

Districts can be nimble local solutions

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Welcome to Pierce County

SQUARE MILES: 1,790

POPULATION 2011: 807,904



Source: "Pierce County Profile" <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/profile.htm>

Rich History of Agriculture: Urban & Rural

1890s – 1900s = Hops capital of the world!



1942 Victory
Garden in
Tacoma

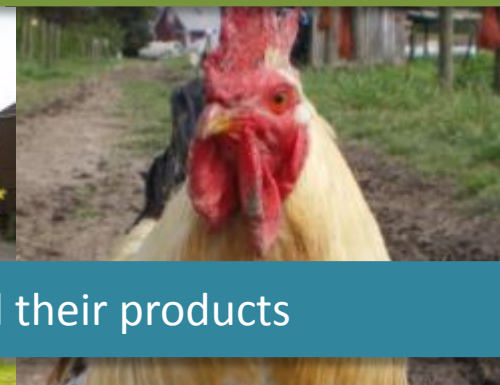
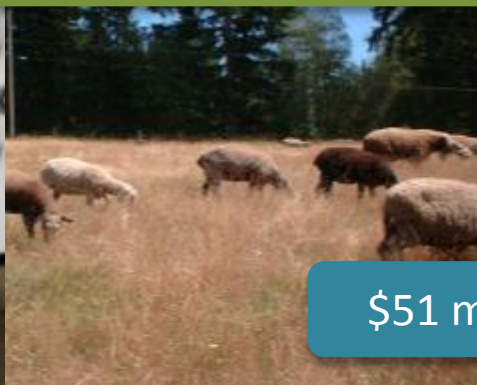


Puyallup berry fields – summer 1916



1,448 farms producing \$84 million worth of products

- Total market value of agricultural production in Pierce County



\$51 million in livestock, poultry and their products

5th in Washington Production

\$11 million aquaculture value



\$19 million nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod sold

\$9 million worth of mixed vegetables

Agricultural Assistance Program

- **Served as member of County Ag Advisory Board**
- **Farmland preservation**
 - Purchased 2 prime farmland properties
 - Assist County/private partners in their acquisition of farmland
- **Assist with agricultural infrastructure where possible**
 - USDA Mobile Meat Processing Unit
 - Small-scale poultry processing equipment rental
- **Assist in capacity development of markets**
 - Farmers markets
 - Food Coop/retail
- **Outreach & education to urban population/eaters**
 - Buy local campaign w/ regional partners
 - **COMMUNITY GARDENS!**



Initial District Involvement

Grassroots organizing

- Joined a group of about 5-7 partners in crime; including City and local Health Department
- Hired a community garden intern to help partners:
 - Community meetings and educational events
 - Community Garden Harvest tour (by car and bike)
 - Website development with garden information



Initial District Involvement

Program development

- Chipped in small amount of funding for program start up
- Supported small community grant program (Green Partnership Fund) which supports garden development
- Continued to work as partners in larger effort to formally organize program



Initial District Involvement

Policy support

- Advocated on behalf of community gardens as local policies were developed
 - City of Tacoma Open Space Plan
 - Urban Forest Plan
- Attended community meetings (ACHIEVE) to support policy development that resulted in formal program
- Served on program steering committee to provide strategic direction to the program



What is Urban Agriculture/Farming?

The growing of plants and the raising of animals within and around cities.

It is integrated into the urban economic and ecological system: urban agriculture is embedded in -and interacting with- the urban ecosystem.

Or



What are Community Gardens?

Any piece of land gardenized by a group of people.

From the American Community Gardening Association



Also – “Community-managed Open Space.”

What do we find in community gardens?



They are as diverse as the neighborhoods in which they are created.

We find: organic vegetables,
flowers,
fruit,
gathering spaces,
children's areas...



What do we find in community gardens?



Also...

places for education,
composting,
wildlife habitat areas,
orchards,
rain gardens,

and much more.

What's the big deal?

Community gardens are much more than places where people turn vacant lots into nice gardens – They are about ***reconnection***.



