

Executive Summary

This is an inventory of open space with potential for agricultural production on land both owned by public agencies and within the city limits of Oakland, California. The inventory was conducted between the summer of 2008 and spring of 2009 and is part of an ongoing movement to develop a more resilient, sustainable, and just food system in Oakland. This project aims to locate Oakland's "commons"—land that is owned by public agencies and therefore a public resource—and assess the potential for urban agriculture (UA) on this land. We hope that this assessment can be used 1) to inform policy decisions that concern Oakland's food, health, and environmental quality, and 2) by non-profit organizations and city officials as a tool with which to identify potential sites for UA programs.

While Oakland was once a center for fruit production and food processing, today most of the food consumed here comes from thousands of miles away. Much of this food is produced in ways that degrade the environment and threaten the health and living conditions of farmworkers. Much of the food produced, while cheap and readily available, undermines the health of urban consumers. Many of Oakland's residents live in so-called "food deserts" where access to fresh, healthy, culturally appropriate, and affordable food is limited. A lack of purchasing power and limited access to transportation exacerbate this situation. Such obstacles to healthy food are particularly widespread in Oakland's "flatlands".

Strengthening local, sustainable food production can help to address these challenges by promoting education about the food system, reducing the "food miles" between production and consumption, enhancing green space, creating "green job" opportunities, and making fresh, nutritious food available in the flatlands.

Using aerial photos, GIS, and site visits, we identified approximately *1,200 acres of undeveloped open space* at 495 sites (consisting of 756 individual publicly-owned tax parcels). The majority of these parcels are arable and located within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of public transportation. A third of the parcels are within a quarter mile of a school, and 7.5 percent have an EBMUD meter. In addition to the parcels in this inventory, we identified 2,706 acres of publicly-owned land with the potential to for agroforestry development.

Based on a conservative estimate, the parcels in this land inventory could produce *5 to 10 percent of the City's vegetable needs*. However, the potential impact of the expansion of UA programs in Oakland extends beyond the production of solely food. UA can provide environmental services, job opportunities, green space, and educational opportunities: these programs can also improve public health, raise property values, and make communities safer.

Given the multifunctional nature of UA programs and our conclusions from this inventory, we recommend the following:

- Rank and classify potential sites for further assessment, which will include land-use history, site visits, soil sampling, and community feedback
- Create an online interactive land locator to assist the public in accessing available arable land
- Assess the potential for the cultivation of privately-owned vacant land, fruit trees, rooftop gardens, greenhouses, urban livestock production, and agroforestry
- Identify existing policy and zoning obstacles to UA
- Create of an Urban Agriculture Working Group within the Oakland Food Policy Council to help develop UA policy
- Expand the City of Oakland's Community Gardening Program to encompass UA more broadly in order to help streamline and facilitate the land acquisition process.