

Atlanta Local Food Forward

Work Group Session: Community Gardens: Bobbie Wilson & Fred Conrad

Brainstorming – how are we going to make MORE community gardens

- Bobby on the Community Garden Movement
 - The People's Garden Initiative
 - Organic gardens on Department of Agriculture grounds & other government buildings
 - About reducing environmental impact
 - Demonstration site
 - Providing cost share opportunities for implementing sustainable agricultural practices
 - Bobby suggested that every state receive funding/create a regional demonstration site to show how family can make a living off 5 acres
 - Today: Draft letter to Secretary of Agriculture asking to support agricultural funding
- Question of economic crisis – where will funding come from?
 - Gardens that sustain themselves (economically locally sustainable)
- Poverty in rural communities – returning to the land
- Policy
 - Agricultural bill – this money will continue to flow
 - WIC – Women, infants, and children
 - SNAP – food stamps
 - Policy in Atlanta against community gardens in public parks – recently changed
 - Atlanta has growing season, space
 - Educational programs to assist participants in community gardens
 - 23 cities program
 - Direct funding to provide technical information from universities to help gardens
 - BUT, universities worked with industries, not providing sustainable methods
 - Why not 50 State Program?
- Partners
 - Realtors, housing authorities = empower policy
 - Government funding – showing them that community gardens are as important as the industries receiving massive funding
 - Home owners
 - Institutional involvement in community gardens
 - Churches (funding)/ Faithbased organizations
 - Federal Agencies
 - CDC: Funds State Department of Health to support community gardens
 - Environmental Protection Agency: more than regulations
 - DCA: Local plans, affordable housing
 - Master Gardeners Associations
 - \$100 + volunteer hours in community
 - Each garden is autonomous; some engaged in community others not

Atlanta Local Food Forward

- Donated 40,000 lbs “locally grown for local charities for local people in need”
- Challenges
 - Horticulture/Agriculture = healthy living
 - What comes first? Education or gardens? Organic or quick food production
 - Each community garden has the autonomy to decide what responds to their concerns
 - Community Organizing = sustainable garden
 - Must come out of the people, not implemented from above
 - Family plot vs. Community open
 - Community Garden: Open to all members of community
 - By-laws established to prevent favoritism
 - Minimal dues show commitment (\$0.50 - \$5)
 - Involvement
 - Navigating the system = getting things done
 - Land Availability
 - Government owned land
 - Using public land & community gardens lost to developers
 - Create waiver with County Development Office/Planning Department (where developers get plans approved)
 - Mulberry Garden – Permanent Landtrust
 - Changing Zoning – Creating permanent open space (make sure open space includes gardens)
 - Empty lots – generally shorter term gardens
 - Using people who know the system

Discussion/Planning

- Education beyond food pyramid
 - Health, environment, community benefits
- Area: 38 county metro area
- At the Federal Level
 - Create Federal Family that uses ALFI as pilot project
 - Use as a **model** (diverse models) for the rest of the Southeast
 - County policies that encourage space for gardens
 - Many developed communities have rules around
- At local level
 - We can all grow food
 - Edible landscape
 - Community gardens
 - No communal land?
 - Bringing communities together around private backyard gardens
- Changing the Language around local food production
 - From “garden” to “urban farms or

Challenge summary

Expertise/education

Atlanta Local Food Forward

Land: usable, desirable – land generally not an issue

Awareness/involvement: public relations, support, community participation

Summary

- Goals/Plan for Action
 - Policy
 - Explore the creation of a Federal Family (CDD, EPA, USDA) concerned about community agriculture that uses ALFI as pilot project
 - Use as a **model** (diverse models) for the rest of the Southeast
 - Partners
 - Develop strategy for reaching out for partners
 - Federal: CDC, EPA, USDA
 - State: DNR, DCA (department of community affairs)
 - Local: Work with Planning and Zoning boards for uniform policy of access to land/use of land
 - Community constituencies: community planning meetings, senior communities, faith based communities
 - Plan
 - 1) Community Gardening Education
 - Class on community gardens (Urban Harvest)
 - Training for a Speakers Bureau (think Community Garden Experts)
 - We need more Fred and Bobbie in Atlanta
 - Distribution of information about starting/sustaining a community garden
 - Series of Webcam lessons in the garden (Youtube)
 - Accessible literature (handbook)
 - 2) PR campaign around community gardens
 - Public Library programs/book festivals
 - Photo contest for best community garden
 - Celebrate/spread awareness about existing community garden culture
 - Sponsors/judges: People from CDC, EPA, etc.
 - Community Garden Agricultural Fair (look at past model)
 - Garden tours include vegetable garden tour
 - 3) National Conference on Urban Gardening in Atlanta in 2010
 - 4) Draft letter to Secretary of Agriculture asking for funding to have an educational person to assist in each of the 50 states (50 State Program)

Top 3-5 For Harvest Presentation

5) Text Here