To our environment



To our food supply



To each other

There are some problems we're facing today

Degraded urban environment – lack of understanding of natural cycles (and lots and lots of waste)



Unhealthy relationship with food

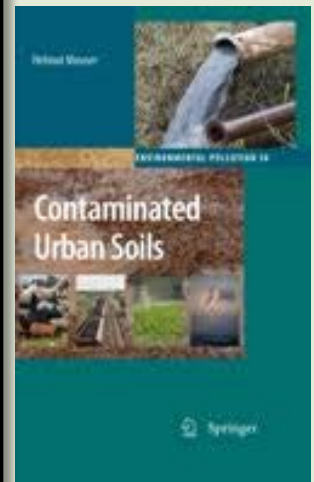
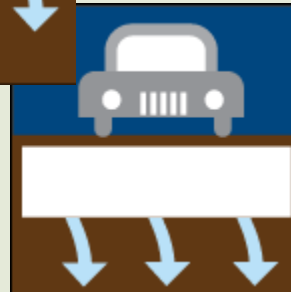
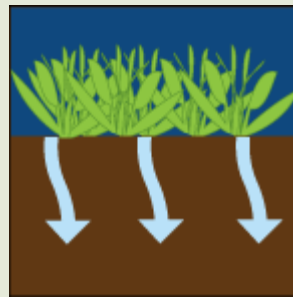


Loss of ability and opportunity to engage in citizenship – too often we are solely consumers...

Problems in the urban environment - soils

Urban soil has often been both damaged and neglected.

- Poor Infiltration
- Poor Drainage
- Compaction
- Low Nutrients
- Contamination



There is a low understanding of soils among urban dwellers.

Problems in the urban environment - waste

Urban centers generate a wide range of organic residuals that have potential utility as soil amendments, including:

municipal biosolids
yard trimmings
and food scraps

Annually, each person in the US generates an average of:

- 22 dry kg municipal biosolids (treated sewage)
- 88 kg yard trimmings and (grass clippings, leaves, etc.)
- 79 kg food scraps

(NEBRA, 2007; USEPA, 2006)



Problems in the urban environment – water



Our urban life has serious impacts on our water bodies:

Waste – lack of awareness about conservation leads to wasteful use

Pollution – many urban dwellers don't see the connection between their activities and the orcas

Problems in the urban environment

Much of this stems from lack of understanding/connection



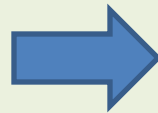
Problem – Lack of connection to healthy food

We don't know where our food comes from

We don't know who grew it

We don't know when it is in season

We don't know how to grow it ourselves



Food related disease

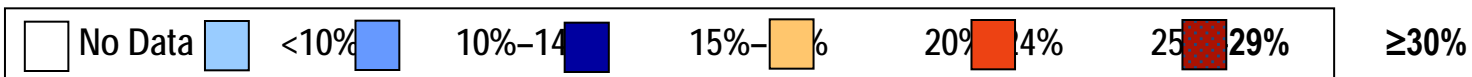
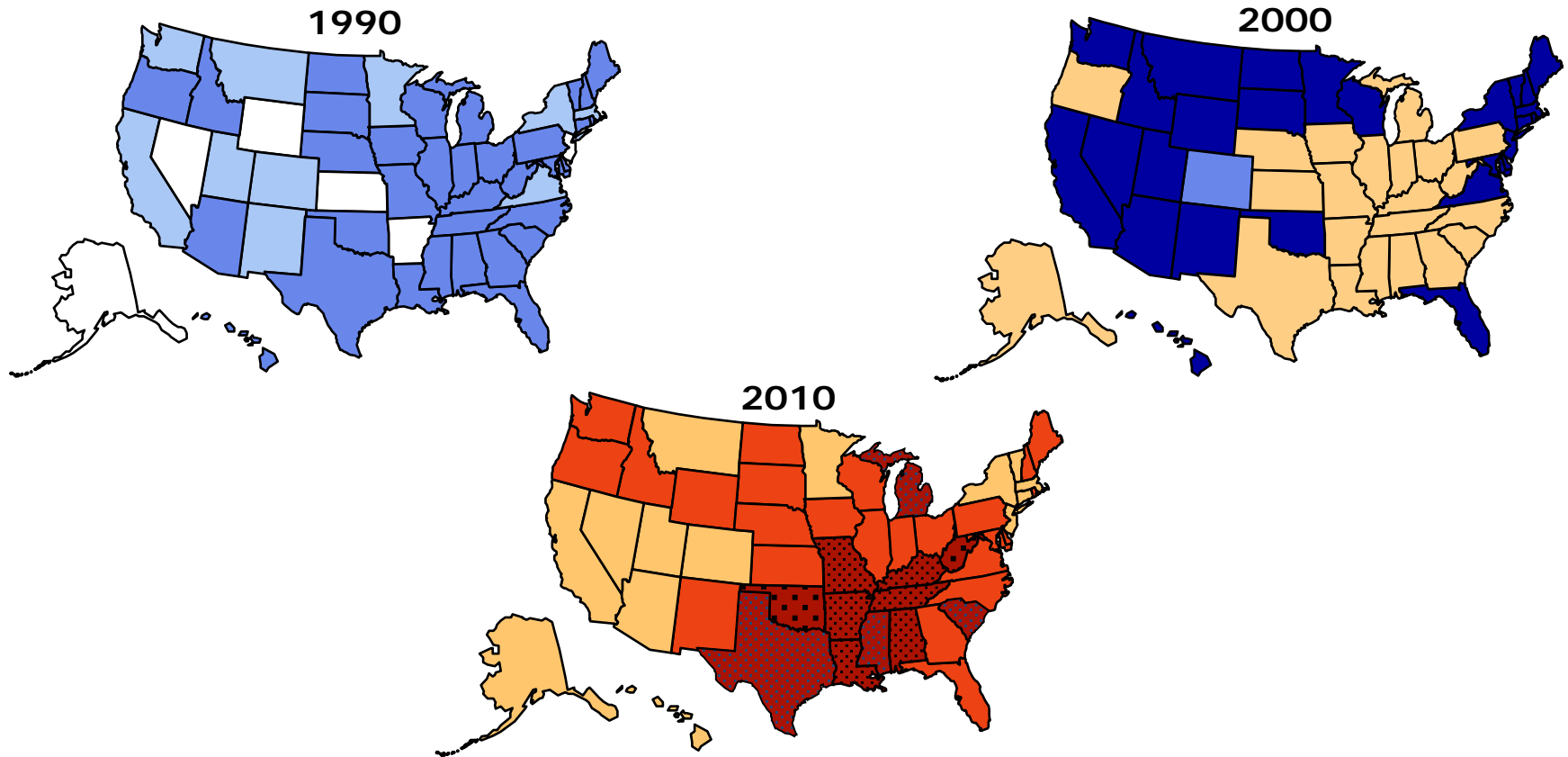
1. 68% of adult Americans are overweight or obese
2. 18-20% of children & adolescents are overweight or obese
3. 10% of all U.S. healthcare costs are related to obesity
4. Children in school today have a life expectancy 10 years shorter than my own



