Plan Fort Collins Question of the Week:
Q2 - Local Agriculture

One of our long-term goals is to grow more food locally, possibly on some City-owned lands. What's the best way to do this?

Responses submitted via Online Comment Form:

Answer: I disagree with the premise that we should be growing more food locally - especially on City-owned lands. We live in an arid climate and if such production could effectively be done here (with limited water supply) it would have been done privately. How does growing food locally mesh with our decreased water usage goals? This makes no sense and should not be a long-term goal.

Answer: Fairly lease out space to citizens in any area- not just to those citizens around the area being used for food production.

Answer: Leasing city land and allowing for more produce stands are both fine. However, I would not want existing city parklands to be converted to gardening.

Answer:
- Provide tax breaks/incentives for local growers. Land is very expensive for local growers.
- Designate a certain amount of parks/open lands to be used for community gardens; could charge rent for people to use these community garden plots to cover costs. Is there a big cost difference to plant & maintain food gardens versus watering/maintaining grass and flower gardens?
- Plant fruit trees instead on non-bearing fruit on City owned property. Place signs by them letting the public know they can eat the fruit. Use Master Gardeners or other volunteers to help with maintenance.
- Follow recommendations in LiveWell Colorado Food Policy Blueprint: Develop local land use policies that allow and incentivize food production, including home-based and community food production and urban agriculture. For more info, see page 10: http://livewellcolorado.org/assets/pdf/resources/blueprints/final-food-policy-blueprint.pdf

Answer: Though this is nice for those who want to garden, it should not be a priority for the City. This rings of Isolationism and that is not good for Fort Collins or the region. If the City wants to use the open space it has for this purpose that is a good idea. How about the Soap Stone property, I hear there is a lot of open space up there.

Answer: The City should allow well-managed food growing on storm water land, e.g., detention areas. Of course there must be no structures, walls, or other fixtures that would interfere with
the purpose of such lands to retain or channel stormwater. The downside...gardeners would have to accept that in some years their efforts may be wiped out by inundation.

**Answer:** 1. how about perhaps offering bare root FRUIT TREES at a discount for homeowners (CSU used to offer bulk buys of bare root trees as windbreaks for people with acreage...how about discounts even without a bulk buy or without acreage?) Also, classes preceding bare root tree planting, to understand which fruit trees grow best along the Front Range, and how to do it organically or with least chemicals.

**Answer:** Really? This is a priority question and long-term goal? The community has lost thousands of jobs and you’re asking questions about growing vegetables on public land? If people want to grow vegetables, they can do so in their backyard or pool their resources and buy or rent land. You're undermining the credibility of this process by focusing on issues like this.

**Answer:** I love this idea. More local food production and creating community. Allowing small scale produce stands in more places is a great idea. Partnering with Schools and community groups for gardens on school property Same with City property. I'd like to see fruit trees in parks as well as the standard trees you see. Allowing gardens in the parkways with minimum maintenance requirements to keep it a garden and not a weed patch. Would need to explore this more for writing appropriate codes. Or maybe just not worry about people who do plant in the parkway unless it becomes a problem. Maybe even allow a goat in the backyard for goats milk? That might be pushing it. Back during WWII they had liberty gardens. Great idea to encourage growing local food.

