

January 30 - Urban Farmer Meeting
Mount Pleasant Community Centre
Vancouver, BC

Prepared by Chris Thoreau

In Attendance (at one point or another):

Clelie Murray-Chevrier, Ross Moster, Emi Do, Kate Hardman, Julia Smith, Ludo Ferrari, Marc Schutzbank, Jodi Peters, Jeff Radke, Philip Be'er, April Reeves, Kimi Hendess, Kareno Hawbolt, Anna Rallings, Erin Innes, Ben Stevenson, Craig Heighway, Mark Bomford, Anne Pacey, Charles Wilson, Susan ?, Rick Maynard, Jen Maynard, Chris Thoreau, Wes Regan, Vince Verlaan (facilitator). Thanks also to those who contributed to this process through surveys after the meeting. Did I miss anyone?

Meeting Purpose: To *bring into focus* a shared vision and context for urban farmers with which to move forward and begin to collectively identify our priorities for increasing the sustainability of urban farming in Vancouver.

Exercise Summaries

Exercise 1 - What are your hopes and fears regarding an urban farming network?

Please see last page for a complete image summary of this exercise



Exercise 2 - Develop Shared Vision by Clarifying Major Goals to Pursue

Support one another through collaboration, sharing skills, knowledge, experience, resources.

Common voice/body with legitimacy and credibility (representative, speaks to power and public clearly, effectively; dependable, accountable, reflective, effective).

Advocates* to build profile of the sector, build supportive policy, create demand, eliminate impediments, etc.



Demonstrate economically viable urban farming (definitions do exist); strategic goal to support the success of the field/network - not necessarily a shared value statement. Urban farmers “earn a living wage” as an indicator.

Demonstrate ecologically viable urban farming

Document/communicate* successes of existing farms, enhance that at the individual farm level, but also collectively increase marketing*, funding, profit, mentorship*, expansion, start-ups.

Outreach - documentation, replicable models. Expand local community and bio-regional understanding of the issues and opportunities.

Communication - keep in touch, scope/share opportunities, build a community base for mutual support.

Training - internal capacity building focused on the supply side.

Research collaborations on critical issues, link to research bodies, etc.

Clarify/strengthen/respond to shared values of a healthy urban food system we want to be part of; serves as root/foundation for the rest of our network (e.g. healing, regenerating, etc.); Ethical and sustainable vision to guide all the activities of the network, with structures for people to access food and heal planet at same time; recognize the environment we are operating in (risks/changes at all scales).

Exercise 2 - Opportunities and Challenges in the Current Context/Landscape

Subject	Opps	challenges
Dependent on external inputs/trends (seeds, soil, cc, peak oil)	Due to pop. density can take waste products* and turn them to inputs; distributed seed saving, etc. Opps. to re-localize	Our dependency on external inputs
Land*	Remediation possible Lots of land is available at different scales; needs fuller conversation	Access to land; tenure Toxic lands Densification/gentrification Political/social pressures
Communications	Good comm. Infra. internally If share info externally, can draw people into the issues and work	
Funding	more attention and pots coming on-stream easier to get as a group	Lots of competitions Harder as individuals
Need for local food with big pop.	Growing awareness re: eat local Growing infra	Lots of demand Competition w/ existing players Little general awareness
Diversity	Engagement of diverse communities around food	Participating pops could be more diverse at all levels
Govt. Policy	GCAT Charles re CRA/GST Policy alignment with councils Implement the rhetoric Hold accountable Connection between food and sustainability	Bureaucracy moves slowly does not understand us HST - GST Urban farming operates at a different scale Red tape, regulations
Organizational credibility	Change rhetoric	Establish leadership and accountability internally
Financial and human resources	Network allows skills dev and pool resources/knowledge	Finding common interests, avoiding conflict; how to work well together in all senses when there is so much complexity
	Moral high ground	Resource constraints: low capital, equity, influence

	Opportunity to build capacity and create jobs	Time to stay involved and keep it relevant
Urbanization Trends	People in cities need food	Expectations re cheap food
		Social equity issues
Demographics	Making urban farming cool Lots of cachet right now	Mostly white middle class movement, not representative
	Fad or movement?	Social inertia/resist change

Exercise 3 - Brainstorm on Selection of 5 Key Themes from Previous Exercises

- Communications/Outreach/Inreach (e.g. databases)
- Research and education
- Planning Body (decision making / support / common values / funding issues)
- Policy/Advocacy
- Demonstration activities (ecol/econ)

1. Demonstrating Ecological and Environmental Value of Urban Farming

- Develop web presence and link to farmers with skills to share
 - Repository of urban farming knowledge
 - What is happening and where?
 - Work parties
 - Workshops
 - UF Tours
 - Workshops - demonstrating value to urban farmers
 - Farming skills
 - wide variety of topics
 - Business planning; taxes
 - Marketing; time mgmt.



