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# Harvesting Opportunity: A Strategic Vision for Farmworker Housing and Microenterprise in Washington County

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# HARVESTING OPPORTUNITY



**A Strategic Vision for Farmworker Housing and Economic  
Opportunities in Washington County, Oregon**

**PREPARED BY TIERRA PLANNING**

**JUNE 2010**





Above photo: Tierra Planning  
Cover Image Credit: Flickr/ shineglobal

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington County is home to just over 12,800<sup>1</sup> predominantly Latino farmworkers and their family members, making up 3% of the county's overall population. Farmworkers are the backbone of the county's agricultural economy, working in a series of labor-intensive crops throughout the growing season that yield over \$300 million annually.<sup>2</sup> Although more than two-thirds of the population has settled in the county permanently, the Latino farmworker population remains largely invisible within the community and is rarely featured on the planning agenda.

Two of the biggest obstacles facing farmworkers are a shortage of affordable, humane housing and a lack of economic opportunities to move out of poverty. In Washington County, the estimated unmet need for affordable housing for farmworkers and their families was 10,546 to 11,595 beds in 2009. Poverty within the farmworker community is markedly higher than county averages, with the average Washington County household earning over \$64,000 a year and the average farmworker household in the county earning just \$10,000 to \$16,000 annually.<sup>3</sup>

This report explores the strengths, needs and realities facing the farmworker community in Washington County and how local planners, government officials, and service providers can improve housing and economic opportunities for this marginalized community.

Farmworkers in Washington County, Oregon face a shortage of affordable, humane housing and a lack of economic opportunities to move out of poverty.



Dilapidated housing at an Oregon labor camp limit opportunities for farmworkers.

*Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Public outreach focused on engaging a diverse set of stakeholders including farmworkers, farmers, and professionals in government and nonprofit agencies.

### Stakeholder Involvement

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Farmworkers	61 participants in five focus groups including labor camp residents and members of the broader farmworker community
Professionals with expertise in housing, economic opportunities and land use regulations	15 in-depth interviews and 15 workshop participants
Farmers	9 phone interviews

## FINDINGS

Stakeholders identified a series of fundamental issues related to housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers in Washington County. Key concerns related to housing included:

**Subsidized Farmworker Housing Developments:** Washington County professionals expressed their enthusiastic support for subsidized housing developments in urban areas dedicated for farmworkers, managed by a nonprofit. Many farmworkers expressed a preference for these kinds of apartments with improved access to services, such as schools, health care and grocery stores, but many had difficulties meeting the eligibility criteria for residence.

**On-Farm Housing:** Housing experts overwhelmingly agreed that rural on-farm housing in labor camps is a poor option due to the common tie between employment and housing that often leads to the exploitation of farmworkers. However, many farmworkers living in labor camps felt there were few housing alternatives due to transportation barriers and the higher costs of living in urban areas. Farmers found on-farm housing to be troublesome to develop and manage due to strict regulations, costly fines for infractions, and cultural and language barriers.

**Homeownership:** Experts agreed that achieving homeownership for farmworkers is challenging even with a variety of assistance programs due to low wages, impermanency of tenure, seasonal employment, and long-term mortgage commitment. Despite the challenges, farmworkers often see homeownership as a life goal, either for themselves or for their children.

**Subsidy Needs:** While many housing professionals expressed the need for more subsidies and assistance for the farmworker population, bureaucratic barriers such as rigid eligibility standards that vary per funding source are barriers for many farmworker households. The main barrier for farmworkers that prevented them from accessing public housing assistance was immigration status.

Key issues related to broadening economic opportunities in Washington County identified by stakeholders included:

**Barriers:** English language skills and legal immigration status were both seen as major barriers to advancement that add to the economic instability of the marginalized community.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Economic Importance of Farmworkers:** Farmers acknowledged the importance of farmworkers and emphasized the need for a stable workforce supply as a vital component of the local agricultural industry and of their individual farms. Farmworkers took pride in their integral role in the local food supply, but expressed frustration about the general lack of public awareness of their contribution.

**Local Food Movement:** Economic development experts and farmers alike agreed that the local food movement was growing in the Portland metropolitan area. Latent regional demand for community supported agriculture (CSAs) and organic, local produce at farmers markets suggest strong public support. Stakeholders frequently noted this growing trend and niche market as an avenue for expanding economic opportunities.

**Mentorship:** Within all industries in Washington County, including agriculture, there are few Latino leaders to serve as mentors and role models for the farmworker population. Overall, farmers are reluctant to participate in informal mentorship programs, however, opportunities through universities and the state agricultural extension may be feasible options.

**Value-Added:** Many members of the farmworker community expressed an interest in business models centered on food processing using local products. Experts identified several nonprofits in the region that provide community and commercial kitchens for starting small-scale value-added businesses; however, these organizations noted permitting as a barrier to establishing new kitchens. Local economic development professionals view home-based businesses as one route for future innovation in Washington County, which would include value-added processing.

## SCENARIOS FOR EXPANDING HOUSING AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Extensive stakeholder input identified criteria and considerations for each housing and economic development scenario to determine the most relevant recommendations for Washington County. Four housing scenarios and three economic opportunity scenarios are presented here as part of the vision for *Harvesting Opportunity*. The scenarios are not presented as alternatives, rather, stakeholders emphasized that there must be a continuum of housing and economic opportunities available for farmworkers given the diversity of needs and skills within the community.

### Scenarios Developed with Stakeholders and Farmworker Community

#### *Housing Scenarios*

- Urban-Based Nonprofit Housing Development
- Healthy Housing in Rural Areas
- Home Ownership Assistance for Families
- Vouchers and Housing Assistance

#### *Economic Scenarios*

- Farmworkers as Future Farmers: Mentorship and Marketing Assistance
- Farmworkers in Support Industries: Skill-Building Models
- Business Development and Value-Added Models

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HARVESTING OPPORTUNITY

Many simultaneous actions from various stakeholder groups, rather than any one single solution, should be pursued to improve farmworkers' housing and economic opportunities given the wide scope of challenges and opportunities within the farmworker community. Four overarching goals were created to organize recommendations developed with input from stakeholders, especially farmworkers:

- **Expand awareness of and respect for farmworkers**
- **Improve baseline living conditions and expand the spectrum of housing opportunities**
- **Expand economic development opportunities**
- **Increase communication among farmers, service providers, and government agencies**

Within the following report, each of the four goals is accompanied by a set of recommendations to guide local planners, government officials, and service providers in increasing the available housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers.

The overarching goal of this work is to benefit the farmworker community of Washington County by improving the visibility of and respect for farmworkers by placing farmworker issues on the planning agenda. By moving forward with the above goals and scenarios, Washington County and other committed localities can begin to address how to share the harvest with all members of the community.

# PREFACE

## DEDICATION

*To the farmworkers in Washington County and beyond who engage in the most essential of all human labors, the cultivation of the earth and harvest of its bounty. May we all share the harvest and enjoy its fruits with respect for the earth and those who nurtured it.*

## PROJECT PARTNERS

### Tierra Planning

Tierra Planning is comprised of six graduate students from Portland State University in Portland, Oregon earning their Master of Urban and Regional Planning. Tierra is made up of a multifaceted group of students with varying backgrounds in community development, environmental planning, economic development, land use planning and housing policy. This project serves as a capstone requirement to earning a Master of Urban and Regional Planning. For full team member biographies, see Appendix G.

### Farmworker Housing Development Corporation

The Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC) is a nonprofit development corporation serving farmworkers and their families throughout the Mid-Willamette Valley. Based out of the city of Woodburn, FHDC currently manages 190 residential units and provides housing and services to nearly 200 families.

### Partnership between Tierra and FHDC

The Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC) solicited Tierra Planning in January 2010 to explore farmworker housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers in the Portland metropolitan area. What began as a site-specific project in Washington County quickly expanded to a county-wide strategic evaluation to develop a vision of appropriate housing and economic opportunity models.

## ADDITIONAL KEY INFORMANTS

Tierra benefitted from the wisdom of years of on-the-ground experience of several organizations working with farmworkers in Washington County, including:

*Adelante Mujeres* is a community based organizations located in Forest Grove, Oregon, focused on education, empowerment, and enterprise of primarily immigrant women and their families. Adelante Mujeres staff were crucial during the stakeholder engagement phase, connecting the project team with their clients to participate in focus groups. Additionally, staff at Adelante Mujeres provided critical feedback as the project team analyzed alternative models of housing and economic opportunities.

*Bienestar* is a nonprofit development corporation located in Hillsboro, Oregon whose portfolio of affordable housing projects include 10 multifamily properties in five cities throughout Washington County, and its neighboring county, Columbia County. In addition to developing and managing low-income and farmworker housing, Bienestar also provides services and educational programs to its residents, focusing on improving self-sufficiency. Throughout the project, staff at Bienestar provided valuable feedback during the research and alternative-building phase, while also connecting the project team with valuable meetings of local leaders in Washington County.

*Washington County Department of Housing Services* coordinates housing services at the county level. Their staff has provided the project team with the draft form of the Washington County Consolidated Plan for 2010-2015 and the accompanying data for the Opportunity Maps which was useful for its insights into housing conditions across the county. They have also provided valuable connections to other agencies and service providers in Washington County, and offered feedback during our research and scenarios development phase.



FHDC Community Organizers at a farmworker housing tour.  
Photo credit: Tierra Planning

# INTRODUCTION

Farmworkers are involved in the planting and the cultivation and the harvesting of the greatest abundance of food known in this society. They bring in so much food to feed you and me and the whole country and enough food to export to other places. It's ironic that those who till the soil, cultivate and harvest the fruits, vegetables and other foods that fill your tables with abundance have nothing left for themselves.

-Cesar Chavez

“The availability of affordable, decent, safe and sanitary housing opportunities for persons of lower, middle and fixed income, including housing for farmworkers, is a matter of statewide concern.”

Oregon Revised Statutes 197.307

## PROJECT NEED

Farmworkers in Oregon bring food to our tables and prosperity to our state, harvesting the fresh fruits and vegetables we enjoy at home as well as supporting the vibrant agricultural industry that brings in \$4.9 billion to the state annually.<sup>1</sup> Many of Oregon’s signature crops like strawberries, nursery crops and hazelnuts require significant human-scale labor from planting to harvesting. The hardest work is done almost exclusively by farmworkers for an average annual wage of \$10,000.<sup>2</sup>

Despite farmworkers’ contribution to Oregon’s multibillion-dollar agriculture industry, farmworkers continue to face a host of challenges that prevent them from improving their well-being. Farmwork is one of the lowest paid sectors of the economy, and workers often perform backbreaking labor for rock bottom wages in some of the most unsafe working conditions, at risk for multiple injuries from farm machines and pesticide exposure. Most farmworkers cannot stretch their wages far enough to meet their basic needs for food and shelter.

For many, “home” is either a dilapidated cabin on the farm where they work, an overcrowded apartment shared by several families to help pay the rent, or a tent or a car if times are particularly bad. Living in substandard conditions puts farmworkers at risk for disease and injury, and is particularly challenging for families with children who cannot find a safe place to study or play. Living on farms or crowding into apartments makes many farmworkers invisible to the larger community, obscuring the connection between the food at the grocery store and the substandard living conditions of those who grow it.

