Urban Agriculture in Portlandia
On the Cover:
Community Breeders:
Animal Husbandry in Portlandia
Farm animals and us.
by Kurt Spickerman
Page 8

On the Edge of Agriculture
An interview with Narendra Varma
and Gianna Banducci of Our Table Cooperative
by Mike Simpson
Page 20

Poultry and the Press
Urban chickens on the national stage.
Not everyone likes city hens.
by Nicole Iroz-Elardo

Departments
Publisher’s Notes 3
The Landscape 4
Periodic Atlas of the Metroscape: Food Production 13
Indicators of the Metroscape 31
Welcome to the Summer 2013 issue of Metroscape! With this year marking the 40th anniversary since Governor Tom McCall signed Senate Bill 100, paving the way for Oregon’s renowned land use planning system, it is important to reflect how this legislation has, and continues to shape the state and its communities. To celebrate this milestone, in this issue we feature articles highlighting two of the state’s planning goals—to preserve agricultural lands and environmental quality—by examining the interrelationship between agriculture and the region’s people and places.

Closely linked to the Portland region’s ethos of environmental consciousness, sustainability, and self-sufficiency, the relatively recent influx of chickens, goats, honeybees, and other farm animals into the backyards of many Portland metro neighborhoods is part of what makes Portland, Portland. As Kurt Spickerman reports, urban animals are not only providing locally sourced food options, but as companions, educators, and community builders, these farm-to-city transplants are increasingly shaping the metro region’s identity and sense of place.

Nicole Iroz-Elardo sets the national stage in her article, “Poultry and the Press,” by demonstrating the rapidly rising interest in urban chickens across the country and points out that not everyone is in love with the reality of egg-layers in their neighborhoods.

In addition to urban animals becoming more commonplace, this issue’s Atlas demonstrates the growth in food production within Portland’s city limits by mapping community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, community and school gardens, organizations involved in urban agriculture, and households with residential gardens.

Mike Simpson’s interview with Narendra Varma and Gianna Banducci introduces us to a local organization, “Our Table Cooperative”, and their efforts to ensure that small and medium scale agriculture is economically viable for producing locally sourced food for residents across the Portland metro region.

In The Landscape, Jeremy Young highlights the “Stafford Triangle”, a largely rural community south of Portland in Clackamas County that is currently entangled in a decades-long conflict over the prospect of urbanization resulting from the expansion of the urban growth boundary. In response, community residents have organized the grassroots organization “Stafford Hamlet” to encourage more citizen participation in the county’s governance.

Belly-up to a bowl of CSA locally grown food and enjoy this issue of Metroscape!

Jason Jurjevich, Acting Director,  
Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies  
Population Research Center
This year, the Portland metro area recognizes the 40th anniversary of Senate Bill 100’s signing into law by the late Governor Tom McCall. This landmark legislation paved the way for Oregon’s renowned land use planning system and pioneering urban growth boundaries. Since the implementation of the state’s first urban growth boundary (UGB) in the 1970s, the UGB has become a model for anti-urban sprawl efforts nationwide and has helped to preserve vast areas of agricultural and forest lands statewide. Since its inception, however, the UGB has excited controversy, especially in the state’s most populous area: Portland metro. This year, as many celebrate the birth of the UGB and its many successes, a largely rural community south of Portland and its surrounding municipalities continue to be embroiled in a decades-long conflict over the potential expansion of the boundary and the prospect of urbanization.

The community of Stafford is comprised of ten neighborhoods located within what is known as the Stafford Basin, or “Stafford Triangle,” in unincorporated Clackamas County. The roughly 3,900-acre area is bound by Tualatin to the west, Lake Oswego to the north, West Linn to the east, and Interstate 205 to the south, and is mostly agricultural today. Much of the land is zoned “exclusive farm use.” The area’s rolling hills, steep topography, and numerous riparian areas including the scenic Tualatin River and its tributaries, have hindered urbanization since Anglo-American settlers first arrived in the 19th century. Nevertheless, the Stafford Triangle is home to nearly 2,200 residents today.

Stafford’s challenging topography hasn’t kept it off of Metro’s or Clackamas County’s radar as a potential site for future population and employment growth, however. The area was first targeted as a UGB expansion area in the early-to-mid 1990s, but the idea was quickly shot down as the cities of Tualatin, Lake Oswego, and West Linn expressed concerns over the high costs of providing infrastructure and services there.

Stafford’s earliest consideration for inclusion within the UGB came at a time when Metro and regional municipalities were required by state law to reassess its 20-year supply of developable land every five years to determine whether or not it could adequately support new growth. The frequency of this process and specifically the question of which areas would be selected next led to many property owners on the urban fringe, especially farmers, having uncertainty about what the future held for their land. This, as a result, caused many headaches for the region’s planners and elected officials.

According to Carlotta Collette, Metro Councilor for District 2, which includes the Stafford Basin, the consideration of Stafford as a UGB expansion area in the 1990s also occurred at a time when Metro was required by state law to consider the quality of agricultural soils over anything else when identifying areas suitable for expansion.
urbanization. In other words, the lesser the quality of the soil in a given area, the more suitable it was for urbanization. To a large degree, topography was not a primary consideration during that time.

New land use legislation signed into law in 2007, Senate Bill 1101, has since provided Metro and the three counties with a more efficient way to identify areas for future urban growth. No longer selecting new areas based primarily on soil quality and deciding simply where not to develop, Metro and the counties must now identify and designate “first priority” developable lands, or urban reserves. These are locations outside the UGB that may facilitate the most efficient and cost-effective development of new urban areas and “livable communities.” While Metro is still required to reassess its need to expand the UGB and evaluate the adequacy of its 20-year land supply every five years, property owners on the fringe now have more certainty about the future: urban reserves are designated as such for 50 years. Every five years when considering if and where to expand the UGB, Metro is required to draw first from areas that are designated first priority urban reserves. An urban reserve designation does not guarantee that an area will be urbanized, however.

In compliance with the new legislation, Metro and the three counties, Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas, formally designated areas outside of the UGB as urban reserves in 2010. Once again, Metro and Clackamas County saw Stafford’s potential for urbanization and took the appropriate steps to seal its fate, designating it as an urban reserve until at least 2060. In light of Stafford’s history of resistance to urbanization and noting some of the challenges associated with urbanizing, Metro designated the greater portion of the basin as “urban reserve with options/conflicted agricultural land.” The remaining portions of the basin (south of the Tualatin River and north of Pete’s Mountain) in the area of Borland Road and the I-205 interchange and a smaller area containing Rosemont Road (abutting the City of West Linn) pose the least challenges and would likely have little effect on commercial agriculture, according to Metro.

