

## Regional Food Hub Feasibility Study Gets Down to Details

More than 50 growers, producers, community garden organizers, farmer's markets, food pantry providers, distributors and other stakeholders attended the third and final charrette designed to explore the feasibility of establishing a regional food hub in Southeast Nebraska. The meeting, headed by Joslyn Institute President W. Cecil Steward, was held December 16 at Mahoney State Park.

The Southeast Nebraska Food Hub proposal is intended to consider an interdependent, comprehensive strategy that addresses environmental, socio-cultural, technological, economic and public policy opportunities and consequences. Its sustainability requires that these factors—or domains—be considered in planning and development.

The proposed demolition of Lincoln's Pershing Auditorium has been an additional catalyst for the timing and direction of the Southeast Nebraska Food Hub feasibility study. The building's important location, cultural and historic attributes, and overall good condition bring it to the forefront in consideration as a location for a multi-use structure including a year-round public market, as well as housing for many of the proposed Food Hub's activities.

Through a process of earlier charrettes, Clark Enerson Partners architectural and engineering firm, has drawn plans for retrofitting and rebuilding Pershing Auditorium and its environs that include greenhouse, "artist loft" housing units, restaurants, offices, year-round public market, distribution and processing center, storage, specialized food processing kitchens, parking, outdoor festival/events/dining spaces, and a state-of-the-art high tech power plant that both provides energy for the specialized needs of



Clark Enerson Partners' rendering of a multi-use plan for the Pershing food hub site

the food-centric areas of the facility and also feeds the energy needs for the neighborhood. Estimates are that by keeping Pershing Auditorium out of the landfill, more than \$2 million in demolition costs and \$2 million in tipping fees will be saved. In addition, a number of Lincoln residents want to save the mosaic mural on the façade of the structure; if the building were demolished, it would cost an additional \$2 million to preserve it.

Participants in the third charrette studying the feasibility of a Southeast Nebraska Food Hub considered five aspects of going forward: producers, distribution and processing, organization, marketing and finance, and facilities. Break-out discussion groups focused on these aspects. The varying goals and concerns of stakeholders appear, at first glance, to be nonaligned at times.

For example, community gardeners and corporate-size producers are seen by some as competitors. Co-ops and CSAs, individual small and young farming concerns and well-established large producers, composters and low-income food pantries, and ethnic communities and regulators/government entities and waste management

may have different needs and aims. But a food hub can be a source of information, resources, ideas for new revenue streams, a catalyst and proving ground for policy, and innovative channels for all of these.

A food hub is not a public market, nor does a public market require a food hub, but a food hub could enhance the public market in myriad ways. Well-established corporate farms may already have their own processing and distribution channels, but a food hub may act as a resource to their finding new markets, economies of scale through connection with other similar producers, among other resources.

There was much discussion over ownership, leadership, management, responsibility and how a food hub centered around Pershing Auditorium might operate. A regional food hub could be instrumental in bringing together such a varied group of stakeholders with divergent needs and goals, coalescing and strengthening the concept, impact and necessity of local foods in Nebraska generally.

The final report on the feasibility study will be produced this winter, and we will include its findings in our next newsletter in the spring.

## JISC to Study Construction & Demolition Waste Streams in Lincoln

A Joslyn Institute proposal for a 12-month study of changes to the City of Lincoln's management of construction and demolition waste has been approved for funding by the City of Lincoln. The proposal has partnering agreements with the top four contractors in Lincoln and EcoStores. This project is a continuation of our study of an Eco-Industrial Park on West O Street in Lincoln which has been funded by Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA).

The idea is to increase diversion and life of the county landfill while extracting new economic value from waste.

Recommendations from the City's 2040 Solid Waste Planning Advisory Committee have an aim of progressively higher goals for recycling and diversion of wastes

from the local landfill, while recognizing opportunities in "extracting higher levels of community and economic values and higher levels of public safety" from the present and future waste stream for this city and county.

The "preferred paths" recommended by the City's advisory committee identify economic, social, environmental, technological, and public policy opportunities to defer 30 to 60 percent of current waste volume from the city/county landfill.