Labor camps for farmworkers represent some of the worst housing available for any members



Photo credit: Flickr user Mr. T in DC

Average retail price per  
pint of strawberries<sup>3</sup>: **\$2.10**



Photo credit: AP Photo/Chris O'Meara

Average farmworker pay  
per pint of strawberries<sup>4</sup>: **10¢**



of our society. Conditions at on-farm labor camps remain dire even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: in Washington County, where the average household income is \$64,200,<sup>5</sup> conditions in some labor camps more closely resemble slums of a developing country than the subdivisions down the road that are home to workers in the high tech industry. Additionally, workers living in labor camps are particularly vulnerable because continued employment on the farm is typically required to secure a cabin or bunk; any complaints about working or living conditions can result in a loss of both your job and your place to live.

Although a number of groups work directly with farmworkers to fill in the missing link between what farmworkers can afford and their basic needs, there remains a large gap between the availability and the demand of these services. In Washington County, the estimated unmet need for low-income housing for farmworkers and their families was 10,546 to 11,595 beds in 2009.<sup>6</sup> Nonprofit groups strive to meet the need for farmworker services, working to provide housing, educational, health, food and economic assistance. Often these nonprofits have limited funding and run into the same “invisibility” problems encountered by farmworkers. There is little public assistance available because of strong political aversion to using public money to support farmworkers, who are often portrayed as immigrants who are in the U.S. illegally seeking to benefit from government handouts.

### Problem Statement:

In Washington County, farmworkers face a shortage of affordable, humane housing options and a lack of economic opportunities to move out of poverty.

The current state of farmworker housing and economic conditions presents a range of problems. The combination of low wages, nonprofit groups stretched thin, and very limited government services has resulted in a shortage of humane, affordable housing options available for farmworkers. At the same time, farmworkers largely lack economic opportunities to increase their earnings in agricultural work or other sectors. Improving farmworkers’ well-being requires addressing the needs of the least paid and underserved of our labor force and overcoming a range of

barriers currently facing farmworkers. At the same time, there is an opportunity to work with farmworkers to build off their existing skills and assets. Providing farmworkers with the resources to build capacity and develop skills will help to increase their well-being as well as for their families.



Common problems in labor camps include cockroach infestation, exposed wiring, no insulation, soiled mattresses and no running water.

Photo credit: Tierra Planning



## PROJECT GOALS & OUTCOMES

The central goal of this project is to empower farmworkers in Washington County and the organizations that work with them by identifying and evaluating feasible models for housing and economic opportunities. An overarching theme of this work is to improve the visibility of and respect for farmworkers by placing farmworker issues on the planning agenda.

This report details key findings from extensive research and stakeholder engagement in Washington County and the wider Portland metropolitan region. The report is intended to be relevant for service providers, planners, politicians, and applicable government agencies within or near Washington County. The project is also meant to serve as a catalyst to create partnerships among existing organizations and as a model for evaluating the needs and opportunities facing farmworker communities in other Oregon counties and beyond.

*This report delivers:*

- In-depth findings from a series of stakeholder interviews and focus groups, including work with farmworkers, farmers, nonprofit service providers and government agencies (See **Findings**, pg. 39).
- Detailed analysis of a range of housing and economic opportunity scenarios to meet the diverse needs of the farmworker population, and their applicability in the Washington County context (See **Scenarios**, pg. 53).
- Broad-based, goal-oriented recommendations to improve conditions for farmworkers in Washington County (See **Recommendations**, pg. 73).

## A PORTRAIT OF THE FARMWORKER POPULATION

The research, outreach and policy analysis presented focuses on meeting the needs of a broad segment of farmworkers and their families in Washington County. The stereotypical image many people have of farmworkers is of young, poor, single men who are illegal immigrants from Mexico, working in the U.S. for a short period of time following the crops. A more nuanced image of farmworkers in Washington County and the diversity within the population emerges out of research and discussions with Washington County farmworkers.

The most basic definition of a farmworker is someone employed in the agricultural sector. Work tasks may include planting, cutting, pruning, harvesting and tending to livestock. A number of more technical definitions have been developed by government agencies to classify workers and define eligibility for a range of programs, including immigration visas, housing units and educational programs. With regards to housing, for example, potential residents of housing units developed with funding from the US Department of Agriculture's Office of Rural Development (USDA-RD) must meet the USDA definition of a domestic farm laborer: "any person who receives a substantial portion of his/her income as a laborer on a farm in the United States." <sup>7</sup> In Oregon, the Housing and Community Services Department's definition of a "farmworker" is similarly based on employment in the agricultural sector and is used to determine eligibility for projects built with state tax credits to develop farmworker housing.

The State of Oregon's Housing and Community Services Department defines farmworkers as: "any person who, for an agreed remuneration or rate of pay, performs temporary labor for another in the production of farm products or in the planting, cultivating or harvesting of seasonal agricultural crops or in the forestation or reforestation of lands, including but not limited to the planting, transplanting, tubing, precommercial thinning and thinning of trees and seedlings, the clearing, piling and disposal of brush and slash and other related activities."

Oregon Revised Statutes 315.164

Although farmworkers by definition may be of any race or ethnicity, historical patterns of migration, employment, and national policy have created a largely Latino farmworker labor force. Farmworkers from Mexico have been a vital part of Oregon's agricultural community since the 1940s, when the government-sponsored *Braceros* program brought Mexican "strong arms" (*brazos* in Spanish), mostly young men, to the United States to provide agricultural labor, which was in short supply during World War II. Among the 4.5 million Mexicans who came north as legal guest workers during the growing season, 15,000 came to Oregon, where they made the difference between crops spoiling in the field and being harvested, helping to feed civilians at home and soldiers abroad. *After* the program ended in Oregon in 1947 and in the US in 1964, many braceros and their families chose to return to the U.S., starting Latino communities within many small farming towns like Hillsboro and Cornelius in Washington County.<sup>8</sup>



Braceros from Mexico made vital contributions to Oregon's agriculture during World War II. Two legacies of the government-sponsored Bracero program were a dependence of Mexican farm labor and a pattern of farmworker exploitation.

*Photo credit: Oregon State University Archives*

## FARMWORKERS BY THE NUMBERS

- 95% identify as Mexican or Mexican American (Washington state)<sup>10</sup>
- Median age is 33 years (nationally)<sup>11</sup>
- 71% are settled in the same housing unit year-round (Oregon state)<sup>12</sup>
- 85% of farmworkers live in households with children (Oregon state)<sup>13</sup>

## FARMWORKER CHARACTERISTICS

Even as new migrants continue to arrive today, the farmworker population in Oregon and in Washington County has matured and settled, as farmworkers and their families are integrating themselves into the communities they now call home. Many families have lived in the region for decades and approximately 7,800 farmworkers today work in a variety of crops over the growing cycle throughout the county, from the early strawberries to Christmas trees.<sup>9</sup> In addition to those currently working in agriculture, there are many former farmworkers who have moved into the service industry or technical or professional careers. Latino neighborhoods now include businesses specializing in products from *quincinera* dresses to fresh *pan dulce* pastries, and children of farmworkers are graduating from local high schools and moving on to college.

Although there is diversity within the county's farmworker population, many farmworkers share several common demographic characteristics. A broad portrait of the population reveals that farmworkers are overwhelmingly Latinos and many are first or second generation immigrants from Mexico who speak Spanish as their first language. There is a significant minority of First Nations/indigenous Mexican farmworkers who are not Latinos and speak an indigenous language first and Spanish as a second language. In Washington County, the majority of farmworkers live in the county year-round, although migrant labor still makes up a large percentage of the work force. Farmworkers are mostly of working age, and many are accompanied by family members and children. Farmworkers generally earn very low incomes because of low wages and the seasonality of employment.

The findings and recommendations developed in this report are tailored to address the characteristics of the farmworker population, presented in greater detail in Section 2. Because there is a great deal of overlap between the needs of this farmworker population and other disadvantaged populations, many of the recommendations developed in this report would be relevant to a wide spectrum of low-income Latinos. Many Latinos are former farmworkers who have transitioned to another industry but still face many of the same economic challenges. More broadly, these recommendations may also offer insights into opportunities for other low-income, minority or immigrant populations.



Farmworker families are increasingly making Washington County their home and creating a new community.  
Photo credit: FHDC

## GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

This study focuses on the farmworker population in Washington County, estimated at 12,805 workers and their family members in 2002.<sup>14</sup> The primary focus was on areas where farms and agricultural activity are located as well as where there are large concentrations of Latinos.

The agricultural base in Washington County, judging from the zoning and locations of farm stands, runs roughly north to south through the middle of the county, just east of the Metro Urban Growth Boundary and west of the Coast Range foothills, which are largely forested.

Washington County  
Rural Zoning

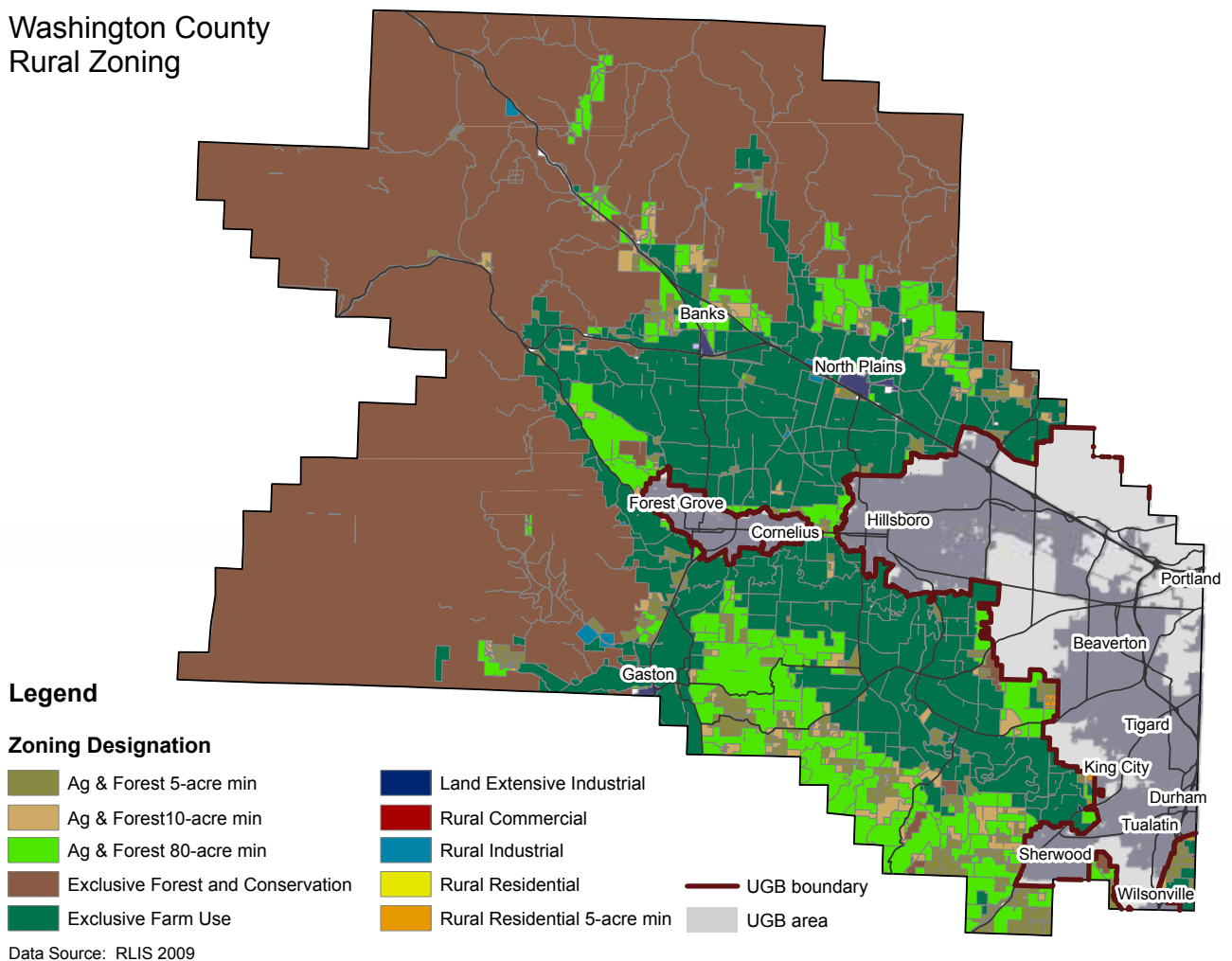


Figure 1.1: Washington County Rural Zoning Map

Although not all Latinos are farmworkers and not all farmworkers are Latino, there is a large degree of overlap between the two populations and thus Census data on the Hispanic and Latino population provides a rough insight into areas where farmworkers are likely living.