The 2010 urban reserve designation immediately rekindled the tensions of the 1990s in Stafford, pitting neighbor against neighbor and developers against open space preservationists. The City of Tualatin and the City of West Linn, once again objecting to Stafford’s development, also filed an appeal with the Land Use Board of Appeals, just three weeks following the official designation. The appeal remains in litigation and a decision is expected “soon,” according to Jeffrey Condit of Miller Nash, the land use attorney representing the two cities.

Gearing up for the rumored urban reserve designation in the years immediately preceding Metro’s 2010 decision and anticipating the potentially bitter conflict ahead, Stafford property owners came together in 2007 in an attempt to have their voices heard on the issue and to begin work on a shared vision for the area. What began as a grassroots effort quickly evolved into a quasi-governmental entity, one of three “Hamlets” now recognized by Clackamas County. The Stafford Hamlet is represented by a board of directors, comprised of com-
munity leaders, who essentially serve as advisers to the Clackamas County Commission. “The Hamlet system is an expression of Clackamas County’s desire to invite more citizen participation in governing decisions,” says Molly Ellis, one of the Hamlet’s original board members and a resident of the Basin for forty-plus years. “Although we have no legal power as a Hamlet, both [the County and Metro] have invited us to the table and respectfully listened and responded to our requests.”

The Stafford Hamlet ratified an official Vision and Values statement in 2008, which serves as the “standard for all future decisions” and helps the community to speak in unison, according to Ellis. The Hamlet’s vision, according to the document, addresses the following concerns: upgrading infrastructure should new development occur; clustering development to preserve open space in the Basin; concentrating higher-density residential development and new employment centers in the vicinity of Borland Road and I-205, south of the Tualatin River; mitigating impacts to the river; protecting the Basin’s most sensitive natural areas and wildlife habitats, especially along riparian corridors; and allowing existing lower-density residential neighborhoods to maintain their current densities.

The Hamlet remains committed to a set of core values, which prioritizes striking a “balance between competing interests” and “preserving the “Stafford Character.” The latter represents a desire by many for the area to maintain an overwhelmingly rural feel despite the potential urbanization of portions of the Basin.

Whether or not the Stafford Basin is urbanized in the next fifty years remains to be realized, but the recent designation of the area as an urban reserve has proved, if anything, to be a successful community-building exercise. An issue that initially polarized the residents of Stafford has brought them together.

Jeremy Young is a student in the Master’s of Urban and Regional Planning program at Portland State University. He is originally from Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
six years ago, when Oregon State University’s Director of Extension Services, Beth Emshoff, received a phone call from a veterinarian regarding care for a sick chicken, she was at a loss. “I said, ‘I have no idea! Let me ask around, and I’ll copy you in on any emails,’” she recalls. “So, I made a couple of phone calls, and there was this poultry guy on campus. So I sent an email to the poultry guy, and he writes back, ‘It’s a chicken! They’re sick, you wring their neck!’ When the vet read that, he called. ‘Who the heck is this guy?’ he sputtered. “Doesn’t he understand—this is a family pet!”’

Just about everyone probably knows by now about the influx of farm animals, in recent years, into the backyards of their Portland Metro neighbors. The “rationale for it,” says Nathan McClintock, Assistant Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University, “is very much connected to not wanting to participate in the kind of industrial food system—not wanting to participate in factory farming, or factory keeping of animals. Peo-
People want to be in touch with their food, where their food comes from, kind of in touch with nature—they want to have the educational experience, they want to have their children around animals, to see where eggs come from, and to see where milk comes from, and to experience that.”

At one time, much of the country was intimately familiar with the workings of a duck and a cow, a chicken and a goat. But we have lost touch with our agricultural roots. “During the Second World War,” says Emshoff, “20% of the food consumed in the United States was grown at home. That was part of the rationing process. People would come out of the Depression having really relied on those sorts of skills to stretch your dollars. We don’t have those skills anymore.”

People who have grown up in rural areas may still interact with these animals, but “most of us who grew up in cities,” says McClintock, “or didn’t grow up around chickens or goats or rabbits, you know, or ducks, or whatever—they’re not dogs and cats and guinea pigs, we’re not used to seeing them. We’re not learning anything from seeing a dog, but we’re actually learning something from seeing a chicken.”

But what is even more interesting is that somewhere along the line, what drew these animals to the city expanded from simply being a dietary need, into being something else entirely. “We did this survey of about 140 livestock owners around the U.S.,” says McClintock, “and across the board, people treat their urban livestock like their pets. Urban livestock now is completely a different sort of ball of worms than it used to be.”

Kevilina Burbank used to drink the “yummy milk” produced by her Nigerian Dwarf goat, but “you have to be pretty disciplined about it,” she says. “You have to decide: are you going to bottle feed the babies, how much to separate the mom and the babies at night, you have to do it regularly, every day. But you can keep her into about two quarts of milk for three hundred days out of the year.” The companionship aspect of owning goats is what drives Burbank to keep these pets, though. “One of the coolest experiences of my life with another animal has been when she was giving birth. It was such a bonding experience—we lock heads, when she’s pushing, until the baby is born. We slept out here for three nights with them, and the mom lets us snuggle them, and bring them in the house, and we got little baby goats running around.”

Alyssa Vetsch, of Bee Thinking, a beekeeping supply shop on 15th and Poplar, is a little more apt to enjoy the fruits of her labor, but it’s still not a priority. Her employers “have about 25 hives in the Portland Metro area, so we harvest their honey probably twice a year, Spring and Fall, do a crush n’ strain (where the honeycomb is crushed, and then the wax is strained out). It’s raw, all natural honey—it’s just the best.” But “honey is definitely a side-note to keeping bees,” she says. “It’s a nice reward, but it’s not the reason. Especially Portlanders—they’re really in it for the pollination, they’re in it to benefit the biodynamic flora that we have around here, and they hear the plight of the honeybee—they hear stories of the colony collapse—and they want to help out.”

Erin Copley is even less enthralled by the offerings of her three chickens: “I haven’t bought eggs in the last month, but I fed them for four months before then. And cleaned them, and took care of them, so really it’s more of an exercise in taking care of something that’s not giving anything back to you than anything else. Which is a big part of what having
a pet is.” But, for Copley’s two children, that’s exactly the lesson that the chickens are meant to teach. “It’s been good for the kids, because they’re responsible for taking care of them, so they’ve had to do the really gnarly chicken coop cleaning. But that’s in part because they want a dog, and they want other animals, and I said if they can take care of the chickens, then we can talk about them having other pets. It’s like a step—a graded step—towards taking care of other animals that are harder to take care of. The self-sufficiency aspect of it is an interesting goal to attain, but considering how many they’re laying, and how much we actually use eggs and stuff,” Copley doesn’t see it working for her family, in the long-run.

