

Urban Agriculture

Directory, Business Survey and Recommendations

PoE Capstone Internship

- Explored the Questions:
 - What businesses/non-profits are participating in urban agriculture in Seattle?
 - What are the business needs of the community?
 - What services City of Seattle services are they using, and how could those services be improved?
 - Would a business directory and/or business association be helpful?
- Performed research through the University of Washington's Human Subjects Division.
 - Collected participants responses through Catalyst Online Surveys

Survey Composition

- Sent off to 63 unique participants out of 87 of the Directory's entries.
- Survey was open from February 16th to March 8th.
- The questions in the survey consisted of multiple choice, Yes or No, and short answer to maximize the level of detail from the participants.
- The response rate was around 50%, with 31 members participating.

Initial Findings

- The three major responses for both business needs and ways the City of Seattle could improve were...
- Increased access to land.
- A centralized organization to solidify both the community and business landscapes.
- An intensified investigation into the usefulness of Co-Ops is needed as they provide the good business model for this sector.

Land

- The majority of respondents, both farmers and non-profits, requested that the City open up lands which they view as underutilized.
 - Would like either subsidized rent or have a competitive rent.
- Also, the ability to have increased access to City owned spaces was important.
 - Access to vans, greenhouses, storage facilities, tools and mulch were all brought up as ways to economically stimulate these businesses.

Community

- Mixed response on whether or not there was a concrete community in the field of urban agriculture.
 - Those who had been practicing less than 5 years felt that there was a community within the non-profits.
 - Participants who had been involved 5+ felt that this area was still fledgling and the the community still needed to grow and solidify.
- The majority of respondents felt that a centralized form of a business association and/or directory would be helpful.
 - 81% responded positively to a business directory and 94% would want to be listed if put into place.
 - 81% thought that a business association would be useful.

Co-Ops

- When asked ways to improve/stimulate this sector many respondents replied that the co-op business model would be most helpful.
- A participant requested that the City become involved with the farmers/organizations that are involved with urban agriculture, so that there can be increased access to City funds and resources.
- Most participants requested some form of a pooled resource model, either for money, time, labor, tools or land.

Recommendations

- Land
- Community/Co-Ops
- WSU's Extension Services
- Census of Agriculture

Land

- Land is a limiting resource in an urban environment, so it will always be a ceiling that urban agriculture enthusiasts will be up against.
- Ways that the City could help are
 - Surveying unused or underused City properties that could be used for urban agriculture
 - Creating an online database for locations and descriptions of where suitable land can be found.
 - Investigate the fair market price for agricultural land in an urban environment
 - Discuss with other Cities the best practices they are undertaking to help with this emerging field.

Community/Co-Ops

- Apply traditional rural agriculture co-op models to the urban environment.
- Begin an online business association and local in-person monthly meetings, with a bi-annual city meeting.
- Have a central business directory that is built off of the non-profit directories already in place to remove redundancies/inconsistencies.

WSU's Extension Offices

- With one of the pre-eminent agricultural colleges in our state, we are currently criminally underusing the vast research and knowledge that WSU could lend to these communities.
- The urban agriculture community needs to create a working relationship with both the main WSU campus and the Seattle extension office to both give and receive vital information on this topic.

Census of Agriculture

- Currently most urban farms are not included in the Census, which requires farmers produce at least \$1,000 worth of products a year and can document that they have done so.
- If they were included, the number of recognized agricultural businesses would increase dramatically and the City would have better information on farms location and more how to make informed decisions on how federal funding can be best spent to support farming.
- There would also be the added benefit of a formal recognition of urban farms as a true source of agriculture, while demonstrating Seattle's growing presence as a leader of urban agriculture.

Questions?