There are several areas in Washington County with large Latino populations, in the smaller cities west of Portland, particularly in Hillsboro, Cornelius and Forest Grove.

Based on these general trends, the majority of research for this report focused on the intersection of these two geographic trends, right in the center of Washington County.

The majority of the findings and research are applicable county-wide, but highlighting this central area of the county focuses attention on likely areas of higher need and greater future potential.

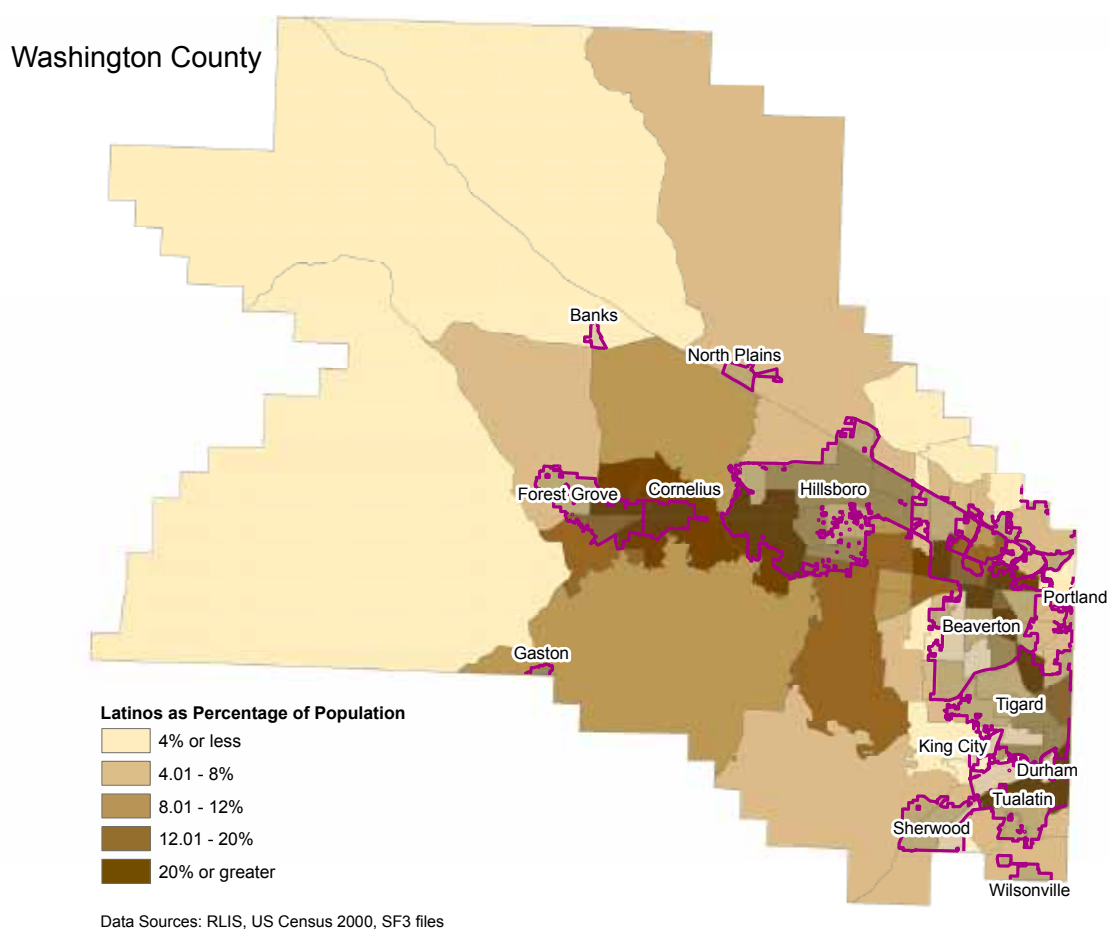


Figure 1.2: Washington County Latino Population, 2000 Census



## PROJECT FOCUS & ASSUMPTIONS

### Motivation to Improve Well-Being

Based on conversations with farmworkers and service providers, this report assumes that members of the farmworker population in Washington County desire improved housing and economic opportunities to improve their well-being and their families'. Low vacancy rates at dedicated affordable housing properties for farmworkers, county estimates of unmet need for such housing, and microenterprise strategies emerging from within the farmworker community itself support this assumption.

### Untapped Demand for Local Food

Rising interest in farmers' markets, CSAs and locally produced food indicates a swell of interest in local food that is not being fully met. For example, the Hillsboro Farmers' Market Director reported that the opening of a new neighborhood farmers' market just a few miles from the main farmers' market did not decrease sales at either market—rather, overall sales expanded to meet previously unmet demand. This report assumes that finding ways to capture a portion of this growing market segment offers new economic opportunities for farmworkers.

### Focus on the Agricultural Sector

This report focuses on economic and housing opportunities for farmworkers who remain in the agricultural sector. As more farmers near retirement and demand for local food continues to grow, there are specific opportunities in agricultural work for farmworkers to expand their skills, responsibility and incomes, based on their previous knowledge and experience in agriculture. This opportunity is not a mandate for farmworkers to remain in agriculture, however. Farmworkers should be encouraged to pursue a wide variety of economic opportunities and skills depending on their interests, and further research into opportunities outside the agricultural industry is encouraged. For further discussion, see **Economic Scenarios**, pg. 64.

### No Discussion of Housing Financing

The focus of this report is on housing needs and opportunities, rather than the complex details of housing finance. Although obtaining funding can be one of the major hurdles to developing farmworker housing, this report assumes that housing professionals have a thorough knowledge of the different financing programs and requirements that does not need to be duplicated here.

### Limited Discussion of Immigration Status

Opportunities for farmworkers, irrespective of their immigration status, are the focus of this report. However, no discussion of farmworkers can completely avoid the issue of immigration, because of both broad community attitudes toward “illegal” farmworkers and the real and perceived barriers confronted by undocumented farmworkers. Immigration reform and enforcement is a federal issue, and is not examined in this report, but this report does document the effects of immigration status on farmworkers' opportunities.

### Broad-Based Analysis of Policy and Conditions

This report offers a broad analysis of existing conditions and future opportunities for farmworkers in Washington County, but does not provide any geographic-specific examination of potential project sites. Future work would benefit from looking at patterns of existing housing, services, and employment opportunities to site a specific project.





# PROJECT CONTEXT

In Washington County, the context for expanding housing and economic opportunities is largely shaped by the demographics of the farmworker population; existing housing conditions, including barriers to both accessing and developing housing; and economic conditions, specifically in the agricultural sector. Additionally, current efforts by nonprofit groups and different levels of government who are working to address farmworker issues both on the ground as well as on a policy level inform the project context for future planning efforts.

## GEOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Located just west of the major Portland metropolitan area in northwest Oregon, Washington County, is a vibrant, diverse county that includes urbanized areas, rural communities, farms and forestland. There are 16 incorporated communities; Beaverton and Hillsboro are the largest (see Figure 2.1). The population is concentrated in urban areas in the eastern third of the county, with 93.1% living in urban areas and 6.9% in rural areas mainly to the west, as of 2000.<sup>1</sup> The county is home to over a half million inhabitants, and increasing in both numbers and ethnic and racial diversity. Latinos, at 14.7% of the total population, make up the largest minority group.<sup>2</sup>

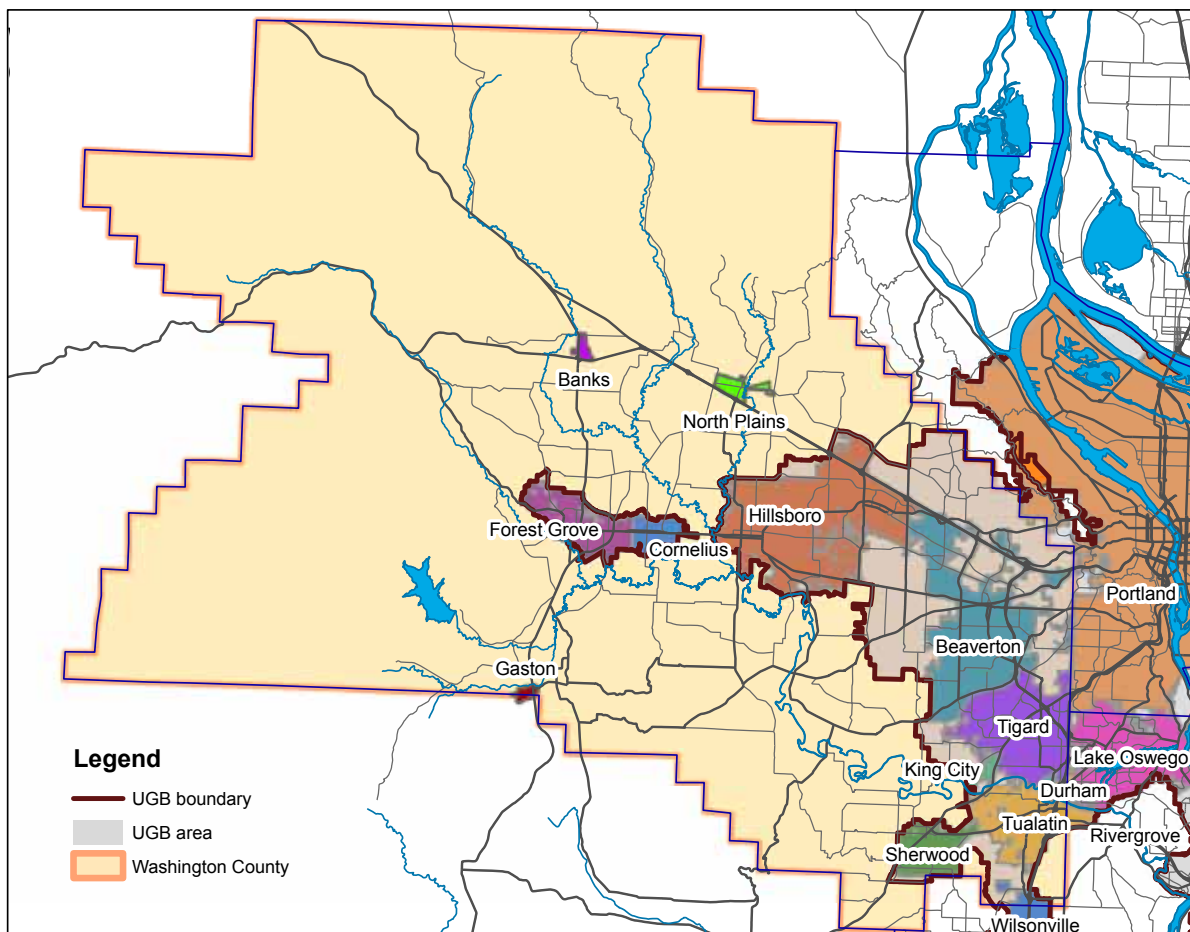


Figure 2.1 Washington County Overview Map Geographic Overview

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE FARMWORKER POPULATION

Washington County has the fifth largest farmworker population in the state, though farmworkers make up only 3% of the county's overall population.<sup>3</sup> According to a study done in 2002, there were an estimated 12,805 farmworkers and their family members in Washington County.<sup>4</sup> Available data suggest farmworkers share a number of demographic characteristics:

### *Country of origin and ethnicity:*

The majority of farmworkers are of Latino ethnicity with family roots in Mexico. A study of farmworkers in Washington State found that 95% of farmworkers, both immigrants and U.S.-born, identified as Mexican or Mexican-

American.<sup>5</sup> National data show that 75% of all farmworkers are first-generation immigrants born in Mexico and an additional 2% were born in Central America.<sup>6</sup> There is a minority of farmworkers who are First Nations/indigenous Mexicans who do not identify as Latinos.<sup>7</sup>

*Language:* Spanish is the predominant language of the farmworker population: national data show that 81% of farmworkers speak Spanish as their native language.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, there is a significant minority of First Nations/indigenous Mexican farmworkers who speak an indigenous language first and Spanish second, if at all. According to field workers for the Virginia Garcia Health Clinic, farmworkers in Washington County speak 11 indigenous languages and dialects.<sup>10</sup> Many farmworkers have limited English skills—only 24% of farmworkers nationally reported speaking English well.<sup>11</sup>

*Age:* Farmworkers are overwhelmingly younger than the overall population, and very few are past working age. Nationally, half of all farmworkers are younger than 31 and only 7% are older than 54.<sup>12</sup> The overall Latino population in Washington County is also overwhelmingly young: children under 18 make up 38.9% of the population, workers between the ages of 18 and 54 make up 54.6% of Latinos, and only 5.4% of Latinos are over 55 years old.<sup>13</sup> Anecdotally, several farmworkers who participated in focus groups for this project discussed their plans to return to Mexico when they can no longer work, suggesting that few older farmworkers retire in Washington County, which may in part account for the low number of elderly Latinos.

*Migrant status:* 2002 data estimated that the farmworker population in Washington County is split roughly evenly between migrant farmworkers, who do not permanently live in the county, and seasonal farmworkers, who do live in the county year-round.<sup>14</sup> A key difference between the two groups is that seasonal workers are more likely to be accompanied by their families, which swells the ranks of the seasonal population.<sup>15</sup> In the U.S., many families of

### A NOTE ON DATA AVAILABILITY AND SOURCES

Demographic and socioeconomic data on farmworkers are regrettably thin, particularly at the county level, due to the relatively small size of the population and difficulties connecting with farmworkers due to language barriers, migratory patterns and mistrust of data gathering. The best available data are a mix of national, state and limited county-level data, coupled with the impressions of local professionals working directly with farmworkers. When local data were not available, this report draws on national trends to provide a general impression, though there is an unknown degree of regional variation between farmworker communities.

Additionally, local data on Latinos in general is provided in some cases to give an estimation of the farmworker population, although the Latino and farmworker populations do not completely overlap. While nearly all farmworkers are Latinos, the Latino population in Washington County is much broader than the farmworker population: farmworkers make up only an estimated 16% of Latinos in the county.<sup>8</sup>

Latino origin are of mixed immigrant and native born status. Anecdotal reports from local service professionals working with farmworkers indicate that the proportion of seasonal workers continues to increase.

*Gender:* The large majority of farmworkers who work in the fields, particularly migrant workers, are men. Nationally, 80% of crop farmworkers are male,<sup>17</sup> and American Community Survey (ACS) data from 2008 confirm that 75.7% of those employed in the agricultural, forestry, fishing and hunting sector in Washington County are male.<sup>18</sup> However, women are more likely to be employed in food processing operations.<sup>19</sup> Given the diversity of crops and processing work in Washington County, it is likely that the overall gender ratio among farmworkers is more balanced. Additionally, the larger percentage of seasonal farmworkers in the county compared to migrant workers and the presence of their family members likely means that the total population of farmworkers and their families more closely approaches an even gender breakdown.

*Family* – The majority of farmworkers nationally, both migrant and seasonal workers, are married and a majority have children.<sup>22</sup> Among farmworker households nationally, the vast majority—85%—include children.<sup>23</sup> Seasonal workers are more likely to live with family members: in Washington County there are twice as many family members in seasonal households as family members in migrant households, despite roughly even numbers of seasonal and migrant farmworkers.<sup>24</sup> Figure 2.2 shows that there are a variety of family types, including nuclear families, single parent families, blended families and extended families.

## DEFINING FARMWORKERS

- Migrant farmworkers are employed in agriculture by several employers during the year and have traveled from a permanent home, often outside of the state.
- Seasonal farmworkers are employed in agriculture by several employers up to about 10 months out of the year and live permanently in the area.<sup>16</sup>



85% of farmworker households nationally include children.

Photo credit: FHDC

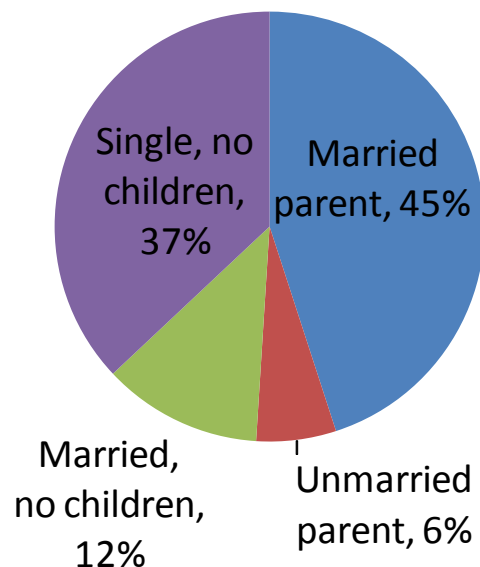


Figure 2.2: Family Types of Farmworkers Nationally

Source: Kandel, 2008

*Education and skill level:* There is a wide spectrum of educational attainment and skill levels among farmworkers in Washington County. Participants in focus groups, for example, included farmworkers who had worked in agriculture their entire lives and others who previously had a professional white collar career in Mexico; many fell somewhere in between, possessing a variety of trade skills. Nationally, over 60% of Latino farmworkers have completed less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education.<sup>20</sup> ACS data similarly reveal that 46.4% of Latinos in Washington County have not completed high school.<sup>21</sup>

## FARMWORKER HOUSING CONDITIONS

### Existing Farmworker Housing

Farmworkers access a variety of housing options, both housing reserved for farmworkers and a wider range of informal housing options. There are two main sources of dedicated farmworker housing available in Washington County: subsidized farmworker housing developments in urban areas and on-farm labor camps. These two sources fulfill only a small fraction of the demand for farmworker housing, however, and the majority of farmworkers must find alternate housing options, and many of these do not meet farmworkers' basic needs for health, safety and decency. Figure 2.3 shows existing dedicated farmworker housing in Washington County.

The best quality, dedicated farmworker housing options in Washington County are subsidized apartment units developed and managed by Bienestar, a nonprofit farmworker housing developer that has been working in Washington County since 1981. Bienestar is a county-recognized Community Housing Development Organization (CHDO), and as such, is eligible to receive federal funds distributed by the county for housing development activities.

Bienestar's portfolio includes five apartment properties with a combined total of 254 units dedicated for low-income farmworkers and their families; one member of each household must be employed in agriculture to qualify. The five properties reserved for farmworkers were built between 1984 and 1997. Since then, Bienestar has focused on developing four additional low-income apartment properties; to be eligible, residents must earn less than 50% or less of area median income and may be employed in any sector, not exclusively farmwork. Bienestar's farmworker properties provide affordable, high quality housing for 1,210 farmworkers and their family members,<sup>25</sup> approximately 9% of the farmworker population, but there is a much greater need for housing among the larger farmworker population.

The need for farmworker housing far outstrips the supply: less than 10% of farmworkers and their families can currently be accommodated in quality, affordable housing units.



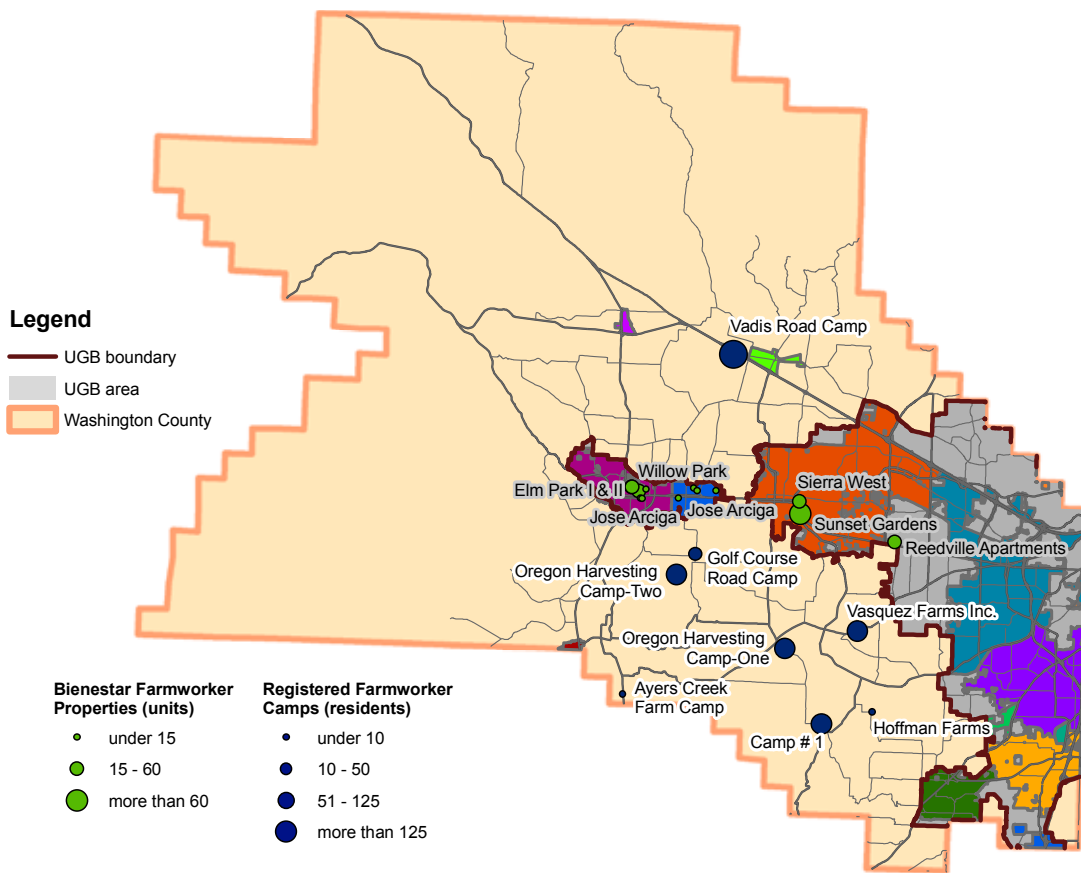


Figure 2.3: Existing Dedicated Farmworker Housing in Washington County

Source: State of Oregon Agriculture Labor Housing Registry and Bienestar

Agricultural labor camps provide dedicated housing for another portion of the farmworker population, but often serves as housing of last resort because of extremely poor living conditions. On-farm labor camps typically provide housing at or near farms where farmworkers are working. Often times continued employment on the camp owner's farm is required as a condition of tenancy in the camp. As of 2009, there were 10 labor camps registered with the state that met Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) minimum regulations for living conditions, with a combined occupancy of 1,049, or 8% of the farmworker population.<sup>26</sup> The number of registered camps in the county has declined by more than two-thirds since 1995,<sup>27</sup> due in part to increased inspection and other costs that have led farmers to close their camps or take them off the registry. The last legally approved, registered on-farm housing was constructed about 10 years ago and there has been no construction since then.<sup>28</sup>