2. Planning Body

- Planning body for current project and for official UFN
 - What governing structure do people envision?
 - And how much are they able to participate?
 - Working from shared values (discussed in Block 1)
- How do we make decisions?
- Importance of communications
 - Internal and External
- Planning body acts as meta group to connect working groups and members

3. Policy/Advocacy

- Nobody chose this topic, even though it came up as very important in many discussions!

4. Research and Education

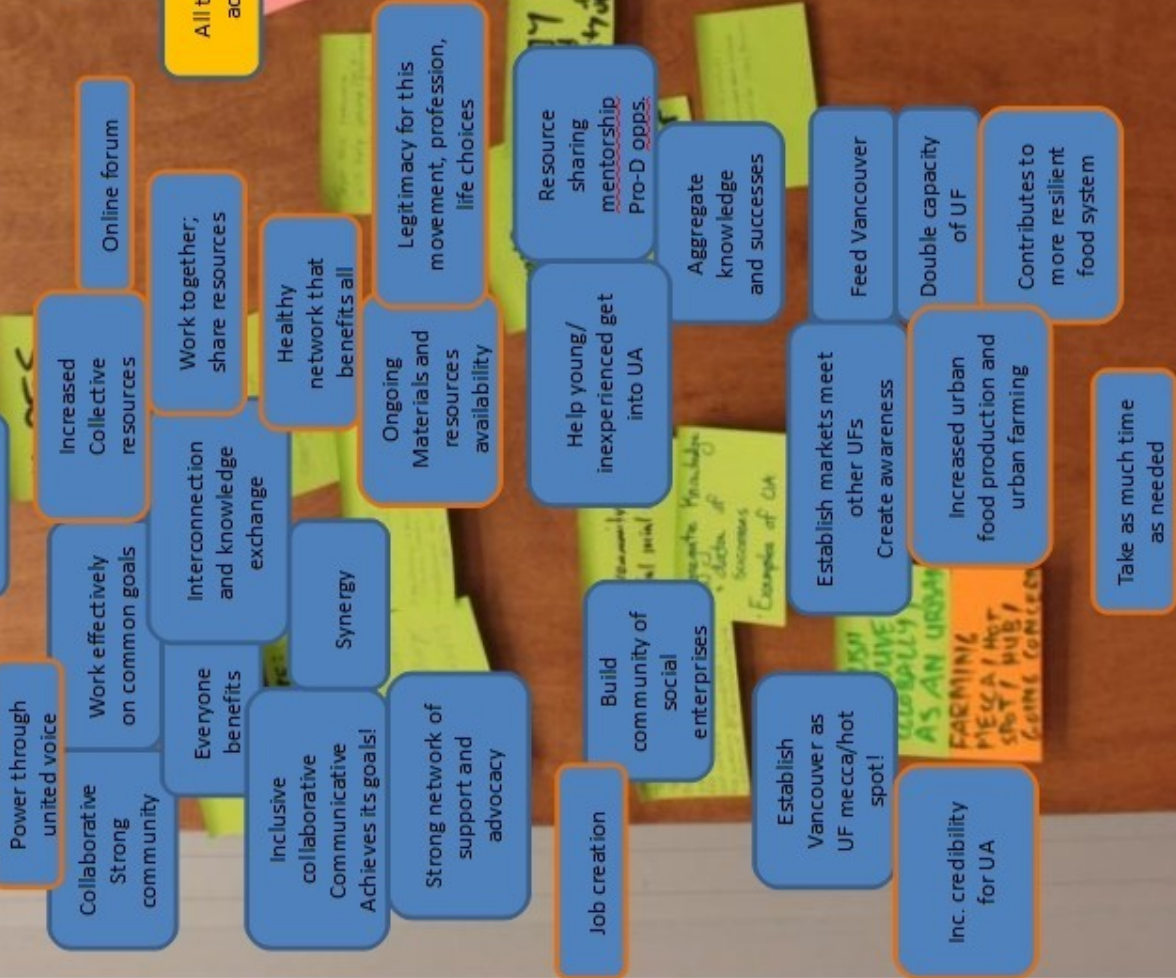
- Inventory
 - Skills; land available, education programs; markets; successful business models.
 - What is available that we can already utilize?
- Linking Farmers with researchers who can answer questions
- Workshops
 - Pro-D for farmers
 - Workshops led by farmers
- Business aspects of farming
- Finding local expertise
- Showcase successful strategies
- Connecting to public
- Capacity building
- Best practices/skill sharing
- Green book of UF resources (on website?)
- Outreach - different languages//cultures

5. Communications

- Internal
 - Protocol
 - document/info dissemination
 - Using e-message boards/listserv
- External
 - Social media (twitter, FB)
 - Web presence
 - open blog
 - message board
 - multiple administrators
 - Physical media
 - branding - logo, stickers, signage
 - newsletter
 - Media relations - publicity, exposure, awareness
 - PR - who can speak for the group
 - Press releases - events, successes
 - Fundraising
 - raise \$ with ads on blog/site/newsletter
 - Identify corporations we can advertise for (ethical issue?)



Hopes



Fears