The paths will identify new market opportunities such as higher volume recycling, repurposing of reusable waste materials (i.e., construction and demolition "waste"), extracting energy from waste, and conversion of disposable materials into new resources for industrial and business opportunities.

One of the key preferred paths is a recommendation for proof of feasibility for one or more waste transfer stations to facilitate reduced transportation costs for moving waste to either new market opportunities or more efficiently to landfill disposal.

The proposed transfer stations would also facilitate separation and sorting of actual waste from the economic value of consumer materials, efficient handling of toxic and hazardous materials, and the facilitation of extracting and using renewable energy from the waste stream.

The study will consider sites for possible future development of waste management transfer stations at 545 West O Street, a site whose existing infrastructure could accommodate such a project.

## EcoStores Building to Demonstrate Green Roof Project

Living architectural materials such as green roofs and green walls are at the nexus of landscape architecture, architecture, engineering, and horticultural and ecological science. In North America, green roof use has increased at a rate of 10 to 15 percent since 2004. As a sustainable building practice their use ameliorates water, energy and aesthetic concerns associated with urbanization.

In partnership with Dr. Richard Sutton, EcoStores Nebraska is embarking on a project to build a green roof structure at its site on West O Street in Lincoln this spring to demonstrate to the public the possibilities of green roofs and living architecture. It would look at the



use of mostly recycled materials to create a demonstration green roof at the EcoStores site that could also provide for research assessments and serve as a site to inform the public about green roofs.

Dr. Sutton, of the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture and the Program in Landscape Architecture at UNL, has initiated a green roof

research program funded by small grants from the Fleming Horticulture Research Fund. The green roof at EcoStores Nebraska, under his direction, is a cooperative project of UNL Landscape Architecture, the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, Ag Research Division, Engineering Material Science and EcoStores.



Jim Powell

## The Alaska Bellwether is SLPS Program Topic February 5

Jim Powell, Alaska environment expert and Joslyn Institute board member, will present a live webcast 3:30 to 5 pm on Thursday, February 5 as part of the Sustainability Leadership Presentation Series (SLPS). The program is free and open to the public.

Global climate change is causing rapid ecosystem change in Alaska. How local communities respond to this challenge now and in the future will have great bearing on whether these communities can continue to thrive in an era of climate change.

Powell will discuss the tangle of on-the-ground ecosystem conditions, local perceptions of the issue, and climate change mitigation strategies and adaptation plans being developed. The implications of a changing planet and the significance of the Alaska experience as related to our unique conditions in Nebraska will be considered during a live Q&A session following the presentation.

SLPS is a monthly program of Joslyn Institute for Sustainable Communities in partnership with Central Community College, Metropolitan Community College and WasteCap Nebraska. Watch parties of the live webcasts are held each month across the state. For more information, please visit [www.cccneb.edu/sustain/SLPS](http://www.cccneb.edu/sustain/SLPS) or [www.joslyninstitute.org/slps.html](http://www.joslyninstitute.org/slps.html).

## EcoStores to Install Biogas Digester

Nebraskans will soon get an idea of how much energy can be generated at home using biogas using home biogas digesters, when EcoStores Nebraska installs a Hestia Biogas Digester in the next few months at their building on West O Street in Lincoln. Biogas provides clean burning fuel for year-round cooking and a small amount of stand-by electric.

Just as solar panels depend on the amount of available sunlight, the amount of biogas that can be produced depends on the amount of organic waste available. A typical American household with a lawn or garden will generate enough energy to cook three meals a day.

A two cubic meter (525 gallon) home digesters are intended to be fed between 10 and 30 pounds of mixed waste per day, such as table scraps and garden waste, animal manure, grass clippings and tree leaves.

## Community Garden Grants Available

The Omaha Community Garden Network has received \$800 in grant funding from the Northrop Grumman Corp. to support community gardens in the Omaha area (Douglas & Sarpy counties). Community gardens can apply for grant funding (up to \$400) to support specific garden needs (equipment, supplies, plants, garden upgrades). Download the grant application [here](#). Completed applications must be received by February 1, 2015, and can be submitted by e-mail to [info@dundeegarden.org](mailto:info@dundeegarden.org). Notification of acceptance will be made by March 1, 2015.