While the decrease in registered labor camps may appear on the surface as an improvement in farmworker housing conditions, many formerly registered camps continue to function as unregistered camps, where not even OSHA's minimum standards are enforced. There are an estimated 18 such unregistered camps in the county, housing somewhere between 500 to 1,000 farmworkers.<sup>29</sup> As bad as living conditions may be, the continued demand for such housing is an indicator of the desperate need for farmworker housing in any condition.

## LABOR CAMP LIVING CONDITIONS

OSHA regulations are intended to guarantee a minimum standard for health and safety conditions in labor camps. An estimated 8% of the farmworker population in Washington County lives in such camps.

To meet minimum standards, camps must provide:<sup>30</sup>

- One shower head per 10 occupants of each gender
- One toilet per 15 occupants of each gender
- Mattresses/pads minimum 2" thick
- 100 sq ft of living space per occupant
- Minimum 7 ft ceiling height
- Floors and walls free of structural defects and hazards

However, many camps fail to meet even these minimum standards for many reasons: lack of staffing to perform inspections and enforce regulations, lack of political will to address the problem, and landowners who keep camps unregistered. Unregistered camps house an additional 4 to 8% of the county's farmworker population.<sup>31</sup>

Documented conditions in Washington County labor camps too frequently include overcrowding, unsanitary common toilet and shower facilities, pest infestations, general filth, and dilapidated buildings, often sagging from shoddy construction or water damage. Sewage leaks from overflowing toilets or septic tanks, piles of garbage, abandoned cars, water unsafe to drink and exposed wiring have also been observed at local labor camps.<sup>32</sup>



Labor camps in Marion and Washington Counties are often characterized by inhumane, substandard and overcrowded conditions.

Photo credits: FHDC (above right); Tierra Planning (directly above)



## AVAILABLE FARMWORKER HOUSING

After tallying known sources of farmworker housing, 75% to 79% of farmworkers and their families are unaccounted for and their housing accommodations are unknown, as shown in figure 2.4. Farmworkers generally have limited market-rate housing options given their extremely low incomes, and many families are severely rent-burdened because of relatively high rents in comparison to incomes.<sup>33</sup> Most of the available options are substandard or overcrowded. Anecdotally, there are stories of farmworkers living in their cars, tents, RVs, sleeping out in the open, housing several families in a market-rate apartment or living with relatives. On the other end of the spectrum, a very small handful own their own homes.

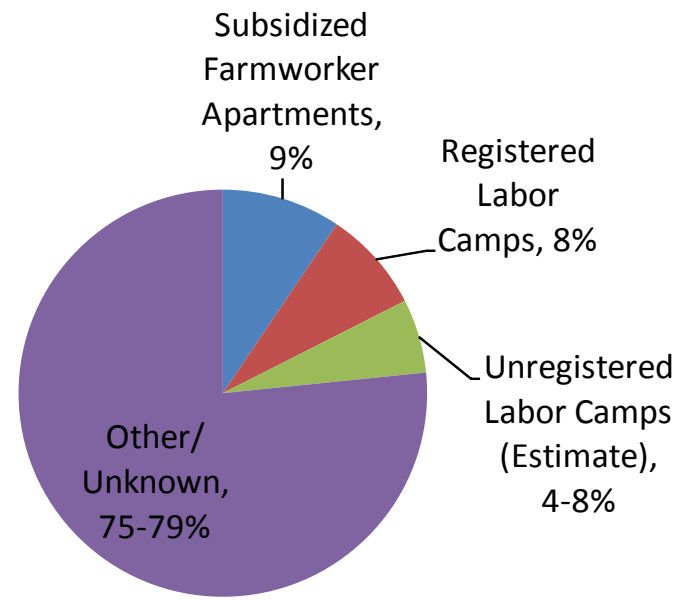


Figure 2.4: Types of Housing Utilized by Farmworkers in Washington County

Table 2.1: Available Farmworker Housing Options

	Subsidized Farmworker Apartments	Registered Labor Camps	Unregistered Labor Camps (estimated)	Other/Unknown
Number of Properties	5 properties; 254 units	10 camps	18 camps	not applicable
Number of Occupants (approximate)	1,210 (660 farmworkers and 550 children)	1,049	500 to 1,000	9,546 to 10,046

Few farmworkers in Washington County are receiving direct government support to meet their housing needs. The largest barriers to accessing low-income housing assistance through Washington County are a lack of knowledge and immigration status, which makes many farmworkers ineligible for housing assistance. Farmworkers who are eligible for public housing assistance face an estimated three-year wait for assistance:<sup>34</sup> demand for the existing supply of subsidized housing far outstrips supply, both for Section 8 vouchers for market rate units and for county managed housing units.<sup>35</sup> A small percentage of farmworkers may access short-term rent assistance through programs like Emergency Rent or Housing and Homeless Services through Washington County Community Action.<sup>36</sup> The already overburdened public housing system is not and likely cannot provide sufficient housing options for farmworkers currently living in substandard conditions or who are significantly rent burdened.

## ESTIMATING UNMET HOUSING NEED

There is a large unmet need for farmworker housing in Washington County given the limited availability of existing housing options in relation to the total county farmworker population, estimated at 7,815 farmworkers and 4,990 accompanying family members.<sup>37</sup>

Recent estimates from the Washington County 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan place the unmet need for farmworker housing at 6,534 beds. This estimate assumes that all farmworkers not currently housed in subsidized farmworker apartment units operated by Bienestar or registered labor camps are in need of affordable housing, which is reasonable given that farmworkers earn approximately 20% of the area median income.<sup>38</sup> However, the county estimates include only the number of beds or units needed to house farmworkers in the county, not including accompanying family members. Additionally, the estimates assume that housing provided in labor camps meets basic housing needs, whereas it is likely that the substandard condition of most labor camps amplifies the need for quality farmworker housing.

A more complete, revised estimate of the need for farmworker housing that includes families puts unmet need at approximately 10,546 beds after accounting for existing housing in subsidized farmworker apartments and registered labor camps.<sup>39</sup> Given that the average household size for Latino families in Washington County is four people,<sup>40</sup> the number of beds would translate into roughly 2,636 housing units, or more than 10 times the existing number of subsidized units currently available.

### ESTIMATED NEED IN WASHINGTON COUNTY

Beds Needed:

10,546

Housing Units Needed:

2,636

The existing supply must expand:

more than 10x

## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HOUSING

Farmworkers face numerous barriers to accessing housing that make it more challenging to meet farmworkers' housing needs. Barriers include:

- *Income:* Low incomes in proportion to high rents are the single biggest barrier for farmworkers seeking to obtain decent housing. The median gross rent for Latinos in Washington County was \$790 in 2008,<sup>41</sup> slightly lower than the overall county average. An average farmworker household earning approximately \$13,000 per year,<sup>42</sup> or \$1,083 monthly, would need to pay 73% of their income towards rent to afford a market-rate unit. This is more than double the 30% of total household income commonly used as the benchmark for housing affordability.
- *Language and Cultural Differences:* Farmworkers may not be familiar with the methods and procedures needed to secure a rental unit in the US, such as filling out applications and providing deposits.<sup>43</sup> Limited or no English skills also present challenges to determining the terms and availability of housing.
- *Household Size:* Latino families in Washington County tend to have larger household sizes, at an average of 3.92 persons, than the general population, which average 2.68 persons per household.<sup>44</sup> However, many apartments are built with one or two bedrooms. Additionally, households with more than five members are often restricted by code to single-family units, which tend to be unaffordable to farm laborers.<sup>45</sup>
- *Migrant Families:* The estimated 29% of farmworkers in Oregon who migrate seasonally face additional barriers in acquiring housing.<sup>46</sup> Lease terms often require 6 to 12-month commitments and migrant workers may not have employment in the area for that length of time.
- *Eligibility Criteria:* Farmworker housing developments often have specific eligibility criteria requiring total household income below a certain threshold and agricultural employment by at least one family member. More generally, many farmworkers cannot provide for previous landlord references or proof of current employment commonly required for private apartments.<sup>47</sup>
- *Real or Perceived Legal Repercussions:* Farmworkers may not be eligible for certain government-subsidized housing because of their immigration status. In addition, some households may not seek affordable housing because they fear negative consequences may result from government agencies gaining access to their records.<sup>48</sup>
- *Discrimination:* Farmworker families are victims of discrimination based on their race as well as their legal status.<sup>49</sup> Discrimination may affect farmworkers at an individual level when trying to rent an apartment, or as a group when community opposition threatens farmworker housing projects.<sup>50</sup>

**“Farmworkers will tell you it is easier to find another job than it is to find another place to live.”**

—Larry Kleinman, PCUN

## BARRIERS TO DEVELOPING HOUSING

On the other side of the issue, developers who seek to build housing for farmworkers face a different set of challenges that limit their ability to respond to the need for farmworker housing. Barriers include:

- *Lack of funds:* There are very limited funds available to subsidize the capital and particularly the operating costs of non-profit farmworker housing projects. In part this stems from political opposition to provide government funding for projects housing residents who are perceived to be in the U.S. illegally. Difficulty obtaining funds often translates into a long development process because of complex financing from multiple sources.
- *High Costs:* Land prices in urbanized areas of Washington County are extremely high, making land acquisition a significant cost, in addition to construction and infrastructure costs.
- *Rural Land Use Limitations:* Agricultural land use zoning in much of rural Washington County severely limits the ability for both farmers and nonprofits to develop farmworker housing. Current zoning requires that agricultural land owners substantiate the need for year-round agricultural workers on a specific property in order to win land use approval for accessory dwelling units.<sup>51</sup>
- *“Not in My Backyard” (NIMBY) Resistance:* Farmworker housing projects typically encounter stiff initial community resistance rooted in ethnic discrimination. At public hearings, racism is often only thinly disguised behind other motives such as maintaining a community’s character or preserving property values. Based on strong community disapproval, decision makers are often faced with intense political pressure to deny local land use applications for farmworker housing projects.
- *High-Needs Residents:* There are additional challenges for projects trying to accommodate residents with very low incomes or short occupancy periods.