“In the Bay Area there’s much more of an explicit focus on food justice, food security, and inequities in the food system, and urban agriculture is one tool to address those inequities,” says McClintock, who earned his PhD studying the agricultural movement in Oakland. “I would say that what I’ve seen thus far in Portland is more of an emphasis on environmental consciousness, environmental sustainability, (and) self-sufficiency.” All very Portland things. Here, as opposed to Oakland, “it’s much more connected to the lifestyle, like the sort of Portlandia lifestyle. It’s one of the things Portlandians do: we drink craft beer, and we grow our own food—everything that the TV show mocks.”

The urban animals of today have taken on new roles, still producing edibles to different degrees, depending on the needs and desires of the owner, but also becoming companions, educators, and community builders. “It draws neighbors, creates those connections—people come over, they share their eggs with people, the neighbor’s kids come over and play with the chickens—it’s like the glue of the social fabric,” says McClintock. Kevilina Burbank has had that experience with the three goats she keeps in a pen in the front yard of the Airbnb that she calls “Goatlandia.” “They’re super community-building,” she says. “A lot of these kids in this neighborhood would never go to a petting zoo, and don’t even know what kind of animal this is. So, especially in the summer, like last summer, we had so many kids who come up and help clean, and go do research, and all this stuff. You know, that side of it’s pretty powerful, too.”

“These are urban livestock,” says McClintock, “because they’re farm animals—but in addition to our food production, a primary goal is community building and education—goals not only for individuals and families, but then for the community as well.”

“That’s what’s really great about the beekeeping community in Portland,” says Vetsch, “the ‘Portland Urban Beekeepers Association.’ That’s been really nice for all the beekeepers, because they have this network of information, and they have people they can go to if they need assistance or help (or) guidance… There’s a Tour de Hives, as well. ‘Tour de Beehives. It’s just like Tour de Coops.” Burbank also finds support in a community of like-minded neighbors, with goats of their own. “A bunch of goat people in the neighborhood went to one house last summer and brought our goats for goat daycare/blackberry-eating. For like four weeks.” The life events unfolding on her lawn are also focal points for neighbors, and visitors, alike. When mother goat, Violet, gave birth, “we had like sixty people a day show up to see the babies, and as she was giving birth, there were like 25 people standing around, dead silent, in awe.”
These animals also educate their communities by clearing up misconceptions. “I think with keeping bees, there’s generally a misnomer that honeybees are a dangerous insect, and they’re going to sting you to death, or people are going to have a serious allergic reaction and die,” says Vetsch. “But honeybees are pretty docile, they don’t really care about you.” Fear seems to be a shared reaction to bees and goats. “They’re not evil,” says Burbank, running her hand through Violet’s thick coat. “We have people come and think that they’re mean, and that they’re going to hurt them.” People also seem to hold onto that image from cartoons, of the goat that will eat anything. “People will come by and throw lettuce in, or throw whole apples in. Their mouths don’t function like that. If you cut apples into slices, they’ll eat them. They love bananas and banana peels,” Burbank says. But even Portland goats have to draw the line somewhere. “Kale they won’t eat.”

Laws aren’t stifling any of this animal action. The Portland region has very relaxed laws, as do most surrounding cities and counties—the urban chicken crusaders saw to that. Would-be chicken, rabbit, duck, dove and pygmy goat owners need no permit for three or fewer animals, in any combination. According to Portland’s animal ordinance webpage, however, any more than that requires a permit, and a $31 fee. And if you are interested in keeping turkeys, geese, doves, pigeons, peacocks, cows, horses, burros, sheep, llamas or bees, no matter how many of these animals, you need to apply for a permit. With bees and pigeons, there is also a 150 foot perimeter space rule, so a would-be beekeeper must get permission from neighbors in closest proximity to that 150 foot perimeter by going door-to-door, getting signatures on a petition, and filing it with the county. Chickens, goats, bees: the sense of community maintained by metroscape husbandry aficionados makes most people comfortable about seeking support from their neighbors. It turns out that metro-area Portland is very accepting of urban agriculture and beekeeping. As McClintock points out, “Social cache goes along with raising your own food. It’s like, ‘yeah, I have these pets, but I also am living sustainably.’” That’s signature Portland.

Even though metro-area husbandry is growing in popularity, drawbacks to animal ownership should give would-be urban farmers pause. There’s a misconception that what’s great for one urban farmer is great for all people of Portland: “It’s not so amazingly wonderful that I’m suggesting everyone should always have chickens.” Cleanup seems to be the biggest drag. “Chickens stink when you don’t clean them,” says Copley. “And you have to get up and take care of them in
the middle of winter when it’s cold and raining.” For Alyssa, the drawbacks include “the reactions from people when you tell them that you’re keeping bees—people sometimes will get a little weirded out. They think you’re crazy. And getting stung is never fun.” The time commitment also should be considered. “The drawback of keeping goats is finding people, if I need to leave town, to wake up at six-in-the-morning and feed them, because they’re creatures of habit. You have to be responsible.”

Nevertheless, for many, the benefits outweigh any drawbacks, and not all urban animals require intensive time. “It’s not like chickens are hard to take care of, or you can’t leave town because of them,” says Copley. And Melissa Kerry, who works with Alyssa, assures that “you can be a lazy beekeeper.” Even the specter of cleanup can take on a positive spin. “Having to take care of chickens in the winter rain is part of the kids learning to take on that responsibility. Last week, Nora cleaned the cage out instead of James, because I asked him to do it, and he was distracted with something else. Since cleaning is part of his allowance, he didn’t get paid as much, but he didn’t complain at all—he was mad at himself, but he totally got it. And that’s the kind of lesson I’m not sure he gets anywhere else.” Sometimes cleanup can be cathartic: “It’s manageable. It’s like gardening,” says Vetsch. “You just have to set aside time for it, and you’re going to dread it sometimes, but then, after you’re done, after working with the bees, it’s always a delight, and you’re whole day is changed because of it. There’s some sort of calmness that usually comes afterwards, because you have to be calm when you go into the hives. It’s a nice addition to the day. Afterwards, I’m happy that I did it, and it gives me confidence, and I’m excited again.” Cleanup can be community-building, too: “When you have to clean the pen, it’s a pain,” says Burbank, “but even then, people want mulch, so they’ll come dig it out for you!”

