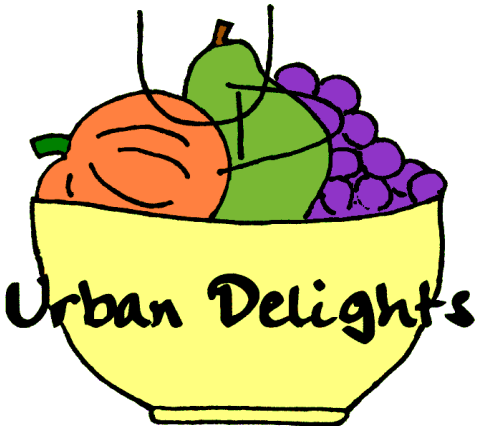
Jubilee Homes
Urban Farm Project



An Expansion of the

Urban Delights Youth Farmstand Project

Project Partners

Cornell Cooperative Extension

SUNY ESF

Team

Professor Emanuel Carter, SUNY ESF

LaRhonda Ealey, Jubilee Homes

Brain Luton, Stones Throw Farm

Jessi Lyons, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Gregory Michel, Project Coordinator

Executive Summary

Jubilee Homes of Syracuse, Inc. has partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Onondaga County and SUNY ESF to expand our *Urban Delights Youth Farmstand Project* and implement the Urban Farm Project. Utilizing the "Youth Corps" model, the Jubilee Homes *Urban Ag Corps of* 10 – 15 youth will develop an Urban Farm to 1) grow fresh produce 2) educate community residents on sustainable growing practices, and 3) improve the use and quality of vacant land. Youth will plan, design and establish the farm through after-school and summer employment programs developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, and Jubilee Homes. The Urban Farm Project has been awarded a substantial grant from the Lincoln Bellevue Community Initiatives Planning Group to implement this project as the anchor for a comprehensive Midland, Lincoln, Bellevue neighborhood development project

Urban Delights Youth operating summer produce stands

Motivation

The Jubilee Homes Urban Farm Project is an innovative project designed to provide youth from the inner city with employment opportunities and simultaneously promote good citizenship and positive environmental practices within Southwest Syracuse. The Urban Farm Project will be developed within Syracuse's Southwest Community which is an area plagued by environmental risks inclusive of vacant land, poor soil quality, and food insecurity. Due to the lack of financial resources available within the Southwest Community to stimulate and support healthy development, vacant land within the neighborhood continues to increase as houses and old buildings are demolished. Furthermore the demolition of commercial and residential structures has contaminated the soil via the remnants of sub surface structures and contaminants such as lead and asbestos. As well, the Southwest Community is comprised of very-low to moderate income households many of whom rely on corner stores, which often offer minimally nutritious food choices and at higher prices than supermarkets.

Former A-Shack Market (492 Midland Ave) & 1 parcel of planned site of Urban farm

Youth involved in the Jubilee Farm will also learn vocational and professional skills that have value in the workplace. Students will learn how to: (1) plan for a season of crops; (2) determine desired yeields and how to obtain those yields; (3) how to plant and manage crop growth; (4) how to harvest, package, preserve, market and preserve crops; (5) how to set up and manage farmstands and/or a farmers market; (6) how to maintain an efficient growing facility, and; (7) how to work in efficient, productive and interdependent teams.

The Jubilee Farm program will also add to the ability of the Syracuse City School District to offer extended and enriched academic and vocational education and contribute to the new "working" landscape of the Southwest Community – a landscape that will eventually include a supermarket that could be directly connected to the mission of the Jubilee Farm.

Urban Farm Project Objectives:

- **Improve the use and environmental and aesthetic quality of vacant land –**
  The Urban Farm Center design will be completed by project partners and will include fencing to provide security and identity for the facility. Once the plan is complete, project participants and staff will construct raised planting beds on the site. A hoop and/or green house will also be constructed on the site in order to facilitate year round growing. A portion of the space will be dedicated for community use. Area residents alongside project youth will work together to construct their own bed using program tools and materials.

- **Increase Food Security** - *The Urban Farm will* combat food security directly by providing healthy foods to Southwest Community residents. The project is also committed to growing produce that is culturally representative of Syracuse's inner city populations, thereby making access and preferences for fresh produce even more attractive.