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Washington County has a broad economic base, from its traditional agricultural industries to technology start-ups. The county's top employers include household names like Intel, Nike, and Columbia Sportswear. The county is relatively wealthy, with median household income at \$64,202, above the national average, and the poverty rate for individuals at 9.2%, below the national average.<sup>52</sup>

At the same time, agriculture remains an important fixture in both the economy and the rural landscape. Approximately 28% of the land in the county is used for farming, divided into 1,761 individual farms.<sup>53</sup> In addition to the farm operators, Washington County farms employ around an additional 8,000 workers annually.<sup>54</sup>

Washington County ranked fifth among Oregon counties in the value of agricultural production in 2008, with total cash receipts totaling over \$302 million. Greenhouse and nursery products are the county's largest agricultural commodity.<sup>55</sup> The diversity of labor-intensive crops grown in Washington County fuels a demand for farmworkers during many months of the year, which helps explain why Washington County has the fifth largest farmworker population in the state.<sup>56</sup>

## ECONOMIC CONDITIONS FOR FARMWORKERS

Although Washington County is a relatively wealthy county, Latinos generally and farmworkers in particular face much more precarious economic conditions. The median household income for Latino families in Washington County is \$39,073, significantly below the county average of \$64,202.<sup>57</sup> Annual incomes for farmworker families were even lower: best estimates of average households incomes are between \$10,000 and \$16,000, putting almost all farmworkers near the poverty line.<sup>58</sup> Poverty is a struggle for almost one in four Latinos in the county, compared to an overall 9.4% of individuals living in poverty across the county.<sup>59</sup> Poverty rates are even higher for Latinos in some cities, such as Cornelius and Forest Grove, where poverty rates for Latinos are 29.1% and 29.7%, respectively.<sup>60</sup>

Farmworkers earn some of the lowest wages of any occupation, and their wages have generally failed to keep pace with rising gains seen by many other workers over the past decades. Farmworkers' wages rarely exceed minimum wage by a significant factor and have tended to be stagnant over time, even as earnings for workers overall have increased.<sup>61</sup> Despite the arduous nature of agricultural work, farmworkers earn less than all other groups of low-skill workers except dishwashers.<sup>62</sup>

Table 2.2: Economic Conditions in Washington County

	Washington County	Latinos	Farmworkers
Population	519,979	76,566 (15% of County population)	12,805 (3% of County population)
% of Individuals Living Below the Poverty Line	9.40%	24.10%	--
Median Household Income	\$64,202	\$39,073	\$10,000 to 16,000 (estimated)

Low wages and the seasonality of employment translate into low annual incomes for most farmworkers, although exact incomes are difficult to calculate. In April 2010, the average hourly wage for farmworkers in Oregon was \$11.18.<sup>63</sup> Working 52 weeks a year, a farmworker could make \$23,000 at that wage. However, farmworkers typically experience periods of unemployment during the year because the availability of agricultural work fluctuates depending on the growing cycle. As a result, Oregon farmworkers may make closer to \$16,100 annually, assuming they work 36 weeks during the year, which is the average number of weeks farmworkers nationally are employed in farm work.<sup>64</sup>

However, \$16,000 likely represents the high end of the earnings spectrum, as other estimates of annual wages are much lower. In 1999, the median income of farmworkers in Oregon was \$7,500 for a single worker and between \$10,000 and \$14,000 for families.<sup>65</sup> Recent data from FHDC indicates that farmworkers in Marion County, just south of Washington County, currently earn an average of \$15,000 per year or less.<sup>66</sup> Taken together, best estimates put annual farmworker household incomes in Oregon between \$10,000 and \$16,000.

Data on real hourly wages for farmworkers show that wages have remained stagnant since 1975. Figure 2.5 compares farmworker real wages with those of people without a high school degree and people with bachelor's degrees. Real wages for people with bachelor's degrees have risen while those who have less than a high school degree have seen decreased real wages.

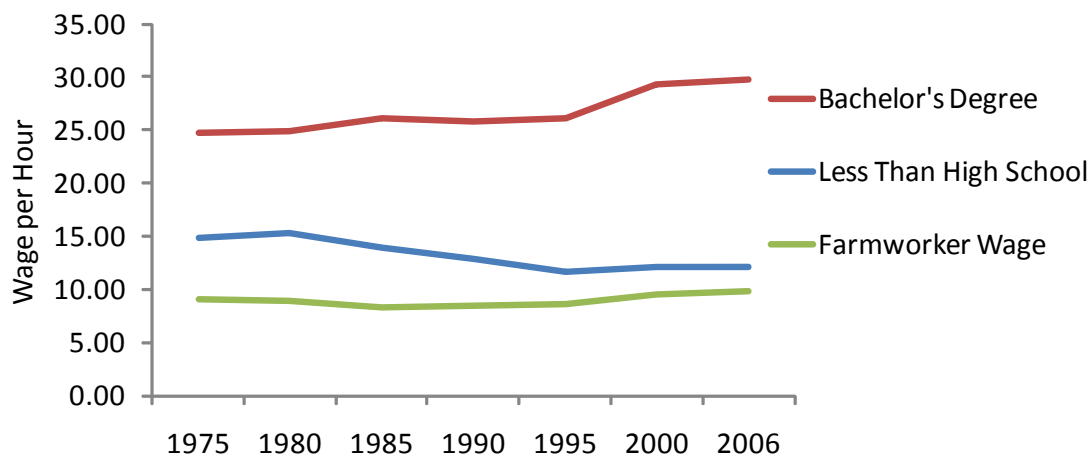


Figure 2.5: Real Hourly Wages for Farmworkers and Other Workers Nationally, 1975-2006 (in 2007 dollars)

Source: Kandel, 2008 and Economic Policy Institute

## THE SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARD

### A New Way to Consider Poverty

Most farmworker families have incomes that are well below the federal poverty threshold for their household size. However, many people recognize that the federal poverty threshold is insufficient because it does not address the cost of living differences between places and different types of families. Researchers at the University of Washington have developed an alternative poverty standard called the Self-Sufficiency Standard to address some of the federal poverty standard's shortcomings. The Self-Sufficiency Standard measures how much income is needed for a family of a certain composition in a given place to adequately meet its minimal basic needs without public or private assistance. The Standard was designed as a national measure, with a specific methodology that is tailored to the costs of each state and county within that state.<sup>68</sup> While the Self-Sufficiency Standard has not been adopted at the federal level, some planners and policymakers are using it to bring light to cost of living and poverty issues in their communities.

Figure 2.6 shows that average farmworker households are not earning enough to reach the Self-Sufficiency Standard for any household type.

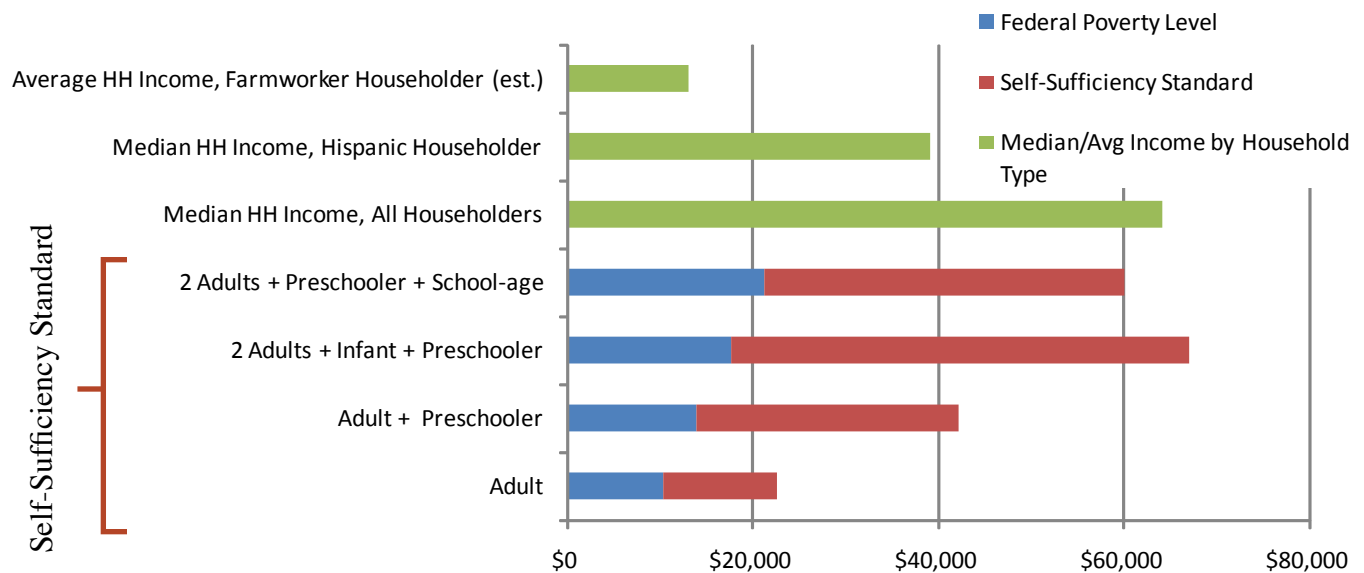


Figure 2.6: Self-Sufficiency Standard by Household Type and Median Household Incomes, Washington County, 2008.



## BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Given low wages for crop work, many farmworkers look to obtain higher-paid employment outside of the agricultural sector or establish small businesses. However, farmworkers face a number of barriers in the economic arena including:

- **Language and cultural differences:** Limited English language skills and cultural barriers present difficulties for farmworkers seeking to enter different types of work.
- **Low educational attainment:** The national average for farmworker educational attainment was 7th grade in 2001-2002.<sup>69</sup>
- **Few formal skills or job history:** Though farmworkers have an average of 12 years of work experience,<sup>70</sup> many farmworkers lack formal job skills. Few farmworkers have a stable work history or employment references to provide to potential future employers because of the informality of the agricultural work sector.
- **Transportation:** Since the State of Oregon began requiring legal documentation to obtain a driver license, many farmworkers report limited transportation options either because they cannot legally drive themselves or cannot find a willing, legal driver among friends, family or co-workers. Auto transportation is crucial to basic mobility and employment access, particularly for farmworkers living in rural areas where public transit is infrequent or non-existent.
- **Difficulties obtaining business licenses:** While some farmworkers have experience in a variety of trades, from cosmetology to forklift operations, many such trades require government licenses, which in turn often require documentation of immigration status. While documentation is not required for all business licenses, fear of government and uncertainty of the rules can deter would-be entrepreneurs.

## CURRENT EFFORTS TO ADDRESS FARMWORKER ISSUES

A range of efforts are already underway to address farmworker issues in Washington County, which provide a starting point for future recommendations and efforts. A range of nonprofits provide services for farmworkers, and the county government has begun to address planning needs for farmworker housing. Additionally, there are several collaborative efforts underway that represent a mixture of nonprofit and government initiative. Given the diverse needs and range of barriers facing farmworkers in the county, much work remains to be done to better ensure that farmworkers have access to a broader range of housing and economic opportunities.