Emshoff, however, wonders what the long-term effects of added animal waste will have on a city designed with only its people in mind. “This is a city that’s got a lot of concrete. We just finished the big pipe project. People say, ‘well, you just put it in your compost.’ And I’m thinking, ‘yeah, this could be nice, but we’ve built a city with concrete streets, and so growing stuff on that little boulevard next to the curb—which people do—means waste matter. It rains here! A lot! Not everybody’s going to be organic in what they do. We learned some tough lessons in the 70s, 80s and 90s about what run-off from fertilizer was doing to trout streams, and killing off lakes. What are the longer-term implications of run off? What if everybody did it? I really don’t have answers. I just don’t think we’ve thought about it much. It’s just sort of like, ‘Portland: things happen.’ What’s a reasonable expectation of an urban community, in terms of all the systems that have to work? The water system, the trash system, the waste into the water stream, the dead animals—Who really knows?”

Whatever the answer, these animals are likely here to stay, and their presence is already shaping the lives of metroscape inhabitants.

Kurt Spickerman is a freelance writer pursuing a master’s degree in technical and professional writing at Portland State University. Kurt was born and raised in the outskirts of Eugene, in the days when peacocks and wild turkeys roamed the streets, and geese freely bit little boy’s fingers.
The celebration of the 40th anniversary of Senate Bill 100 provides us with an excellent opportunity to reflect on metropolitan Portland’s agricultural landscape. The landmark legislation passed in 1973 has helped to protect countless acres of the region’s precious agricultural soils—some of the richest known in the world—from development. Perhaps most importantly, however, the legislation has helped to preserve the important bond between the region’s urban areas and their hinterland, and to secure the region’s local food system. A renewed interest in growing food in one’s own backyard, however, has shown in recent years that urban dwellers need not rely only on the surrounding countryside for locally grown produce. As this edition of the Periodic Atlas will show, food production today occurs not only outside the urban growth boundary, as it has for the last few decades, but within it as well—and in some cases, in the very heart of the city. Through this series of maps, we attempt to paint a picture of food production in Portland and the surrounding region in broad brushstrokes. The maps are by no means exhaustive, but rather hint at the variety of food production taking place.

Maps of the region’s food producing farmland illustrate the effectiveness of Oregon’s efforts to control urban sprawl over the last four decades and to maintain a productive agricultural landscape in the urban periphery. According to the USDA, there are 963,843 acres, or roughly 1,500 square miles, of agricultural land in Clackamas, Clark, Columbia, Marion, Multnomah, Washington, and Yamhill counties. This amounts to about a quarter of the total land area. About 64% of it is cropland, while about 12% of it is pastureland (not including fallow cropland or woodland). Almost half of the region’s agricultural land is irrigated. Certified organic agricultural land and land transitioning to organic amount to about 1% of the region’s agricultural land. Median farm size across the region ranges from 15 acres in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Clark Counties, to 23 acres in Columbia County.

According to the last USDA Agriculture Census, over 14,000 farms in the seven counties pulled in more than $1.7 billion in agricultural sales. Not all of this can be attributed to food production, however. More than half of the revenue came from nursery, greenhouse, floriculture, and sod production alone. Indeed, this is the highest earning commodity group in Clackamas, Marion, Multnomah, and Yamhill Counties. Grass seed production also dominates the agricultural landscape in the region.

Since the focus of this series of maps is food production, we have excluded non-edible crops such as Christmas trees, ornamentals, and grass seed, even though
they are the predominant feature of the region's agricultural landscape, focusing instead on food and oilseed crops (figure 1). We have also included pasture, hay, alfalfa, as these are central to livestock production. In Clackamas County (figure 2), for example, nearly 25,000 acres are devoted to forage production (hay and silage). Indeed, animal agriculture plays an important role in the region. Roughly 6,000 operations sold more than $260 million in animals and animal products. In Clark County, milk and dairy products, poultry and eggs are the biggest earner, while in Columbia County, cattle and calves top the list.

Vegetable production sales amounted to only $90 million at the time of the last census, or about 6% of the region's total crop sales. Only about 4% of the region's agricultural land is dedicated to vegetable production.

In addition to selling directly to consumers at farmers markets, a growing number of vegetable farmers rely on a community-supported agriculture (CSA) model. Under this arrangement, consumers purchase a share or subscription at the beginning of the season in return for a weekly box of...
produce during the growing season. According to the Portland Area CSA Coalition, at least 45 CSAs provide Portland residents with shares (figure 3). A Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability survey of 40 of these CSAs sold more than 4,300 shares in 2011, grossing just over $2 million.

The region’s agricultural production isn’t just limited to its farmland, however. A range of agricultural activities occurs within the boundaries of the region’s municipalities. Urban agriculture takes a variety of forms. Community gardens also dot the metropolitan landscape. Portland Parks and Recreation manages 47 community gardens within the city limits (figure 4). Surrounding municipalities such as Vancouver, Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Gresham, each operate a small handful of gardens. Most community gardens outside of Portland are operated by non-profit and religious organizations, notably churches. Within the Portland city limits, we identified at least 39 non-profit organizations and churches engaged in urban agriculture, in the form of community gardens where individuals tend their own allotments, collective gardens where groups are responsible for garden management and harvest, as well as a number of educational and demonstration gardens.

Commercial agriculture is not limited to farms outside the urban growth boundary. Within the City of Portland alone, we were able to identify 7 CSAs, market farms or gardens, and commercial greenhouses or nurseries. Several of the city’s non-profit organizations also engage in market and CSA sales.
Figure 4

Community Gardens

- Portland Parks & Recreation
- non-PDX Community Gardens
- Developed Areas
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Lines

Data source: Portland Parks & Recreation, Vancouver Clark Community Grown, City of Beaverton, City of Hillsboro, City of Gresham, PSU Institute of Metropolitan Studies, J. Young.

Figure 5

School Gardens

- School Gardens
- Developed Areas
- Municipal Boundaries
- County Lines

Data source: Oregon Dept of Education - Child Nutrition Program.
Urban agriculture in the region can often also be found in the school-yard. According to the Oregon Department of Education Child Nutrition Program and Vancouver Clark Community Grown, there are at least 208 gardens in the region's elementary, middle, and high schools. There are at least 61 gardens in Portland schools alone, the majority of which (85%) are located at elementary schools (figures 5 and 6).

