

**“...a large demand still remains for additional garden plots, and community response from processes like visionPDX indicate that the public would like to see the City take an active role in expanding community gardening opportunities.”**

-- from the [Portland Plan: Food Background Report](#), Fall 2009

## **What is Demand?**

The Demand Working Group made significant progress in identification of local demand for community gardens. In addition to getting a grasp on the current situation related to the existing sites and currently quantified waiting lists, we aimed to provide the full exploration of the specifics of local demand and the various ways that it was either being met or still needed fulfillment. The concept of demand is difficult to assess due to the multivalent nature of urban food production, so our analysis focused on the aspect of community gardening that included multiple users, and was open to a range of public or quasi-public individuals and families, and included both food production and community building aspects.

The Demand Working Group agreed upon a broader definition of demand for gardens in Portland. Part of this demand is that which is currently quantifiable and visibly exists through the Portland Community Gardens Program (PCGP) waiting list. The less visible, yet equally important part of demand for gardens is that which we defined as the “silent demand” – those who live in garden deficient geographic areas of Portland, or who may have an interest, but for a variety of reasons, may not have access to a garden. Demand was also defined by the need for more garden-ready spaces; although there may be an abundance of vacant property, it is likely to be in no condition to be converted into a garden.

## **Where is Demand?**

The fact that the majority of requests on the PCGP waiting list are in inner SE Portland, where the majority of community gardens already exist, helped generate dialogue around the barriers certain populations are up against to even voicing a request through the waitlist. For instance, people in outer underserved areas may less frequently pass by an existing Community Garden to notice the signage with City of Portland contact information, than someone living in an area with many gardens.

The Working Group worked on a mapping exercise to plot all known existing gardens, and reviewed correlations between the distribution of gardens to data such as rates of students in schools qualifying for free and reduced lunch and recent demographic shifts of low-income, communities of color displaced from the central city.

## **Equity**

The Working Group prioritized equity in assessing demand. We brought attention to the need to build a sense of community and social cohesion through community gardens, but also the importance of addressing hunger and enhancing self-determination, skill building, and access to affordable, healthy foods in low-income communities. We also determined that there needs to be greater resources devoted to enhancing proactive outreach, education, and increased opportunity in low-income, garden deficient areas to build awareness of the potential for new garden development.

## **Existing Supply**

Portland Community Gardens Program (PCGP) now has 34 sites with a total of 1088 garden plots, serving over 3000 people locally and are currently working on 3 additional sites for another 60 plots to be added in 2010. In addition to providing space for gardening, educational activities are a major function of the PCG Program, and the total impact in 2010 is expected to reach 4500 people. The waiting list is currently large, and will continue to grow in upcoming years.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS WORKING GROUP - DEMAND SUMMARY

In the 'Portland Plan: Food Background Report' of Fall 2009, it was indicated that in addition to the 30+ PCGP Sites, there were around 10 other community garden sites at schools, faith-based lands, multi-family housing sites, and underutilized properties around the city. Our investigations identified a much more significant number of organizations and resources involved to augment PCGP in a number of ways. The overall impact is immense, with an additional 40 gardens containing 100's of plots around the city - filling demand niches based on faith, area of residence, interests, and other factors.

## Recommendations

### Equitable Access for All

- We recommend that the project address all facets of demand, visible and silent, and to do so by bridging and providing resources to a range of existing efforts, public and private.
- There needs to be a comprehensive strategy to meet demand for gardens by defining the need through an equity lens. This could be coupled with greater land use opportunities by providing policy incentives to remove barriers to implementing a range of community gardens throughout the city.
- Food can be intertwined with a number of planning and development processes, including green building policies, 20-minute neighborhoods, Ecodistricts, and overall Portland Plan goals related to food, open space, livability, health, equity and other factors.

### Measuring What We Have

- Portland Community Gardens provides valuable services to meet demand for a significant portion of the area needs for community gardening space and education that should continue to be supported through the City of Portland budgeting process and support from the Friends group.
- The waiting list for Portland Community Gardens includes over 1400 families looking for space, and this number will continue to grow exponentially, well beyond the current level of attrition and new garden development. A wider range of possible sites for gardens, and new methods of delivery need to be investigated (i.e. short-term use of land)
- Beyond identification of waiting list, we need to invest in a more detailed needs assessment that further quantifies the existing supply and the overall potential for demand to be met through a combination of the groups – not just through PCGP.

### Supporting a Broad Range of Resources

- Significant additional community garden demand for space and education is being met by a range of organizations, non-profits, faith-based groups, schools, and private residents. These groups facilitate installation of gardens, build and operate gardens (community, quasi-community, and private), educate gardeners, provide cooking and other expanded services, and continue to meet demand that would otherwise not be met elsewhere.
- Urban farms and gardens through Portland, along with yard sharing, backyard farming, and a growth of home gardening resources offer another layer of opportunity for volunteerism, expanded education and gardening opportunities for people with available land but who lack skills or those just looking to get their hands dirty.
- Significant opportunities could be realized with a combined approach that equally supports these groups as a combined network for delivering community garden space and educational opportunities to a wide range of people from all socio-economic areas.