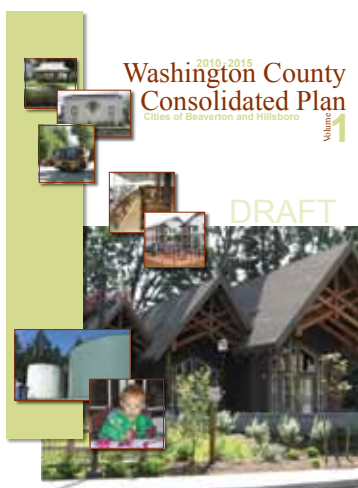
## NONPROFIT SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are numerous organizations working with farmworkers locally to provide a range of services including housing, health care, education, empowerment and more. Some groups work specifically with farmworkers and others target the broader Latino or low-income populations. Organizations include:

- *Bienestar* manages 10 affordable housing properties with a total of 458 apartments. Five of the properties are reserved for farmworker families and the remainder serve low-income residents.
- *Adelante Mujeres* provides a range of programs designed to empower, educate and improve economic conditions for Latinos, particularly Latina women and girls. They provide a wide range of economic programs from agricultural skills training to financial literacy classes.
- *Oregon Human Development Corporation (OHDC)* provides services for farmworkers, Hispanics, and disadvantaged individuals throughout Oregon. Specific farmworker programs assist workers to find more permanent and better-paying employment.
- *Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center* provides affordable, quality, culturally appropriate health services with a special emphasis on working with migrant and seasonal farmworkers.
- *Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) – Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United* is a statewide union of farmworkers, nursery, and reforestation workers. PCUN helps to organize workers and improve labor conditions, and provides support services for its 5,000 members.
- *Community And Shelter Assistance Corp. (CASA of Oregon)* develops housing and community facilities in rural areas and financial programs for farmworkers and other low-income populations across the state.
- *Oregon Food Bank – Washington County Services* distributes food to nonprofit agencies in the county serving low-income populations with difficulties accessing sufficient food sources.
- *Centro Cultural* provides education and empowerment programs to the Latino community in the county to promote social and economic development.
- *Community Action* serves low-income families across the county to help fight poverty and improve economic well-being with services like childcare referrals, rent assistance and weatherization services.
- *Vision Action Network* supports community-based solutions for critical issues facing Washington County, working to enhance economic security, respect diversity and build sustainability.
- *Greater Hillsboro Area Chamber of Commerce* provides business development services particularly targeted for Latinos in the area.
- *Legal Aid Services of Oregon* and the *Oregon Law Center* provide legal advice, representation and a range of civil legal services to low income communities in Oregon.

## PLANNING EFFORTS

Although a number of county-level plans (detailed in Appendix C) shape the context for developing future housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers, very few planning efforts have directly addressed the needs of the farmworker population. The exception is the Washington County 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan, prepared by Washington County's Department of Community Development. The strategic five-year plan documents existing housing conditions, unmet housing need, and priorities for allocation of federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds to meet housing needs. The plan addresses the needs of the general low-income population as well as "special needs" populations, which for the first time in this report include the farmworker population. By documenting the unmet need for farmworker housing in the county, the plan brings farmworker housing issues into the planning agenda. Additionally, the strategic plan ranks housing for farmworkers as a high priority need, to indicate that the county plans to make funds available for housing activities that address this unmet need.



The Washington County 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan brought farmworker housing issues to the planning agenda in the county for the first time.

Key findings and recommendations include:

- The plan documented almost 1,300 existing beds/units available for farmworkers currently.
- The plan identified an unmet need for 6,534 beds/units for farmworkers.
- The plan ranked housing for farmworkers as a high priority need.

## EXISTING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS

A unique strength to draw upon to develop future opportunities for farmworkers in Washington County is the diverse range of existing collaborative efforts at the county and state levels, described in greater detail in Appendix C. Current work includes:

### **Statewide Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team**

A product of the Oregon House Bill (HB) 3172 of 2001, the Statewide Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team was established within the Housing and Community Services Department charged with ensuring adequate farmworker housing within the state. The team is comprised of top leaders related to farmworker housing, bringing together the executive directors of community development organizations, nonprofit agencies and service providers, and state-level officials from land use and community development departments. The group has the potential to affect statewide policy and raise the profile and awareness of the farmworker community. One of the group's many tasks is to conduct an enumeration study of the state farmworker population.

### **Washington County Farmworker Leaders Group**

There is an informal, ad-hoc group of leaders on farmworker issues in Washington County that meets regularly. The group is led by the executive director of Washington County's primary farmworker housing development corporation, Bienestar. The group is comprised of staff of support agencies and organizations, government staff, and attorneys. Recently, the work of the Farmworker Leaders Group has sought to promote farmworker rights and advocacy locally through Portland-area print media as well as provide support to the statewide Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team.

### **Washington County Housing Advocacy Group**

The Washington County Housing Advocacy Group (HAG) meets monthly with local policy makers and other collaborative housing advocacy groups to promote the availability of affordable housing throughout the Washington County area, and educate the public on the need for affordable housing.

# FINDINGS

## IMPORTANCE OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Beyond data and reports, direct engagement with critical stakeholders provides deeper insight into current conditions and future opportunities for farmworkers in Washington County. This report draws on findings from formal and informal discussions with a range of stakeholders, including farmworkers, farmers and professionals working in related fields. Although findings from interviews and focus groups are not scientific and cannot be used to generalize a broader population, listening to the voices of farmworkers and other stakeholders added an extra, more human dimension to this report. Workshops and interviews also provided a critical opportunity to gather feedback on proposed scenarios and recommendations.



Tierra Planning held two focus groups with women in Adelante Mujeres' Education program.  
*Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



Tierra Planning held one focus group with Adelante Mujeres' Adelante Agricultura program members.  
*Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



The Professional Workshop had 15 participants from diverse backgrounds.  
*Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



## OUTREACH METHODS

The project team utilized a multipronged approach to solicit stakeholder feedback on farmworker opportunities in Washington County, as summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Stakeholder Involvement Participants and Objectives

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants and Outreach Method	Participant Characteristics	Objective
Farmworkers	61 participants in 5 focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both genders</li> <li>• Current and former farmworkers</li> <li>• Farmworkers living in a range of accommodations</li> </ul>	To hear first-hand from farmworkers about their concerns and aspirations.
Farmers and Farm Owners	9 phone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small and large farms</li> <li>• Farmers growing a range of crops, including nursery crops</li> </ul>	To ascertain barriers and interest in various alternatives that necessitate farm owner support.
Professionals	15 in-depth interviews, 15 workshop participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionals with expertise in housing, economic development, and land use regulations</li> <li>• Working in Washington County and the Portland metro area</li> <li>• Non-profit and government sectors</li> </ul>	To obtain technical information on current housing and economic opportunities available to farmworkers; barriers and models for expanding future opportunities. To solicit critical feedback on proposed scenarios and recommendations.

## FARMWORKERS

The core of the outreach efforts were focused on engaging farmworkers in conversations at a series of five focus groups. To effectively engage with farmworkers, the project team partnered with trusted community service providers working with farmworkers to recruit participants and worked with translators to conduct the focus groups in Spanish; more detailed outreach methodology, survey instruments, and specific findings are included in Appendix E.

## FARMERS

Farmers are another important stakeholder in improving opportunities for farmworkers, because of their role as employers and sometimes landlords. Additionally, farmers' detailed knowledge of economic opportunities within agriculture was particularly desired to inform potential economic opportunities for farmworkers in the agricultural sector. A series of phone interviews was conducted with nine farmers in the county on these and other issues.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS

More technical knowledge was obtained through 15 interviews with professionals who had experience in three main interest areas relevant to developing future farmworker opportunities: housing, economic opportunities, and land use. Additionally, 15 professionals were recruited to participate in a workshop to discuss preliminary findings and analyze proposed housing and economic scenarios, which are presented in Scenarios, and incorporate feedback from the professional workshop.



Farmers in Washington County are aging. The average age of a farmer is 56.6.  
*Photo credit: Oregon Agricultural Extension*

# VOICES ON HOUSING

## SUBSIDIZED FARMWORKER HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS

The majority of professionals working with farmworkers expressed their enthusiasm for quality, affordable housing developments as the best option for farmworker housing. One professional with experience throughout the country stated that the housing available through Bienestar and FHDC was some of the best she had seen.

Farmworkers were also enthusiastic about this kind of housing, although few of the farmworkers included in this study lived in such housing. Many farmworkers mentioned the importance of access to services in town, like grocery stores and schools for their children. Some farmworkers currently living in labor camps felt that in-town apartments were too far out of reach, mainly for economic reasons, although subsidized rent may make the option seem more attainable.

A concern for some former farmworkers was the difficulty of finding similar quality housing if they moved out of farmwork or increased their incomes slightly above the eligibility threshold. Housing professionals mentioned related difficulties in qualifying families for dedicated farmworker housing based on the different eligibility criteria.

Housing professionals working with farmworkers documented many obstacles that often have to be overcome in order to build farmworker housing projects. One of the largest challenges is funding: finding funding, assembling different combinations of funding, and meeting the different requirements of different funding sources. Federal, state and county grant sources have slightly different definitions of eligible “farmworkers” and different income thresholds for residents. A potential tenant may meet one set of requirements but not another. Additionally, finding money for operating costs was cited as a perennial challenge: some housing professionals judged operating costs to be even more difficult to meet than capital construction costs. In Washington County, community development and Bienestar employees strongly value the collaborative relationship they have formed, which includes county support for Bienestar programs with federal community development block grant funds.

Another obstacle frequently mentioned by housing professionals in siting farmworker housing developments is community opposition, often motivated by NIMBYism and discrimination. In several cases, land use approval for farmworker housing developments was only granted after changes in state laws or threats from the state level to withhold funding for city departments. Professionals recounted that resistance was often strongest for the first housing development to come into a community, and that they were often more successful with second and third projects once communities had grown more accustomed to the idea of farmworker housing. After working in Hillsboro for more than 20 years, Bienestar encountered a positive response by the City of Hillsboro when they proposed to restore three deteriorating apartment buildings plagued by crime and drugs.

## ON-FARM HOUSING: REALITIES AND POSSIBILITIES

Housing experts interviewed for this project overwhelmingly agreed that on-farm housing, which generally takes the form of labor camps, is a poor housing option for farmworkers. The main reason cited was the prevalent patterns of exploitation of the workers by the farmers who provide the housing. Because housing is often tied to employment, workers have little recourse to combat the often deplorable living conditions found at the camps. Further, many cited the isolation of rural housing from necessary services and the general population as negative features.

According to land use experts, there is currently no good option for developing farmworker housing in agricultural areas that would formally sever the traditional link between housing and employment. Under the current agricultural zoning system, they explained, a farmer submitting a land use application to develop on-farm housing bears the burden of proof to substantiate the need for farmworker housing for their operation.

The complexity of concerns related to on-farm housing was also touched upon during focus groups with farmworkers living at a Washington County labor camp. Many farmworkers in these focus groups made it clear that they were living outside of town because they felt they had no other option. Several participants reported that labor camp housing was all that they could afford because apartments in the city were too expensive without reliable and steady employment.

Some of the participants appreciated aspects of living in a rural environment, including being close to nature and away from the “density.” Some explained they preferred to live near agricultural areas because it was near agricultural-related employment. One respondent said, “I would feel more dignified living in the community [in town], but I am here to work, so I do what I have to do.”

Labor camp focus group participants validated concerns about proximity to services. In particular, several women expressed a desire for better transportation options in order to make trips to the grocery store or run errands, such as public transportation or greater car access. About half of the participants reported that their households have cars, but different work schedules often make it challenging to share rides with others needing to get to work or run errands. Lack of transportation was also cited as a barrier for getting to potential jobs. Several community development professionals suggested that a nonprofit or other group could operate an occasional shuttle service in rural areas to assist farmworkers living on labor camps, much like the school bus provides transportation for students.

