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In Neighborhoods



BUILDING A HEALTHY SACRAMENTO

Cultivating Urban Ag in Sacramento County

BY NATASHA VON KAENEL

Last March, the Sacramento City Council passed the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, allowing urban farmers to sell produce grown on their property or on vacant lots. Small farm stands quickly popped up, advertising their “hyperlocal produce” usually grown within a few yards of the stand.

But some residents of the Sacramento region soon learned that the ordinance would not apply to their properties, despite living a short bike ride from the city center.

“The actual boundaries of Sacramento City and Sacramento County are really weird,” says Matt Read, an organizer for the Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition, which is supported in part by The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative.

Many neighborhoods in South Sacramento, including those south of 14th Avenue all the way to Florin, are unincorporated and subject to the zoning ordinances of Sacramento County. Many of those neighborhoods suffer from lack of economic opportunity.

Judith Yisrael is a member of The Yisrael Family Urban Farm, which has land in both the city and the county. She says that fresh produce grown and sold locally will revitalize and strengthen these communities. “We live in a food desert. It is easier for me to locate and purchase a bag of

chips, a candy bar and a beer, than it is for me to find an apple or fresh spinach.”

“WE LIVE IN A FOOD DESERT. IT IS EASIER FOR ME TO LOCATE AND PURCHASE A BAG OF CHIPS, A CANDY BAR AND A BEER, THAN IT IS FOR ME TO FIND AN APPLE OR FRESH SPINACH.”

Judith Yisrael, The Yisrael Family Urban Farm

Yisrael believes urban agriculture can be a solution to a wide range of problems facing her community. “This isn’t just about improving food access. It will provide economic development and opportunity throughout the county. Urban Agriculture will improve the public health of our community.”

Read agrees: “Urban agriculture really gets people out on the sidewalk and engaging with their community. It is another tool to build community in a few minutes, to help people connect with a neighbor.”

The proposed county ordinance is still being developed. Chris Pahule, a principal planner for Sacramento County involved



Judith and Chanowk Yisrael of the Yisrael Family Urban Farm hope urban agriculture stands will soon be allowed in the county.

in drafting the ordinance, says that it still needs to get through the Community Planning Advisory Councils, the Planning Commission and the County Board of Supervisors before urban farmers could set up stands and start selling their produce in the county. It is unclear if and when the ordinance would go into effect.

The process may seem lengthy, but Yisrael is patient. “We understand that these types of things take time and research to really develop it all out.”

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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Your ZIP code shouldn’t predict how long you’ll live – but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long – and how well – we’ll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.
Health Happens with Prevention.

Start growing Sacramento’s Urban Agriculture movement!

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Visit www.sacurbanag.org for more info.



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