



Commissioner Nick Fish
City of Portland

October 26, 2009

To: Oregon Solutions Community Garden Team
Re: Community Garden Vision

Team,

This week you will be rolling up your sleeves and digging into one of our three focus areas: Resources/Strategy, Governance/Structure, or Demand/Access. We will be asking a lot of you in the next coming months, because we know that you have the ideas and the passion to help us create something great. I know that you are all very busy with the good work that you do and I want to thank you again for devoting your time to this special project.

At our kick-off meeting three weeks ago, we began to explore where this Oregon Solutions process might take us. There were many good questions that helped us to think about our collective goals.

A number of team members have requested that we provide you with more direction as we proceed on a fairly ambitious timeline. There is an understanding that gardening has the power to reconnect us with our food, with nature, with culture and with community. How do we expand our capacity to meet this need, in a way that uses community space efficiently and provides access equitably?

With over 1300 people on the waiting list for a garden plot and over 10 proposals for new gardens in the works, the Parks program is clearly in need of expansion. How do we continue to build community gardens, while also preserving existing public park space? There are many opportunities to partner with schools, churches, non-profits and businesses. Using the [Diggable City](#) report, we can identify under-utilized public property. There are also many other parking lots and paved areas that we can make pervious again.

The City has the potential to provide the resources and guidance necessary for anyone who has the desire to grow their own food. We also can provide incentives by making it easier to install gardens, whether it be through zoning code changes or fee waivers.

I envision a new public program that could serve as a hub for the network of organizations and leaders working for a sustainable regional food system. This program could work in close partnership with a new non-profit entity that has the capability to raise funds and expand its scope, not unlike the Regional Arts and Culture Council. Some models from other cities include the [P-Patch Trust](#) in Seattle, [Philadelphia Green](#), and [Denver Urban Gardens](#).

Please take some time to read about the success of these programs and think about how we can create an integrated approach that is uniquely Portland.

We live in a region abundant with fertile soil and people passionate about local food. Together, we can bring this awareness to the next level by making it easy for anyone, regardless of their race, age, income, or neighborhood, to grow their own fresh healthy food.

I look forward to hearing how the work group meetings go this week and seeing the whole team on November 13th.

Thank you again for your service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Fish".

Nick Fish
Parks Commissioner