## A Current Snapshot of Supply + Demand

The map of existing sites is a work in progress, but locates a detailed view of over 100 different types of gardens and farms within Portland that are collectively meeting local demand.

The map currently includes the following breakdown of sites:

### COMMUNITY GARDENS

- **Portland Community Gardens**      **33 gardens**
- **School Gardens**                      **19 gardens**
- **Faith-based Gardens**                **30 gardens**
- **Non-profit Gardens**                  **8 gardens**
- **Private Gardens**                      **4 gardens**

### URBAN FARMS

- **Educational Farms**                    **6 farms**
- **Farms - Vendors**                      **11 farms**

## In Detail

### Portland Community Gardens

- Expected to serve over 4,500 people in 2010
- 1088 Garden Plots (full, half, raised accessible beds) – 60 more to be added
- Waiting list is 1400 (usually 10% covered per year due to attrition)
- Expect to add another 200-300 names in 2010.
- Waiting list is strongest in SE Portland but distributed throughout the community.
- Summary of PCG Task Force Strategies:
  - *Add new gardens (Madison, Vestal, Gilbert Heights);*
  - *Continue development of new gardens (Frazer, Sumner, Errol Heights)*
  - *Divide full 20x20' plots in half to make 200 sf plots;*
  - *Enforce one plot per household rule; better reporting of abandoned plots*
  - *Education on non-PCG options and resources (institutions, organizations, yardshare, urban farms, etc.)*
  - *Raise money through grants and donations – solicit garden sponsorships;*
  - *Increase operating budget allocation through PP&R*
  - *Charge fee for all classes (already doing so for pruning classes)*
  - *Look at Washington-Monroe site and others for short term use to meet current demand*

### Other organizations

#### Oregon Food Bank

- Lots of calls for gardening information being fielded
- SEED TO SUPPER Conducted over 75 workshops and 14 Cooking from the Garden Classes – serving 376 people, 62% are low-income; Volunteers presented at local agencies, schools, and community events.
- Additional info: 81,630 pounds of produce were received by local agencies through the Plant-A-Row program

#### Growing Gardens

- Home Garden Program serves 175 families with 33 more on the waiting list for 2011
- 40 requests for help with school gardens in the last 3 years
- Implemented School Garden Coordinator Certificate – 32 people have done the 35 hour training.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS WORKING GROUP - DEMAND SUMMARY

### Portland Public Schools

- 27 Schools in District that are growing food – including K-8, Elementary, MS, and HS.
- Most gardens are lower-yield but high in educational value – impacting hundreds of students.
- Additional 6 schools that have a shared facility run through PCG program.
- No perceived backlog – as demand is immediately discussed and directed to a small, doable size.

### Oregon Tilth

- Garden Crew had 357 volunteer hours at demonstration garden at Luscher Farm – 1000 pounds harvested & donated to Portland Housing Authority.
- Over 4,822 contact hours to 2,351 adults and youth through outreach activities, classes, tours
- Over half of these hours are devoted to Urban Agriculture Classes: Comprehensive Organic Gardener (COG) and Organic Gardening Certificate Program – 245 total students

### Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon

- 10 Independent Gardens on Faith Based Land in Portland – encompassing over 130 garden plots and more;
- 4 of the PCG projects are on Faith Based land
- opportunities for shared community gardening. Very small waiting list on current gardens.
- 16 proposed gardens in process on Faith Based Land that would be meet further demand

### Janus Youth Programs

- Gardens at a number of low-income housing sites offering site-access to 30+ garden plots for local residents and education on gardening.
- 35,000 square feet of gardens and community orchard (15 fruit trees) at two affordable housing sites
- 71 total plots with a plan to add 25 more plots to the Seeds of Harmony Garden in New Columbia in 2010 to meet demand
- 71 families garden annually; Weekly garden committee meetings to manage operations attended by 10-15 garden leaders; 150 children involved each year in garden club activities (2 times per week at each garden site)
- 20-30 teens employed each year through the Food Works program and receive 740 hours of training in food, marketing, community engagement and leadership development; distributed over 5,000 lbs of certified organic produce from their farm and gardens to low-income residents

### Groundwork Portland

- Helps turn brownfields and vacant property into community gardens and greenspaces in low-income neighborhoods, engaging communities of color in the redevelopment process.

### Grow Portland

- Grow Portland is a new nonprofit organization that helps connect gardeners with land, education and supplies; launching a grass roots community gardening program in 2010 to work with private landowners and religious/community organizations to build and manage community gardens. Will offer comprehensive services including soil fertility testing, soil preparation, plot layout, and garden administration.

### Private Development

- Developments such as The Cyan, and the Asa Lofts offer at-grade and rooftop community gardens as a residential amenity.