**Answer:** I have several ideas for this: Completing the community market would be wonderful! Beyond this, consider planning for the entire food system - processing, marketing, etc. It is important to consider the business end, not just the feel-good issues. Work with Larimer County to continue to lift barriers to ag production and value added agriculture in particular - planners at the County seem to try to be excessively prescriptive, ignoring market realities on how large a processing operation makes economic sense, for example. We should coordinate with CSU and local non-profits on appropriate crops and methods, work to develop a Larimer County wine district, etc. (I'm thinking the equivalent of a UniverCity connections focused on the county and the agricultural food system from soil buildings and farm operations to on-farm value-added production to a local processing system to the market and table). In the city, continue to encourage farm stands and farmers markers around town; and continue educational programs around self-sufficiency, canning, greenhouses, etc. Continue to partner with Larimer County on mini-grants. I believe it would be good to see more community gardens, particularly community gardens within walking distance of residences. A rule of thumb might be to include at least one garden in each of the roughly 1 mile x 1 mile square formed by our arterial street system (thus also making it possible to reach without crossing major streets). Sites may be on city-owned lands, parks, schools, etc. and should be bicycle-accessible. Proximity to multi-family housing may be a factor to consider or proximity and outreach to low-income neighborhoods. Consider inclusion of greenhouses. I would also like to see the city acquire more open space in areas proximate to the city, for protection of prime ag lands or views (while still allowing growth in housing to keep pace with population - please don't become Boulder!!!) This land may be leased to active agricultural producers, using models being explored by Boulder County or other areas. Encouraging 1 to 5 acre farms near town seems beneficial. Another idea - in old town neighborhoods, we have some very wide streets, out of scale to the housing stock and causing runoff. Imagine narrowing east-west streets by adding a linear community garden on the north (sunny) side of the street.
Answer: We have an agricultural heritage that includes some of the earliest irrigated agriculture in the west. Food was grown on irrigated bottom land along the Poudre River. One way to grow food locally and acknowledge this heritage is to again provide such lands for organic truck farming. This would allow operations of such a size as to be commercially profitable. Such bottom land is always problematic for other uses due to flooding potential. An example of such a situation is Link-N-Greens golf course. It is a golf course because it is in the flood plain. What if that land were put into food production instead of grass production? Survey sites along the flood plain of the river to see if such a plan would have potential sites.

Answer: If I were to guess, I would say that there is already a huge amount of food being grown in the Fort Collins area which is then transported all across the country. Rather than trying to set up a new infrastructure to accommodate more agriculture (water, land, markets, etc) why not try to give enough incentive for local farmers to only distribute their crops in the Northern Front Range? It could be something written between the city and the grocery stores who want to operate here.

Answer: Growing more food locally is critically important for MANY reasons including economic benefits, building neighborhood cohesion, increasing awareness of agriculture, and adapting to climate change. ALL of the suggested ways to do this in this week’s question are needed to achieve this. I would also suggest that more “gardening clubs” and other means of exchanging information, discussing problems, and increasing networking opportunities are needed. Increased farmer markets throughout the year and providing information for them are beneficial as well. Last thought: it might be helpful to have city staff available to initiate community gardens, and somehow bring in Poudre School District to the effort. (The educational opportunities are immense!)

Answer: It seems the first question is begged: In a semi-arid climate, is it more appropriate to encourage crop production locally or allow locations of more suitable condition to reach greater economic scale to provide food products for the local market? In your zeal to achieve ‘sustainability’, it appears the totality of the term is lost. The city should focus its attention upon the identification of market impediments of its own creation rather than overt attempts to ‘guide the market’. The citizens of Fort Collins have earned the right to determine our collective destiny. We have not abdicated this basic freedom to unelected bureaucrats that hold a rather dim view of democratic capitalism. If people want to grow a garden, there’s are no substantive barriers beyond the ownership or effective control to a plot of land. If the city is purchasing real estate with the intent of leasing the land for food production, then it should have disclosed that intent when it imposed taxes, fees and land takings for the assembly of its public lands inventory. The notion that the central land planning document of a city should call out ideas such as this is ludicrous! Stop wasting my tax dollars chasing fads and ‘progressive enlightenment’ and focus upon economic development strategies!

Answer:
• Create winter gardens (hoop houses) for people to rent out so that more food could be grown during the "off" season. We eat year round so we need to have local food available year round.
• The city could plant more fruit trees that could be a free source of food.
• Give tax breaks to apartment building owners who make space available for gardening to their tenants.
• Allow small farmers to sell their goods from stands or trucks without a lot of red tape.
• Encourage more diversity of farm animals on residential properties. Land occupied by only horses is quickly run down. For example, the property own by the City on west Horsetooth, between Shields and Taft, use to have goats and chickens as well as horses. The goats
and chickens have been removed, requiring the tenants to use more herbicides to control weeds. This job use to belong to the goats and chickens. The goats and chickens also provided a source of food to the tenants.

- Provide incentives for new developers to include agriculture in the land planning - especially if that developer bought out a farmer.

**Answer:** What about working with businesses to lease/use their vacant land to do this, these could be on a year to year basis.