Young children enjoying fresh strawberries from the Urban Delights Farmstand at the Lexington Park

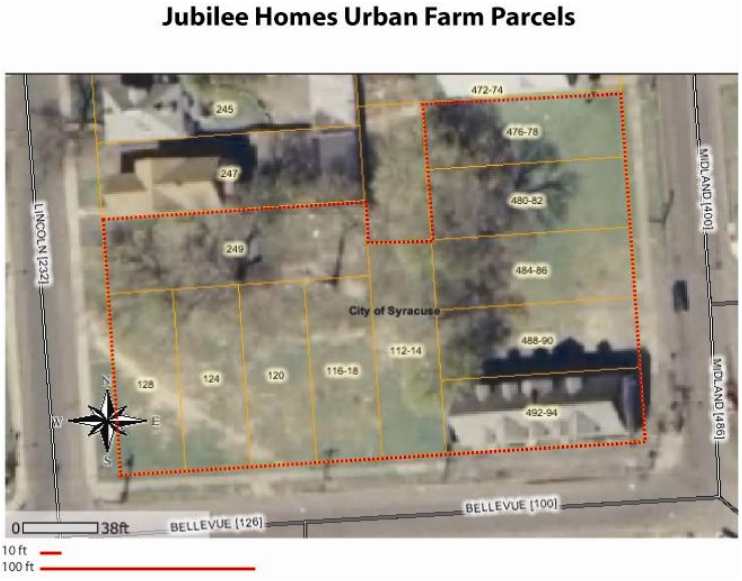
- **Enhance community awareness of food security, healthy and nutritious food choices, and the importance of green spaces** – Youth will promote and assist in facilitating three educational events that focus on urban agriculture and healthy eating

- **Youth Development** - The Urban Ag Corps youth participants will learn all aspects of developing and managing the urban farm. Youth will also receive extensive training on incorporating healthy eating and lifestyle choices in their lives and the lives of community members. This includes teaching them how to prepare the fruit and vegetables they grow, safe food handling practices, the importance of the variety of fruits and how to make healthy lifestyle choices in a variety of settings.

Urban Delights Youth Farmstand Participants working in a community garden at 902 Tallman St.

Planned Site (Parcel) Addresses

492-494 Midland Ave; 112-114 Bellevue; 116-118 Bellevue; 120 Bellevue; 124 Bellevue; 128 Bellevue; 249 Lincoln Ave



Soil Health

The concept for the Jubilee Homes Urban Farm Project was developed by Sue Wyndham, MS as a part of her SUNY ESF Master's cap stone project. The aforementioned sites were recommended because these are "contiguous open (tax delinquent) lots that provide adequate room for a variety crops". The selected area is a little more than 0.5 acres. From the onset of this project, Jubilee Homes and its partners were fully aware of potential soil contaminants due to prior residential land use. A Phase I environmental study was conducted in 2009 by Certified Environmental Services, Inc. (CES). The farm project will address soil contamination issues utilizing urban agricultural best management practices that have been tried and tested in projects throughout the northeast.

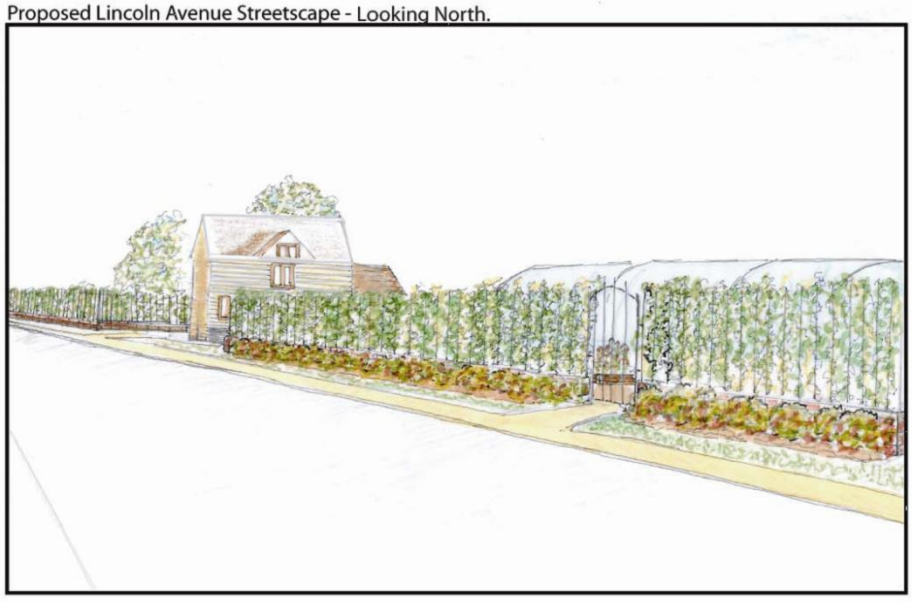
Jubilee Homes will:

1) Cover the entire farm site with a clean 4-6" layer of woodchips and compost. This layer will create a barrier between existing surface contaminants and human contact across the entire site, an immediate environmental and health improvement. It does so by eliminating surface contaminants from wind exposure and by binding heavy metal particles making them less bio-available for uptake by plants.

2) Plant an initial cover crop to further improve the surface soil, beautify the vacant lots and to create an immediate farm-like presence signaling the arrival of the farm to the neighborhood;
3) Jubilee Homes will also work with neighborhood youth and young adults from the Youth-Build and Urban Delights programs to construct a series of raised bed gardens throughout the site. To exercise caution against any contaminants reaching vegetables grown on the farm, vegetables will be grown in raised beds where they will be isolated from original soil by the initial 4-6" layer of woodchips and compost, a layer of geo-textile fabric, and 24" of clean topsoil (see Raised Bed Garden Cross-section below).
4) Raised bed gardens will be designed to fit under the footprint of hoop houses or green houses to eventually be enclosed for a year-round controlled-environment agriculture system (see conceptual design from Wyndham study). Conceptual designs will be adapted for current proposed farm site.

Section B: View of the Gardens and Hoophouses from inside the farm site.

Proposed Lincoln Avenue Streetscape - Looking North.



Successful Examples

Growing Power- Milwaukee, WI

http://www.growingpower.org

In 1993 Will Allen began using his urban farm and greenhouse to employ local youth. Growing Power has grown to include six greenhouses, three hoophouses, an aquaponic system that grows fresh water perch and tilapia, an apiary, a poulty house, and livestock pen, and is now known primarily for the workshops and demonstrations they provide. Growing Power is a sustainable farm that relies on a closed-system production that utilizes farm waste to create energy and feed animals, which then fertilizes the plants.

Growing Power workshops and demonstrations include aquaponics, hydroponics, vermiculture, acid and anaerobic digestion of food waste, bee-keeping, urban agriculture, soil health, and composting.

http://www.theslowcook.com

http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2507/4163559080_6f8a3a15a2.jpg

The Food Project – Boston, MA

The Food Project covers 37 acres in five cities around Massachusetts, employing over a hundred youth and over a thousand volunteers a year. Youth programs focus on leadership training, skill building, and learning to grow and prepare food.

The Food Project launched its first growing season in 1992 with a budget of $100,000, three staff and eighteen youth working on 2.5 acres of land at Drumlin Farm in Lincoln. That summer, it grew and donated 20,000 pounds of food.

One site located on vacant land in Boston added 10 truckloads (300 cu yd) of compost to a ½ acre in early 1995. The land was tested as safe in the summer of 1996. Each garden is regularly tested for contamination. The gardens regularly test well-below the EPA recommended levels for contamination, partly due to the soil amendments and large volumes of soil put on site before planting. This site was the first of several in this neighborhood to be converted to productive farmland.

http://www.flickr.com/photos/8562013@N07/3838353408

EarthWorks Urban Farm – Detroit, MI

EarthWorks Urban Farm was created to grow food for a neighborhood soup kitchen. Volunteers removed debris, and added many truckloads of compost to amend the soil. After one year of restoration the Farm was planted. EarthWorks uses open-field raised beds and a hoop house to provide year-long production, they are a certified organic farm and rely on city food waste for compost.

EarthWorks provides programs for youth and families about nutrition and healthy living, and how to grow and prepare homegrown food. Their youth sell produce at a market stands across the city, though much of the food is donated to the soup kitchen.