Obesity Trends* Among U.S. Adults

BRFSS, 1990, 2000, 2010

(*BMI ≥ 30 , or about 30 lbs. overweight for 5'4" person)



<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>

Food Insecurity

50 million Americans estimated to be food insecure

- Cost
- Access

Food deserts: areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food



Good things that come from a reconnection to food

- Increased **access**
- Increased **affordability**
- Increased **interest** (especially important with youth –but adults too!)

People with a connection to food are much more likely to seek out a local farmer



Challenge of Democracy in an accelerated world

Although we are more 'connected' through the internet then we have ever been – we remain disconnected in fundamental ways.



Scholars note the challenge of maintaining a democratic culture when people are too busy to participate in civic life

Importance of Physical Space for Democracy

Michael Kimmelman in the NYTimes...

From Aristotle to #OccupyWallStreet



Bankruptcy of 'public space' in America – Created by developers, public spaces "are not really public at all but quasi-public, controlled by their landlords."

Contested democracy vs. collaborative space

Difference between engaging in democracy via hearings/protest/elections and collectively creating something new



vs.



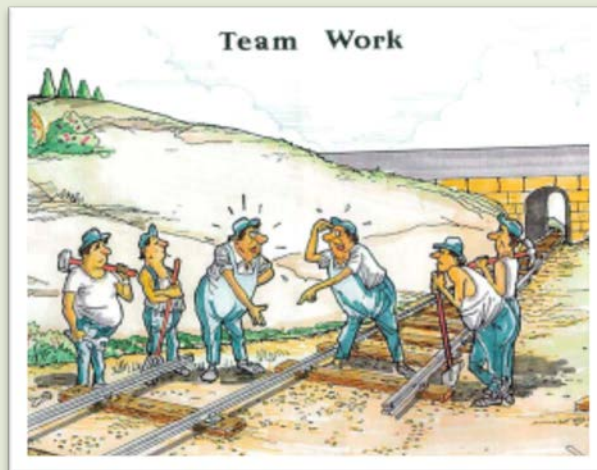
Community gardens provide a democratic place to reconnect with each other

Where do we start?

