by June 30, 2010 for soil testing at potential garden sites in the East Multnomah District

East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

\$10,000 (subject to board approval 6/15/10) toward asphalt removal and soil amendment at three new gardens in the West Multnomah district

West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District

\$25,000 fundraising goal for fiscal year 2010/2011, beginning July 1, 2010

Friends of Portland Community Gardens

Friends of Portland Community Gardens

\$500 by June 30, 2010 to support the Portland community gardens program; two spring 2010 training slots in Organic Gardening Certificate Program (\$550/ea.); two training slots in 2011 Master Gardening Certificate Program (\$400/ea.)

OSU Extension Community & Urban Horticulture

\$2,500 in 2010 for school garden at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in North Portland

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

\$500 by June 30, 2010 to support the Portland community gardens program

Oregon Food Bank

Free workshops (10 per year) for up to 5 community garden coordinators (\$20 per event); two training slots for Portland community gardens youth educator in School Certificate Training (\$250/each); plant starts and seeds as available following May 2010 and May 2011 distributions

Growing Gardens

Complimentary registration for five, two hour urban food growing classes for community garden coordinators (\$35/each)

Oregon Tilth

A 10% discount on design, planning, and installation services to clients who donate 5% or more of the pre-discount value of their project to Friends of Portland Community Gardens or other non-profit organizations that help people garden

Independence Gardens LLC

B. The City of Portland pledges to:

Support commitments made by the City that follow in this document; convene high level discussions with Metro, Multnomah County and other regional leaders and stakeholders on the topic of growing local food in the region; provide staff to Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Mayor Sam Adams

Convene a City Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee in spring 2010 to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community garden plots in order to meet Climate Action Plan goals; convene task force at least twice a year through 2012;

Participate in high-level discussions with Metro, Multnomah County and other regional leaders and stakeholders on the topic of growing local food in the region;

Work with the Portland Parks Foundation and others to restructure and build the capacity of Friends of Portland Community Gardens;

Identify federal funding opportunities and work with the Congressional delegation to secure funding in support of growing food and community gardening in Portland;

By September 2010, establish an advisory committee to provide recommendations for the city's community gardens program and opportunities for growing food in Portland;

Continue city general fund support for Portland community gardens. Make every effort to grow general fund support through citizen advocacy and the city's annual budget process, and work to protect 2010-2011 appropriation; provide leadership and oversight for the community gardens program;

Dedicate policy staff to play a leadership role in updating the community garden program's policies and procedures to provide more access to the program;

Commissioner Nick Fish

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Finalize electronic garden plot registration and waiting list; maintain data base of people waiting for a plot in a community garden; host annual phone bank to call-through and update/reduce waiting list;

Meet with Learning Gardens partners to explore ways in which the property agreement can be updated to increase community garden opportunities at the site;

Continue city general fund support of Portland community gardens; make every effort to grow general fund support through citizen advocacy and the city's annual budget process, and work to protect 2010-2011 appropriation;

Work with Commissioner Fish's office to update community garden program policies and procedures to provide more access to gardening and growing food, with full implementation by January 2012;

Portland Parks and Recreation Bureau

Portland Community Gardens Program

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to remove/reduce costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Maintain and update the mapping project of community gardens and growing food needs begun by the Oregon Solutions Team;

By July 1, 2010, initiate and maintain a comprehensive website that identifies and aggregates resources, regulations and general information for growing food, fruit and nut trees and keeping specified animals in the city;

No later than July, 2010 begin a zoning code amendment process, identify and reform regulatory barriers to growing food in the city; work on policy and programs to enhance opportunities for planting fruit and nut trees and edible landscapes; assist residents and businesses who seek technical advice and clarification on city policies for growing food on public and private land;

Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Encourage and incent community garden opportunities in existing and new housing developments of our partners to enhance equitable access to quality food; encourage the market to commonly include food production capacity in single and multi-family developments;

Explore the feasibility of actions such as: an inventory of existing housing projects of our partners for community garden opportunities; facilitating partnerships between government and developers to identify and reform regulatory barriers to growing food in housing developments; and sponsorship of pilot projects that offer innovation and education to developers;

Wherever possible, in government financed housing projects, support expanding community garden opportunities to include community building, habitat restoration, water management, education, workforce and economic development in addition to the goals of food stability, food quality, and equitable access;

Portland Housing Bureau

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Provide technical assistance for understanding, communicating, and addressing potential contamination on planned garden sites;

Assist with identifying pathways to access public and private funds, including EPA brownfield assessment funds, for assessment and cleanup on future garden sites;

Catalogue BES-owned properties where gardening activities are already taking place for inclusion in the community gardens mapping project;

Identify criteria to evaluate the feasibility of BES-owned sites for new community gardening opportunities;

Bureau of Environmental Services

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to remove/reduce costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

For FY 2010-2011, provide installation only for irrigation service at two community garden properties, with an installation budget not to exceed \$10,000 per property;

Portland Water Bureau

Participate in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to reduce/remove costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Continue to explore opportunities to invest in community garden oriented initiatives through the PDC Community Livability Grants program for amounts up to \$10,000; where PDC's dollars are highly leveraged by other resources.

Identify opportunities to bring community gardens or other opportunities to expand the selection of/provide equitable access to quality produce at redevelopment sites where appropriate.

