Bringing Food Back Home

The City of Eugene is taking meaningful action that will aid policy development designed to protect the City’s food security and encourage urban homesteading.

Whether you consider yourself to be eco-conscious, a food-lover, or simply someone who wants to live in an inspired community, the development and implementation of farm to table programs improve quality of life for all of a community’s members. Enjoying and producing local food is not a political issue; it is a human one. That is why local governments are taking matters into their own hands.

The City of Eugene recognizes that by improving local food production and distribution, Eugene can be a healthier, happier, and safer City. The program initiatives discussed below each address a different societal goal: (1) Sustainability; (2) Disaster Planning; (3) Urban Homesteading; and (4) Open Space and Community Development. These initiatives will facilitate progressive, city-wide change in Eugene’s food system over the next few decades.

CLIMATE & ENERGY ACTION PLAN (CEAP)

Finalized in September 2010, the CEAP identifies six sustainability action areas that will guide policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuel consumption, and help the community respond to a changing climate. The CEAP is not a binding legal document and is only intended to inform the City’s policies. The City is committed to implementing the CEAP and has earmarked funds for City-wide sustainability programming.

The Food and Agriculture action area provides recommendations that address the multifaceted issues associated with food production, distribution, consumption, land-use, and waste disposal. Most importantly, the City wants to assure that its citizens will have a secure and resilient food supply as climate change and increased fossil fuel prices may impact access to food in the near future. To read the CEAP, please visit: http://www.eugene-or.gov/?nid=509.

EUGENE FOOD SECURITY SCOPING AND RESOURCE PLAN (FSS)

Finalized in April 2010, the FSS created a local food system model that accounts for the wide variety of inputs that impact Eugene’s food security.

The main policy recommendations include (1) improvements to the city’s land use code to permit microlivestock; (2) development of an Emergency Distribution Plan to assure access to food in the event of a prolonged disaster (greater than 3 days); and (3) creation of a city liaison position for local food production and hunger relief systems. The City’s top priorities for 2012-2013 include improving seasonal farmers’ markets, updating the land use code to allow microlivestock, and creating the
In 2011, Oregon passed House Bill 2800 mandating that the Department of Education establish food-purchasing programs designed to facilitate the use of Oregon food products in public schools. The Farm to School and School Garden Program also encourages development of school gardens and implementation of wellness policies.

In 2012, the Oregon Department of Education granted $189,140 in funding to eleven school districts for Oregon food-purchasing programs and food education. Among the grant recipients is Eugene’s Lane County School District No. 4J. The awarded funds allow the School District to expand its current food programming and will serve over 16,050 students. The District plans to buy tofu from Surata Soy Foods and tortillas and corn chips from Northwest Mexican Foods.

Lane County School District, however, has been developing food programming in its public schools since 2008. Through the Lane County Food Distribution Project, an Oregon Solutions project, the Eugene 4J school district has increased purchase of locally grown fruits and vegetables. In 2012, local food purchases weighed in at 28,533 pounds.

To learn more about Oregon’s food-purchasing programs please visit:

- Oregon Department of Education: [http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2646.](http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2646)

Land use code changes will make it possible to raise microlivestock allowing homeowners to create well-rounded backyard gardens.

**Land Use Code Changes to Permit Microlivestock**

The City recently approved an urban animal keeping ordinance that will allow properties in various residential zones to raise livestock. Properties less than 20,000 square feet (sf) are permitted to have two of the following categories of animals: (1) up to 6 female domestic fowl; (2) up to 6 rabbits; (3) up to 3 miniature goats; and (4) 1 miniature pig. Properties larger than 20,000 sf can house all categories of animals, and may additionally have cows, horses, sheep, goats, emus, alpacas, and llamas subject to minimum space requirements. Either property size may have a limited number of honey bees. The ordinance strictly prohibits roosters, geese, turkeys, and peacocks. The code also addresses issues associated with fencing, noise, waste, smell, and harvesting. To read the ordinance, please visit [http://www.eugene-or.gov/index.aspx?NID=2144](http://www.eugene-or.gov/index.aspx?NID=2144).

**City Gardens**

Eugene is home to six community gardens throughout the city with more than 300 plots. Plots are affordable and available in 200 or 400 square feet. A site coordinator is available to aid with gardening issues, and the city provides access to garden tools and water.

The city also enters into leases with non-profit organizations to allow gardening on public land. Common Ground Garden is one such “right-of-way” garden, which is cited on vacant city land at the corner of 21st and Van Buren Avenues. Common Ground Garden is a neighborhood resource for local produce and community bonding.