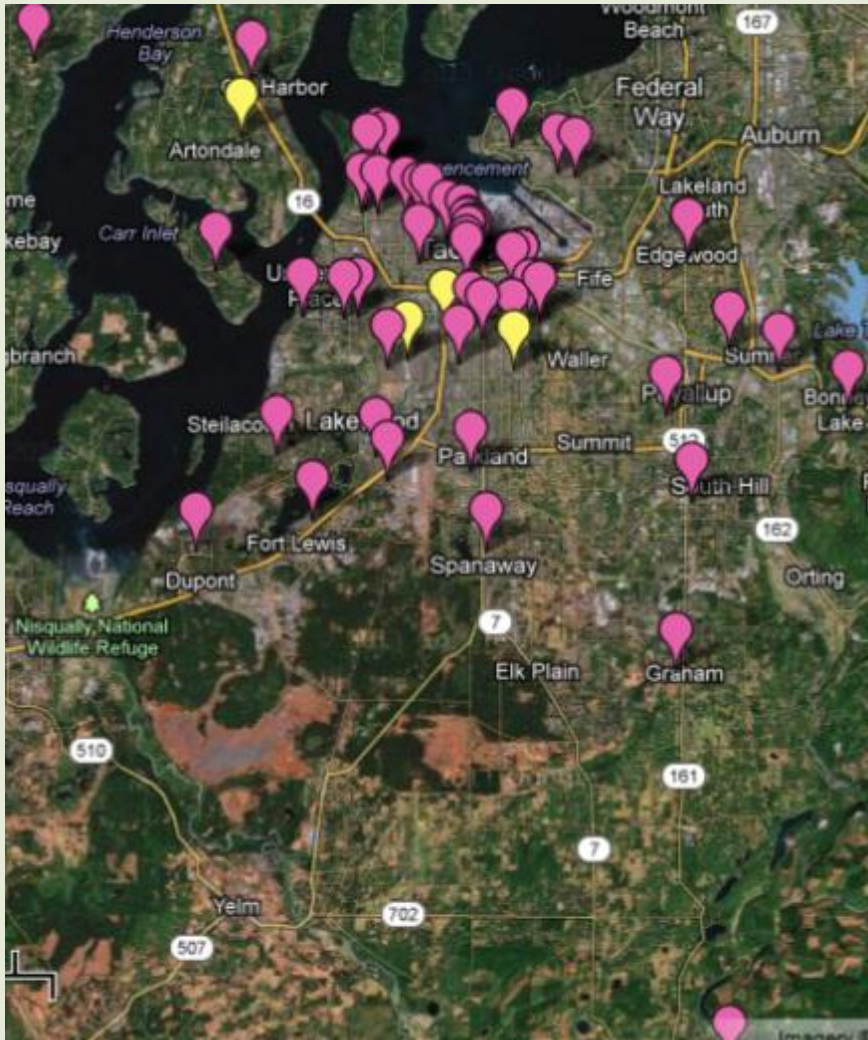
To support communities in doing this – there are two parts:

Community – a Community garden without gardeners is just a vacant lot. Do not underestimate the importance of this!

Garden – Many different types of land can be utilized – almost anything can work if the social piece is there (and some sun!)



What does it look like in Pierce County today?



In **2007**, when PCD got involved, there were **8 gardens**.

Today there are **54 gardens**

Yellow – in development

Gardens are on a diversity of public (City, Parks, School) and private (church, private citizen, housing complex, land trust) land – each one is incredibly unique!

Program Structure

- Initially – 2 year pilot project housed at local non-profit
- Many community partners contributed what they were able
- Today - Memorandum of Understanding with local partners to fund the program and clarify deliverables with each partner
- Other partners can fund the program without the signing onto the MOU –
- Steering Committee comprised of funders, other partners and community members provides strategic direction

Program activities

- Support communities to build gardens
 - Facilitation
 - Technical support
 - Resources
- Build Capacity of Garden Leaders to be successful
- Coordinate Educational Opportunities
 - Edible Garden Workshop Series
 - Gallucci Learning Garden
 - Partnership with WSU Master Gardeners – Community Garden Specialist track
 - Fruit Tree Steward Program
- Share the Harvest – Gardens, Fruit Trees, Farms

Summary

District played a supportive role in getting program started – interested in understanding local need (not all programs would be the same)

Great way to build partnerships with other local agencies that may not be traditional partners (i.e. public health, parks, youth development, community building, solid waste, wastewater)

Collaborative approach was key to success – diversity of steering committee/partners is a strength of the program



Why Gardens?

- Opportunity to educate urban and rural residents about growing, soil, agriculture, land management and natural resources.
- Opportunity for community engagement and volunteerism. Way to get hands dirty!
- Help residents see value of local farms and farmland. Why should they care about farmlands in greater County or regional farmland conversion?
- Stewardship of open spaces.
- Impervious surface and water runoff control... synergize with rain garden work.
- Enhance and build new partnerships: teamed up with jurisdictions, local Extension and private orgs. to support multiple goals with a successful and tangible outcome.

Thanks & Contacts

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