**Answer:** It’s good to partner with established organizations, such as non-profits and community groups that already exist as a means to oversee and assure a continuity of the projects. You can also set aside plots to rent for garden space, such as transforming parks by putting up fencing and irrigation for farmers needs. The city can also implement more permaculture strategies such as planting more small fruit, nut trees as well as mulching, employing water harvesting techniques such has been done by Brad Lancaster throughout the city of Tucson. We could start by celebrating what we already have, a bountiful apple harvest this year, with cider pressing, pie making, composting, ethanol, etc. The city could really rally around an event like this, and it could take place at the Farm.
City of Fort Collins, Colorado  
One of our long-term goals is to grow more food locally, possibly on some City-owned lands. What's the best way to do this? (See examples below.)
- Lease appropriate City-owned lands for local food production
- Develop small community gardens in parks or common areas
- Allow small scale produce stands in more places

Your ideas?

last Wednesday  Report

Tommy Klender  
i think its a wonderful idea and i hope it can happen.
only thing with parks is there will probably be alot of theft.
i would love to see town become more self sufficient in many more areas as well.

last Wednesday  Report

Terence Hoaglund  
This has been done very successfully in other communities, including inner city areas. The the local community has buy-in, and works in it and for it, there tends to be a lot less vandalism and theft.
I am all for it and am starting to incorporate this concept into more of my community designs.

last Wednesday  Report

Scott Mason  
Look to small pocket parks for neighborhood gardens. Use parts of neighborhood parts to rent garden plots for the season. Provide raw water at the garden plots. We rented a garden plot in Champaign, IL for a summer about 30 years ago and it was a wonderful community asset. By renting plots you get interested people and responsible management. My son said that the city-owned, user-rented garden plots in Boulder have a very long waiting list to get a plot.
He volunteers to develop garden plots at Section 8 housing so low-income renters can grow their own healthy food too. Partner with local CSA's and student local ag clubs for volunteer labor and equipment. Call me if you want details on local ag / going local contacts and ideas.

last Thursday  Report

Lynn Cudlip  
Renting city-owned or even privately-owned property is one option, but in South Bend, IN a wonderful group of people started what was later dubbed the Unity Gardens of Michiana. These gardens, spread throughout the area, were open to everyone who needed food and was willing to help. Most gardens were located on city property near a water source. City gave the okay for use. Soil was tested for lead and planted after results came back negative. One local group/church/organization took "ownership" of each garden and organized plant, work and harvest days. One garden supported 150 hubbard squash plants all planted by the neighborhood kids (500 lbs of squash). There was one lead person who spearheaded the whole unity garden effort - an RN who received funding to lead the effort. Extra food was given to food bank.
An additional that really helped many of the gardens get off the ground was use of a city greenhouse to start seedlings. This worked and I assume is still working.

Small scale veggie stands located around town would be great.

last Thursday  Report

Anne Burruss Schreck  
I think there could be a combination of all of those ideas and more.

on Sunday  Report

Katie Wallace  
I would strongly support all of the suggestions you provided as they appear to be solutions that would foster local agriculture while also providing opportunity for our farming-inclined, but economically challenged work force:
- Lease appropriate City-owned lands for local food production
- Develop small community gardens in parks or common areas
- Allow small scale produce stands in more places

Creating farmer apprentice incentives and reducing red tape that could allow more access to the market for small providers would also be great additions to this program.

Bellingham, Washington is a model community that can provide inspiration (Sustainable Connections is a good resource for these efforts: http://sustainableconnections.org/)
**City of Fort Collins, Colorado**

What's the best way for Fort Collins to grow more food locally? Community gardens? Leasing City-owned land for food production? Weigh in on our discussion board, Topic: Plan Fort Collins - Growing Local Food.

August 25 at 2:46pm · Comment · Like

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Likes</th>
<th>Flags</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kimberly Carman</td>
<td>Community events like seed swaps? Or maybe something where people can easily swap their extra veggies? Rooftop gardens are pretty cool... :)</td>
<td>August 25 at 2:51pm · Like · Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marty Shults</td>
<td>More community gardens is a must, turn vacant land into gardens not condos.</td>
<td>August 25 at 8:05pm · Like · Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Keller</td>
<td>As someone arriving in December I would definitely love some community gardens. But seed swaps would also be helpful. Definitely would like to grown more next year than just corn and cucumbers.</td>
<td>August 25 at 8:39pm · Like · Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter Family</td>
<td>Just another reason we love this city!</td>
<td>Sunday at 12:21pm · Like · Flag</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>