

King Conservation District

2015 Program Focus Areas – FACT SHEET

Urban Sustainable Agriculture



Challenge: An equitable local food economy includes urban food production, both commercial and personal. Urban farmers and gardeners have unique needs for land stewardship guidance to ensure a viable, diverse local food system that cares for our soils and waters for future generations.

Need: Existing urban agricultural organizations are under-funded to meet the demand to develop sustainable urban small-lot food production and provide training and support for low-income and immigrant populations, who would benefit most from expanded urban agricultural opportunities.

The Problem

Food deserts exist within the City of Seattle and parts of south King County. Food deserts are defined by the US Department of Agriculture as urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. Instead of supermarkets and grocery stores, these communities may have no food access or are served only by fast food restaurants and convenience stores that offer few healthy, affordable food options. The lack of access contributes to a poor diet and can lead to higher levels of obesity and other diet-related diseases, such as diabetes and heart disease.

Part of the solution is to strengthen farms across King County and develop better transportation, storage, and processing infrastructure. Another part of a healthy local food system is to develop opportunities to grow fresh food within urban boundaries, especially in communities that are transit-dependent, low-income, or comprised of primarily immigrant populations.

Agriculture in urban areas provides exposure, outreach, and connections for urban residents to connect to the agricultural economy, the food system, and the environment through their placement within dense communities. Urban farmers benefit from lower transportation costs for themselves and their products, as well as community based support. These factors make urban agriculture a more viable option for low income and immigrant communities that can benefit this proximity to community support and the consumer market.

“1 in 5 children in King County is food insecure.”

- *Communities Count, 2012*

The Future

We propose to work with our member jurisdictions, King County, Seattle Tilth, Cascade Harvest Coalition, Pike Place Market, the Puget Sound Regional Food Council, and others across the food system spectrum to identify strategies to develop urban agricultural opportunities. We will build on existing success, such as Seattle Tilth’s Farm Works in Auburn and Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands in south Seattle as models of success and work together to innovate new pilot programs to learn from and adapt.

Current Program Outcomes	Proposed Additional Program Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve up to 5 urban farm service customers annually • Deliver 1-5 urban livestock-related farm plans annually (for regulatory compliance) • Participate in regional food system coordination initiatives (as available) • Provide soil testing support to over 500 new urban farmer/ gardeners annually to promote sound water quality related soil fertility management (this service has been growing steadily since starting in 2007) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess regional need for urban farming-related natural resource planning support through coordination with member jurisdictions and the KCD Advisory Committee • Continue to market and expand soil fertility services to promote responsible fertilizer practices (Increase gardener involvement by at least 100 more new gardeners annually) • Coordinate urban farm planning services with coordinated regional food system initiatives with member cities and county • Develop soil testing program and customers into a more comprehensive urban conservation program focused on growing healthy local food and protecting and enhancing urban water quality • Develop 20 Urban Farm Plans per year. Plans will be developed across the District so that by year 5, at least 1-2 urban farm plans will be developed in every member jurisdiction.
.05 FTE \$13,871	1.65 FTE PROPOSED TOTAL: \$191,800

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Deirdre Grace, Community Relations Manager

King Conservation District

Deirdre.grace@kingcd.org

425-282-1902



Photo Courtesy Seattle Tilth