

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Urban Farming Will Feed Future

By [Danielle Nierenberg](#) And [Isaac Hopkins](#) / [Worldwatch Institute](#) on Thu, Dec 22, 2011

The word “farm” may bring to mind images of rolling acres of wheat and corn fields. But in Albuquerque and Santa Fe, as well as cities all over the world, farming is moving back to the city. Urban agriculture is the practice of growing fresh food in otherwise unproductive urban spaces. Today there is a greater need than ever before to find ways to feed growing urban populations. Currently about 50 percent of the world’s 7 billion people lives in cities, and, according to the United Nations, 65 percent of the world’s people will live in cities by 2050.

New Mexico is fortunate to have several statewide groups that foster urban agriculture and community gardening, such as Home Grown New Mexico, an organization that helps bring together businesses and New Mexicans committed to growing, making and preserving their own food. They host educational classes, potluck meals, kitchen garden tours and a number of other events in the Santa Fe area, and also maintain a community calendar with events from cities around New Mexico. And they link would-be urban homesteaders with resources and information, encouraging self-sufficiency and sustainability.

Community gardening is not unfamiliar to many of Santa Fe’s residents, who have seen a recent resurgence of community gardens and urban farms. The Santa Fe Community Gardens group helps manage and get the word out about a number of privately owned gardens, as well as several operated by the city. Some of the recent growth in urban food projects has come from the Sustainable Santa Fe Plan, which was adopted by City Council in 2008, and includes an emphasis on rebuilding the local food system. Thanks in part to that policy, access to locally grown produce in Santa Fe is getting easier each year, which helps people eat healthier and rebuild a sense of community.

Albuquerque is home to several urban farms, including Rio Grande Community Farm, which rescued 138 acres, some of the last farmland in the North Valley, from other development; and Growing Awareness Urban Farm, a micro-enterprise of East Central Ministries. A newcomer to the scene is the Alvarado Urban Farm, just east of Downtown. Officially opened in September, Alvarado Urban Farm aims to become a hub for the local food scene, providing produce, education and a venue for events. The project’s many partners hope that it will illustrate the demand for, and benefits of, a downtown urban farm.

While initiatives like Home Grown New Mexico and Alvarado Urban Farm are working to give New Mexicans access to fresh, nutritious food, halfway around the world innovative city dwellers are also making use of urban agriculture. In Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi, Kenya, more than 1,000 farmers, most of them women, have started growing vegetables out of soil-filled sacks. This “vertical farming” practice allows women in Kibera to feed their families and improve their income. When a 2008 political crisis in Nairobi cut off food supplies coming into the city, people in Kibera did not go hungry because they had their own source of food. These vertical gardens in Kibera are one

example of successful sustainable agriculture innovations highlighted in Worldwatch Institute's State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet report.

Innovations in sustainable agriculture, particularly urban farming, are becoming even more important, as we must find a way to feed a global population that is expected to reach 9 billion by 2050. Worldwide, about 800 million people are engaged in urban agriculture, providing 15 percent to 20 percent of the world's food. Here in New Mexico, urban agriculture already has a growing presence, with dozens of new gardens and farms sprouting each year. These gardens not only provide a fresh, local food source for city residents, but they also help strengthen and vitalize communities.

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