Residential yards are also home to a considerable amount of food production in the metro region (figure 7). Over the last several months, we have attempted to identify residential gardens in Portland using Google Earth. Overall, we were able to identify more than 3,000 gardens in the city, totaling nearly 20 acres. We should note, however, that this is likely an undercount. While most people do not plant gardens in the shade, canopy nevertheless obscures some gardens. Nevertheless, clear spatial patterns...
Average garden size is larger in census block groups in East Portland than in those west of Interstate 205, where lot sizes are larger on average. Interestingly, however, the percentage of households with gardens is higher west of 205, notably in inner Southeast and Northeast, and North. We are currently developing a mail survey to validate our mapping efforts and to help us determine a margin of error. The survey will also provide insights into the demographics and motivations of individual gardeners, as well as how much food they produce and how much of it they give away, barter, or sell.

There are several other forms of food production and provisioning that we have not mapped here but that merit further analysis. What is the scale and distribution of livestock ownership, beekeeping and honey production in the greater Portland metropolitan region? What is the contribution of urban foraging, game hunting, and fishing to the region’s food system? What is the extent of greenhouse production of fruits and vegetables? What about rooftop gardens and aquaponic operations? And who is engaged in this work? As the 2012 Agriculture Census data becomes available over the next year or two, we hope to be able to answer some of these questions. But as these maps show, much of the food produced in the region falls outside of the purview of the census.

Dr. Nathan McClintock is Assistant Professor in PSU’s Tonkan School of Urban Studies & Planning, Jeremy Young, Taren Evans, and Michael Simpson are students in the Master of Urban & Regional Planning program at PSU. Dr. Jacinto Santos is a Visiting Scholar from the Universidade Federal de Tocantins, Brazil.
On the Edge of Agriculture

An interview with Narendra Varma and Gianna Banducci of Our Table Cooperative

by Mike Simpson

One mile outside Portland’s urban growth boundary near Sherwood OR, a new farm business is modeling innovative practices that could become the future of Oregon agriculture. The Our Table Cooperative brings stakeholders from all levels of the food system together as member-owners within the same organizational structure. By sharing costs and infrastructure, the cooperative seeks to show that small and medium scale agricultural production can be economically viable. The farm also emphasizes diversity of crops over industrial efficiency, and its management is based on dynamic governance. Recently, Metroscape sat down with two members of the cooperative to discuss their vision, and how their approach to farming and farmland stewardship works within a system of land-use regulations that were designed to protect Oregon’s farmland at a time when large-scale industrial production was widely thought to be the only viable agricultural model. Narendra Varma is a founding member of the cooperative. Gianna Banducci recently joined the cooperative as Marketing Director.

Q: I’d like to start out by asking you what personal experiences have led you to become interested in food systems and farming, and what has motivated you to create this project?

Narendra Varma: A series of fortunate accidents. I don’t have a background in agriculture or food – my degree is in education. I’ve worked in the high-tech world. That provided a good financial foundation to be able to do this. I was coming at this from the perspective of a layperson looking at the food system, the problems that we are facing as a civilization and as a culture going forward, and thinking about what the landscape and food system are going to be for our children and grandchildren.

And then I also brought certain viewpoints as an investor to the table – asking what is this word investment? We think of it in a uni-dimensional way: I give my money to some yahoo on Wall Street and magically it comes back bigger than it started. Really, that form of investment is gambling – it’s not true investment. I think of the word investment as investing our skills and talents and abilities into trying to build the future.

Gianna Banducci: I left a job in Corporate marketing, and I did a Food Studies
graduate program in northern Italy. That launched my exposure to small farming and a holistic diverse food chain. When I came back I worked in a cooperative in Northern California and then I moved to Portland last summer, and I joined the Our Table co-op a few months ago. My journey has been the communal nature of food – whether you are eating it, growing it, or selling it. I have this overwhelming drive to get people involved in any way that they are interested – whether that means shopping locally or learning a new recipe – whatever it is that gives people a tie and an investment in what they are putting in their bodies, where it comes from, and how it affects this greater picture that we are all involved in.

Q: The Our Table Cooperative has been described as a ‘farm incubator’ project. Could you explain what that means and how it works?

NV: Initially we definitely started as a more traditional incubator. We looked around and asked the question, “What are the barriers for new farmers?” Everybody knows about the aging farm population. Other major issues include access to land, access to capital, and access to markets. But we also identified that even when people have the land, and have the skills of farming, and maybe even have the skills of marketing as well as a market, they may not know how to run a business. So we thought: Why not build a farm incubator that would allow people to cycle through a piece of land, provide some training with a strong educational component and treat it as a traditional business and farming incubator?

Over time what we realized is that, although the focus on training farmers and helping new farmers come into the system is still a goal, our vision of the way we want to manage the land was very holistic. We view the whole farm as a single organism. Biodynamic practices are reflected there. In order to realize this vision of how to manage the landscape in a sustainable way long-term, and to have that right mix of annuals and perennials and livestock that we felt was pretty necessary for truly sustainable land management, you need a mirror framework for the social and legal structures and organizations. One is a reflection of the other – the two go hand in hand.

We realized that you can have capital, and land, and training, and education, and young farmers, but the systemic problems are larger than that. For instance, there is a lack of small and medium scale infrastructure. Everything has gone giant scale. For small-scale agriculture to succeed not only do you need small farms and therefore, lots of farmers, but you also need some of that small-scale infrastructure to come back, such as seed cleaning, slaughterhouses, grain elevators, and all sorts of transportation or distribution infrastructure. So what we ended up becoming – and this might change as we evolve – is a cooperative that brings together both producers and consumers and everybody in between who is part of the food system. You have the farmer, the rancher, the person who drives the truck, the person who does the harvest, the person who does the value added processing, the retail, all the way to the consumer.

We realized that part of the problem with this idea of creating a regionalized food system is that we don't really have all the answers. You can't just go back to the way our great grandparents did things: the world has changed. We have all kinds of interesting scientific knowledge and technology that changes how things are done, we have a lot more people to feed, and...
we’ve learned something along the way. It’s not a question of going back. You have to ask how we use that wisdom of the past to go forward. We realized that all the players in this space needed to come together and figure this problem out together.

**Q:** Can you describe in more detail how the decision-making and economic structures of the cooperative work?

**NV:** Legally, it is a cooperative – a multi-stakeholder cooperative. So, we have three groups of members. One is consumers, and that’s obviously the largest group in terms of numbers. The second is the folks who work in the cooperative – farmers on this land and anybody else who works on this facility. Some of the pieces that we provide are the farming, the management, the marketing, and the value added processing such as chefs and people who are producing packaged foods.