http://www.cskdetroit.org/EWG/gallery/photogallery/photo.cfm?id=66&catid=4

http://www.cskdetroit.org/EWG/history.cfm

Sustainability Strategy

Staffing and Volunteers

- Utilizing the "Youth Corps" model, the Jubilee Homes *Urban Ag Corps of* 10 – 15 youth will develop an Urban Farm. Greg Michel and Brian Luton, (Stones Throw Farm) will provide technical support related to urban agriculture. LaRhonda Ealey of Jubilee Homes will manage administrative duties including hiring, and additional grant writing and securing financial support.
- **Program integration:** The Urban Ag Corps will learn all aspects of managing the Urban Delights Farmstand AND establishing the urban farm.
- **After School-Spring/Fall/Winter Maintenance:** A corps group of 3 – 6 youth will begin the planning process once the site is secured. In the Fall, the after-school program will focus on finalizing the farm design and determining what crops will be planted during the growing season. During this period cover crops will be planted to prepare/refurbish the soil for the following season and youth will begin/continue to plant and harvest crops in the green house during after school programming.
- **Summer:** Youth will work 20 hours a week, spending 10 hours developing and maintaining the urban farm and 10 hours running the farm stands. Youth will work in groups of 6 – 8.

Produce

Products from the Urban Farm will be sold and donated. - *The Urban Farm will* combat food security directly by providing healthy foods to Southwest Community residents. The project is also committed to growing produce that is culturally representative of Syracuse's inner city populations, thereby making access and preferences for fresh produce even more attractive. Over the summer youth will set up farm stands within inner city neighborhoods via the Urban Delights Farmstand Project to sell the produce at affordable prices. Furthermore, the project will donate at least ¼ of the yield to area food banks and/or summer meal programs. Meanwhile the incorporation of green houses will enhance the access to nutritious produce even during off peak season. Thereby during off peak seasons youth will establish and implement a pre-order / pre-pay system.

Financial Support

The project has already secured the financial support from the Midland Lincoln Bellevue Planning group to support the infrastructure costs of starting the project. The project has received a grant in the amount $50,000 from the New York State of Environmental Conservation for administrative support. As well the project receives ongoing support from M&T Bank. Project staff continue to seek additional grant support and plans to also support the program with revenues from produce stand operations.

Research and Development Opportunities

Because the plan for the farm includes at least one greenhouse, Professor Dave Johnson of SUNY ESF has written a proposal in which he will use the Jubilee Farm greenhouse to demonstrate a reproducible, modular infrastructure for growing agricultural products in a facility that repurposes locally available waste biomass materials as an energy source, reformulates the fertilizer constituents they contain for on-site use, and provides treatment of any agricultural wastes generated so that the entire unit operation achieves a near zero environmental footprint. The distributed agriculture ecological system (DAES) will integrate three fundamental and proven technologies into a reproducible unit that increases the sustainability of food production. This anaerobic digester could play a role in heating the facility and providing fertilizer for crops within the greenhouse and beyond. This would reduce the costs of running the greenhouse and would therefore make it more likely to be built and more likely to sustain the farm as a 12-month operation.

Timeline

Time	Activities
May	• Identify Lots • Recruit/Hire potential Leadership Group of (5) youths • Collect Soil Samples • Submit Soil Samples for testing • Purchase Lots
June	• Develop educational materials and curriculum • Soil Analysis • Draft architectural and landscape design of farm
July –August	• Summer Farm Stand Program • Food System Exploration/Health Implications Activities • Formal Ground Breaking and Signage installation for farm
September	• Community Gardner and Volunteer recruitment • Crop selection/ crop rotation planning, seed order • Supplies & tool order • Identify compost sources
October-November	• Installation of infrastructure (fencing, greenhouse, compost bins, shed) • Ground preparation for Spring • Plant cover crops • Infrastructure installation • Compost building and cultivation • Youth Design and implement community surveys
December, January	Winter Recess
2011	
February	• Food System Exploration/Health Implications Activities • Community Gardner and Volunteer recruitment
March, April, May	• Recruit/Trial/Hire potential youth employees (10) • Sow early crops, Seeding, transplanting • Community Gardner Awareness meeting and Orientation
June	• Organize Community Gardner/volunteer work structure • Coordinate Community Garden/Volunteer Saturdays • First Harvest
July-August	• Seeding, transplanting, composting • Expand ground for fall planning season • Coordinate Volunteer Saturdays • Planting, Harvest & Markets • Develop educational materials for Fall Harvest Festival • Plant Cover crops
September-November	• Harvest & Markets • Cultivation/compost • Prepare Marketing Materials for Fall Harvest Fest • Plant Cover crops & Fall Harvest Fest • Tree Planting/Community Service • Food Distribution • Design and Implement Post Assessment Survey • Compile analysis of Surveys • Community Advisory Council & Program Policy refinement
December	• Winter Recess