Portland Development Commission

The following Bureaus agree to participate with previously listed Bureaus in the Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish and seek ways to remove/reduce costs and other barriers to creating community gardens;

Bureau of Development Services

Bureau of Transportation

Office of Neighborhood Involvement

C. Community Gardens Oregon Solutions Team Members pledge continued support for gardening and growing food by:

Participating in the City’s Inter-Bureau Technical Advisory Committee convened by Commissioner Fish to limit barriers or provide incentives for garden development; participating in the Regional Food Network; participating as needed and requested in advisory committees that provide recommendations for the community gardens program;

Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council

Providing staffing to the effort to build a Regional Food Network that began under the Oregon Solutions process and is continuing as part of the Multnomah Food Initiative; prioritizing the County Digs projects to donate tax-foreclosed properties for community gardens; participating in high-level discussions with Commissioner Fish and other regional leaders and stakeholders on the topic of growing local food in the region;

Multnomah County

Participating in high-level discussions with Commissioner Fish and other regional leaders and stakeholders on the topic of growing local food in the region;

Metro Councilor Carlotta Collette

Continuing to identify potential locations for community gardens; being at the table when the community garden program is ready to expand; collaborating on depaving; aligning community garden waiting list with PPS sites; exploring opportunities for shorter-term gardens;

Portland Public Schools

Soliciting support from members of the Oregon Association of Nurseries for the Portland community garden program (financial contributions, donation of materials, volunteer time, advertising to customers);

Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (Development & Marketing Div.)

Providing volunteers for an annual phone bank to be sponsored by Portland Parks and Recreation between February and December to call-through the waiting list for community garden plots; adding 100 new Friends members in fiscal year 2010/2011 (beginning July 1, 2010);

Friends of Portland Community Gardens

Friends of Portland Community Gardens

Assisting with development of the Friends Board;

James Beard Public Market

Dedicating time to the Friends of Portland Community Gardens Board; provide hands-on gardening experience at the Eastside Learning Garden to individuals on community gardens waiting list; advertise Plant-A-Row for the Hungry and connect gardens with emergency food agencies; be part of Regional Food Network;

Oregon Food Bank

Providing workshops and technical assistance to congregations and faith-based organizations on community garden planning and development; encouraging congregations with land to partner with others to leverage resources for community garden development; encouraging congregations and faith-based organizations to partner with and volunteer for community gardens projects and to find ways to incorporate fresh produce donations from community gardens into food pantries and programs;

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

Launching a non-profit grass roots community gardening program in 2010 to help connect gardeners with land, education and supplies; working with private landowners and religious/community organizations to build and manage community gardens; offering comprehensive services, including soil fertility testing, soil preparation, plot layout, and garden administration;

Grow Portland

Providing technical expertise to transform impervious spaces into community gardens; partnering to pool resources, equipment and volunteers to expand the number of community gardens; working with the City to streamline and reduce costs of permits to create new community gardens;

Depave

Fundraising for and developing a community garden site as part of an expansion in 2011 on to the four-acre Furey property adjacent to Zenger Farm; if requested by the Friends Board, facilitating a four hour workshop to help them develop a fundraising plan;

Zenger Farm

Providing outreach to low-income applicants on Portland Community Gardens (PCG) waiting list to enroll in the Home Gardens program; collaborating to share/publicize food garden workshops; exploring collaboration for volunteer management with PCG if requested; continuing to expand children's gardening programs; continuing to support development of a Regional Growing Food Network; expanding Growing Gardens programs within the region; providing registered Portland home food gardeners to BPS/City tracking and mapping of gardening in Portland;

Growing Gardens

Developing community gardens at Hillsdale Terrace as part of HOPE VI revitalization (pending federal funding); continuing and expanding collaboration with Janus Youth Village Gardens; inventory HAP-owned properties to identify potential garden sites for resident use; staying firmly committed to partnership with Humboldt Learning Garden at Humboldt School and residents of Humboldt Gardens;

Housing Authority of Portland

Advising on equitable community garden expansion through mobilizing and increasing the voice of communities of color, youth and elders living in low-income, garden-deficient neighborhoods; converting vacant and contaminated land into community gardens;

Groundwork Portland

Supporting the city gardens in North Portland, Pier Park, McCoy Park, and Portsmouth with low-cost plant sales, out-reach for scholarships, workshops and community events; continuing to expand gardening opportunities for low-income people in affordable housing communities; expanding the New Columbia garden in 2010, expand the St. Johns Woods garden in 2011, and explore the Hillsdale Terrace project with HAP in 2012;

Village Gardens, Janus Youth Programs

Acquiring/holding land for growing food in the city; providing liability coverage for educational/agricultural activities; partnering with organizations and individuals on specific events/projects; acquiring contaminated land and clean up for use as a community garden;

Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust

D. The Office of the Governor, through the Economic Revitalization Team, pledges to support the Oregon Solutions effort to expand community garden access, strengthen food security, and increase local food production.

Governor's Economic Revitalization Team

The Community Gardens Oregon Solutions Team will reconvene within the coming year to provide a follow-up status report to the Governor's office on achievement of commitments in this Declaration.

ATTACHMENT A

Community Gardens Oregon Solutions Team

Convener, City Commissioner Nick Fish

Participating Organizations:

- City of Portland Mayor's Office and multiple bureaus
- Portland Parks and Recreation Board
- Friends of Portland Community Gardens
- Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council
- East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
- West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District
- Multnomah County
- Metro Councilor Carlotta Collette
- Portland Public Schools
- Depave
- Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
- Housing Authority of Portland
- James Beard Public Market
- Growing Gardens
- Grow Portland/Mercy Corps
- Groundwork Portland
- Independence Gardens
- Kaiser Permanente/Nancy Stevens
- New Seasons Market
- Terrafluxus/Jason King
- Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Oregon State University Extension Service
- Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust
- Oregon Food Bank
- Oregon Tilth
- Village Gardens, Janus Youth Programs
- Vision Into Action
- Zenger Farm