The third group is producer members – other independent farms who are not on this land can join the cooperative and be a part of this whole ecosystem. There is an aggregation function that is happening on this farm – if you are a small farmer on a couple of acres and you have a couple of cases of broccoli, you can bring them to us and be a part of our cooperative and we can market them under our one umbrella brand. In that example, you wouldn’t be able to sell it to a distributor because the quantity is too small – there is a hole in the distribution model for really small-scale producers. We are trying to fill that hole by being a “first mile” aggregator.

In terms of decision-making, by law a cooperative is governed by its membership, by a board of directors elected by and of the members. But we are trying to use a model of decision-making called dynamic governance or sociocracy – a model that comes out of the Netherlands and has been used quite successfully in corporate as well as non-profit circles. It’s not consensus-based because there are all kinds issues with consensus-based decision-making that people are generally quite familiar with. Dynamic governance takes some of the idealism of consensus and couches it in perhaps more practical ways. You are not going for 100% consensus, but 100% consent. There’s a subtle difference there – everybody does not have to agree with a decision but everybody has to agree not to disagree with a decision. It allows a little bit more hierarchy based on a meritocracy of skills. At the end of the day we all have certain expertise and skills, and dynamic governance focuses on the fact that people have expertise but it also allows for more broad-based input from everybody, so that you don’t get into group-think and some of those other challenges of being too narrowly focused. That’s the decision-making structure that we are experimenting with, and it’s relatively new in the US.

In terms of finances, the cooperative is a for-profit organization. Workers in the cooperative earn a living wage. We use the standard set by the Living Wage Calculator from MIT, a metric that is set on a zip-code basis. The numbers are far better than the minimum wage, although if you ask me it’s still a little on the low side. If you could pay a living wage with benefits, especially health care as well as accidental death and dismemberment insurance for
Metroscape

our members, that would be a holy grail and that is what we would like to work towards. Those are things that farmers generally don’t have, and in a profession like farming if you do hurt yourself by accident you are finished. It is a physical profession and it’s a huge benefit to have that peace of mind. Also to have some kind of retirement benefit. These are all things that farmers don’t get because they are usually independent businesses. We would really like to use the power of the cooperative and the group to provide some of those things to workers.

Where is the financing coming from? Well, initially it’s Community By Design, which is an LLC that bought this land, and continues to own this land, and put in the seed capital to establish the agricultural infrastructure. Most of that infrastructure is going to be leased out to the cooperative on a not-for-profit basis. Community by Design LLC is a capital shareholder of the cooperative and can get an investment return in the form of a cash dividend once the cooperative becomes profitable. The idea is that the cooperative is given a head start with access to infrastructure and land and some seed capital for operating expenses, and then it’s on its own. It needs to succeed as a viable cash positive business. Otherwise, if it doesn’t, then on some level the experiment has failed. We are not trying to be a non-profit doing something for the good of the public. We definitely have the good of the public in mind, but at the end of the day it has to be a viable business. If it is not a viable business, then it is not something that people can replicate – it’s not something that young people are going to choose to go into. That’s not the way to make farming the next hottest profession.

Having consumers at the table is a crucial aspect of that, because as eaters in this culture we have gotten used to this fast cheap, convenient food system, and the cheap part is going to be hard to get over. People are struggling, so we have to be aware of issues of affordability and access. Having consumers at the table allows for a completely transparent financial scheme in a vertically integrated organization of which they are a member, so that consumers know what the true cost of production is: the cost of the land, how much the farmer was paid, how much the truck driver was paid, how much are we paying in taxes, or for fertilizer, or for whatever else, and that’s why this head of broccoli costs $1.27. Any profits are distributed back to members so there is no hiding behind being a private company and taking an unfair share.

Why is the industrial version of it cheaper? Because the industrial version is externalizing costs: whether it is the cost of the reliance on fossil fuels, or the externalized costs of destroying the soil, or contributing more to climate change, or not paying a living wage. We are not talking about a zero-carbon impact kind of farming here, but we are talking about a far gentler impact on the planet than the industrial agriculture system.

Q: How does this sociocratic decision-making process work when it is time to decide where to plant a fruit tree for instance, or which lands to put into pasture?

NV: Although we would love for everyone who is farming on this land to live here, that is really not the vision here. There are a limited number of houses available on
this land and therefore limited opportunities for people to live here. But we are very close to the town of Sherwood and there are plenty of places in the surrounding community for people to live. One of the projects that we use as inspiration is called Hawthorne Valley in New York, which started in the 1970s. They have created a little village around them because they don’t have housing on their land in any great number, but they have 120 employees who live in the area. That would be the ultimate in terms of success – that you merge with the local community so that you are part of your local community and the local community is a part of you.

In deciding if something should go somewhere on this land, we have a broad-stroke master plan that was produced by a team of designers and that provides some guidelines that we use as a road map. For more specific decisions, the operations on the farm are organized by little mini-business units: the annuals business, the perennials business, the livestock business. Those groups make independent decisions about what they do on a daily basis, but they also check-in with the group when it’s a decision that is going to impact the larger whole. And then we have whole farm decision-making that is about even broader issues. Decisions are always being made at many different levels all the time, and sociocracy is the framework that surrounds all of that.

GB: This really allows people to focus in on their strengths and take the lead on certain areas of this project. Also, being a member of the cooperative, whether as a regional producer, as a farmer, or as a customer, everyone has an equal ownership stake – everybody has a buy-in and everyone has a vote, which keeps things equal across the board and facilitates a community that is able to come together and collaborate on the same level.

Q: You described the cooperative’s approach to farming and land-management as influenced by biodynamics. It has also been described as influenced by permaculture design. Could you explain a little bit about what this means and how they influence the project?

NV: What attracts us to biodynamics is its focus on soil health, which by definition is a long-term focus. Also, biodynamics helps us to view the whole farm – and eventually the community outside the farm – as a single organism. You can see that at any level: you can see just your soil as a single interconnected organism, or you can also get a little bit higher up and look at the landscape as an organism, and you can see that the people are an integral part of that interconnected whole.

Permaculture also looks at the ecosystem in similar kinds of terms – sees it all as inter-related, as a system. Permaculture offers a set of design tools that are based on natural systems. This idea of interdependence is very crucial to this project. When you study the history of intentional communities, or housing communities, or utopian communities in the mid-1800s, you realize that a huge percentage of them failed. Researchers have asked what it is about the ones that have lasted for generations – examples such as the Amish. What is it that caused them to survive when many of their peers didn’t? Really it boils down to one word – interdependence.
If you and I are truly interdependent, we don’t have to be the best of friends, but we can still live together. That is something that informs our thinking here and comes from looking at the natural world. In a healthy ecosystem, it’s really hard to tell where one thing ends and the other starts because there are all kinds of things happening that we don’t usually see. The relationships between us are the same: multidimensional, complex, with many, many layers. Biodynamics and permaculture are both trying to get to the same idea of looking at things as an ecosystem.

