

Community Garden Visioning Session - 10/8/08 – at 800 Purchase Street, New Bedford

Attending:

[Amanda Szott](#), S.C. Hospitals Cardiac Prevention
[Barbara Purdy](#), Forbidden Fruit Farm
[Bill Shell](#), Hunger Commission
[Christina Connelly](#), NB Office of Housing and Community Development
[Chuck Dade](#), NB Resident
[Corinne Weaver](#), G.N.B Gardening Club/teacher
Cory Cordero, Youth Build
[David Weed](#), Healthy Cities Fall River
[Deidre Healy](#), Fairhaven Sustainability Committee
[Derek Christianson](#), Brix Bounty Farm
[Hope Hallett](#), GNB Gardening Club/Nurse
[Jennifer Downing](#), Garfield Foundation/Leadership South Coast
[Jennifer Holske](#), The Trustees of Reservations
[Karl Glosl, Jr.](#), Wings Court and Brooklawn Farmers Markets
[Kathleen Christianson](#), UMASS Dartmouth
[Kerry Muldoon](#), NB Conservation Commission
[Marcia Picard](#), Children in Balance
[Michelle Cloutier](#), WIC GNBCHC
[Mike Labossiere](#), The Trustees of Reservations
[Nancy Lee Wood](#), Bristol Community College
[Pat Bebo](#), UMASS Extension (Nutrition Education Program, NEP)
[Richard Couse](#), New Bedford Big Brothers Big Sisters
[Robert Barboza](#), The Chronicle
[Sarah Kelley](#), SEMAP
[Sarah Porter](#), New Bedford Conservation Committee
[Susan Jennings](#), UMASS Dartmouth Office of Campus and Community Sustainability
[Susan Peterson](#), Farmer and SRPEDD
[Tem Blessed](#), Youth Build
[Virginia Senna-Davis](#), Diabetes Assoc. Inc.

Individuals responded to an inquiry about the role they see for community gardens in relationship to their organizations mission. Responses highlighted the following:

Self-sufficiency: both for individuals and the region. Community Gardening provides individuals with low-cost access to healthy produce, and supports regional food security with more locally-grown food. May also help develop new farmers for region (further increasing regional capacity for local production.)

Educational opportunities: gardens provide an engaging setting for multi-disciplinary learning (biology, chemistry, geology, cultural history, economics, etc), health education (nutrition and how to cook fresh vegetables), agricultural education, sustainable farming and gardening methods, and more.

Community Enrichment: community gardens are common public spaces that allow socialization, intergenerational exchange (gardening together is fun), provides outlets for at-risk youth, can be therapeutic, beautifies formerly vacant lots, get people outdoors, provide exercise, and can provide economic development opportunities. Increases awareness of the natural world and has physical, mental, and emotional health benefits.

*** Organizations represented have different capacities for involvement with community gardens. Some are poised to help develop gardens, others to participate in education, some would benefit from having their target community members gardening, and still others would benefit from the availability of low or no cost fresh vegetables.**

Group Brainstorm 1. What types of resources are needed to help community gardens thrive in our communities? What have been some previous roadblocks?

Resources to Thrive-

Community Support: community buy-in is needed! Respect for the community- remaining open to community members ideas/desires for their local garden, people to be trainers, leaders, and sustainers of the gardens, municipal support, faith and neighborhood group involvement, youth involvement.

Physical Resources: Land, water, open area for sunshine, supplies (seeds, tools, compost), storage facilities, worm troughs, raised beds, green houses.

Administrative Resources: money, organizational structure, coordination, garden stewards, community-formed ground rules for the gardens.

Technical Resources: lot mapping, soil testing. How-to guides. Marketing to public about availability.

Educational Resources: knowledge transfer from existing experts: our older generations and different ethnic communities, garden club members, and farmers. Programming with school systems and health educators.

Roadblocks-

Potential Lack of Community Support: neighborhood acceptance, theft, vandalism, .lack of momentum on past projects disappointed community members. Collaborative models not always embraced.

Physical: environmental contamination, poor soils, pests and vermin. Land? Water access? Place to compost? Place for tools?

Administrative: ownership/governance issues must be sorted out, liability.

Educational: need technical expertise (soil building, what to plant when, etc). Loss of knowledge.

2. When considering the role food and gardens can play in our communities, what is your greatest hope for change in the next 10 years?

Community “Pollination”: getting involved with one another. A thriving, integrated network of gardens that involves adults, kids, youth leaders-in-training, daycare, K-12, hospitals, nutritionists/dieticians, schools, senior centers, faith organizations, farmers, etc. Intergenerational connections. Interdisciplinary connections.

Regional Food Security: Take back control of our food supply: eat locally, produce locally. Have developed a regional seed bank. Understanding of our “Food Shed.” Community Gardens as incubators for new professional farmers (farming internship programs in the cities). Fresh produce in pantries. CSA shares subsidized through hospitals. Capacity to grow ethnic crops for diverse community.

Healthier People: vastly improved health of the population- wider variety of fresh fruits and vegetables grown and eaten by local population, local food in school lunches, and in hospitals. Being outdoors, exercising in the garden, eating fresh fruits and vegetables is second nature.

Education: informal hands-on education for kids and adults together, people are educated about importance of fresh food and nutrition and are reconnected with nature and the food cycle, every school has a garden. Leadership training (youth trained to be garden stewards), incubator training (training for would-be new professional farmers), higher education connections (UMASS Dartmouth Sustainability Extension and Ag Program, BCC’s Organic Tech Program going strong). Understand connections between food and sustainability.

Other Specific Hopes:

Gardens are organic and cooperative
There are community green houses

100+ Community Gardens in the Region,
The SC is seen as a model for Community Gardens and Sust.

