

New Report Reveals Untapped Potential for Food Production on Oakland's Public Land

Oakland, CA (October 30, 2009) – A new report released today identifies 1,200 acres of vacant and underutilized public land in Oakland, California, that could potentially be used for food production. If only half of this land were cultivated using intensive ecological farming methods, the authors conclude that these “commons” could contribute at least five percent of the city’s recommended vegetable needs to the local food system, a significant step towards Oakland’s goal sourcing a third of its food locally. The report, entitled “Cultivating the Commons: An Assessment of the Potential for Urban Agriculture on Oakland’s Public Land”, also emphasizes urban agriculture’s potential contributions to Oakland’s sustainability goals. In addition to producing fresh and nutritious food, urban farming creates green jobs, and provides and other environmental services, green space, and educational opportunities.

The 64-page report contributes to Oakland’s efforts to increase consumption of locally grown food. Alethea Harper, coordinator of the Oakland Food Policy Council, says, "This report should play an important role in the expansion of urban food production in Oakland. The careful inventory and assessment of our publicly-owned land will be a useful tool for citizens and for policymakers seeking to strengthen our local food system." Several local urban agriculture and food justice organizations have endorsed this report as an important first step in expanding local food production. Organizations include: Bay Localize, California Food and Justice Coalition, and People’s Grocery.

The GIS-based inventory of public land was conducted by a UC Berkeley research team and sponsored in part by the HOPE Collaborative and City Slicker Farms. Representatives from public agencies, non-profits, and community groups advised the project. The Institute for Food and Development Policy (Food First) will be publishing print copies of the report and a PDF version is available online. It features color maps, site profiles, case studies of existing urban farming initiatives, and recommendations for policy and further research. The accompanying “Land Locator” contains several maps. A site index provides information on each of the 495 sites, including tax parcel numbers, ownership, acreage, zoning, slope, ground cover, and water availability.

The report’s release will be highlighted at the groundbreaking celebration for City Slicker Farms’ new community market garden in Fitzgerald Park in West Oakland (located at 34th and Peralta Streets) on Sunday, November 1st from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

To download the “Cultivating the Commons” report, visit:
www.oaklandfood.org/home/resources or www.urbanfood.org

The project leader, Nathan McClintock, is a doctoral candidate in geography at the University of California, Berkeley, and member of the Oakland Food Policy Council. He is currently assessing soil quality at several of the identified sites. The HOPE Collaborative is an initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation dedicated to developing a healthy and sustainable food and fitness environment in Oakland. City Slicker Farms is a non-profit food justice organization with a mission to improve access to fresh produce and nutrition education to residents of West Oakland.

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