**GB:** How we see it above ground is bringing people together in the sense that we envision our cooperative to be regional. We have this farm here for our farmers, but as we bring in regional producers we want to reach people in Portland, we want to reach people here in our community in Sherwood, and Wilsonville, and keep going west. One day, if there is a fisherman on the coast who would like to be a part of our cooperative, that’s part of the community that we want to build. And it’s going to be organic, as we grow and as people learn about us.

**Q:** What is the most important aspect of this approach that distinguishes it from that of conventional industrial agriculture?

**NV:** The key feature there is the distinction between monoculture and polyculture. It’s very appealing and very efficient to specialize in one thing. It’s what we are taught to do, it’s what we are trained to do, and it makes a lot of sense from an efficiency standpoint. But, what ends up happening with that idea of efficiency is that you start to become uni-dimensional. If I have 5,000 acres of land, it is physically very difficult to grow 50 things. It doesn’t matter how clever a farmer you are, because on that scale efficiency drives you towards monoculture. That doesn’t mean that you are a bad person, but that’s the scale that you are operating at.

Our industrial agricultural system is about a model of industrial efficiency applied to what is fundamentally a natural system. Industrial efficiency, although it can be a very useful tool for many things in our lives, is not well suited for managing natural systems. When you look at natural systems you realize that what they are really good at is resilience, and they get that resilience from having large amounts of diversity. So, when we look at this farm, we think of diversity. It’s a form of agriculture that you cannot do with giant mechanized harvesters because they would trample over the 17 other things you are trying to grow on that same piece of land at the same time.

Per unit of land, interrelated, complex, diverse systems can produce more useful biomass and be more resilient to any kind of perturbation, whether it’s pests or weather, and I think it is a far better way to move forward. But it cannot compete when it comes to per unit labor efficiency because its labor cannot be multiplied by a machine. To say that the guy farming 5,000 acres alone is highly productive is actually kind of ignoring the fact that what he is really doing is just pushing a button and its the diesel that is doing all the work – it’s fossil fuels that are magnifying that person’s capabilities.

**NV:** Socially we see a monoculture where the decisions are out of the hands of the farmers and are being made by the government or corporations. So you lose that ability to have any kind of collective or individual decision-making because people are doing that across the board for you.
which limits the opportunity for diversity or the chance for small scale agriculture to have viability because it’s in the hands of greater powers.

**Q:** Your farm is situated just one mile outside of Portland’s urban growth boundary. The innovative approach to agriculture that you are creating emphasizes small-scale production, as well as a community of diverse stakeholders and micro-enterprises who share farm infrastructure under a unified cooperative. How has this model been helped or hindered by Oregon’s land-use planning laws?

**NV:** The land-use system in Oregon has been very revolutionary in many ways. One of the reasons we located this project in Oregon is because of the land-use system, because we felt that something like this needed to be done near an urban core, but not too far away. In jurisdictions where there isn’t any kind of comprehensive land use planning, generally our culture has tended towards urban sprawl and suburban sprawl. As a result, decent farmland has been gobbled up by development willy-nilly without any kind of planning. Generally speaking, the land-use planning in Oregon since the 1970s, and this idea of preserving farmland, has been a huge positive for the state. Here we are, exactly 15 miles and less than a half hour drive away from Powell’s Books, sitting essentially in rural America. But a mile north of us is suburbia and a town. This kind of thing really doesn’t exist in places that don’t have comprehensive land-use planning.

You are right that, for one reason or another, at the time when these rules were developed the idea was to protect farmland from development, and development in people’s minds equalled housing. I think they came to the conclusion that the way to limit development on farmland was to limit housing on farmland. Of course, this was also at a time when no one was really questioning industrial agriculture – the
idea was that with science and technology, and cheap oil, we didn’t need so many farmers. This concept of large farms was perfectly reasonable at the time. If you then allowed five houses on one piece of land, that was akin to a subdivision in some ways. I think that’s where all of that came from.

We chose this location one mile from the urban growth boundary because we wanted to be close to the urban core, and what’s interesting about being so close to the urban growth boundary is that we are on the edge here. There is this big melting pot of urban, suburban, and rural all swirling around on the edge. Again, it’s one of those permaculture principles – maximize the edge because the edge is where the diversity occurs, whether it is the edge where the pond meets solid land, or whether it’s the edge of the rural and the urban.

Clearly, I totally agree with the philosophy of the land-use system – there is no question about that. We always wanted some form of a residential community because we felt very strongly that farmers need to live on the land. If you are a livestock farmer, telling you to commute is ridiculous. The animals are there and they need you in the middle of the night. Clearly some farmers have to live on the land. We chose this property partially because it had a Measure 49 claim on it which allows three residences. We plan to construct these three residences. By law they have to be clustered around this existing residence, so it will become a little residential cluster.

Q: Do you think that permitting more housing developments on single-farm land outside the growth boundary would necessarily open the floodgates to subdivision development and suburbanization?

NV: Well, I don’t think it necessarily would, but the devil is going to be in the details. I do believe that the State needs to step back and say, listen, we’ve had all these great successes with the land-use planning system, but the world of agriculture is changing, so therefore our regulatory system has to change along with it. If the requirement is that we are going to have more small-scale farms, and therefore many more farmers, and those farmers have to live somewhere, then the regulatory framework has to be adapted to deal with that.

Small-scale agriculture is going to happen on these urban edges. Perhaps a regulatory framework that talks about those edges in a special way is what makes sense. For example, people have talked about a zone that is maybe a mile on either side of the urban growth boundary that is treated like some form of a hybrid or a buffer zone. We know that the urban growth boundary is growing slowly but surely, and that these areas are going to get absorbed eventually. We don’t want to lose good farmland, but there’s got to be a more creative solution than saying “here’s this line in the sand.” I think those things can be changed, it’s just a matter of getting the people around the table.

GB: We are a part of the change that is happening right now in farming, and part of our challenge is exposing different types of players – whether it is the county or our own neighbors – to our new style of land use, and showing them that it’s not going to cause a problem. It’s a very delicate but very powerful part of what we want to be doing.

Mike Simpson is a graduate student of Urban and Regional Planning at Portland State.

