

**Lake Oswego Comprehensive Plan Background Report**  
**Community Health and Public Safety**  
**Local Food Access**  
August 21, 2012

**Community Health and Public Safety Vision Statement**

Access to locally grown food is one element of a healthy and safe community. In the Community Vision for 2035, the Community Health and Public Safety vision statement says:  
*Our community is a safe place to live and supports lifelong active and healthy living. We have excellent public safety response systems that work together with an involved community to ensure peace and safety. There are opportunities for active lifestyles and to obtain locally grown food that promotes the health and social interaction of our residents.*

**Introduction**

A number of the City's goals and policies work to promote the health of the community; however, the current Comprehensive Plan does not make an explicit link between the impacts of the built environment on health. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that "The way we design and build our communities can affect our physical and mental health. Healthy community design integrates evidence-based health strategies into community planning, transportation, and land-use decisions.<sup>1</sup>" One element of healthy community design is providing access to healthy food; according to the CDC, "increasing access to healthy food" improves people health.

Until recently, access to food was not considered as part of local planning and zoning in cities. However, the health and planning fields are now working together to show the importance of access to local foods and the impacts it has on health. The City of Gresham recently used a Multnomah County grant funded by the Center for Disease Control to evaluate how well Gresham's Comprehensive Plan incorporates goals and policies related the built environment that promote access to healthy eating and active living. Another non-profit, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, founded the Active Living by Design program, whose vision is to create "healthy communities, where routine physical activity and healthy eating are accessible, easy and affordable to everyone."

Healthy food consumption is the foundation for human health. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables and grains addresses multiple health challenges and prevents diseases. Although statistics are most likely more positive in Lake Oswego due to higher median incomes, Oregon as a whole faces serious food-related health challenges, including hunger, obesity, and increases in preventable diseases (see below). For example, 60.9% of Oregon adults were overweight or obese in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Obesity contributes to the deaths of about 1,400 Oregonians each year,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/>

<sup>2</sup> US Kaiser Family Foundation <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?rgn=39&ind=89>

making it second only to tobacco as the state's leading cause of preventable death.<sup>3</sup>

Here in Lake Oswego, healthy food often means fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. The community has expressed an interest in access to local food and education around this topic during public workshops. This background report addresses how the City can improve access to local food by creating opportunities to obtain fresh fruits and vegetables and identifies opportunities to educate the community about local food.

### **People, Places and Prosperity** (show nested diagram)

As the City develops key elements of the Comprehensive Plan update, sustainability is an important consideration. Lake Oswego defines sustainability as meeting the vital human needs of the present without compromising our ability to meet future needs. Planning in a sustainable way means looking at the community as an interrelated system that includes places around us (the natural and built environment), people (that live and work here), and prosperity (of the local economy) that supports society's needs. A built environment that facilitates access to local food supports a sustainable Lake Oswego in the following ways:

**People:** *Locally produced food has a smaller carbon footprint than food grown elsewhere and trucked from far distances. Local foods are consumed sooner after picking, retaining more of their nutritional value and making people healthier. Healthy food in schools is a critical step in learning lifelong food habits.*

**Places:** *Integrating (or weaving) food production into the urban fabric provides great places for people to gather and form stimulating communities. Serving local food in restaurants can create a vibrant food culture and entertainment scene.*

**Prosperity:** *Local food purchases keep more money in the local economy and increase economic prosperity and employment opportunities.*

### **What We've Heard About Food**

During the October 2010 vision and values workshops, citizens discussed the question, "How can we access and incorporate healthy local food into our daily lives?" The themes that emerged were:

- Educational programs for children and adults about finding and preparing local foods; and
- Indoor farmer's market year round.

### **Policy Questions to Consider**

1. How important is it to have access to healthy food at locations within walking distance of the 2035 Neighborhood Villages and Town Centers?

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<sup>3</sup> – Oregon Health

Authority [http://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/PhysicalActivity/Documents/Oregon\\_PANfactst\\_2012.pdf](http://public.health.oregon.gov/PreventionWellness/PhysicalActivity/Documents/Oregon_PANfactst_2012.pdf)

2. How can the City help ensure healthy food is available for current and future generations?
3. Which of the following activities or tools do you think would be most helpful to increase access to healthy local foods?
  - Community gardens located in neighborhoods
  - Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms – farms that produce food and sell directly to citizens on a limited basis
  - Farmers’ markets
  - Farm stands
  - Educational resources/activities (such as demonstration gardens and classes on food preservation)
  - Raising food for personal consumption (such as yard based fruit trees, domestic fowl, and bee keeping)
  - School gardens
  - Supermarkets that support locally produced food
  - Local manufacturing/processing of food products
  - Curbside or other local options for food waste collection for composting or generating energy
  - Food buying clubs or co-ops
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. What are the barriers and incentives in the current development code with regards to enterprise associated with agriculture, food production, processing, distribution and sales?
5. In what ways can urban food systems support community vitality and development?
6. How would a strengthened urban food system support a sustainable Lake Oswego?

## **BACKGROUND**

### **State and Regional Context**

#### *Oregon*

The statewide planning goals do not specifically reference local food production as it’s conceived of today. Instead, agricultural uses are seen as rural and separate from “urban” land uses, which are defined as any use inside the Urban Growth Boundary. (This report also uses the term urban to refer to all land and uses inside the UGB.) .Nonetheless, many of the statewide planning goals do speak to livable, healthy communities and economies in which local food systems (production, distribution, processing, sales, and consumption) play a part.

#### *Metro*

The region’s policies on this separation are shifting to incorporate less intensive or industrial agricultural uses into the urban fabric. Metro currently has few policies and plans that address

urban food systems. They do have programs that address food waste as part of the region's recycling goals and have expressed interest in supporting the regional foodshed<sup>4</sup> economy.