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Here we are, exactly 15 miles from Powell's Books, sitting essentially in rural America.
Poultry and the Press

Urban Chickens on the National Stage

by Nicole Iroz-Elardo

A fter a 2010 Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) conference bus erupted into chatter from a tour guide’s passing comment about a new ordinance allowing chickens into Minneapolis backyards, I wondered about the magnitude of the urban chicken movement. Legalizing urban chickens is, in fact, occurring more often. A Lexus-Nexus Power Search of the term ‘chicken ordinance’ does not even register a hit in 2000. Yet in 2010, 141 articles discussed potential changes to urban chicken ordinances. Such an explosion of national news coverage suggests urban chicken keeping reaches beyond Portland’s borders.

What is driving this interest in urban chicken keeping? What is the media reporting as arguments for and against chickens in the urban context? With the help of my students, I reviewed over 200 newspaper articles from 2009 and 2010 to better understand the public discourse surrounding urban chicken ordinances.

National arguments for allowing back- yard chickens mirror those of urban agriculture more broadly. Frequent themes include controlling the family food source (31 percent), sustainability (30 percent), self-reliance (25 percent) and frugality (22 percent). A resident of Beaverton, Oregon stated in The Oregonian (8/21/2010) that urban chicken keeping is “very much about food security... I want people to get local food; I want it to be as close as possible.”

Centerville, Utah resident Rebekah Homer Pierce proclaimed her support in a Deseret Morning News editorial (8/20/2010). Their family has “five hens and enjoyed designing and building our coop, learning about food production, breeds, and how to responsibly raise hens. We are happy with this decision to help our children learn responsibility and self-reliance.” Caring for urban chickens teaches children important life lessons and values, and nearly one out of five articles mentioned the educational aspect of a backyard flock.

In many households, a chicken becomes an adored family pet. Indeed, fifteen percent of the newspaper articles extolled the virtues of chickens as pets; many noted that chickens are, on balance, better pets than cats or dogs. Karen Nordstrom, resident of Bloomington, Minnesota, was reported in the Star Tribune (9/29/2010) as saying “I doubt I would have a problem moving next door to someone with chickens; I would have a problem moving next door to someone with four barking dogs.”

Not everyone appreciates chickens in an urban setting. Many articles (16 percent) reported general public opposition. The Janesville Gazette (5/4/2010) recorded Councilman Ron Webb of Edgerton,

Page 28

Metroscape
Hiding in Plain Sight

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less; instead, their goal was to remain part of the alternative world of the home-and without sufficient income to stay in their
camp-the loss of a job, major debt from medical costs, divorce, domestic vio-
tions. The Baldock was their home, their


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Hot Chocolate


Not everyone appreciates


chickens in an urban


setting...


Top Ten Reasons to Include or Exclude Chickens from Urban Backyards (2009-2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-Chicken</th>
<th>Percent of Articles</th>
<th>Anti-Chicken</th>
<th>Percent of Articles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control of Food</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>Noise Nuisance</td>
<td>29%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>Smell Nuisance</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>General Public Health Issue</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic/Frugality</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Livestock/Farm Animal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>General Citizen Opposition</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Compliance Workload/Budget</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good Pets</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Rodents</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better than Dog or Cat</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Increase of Animal Predators</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Noisy</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>Decreased Property Values</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Smelly</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Wandering Chickens</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
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labeled chickens as livestock and emphasized their place on a farm. A resident of Flint, Michigan summed up opposition in the editorial section of the Flint Journal (8/10/2009): “For you who scream rights of the property owners, I hate to tell you the guy next door has the same rights as you. He has the right to not put up with [chickens]. You want to be a chicken farmer, buy a farm!”

Other articles were more specific about reasons why chickens might create “monumental livability issues” in urban areas. Citizens worried about falling property values (ten percent), chickens becoming feral and wandering the neighborhood (nine percent), and fowl “scratching up somebody’s flower bed.” A few articles (six percent), including one in the Providence Journal-Bulletin (10/30/2010), suggested that inviting chickens into the city “could open the door for chicken abuse and neglect.” Indeed, a representative of the Animal Humane Society in Minneapolis reported to the Star Tribune (8/21/2010) that one shelter had taken in 89 chickens in 2009; chickens came from classroom hatching projects of “back-yard situations where it was too much work or people lost interest.”

Chickens in dense neighborhoods do present potential problems including noise (29 percent), smell (27 percent), and general health concerns (20 percent). Those advocating for chickens are aware of these issues and often preemptively state noise (8 percent) and smell (7 percent) should not be an issue if roosters are banned and hens are managed appropriately. Less prevalent, but just as problematic, is the potential increase of disease vectors: rodents (13 percent), other urban predators such as raccoons (12 percent), and chicken carcasses (3 percent). It is probably safe to dispose of dead chickens just as you would your Thanksgiving turkey carcass. However city planners and public health departments will need to continue to address the other nuisance and health concerns through carefully crafted ordinances as the urban animal husbandry movement grows.

Nicole Iroz-Elardo is a PhD Candidate in Urban Studies & Planning at Portland State University where her teaching and research investigates the intersection of public health and urban governance. Many thanks to the Winter 2011 Healthy Communities students for their contributions.
Babies born at very low birth weight (less than 1,500 grams) face increased risk of infection, impaired development, developmental delays, and infant death as compared to babies born at a normal weight. Low and very low birth weight is associated with fetal and perinatal mortality and morbidity. And, they are more likely to suffer from long term disabilities, including cerebral palsy and blindness.

Low birth weights can be influenced by a number of factors, including maternal and fetal health. Women who use tobacco, illegal and some prescription drugs, have poor nutrition, or consume alcohol while pregnant are at increased risk of giving birth to low weight babies. Chronic conditions including diabetes, heart defects, and kidney disease can also increase a woman’s risk of giving birth to a low weight baby.

Across the region, the rate of low birth weight babies has declined during the last decade. Multnomah saw the largest decline, 25.6%, from 65.4 per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 48.6 per 1,000 live births in 2011. Of the seven counties in the Portland-Vancouver-Hillsboro, OR-WA, two saw an increase in the rate of low birth weight babies. Between 2003 and 2011, the rate of low birth weight babies in Clark County (14.9%) and Skamania County (74.9%).

The rate of very low birth weight babies is also decreasing. Rates of very low birth weight babies decreased in Clackamas County (14%), Clark County (6%), Washington County (9%), Skamania County (100%) and Columbia County (52%).

Holding Our Feet to the Fire: Greater Portland Pulse and the Regional Equity Atlas