### *Clackamas County*

The June 2012 Clackamas Agricultural Investment Plan is a comprehensive strategy to increase local food production, processing, distribution and consumption in Clackamas County and the region. The plan recommends substituting local food for imported food as a primary economic strategy. It is estimated that approximately 90 percent of the food eaten in the region is imported.<sup>5</sup> Research indicates that the County currently has productive farmland capacity to meet future demand for most regional fruits and vegetables.

### *Lake Oswego Regulatory Context*

Like the Comprehensive Plan, the Community Development Code does not specifically reference many food system<sup>6</sup> uses and activities beyond those typically related to private gardening, breeding and caring for farm animals in residential zones, and food sales in commercial zones. In the R-6 and lower density residential zones, the raising of produce is a permitted use if no sales office is located on site. This definitely means that a resident may use his or her property to garden (including produce, orchards, and bees), but it also may be interpreted to allow for a community garden. Further, there is a code provision for two farmers' markets, one on the east end and one on the west end of the city. School gardens, whether for teaching or consumption purposes, could be allowed as accessory uses on school sites (which are zoned Public Functions).

### **Existing Lake Oswego Conditions**

According to the recently adopted 2025 Parks Plan, "food production has re-emerged in the urban landscape in the form of community gardens that have popped up in vacant lots, parks, and even rooftops. These gardens, along with farmer's markets, community-supported agriculture, food co-ops, and seed-savers groups are part of a larger movement to localize food production – an alternative to the global corporate model of our food industry. The local food system connects consumers with growers, supports small farmers, preserves agricultural heritage, and ensures the availability of nutritious organic food."

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<sup>4</sup> The term "foodshed" is similar to the concept of a watershed: while watersheds outline the flow of water supplying a particular area, foodsheds outline the flow of food feeding a particular area. A foodshed encompasses the farm, the kitchen table and everything in between.

<sup>5</sup> Metro Portland (Oregon), Local Farm & Food Economy

<sup>6</sup> A food system is the collaborative processes of growing, harvesting, transporting, processing, marketing, selling, consuming and disposing of food-waste. In a sustainable food system, the different components are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular place.

## **Urban Agriculture**

### *Community Gardens*

The recently adopted Parks Plan 2025 states that “Community gardens connect people of all ages and backgrounds to the earth and each other. The heart of a community garden is the community that is formed within the garden itself. It provides an opportunity to learn and share with others. It spans generations with grandparents teaching grandchildren the joy of planting a seed and watching it grow into something for the family table. People from other countries bring plants and cultures to share from their native homelands. Neighbors join together to grow pumpkins for their children. The garden promotes activities and exercise as well as provides nutritional food for a healthy lifestyle.”

The City currently has one community garden at Luscher Farm, which has over 180 garden plots. Many schools, garden clubs, local merchants, nurseries, civic groups and individuals help make the garden a community gathering place and great source of pride. There were 1,776 volunteers hours given to support the community garden in 2011.

### *Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)*

Community Supported Agriculture consists of a network of individuals who have pledged to support one or more local farms, with growers and consumers sharing the risks and benefits of food production. Typically, members or "share-holders" of the farm or garden pledge in advance to cover the anticipated costs of the farm operation and farmer's salary.<sup>7</sup>

In Lake Oswego, fresh, produce is grown at Luscher Farm by 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue Farm and a number of "shares" are offered to the public. Interested consumers can purchase a share and, in return, receive a weekly box of seasonal produce through the growing season (May to October).

### **Lake Oswego Farmers' Market**

The LO Farmers' Market takes place on Saturdays from mid-May through mid-October on the east end of town at Millennium Park. Vendors include farms from the Metro area as well as a few other vendors selling crafts, furniture, food items, etc. The market is part of Lake Oswego's culture and is a wonderful place to connect with friends and neighbors. From an economic viewpoint, the market draws people around the region. Fifty percent of the attendees are from outside of Lake Oswego. Farmers' Market visitors may also visit local shops and restaurants, which helps to stimulate the local economy.

### **Parsons Farm Stand (This text should be updated in the final plan)**

Lake Oswego also has one farm stand. Parsons Farm Stand is located at the intersection of... It sells flowers starting in early March, adds produce in early June, and closes after Halloween. It opens again near Thanksgiving to sell trees and wreaths during the holidays. A farm stand is a

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<sup>7</sup> [From the USDA website, cite reference](#)

more intensive use than a typical farmers' market because it is a daily use of the site, not just restricted to weekends. Currently the farm stand is looking for a new home because the property is being sold. Finding a new site is difficult because the farm stand as it exists today does not meet current code; it was grandfathered in years ago when the site was annexed into the City, but it cannot be relocated to another property in its current form. Generally, a farm stand could be allowed in some commercial zones as Retail Sales-Food (under 25,000 square feet) and all commercial zones if it carries more general inventory (more than 50% non-food related inventory). However, it would have to be located in a permanent structure and go through a regular Development Review land use application.

### **Local Education Opportunities**

#### *Oregon Tilth*

Oregon Tilth has a 6,000-square foot demonstration garden at Luscher Farm. The garden features a variety of organic food growing demonstrations, from year-round gardening to urban composting techniques. The garden is a teaching tool for the public to learn about organic gardening techniques and serves as a hands-on classroom during workshops. The goal is to educate urban gardeners about the ease and abundance of organic gardening and supply them with the resources needed to put organic techniques into practice. The farm is open daily to the public from dawn until dusk.

#### *Lake Oswego School District*

Waiting to hear back from Nancy Duinn.