“I would feel more dignified living  
in the community, but I am here  
to work, so I do what I have to do.”

- One labor camp resident, when asked about  
whether he would prefer to live in town.

Farmers expressed mixed feelings about on-farm housing. Some wished there existed a functioning guest worker program and that they could provide quality housing on their farm for such employees. At least one farmer cited numerous obstacles in the land use regulations and approval process that made it extremely difficult to build or substantially renovate on-farm housing. Several farmers mentioned that having on-farm housing was an asset that helped them to recruit workers. However, another farmer explained that maintaining farmworker housing can be a challenge, “I tried farmworker housing years ago and it didn’t work. It’s a terribly complicated issue. These people don’t have respect for peoples’ property and then I have to pay for repairs and get fined for it.”

## LAND USE REGULATIONS

As mentioned in relation to on-farm housing limitations, land use experts explained that farmworker housing is treated as an accessory dwelling under the current state and county level zoning system. In previous years, “seasonal farmworker housing” was a specific conditional use allowed in agricultural zones, but housing for farmworkers is now considered under the broader “accessory farm dwellings” category. One land use planner believed that this would likely make it more difficult to win land use approval for on-farm housing units.

Land use regulations also dictate the proximity of services and uses near agricultural areas. For example, Washington County does not designate rural centers because they would rather put the land to agricultural use. Rural centers provide a limited lot of commercial uses providing goods and services to the surrounding rural area. Other largely agricultural counties such as Clackamas County have designated rural centers.

In urban areas, housing professionals also expressed difficulties working within the land use regulations and approval process to build farmworker housing properties. Because such developments often require a conditional use approval under the zoning code, housing developers described how they often must engage in a long, costly land use application process which typically includes opportunities for public comments that all too frequently express strong opposition for the projects based on discriminatory motives.

## HOMEOWNERSHIP

Housing experts in Washington County agreed that homeownership is unattainable for most farmworkers. Even sweat equity programs require mortgage payments that are challenging for farmworkers given unreliable employment. However, focus group participants did dream of owning a home, this was especially true for participants who participated in Adelante Mujeres programs. In fact, while most focus group participants live in market rate apartments several participants at Adelante Mujeres were already homeowners. A younger participant at the labor camp expressed her opinion that having a home was the American dream for her and other farmworkers as well, and she thought the dream of homeownership was part of the reason why her parents and others came to this country.

## BROADER NEED FOR HOUSING SUBSIDIES

Service providers around the county highlighted the need for increased funding to expand humane housing and support services to serve a larger percentage of the farmworker population. Participants in the nonprofit focus groups also expressed the need to broaden services available for those who fell just outside of the formal farmworker definitions but shared similar housing and economic challenges. The vast majority of this group does not earn a substantial portion of their income from farmwork and therefore do not qualify for farmworker housing. In addition many are undocumented so they do not qualify for other housing subsidies. They expressed a certain amount of confusion over why farmworkers were given so much help and other people with similar backgrounds could not get assistance.



Focus group participants had a variety of backgrounds and were eager to share their perspectives.

*Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



# VOICES ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

## BARRIERS TO ECONOMIC SUCCESS

Farmworkers from all of the focus groups spoke of English language skills as being critical in accessing greater economic opportunities. Achieving fluency felt much more attainable for those who participated in Adelante Mujeres programs. Labor camp participants placed much of their hope on their children's ability to succeed. One respondent said that he dreams his children will not suffer as he had all his life doing difficult work and living in poverty. Several mentioned that if their situations were more secure with regards to legal status and employment, they would feel more motivated to invest in themselves and in the community by expanding their skills, such as English language ability. They explained that language and documentation were major barriers for advancement in employment and entrepreneurship. One respondent said he knew professionals who were trained in business, carpentry, and medicine in Mexico but who had no option other than farmwork in the U.S.

## ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE OF FARMWORKERS

Many farmers interviewed highlighted the importance of farmworkers to the local agricultural industry. One farmer said, "If you don't have farmworkers, you don't have any production. They are vital to agriculture." They also reported that the majority of farmworkers that they worked with were Latino immigrants and that many were undocumented. Several growers expressed their preference for a guest worker program that they believed would ensure a supply of available, legally documented workers.

Many farmworker focus group participants also recognized the importance of their contribution to the agricultural industry. One man expressed a sense of pride in bringing fruits and vegetables to market and putting food on peoples' tables. He also expressed his disappointment in people's disregard and/or lack of awareness of farmworkers' important role in the food industry. Some farmworkers explained that while farmwork was hard and that they felt unappreciated and underpaid, they enjoyed the sense of freedom of working outside in the fresh air.

"If you don't have farmworkers,  
you don't have any production.  
They are vital to agriculture."

- Farmer

## LAND USE

Several farmers and land use experts pointed out the influence of land use regulations on the viability of agricultural operations. Many farmers interviewed believed that zoning in agricultural areas for “exclusive farm use” (EFU) and the urban growth boundary, both hallmarks of Oregon’s statewide land planning system, have made farmland expensive and unaffordable. In turn, this has reduced the profit margins earned from producing agricultural goods. The majority of farmers interviewed believed that land use regulations are important for the preservation of farmland but preferred a balanced approach. They complain that the regulations are too restrictive, and described the need to revise land use laws to allow for innovation in order to earn a profit in creative ways that could also sustain and support local agriculture. Many farmers also felt that land use laws should be more flexible to encourage entrepreneurship. Several farmers believed that the law should redefine what constitutes “agricultural use.” Many find permitting rules expensive and restrictive. It is difficult to get an outhouse built let alone farmworker housing.

Land use experts interviewed reinforced farmer’s sentiments on land use regulations. Some said that EFU zones are focused on farmland protection not farming or farmer protection. They explained that this stems from the statewide Land Use Goal 3, which is very prescriptive and is often criticized for its limitations. However, many land use experts deemed the state’s land use system as far superior to what other states do, pointing out that the loss of farmland in Oregon is a fraction of what happens in other states. Land use experts recognized that the state is good at protecting farmland for land conservation reasons but should focus on promoting the economic viability of farming as well. Other states are seen as doing a better job of protecting farmland from an economic development angle to encourage farmers to plant crops for local consumption. Although land use experts wanted to encourage more opportunities for farmers, they were very reluctant to discuss decreasing the minimum 80-acre parcel size for EFU lands, citing trends towards increasing parcelization and the development of rural “estates” on smaller parcels rather than the creation of small farms.



Washington County has over 1,000 farms.  
*Photo credit: Peter Prehn*

## LOCAL FOOD MOVEMENT

One opportunity for the agricultural industry is the local food movement. The majority of farmers saw promise in the “buy local” movement. They project future trends will include sales to local grocery stores and farmers markets as opposed to large processors, and noted that there is more control over the pricing of products when you sell local. One farmer explained that 85% of what they grow is sold to farmers markets or grocery stores. She said, “We’re getting .35 cents a pound for strawberries from processors but can sell them at farmer’s markets for \$1 per pound.” Some believed that certifications for locally produced foods could promote the viability of local agriculture. Other economic development and agricultural industry professionals also expressed that there is an unmet demand in the Portland metropolitan region for local and sustainable food. These professionals also felt that the key to tapping demand was to make local products more accessible for consumers, either at the grocery store or neighborhood farmers’ markets.

Several farmers saw the local food movement as a contrast to globalization. Most of the farmers interviewed explained that local farming had suffered negative effects from globalization. Many believe it is difficult to compete with the international market because labor laws and land use regulations are less stringent abroad. One farmer cited the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) for the shift away from local agriculture. He explained, “We’ve been feeding people from foreign countries. City people ride by on their bicycles or drive by in their Toyota Priuses with their stickers that say ‘buy local,’ but they haven’t a clue and want to see farms but no Mexicans.” Farmers believed there is a need to educate the local population about the realities of today’s agricultural industry.



“City people ride by on their bicycles or drive by in their Toyota Priuses with their stickers that say ‘buy local,’ but they haven’t a clue and want to see farms but no Mexicans.”

- Farmer

Farmer's markets can provide an important market for new Latino farmers.

*Photo credit: Peter Prehn*

## AGRICULTURAL MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

Several farmers interviewed reported that they had experienced greater success with direct marketing than wholesaling. Farmers have pursued a number of direct market outlets including community supported agricultural (CSAs) where members purchase a share of the farm's produce at the beginning of the season, farmers' markets, and direct sales to grocery stores or food service providers. The director of the Hillsboro Farmers' Market shared that they have attracted significant community interest in their markets that is helping them to expand and open a new market this year. As part of their agricultural skills training program, Adelante Mujeres also coordinates a successful farmers' market in Forest Grove that markets produce grown by Latino participants, many of them former farmworkers.

Economic development experts interviewed offered creative strategies of bolstering the local food movement. One professional recommended an "agricultural collaborative", a six-county regional brand of local food. It would involve four groups working together: a non-profit who could market, brand and sell products; a for-profit aggregator who could help build trust among farmer community; a large-scale distributor; and small local farmers who would grow products and remain independent vendors. Creating a local food brand and or label would help farmers receive premium pricing for local goods and increase consumer accessibility of local foods in grocery stores not just through farmers markets or CSAs. As a whole, the developer of the model believed it could promote the economic viability of farming throughout the Willamette Valley.



Adelante Mujeres' Microenterprise program is an empowering tool for the Latino community in Washington County.

*Photo credit: Adelante Mujeres*



## LAND ACCESS

Farmers acknowledged that there is an aging population of farmers, and many cited disinterest or barriers to farming for younger generations. The cost to purchase land, especially the larger 80-acre parcels created under EFU zoning, is one of the biggest obstacles for prospective farmers. One farmer joked that traditionally the two routes into farming were to inherit or marry in. Financing for the purchase of land is limited. Land values are high but revenue generated from crops, particularly commodity crops, is low. Therefore, it would be difficult to show projected cash flows and profit margins that are positive based on the existing market. However, land use planning professionals explained that there are many small parcels available in Washington County and the Portland region, which should be more affordable to beginning farmers but are often purchased by wealthy urbanites looking for the “agricultural lifestyle” but with no intentions of farming. Such competition keeps prices high even for small parcels.

## FARMWORKERS AS FUTURE FOOD GROWERS

Despite the rigors of farming, some farmworker respondents expressed interest in growing food to sell or eat. All of the men interviewed at Adelante Mujeres were participating in Adelante Agricultura through which they are building long-term skills. Many of them aspired to own their own farm. Lack of access to land was seen as a major barrier for farmworkers who were interested in growing and selling their own vegetables. Economic development and agricultural industry professionals also acknowledged that access to land was a major barrier as was raising capital and effectively marketing products.

## MENTORSHIP

The idea of offering mentorship programs for prospective farmers was mixed. Of those interviewed, some expressed no interest from an economic standpoint, while others saw it as a valuable option for larger agricultural operations. One farmer already had a partnership with area schools and offered job shadowing and summer internships to students interested in the agricultural industry. The same farm also has a continuing program to promote farmworkers from within, and has brought educators out to the farm to teach English and financial literacy. One professional shared two examples of occasions where long term farmworkers who had worked with the farmer over many years have taken over farms when the farmers retired.

## VALUE ADDED

Some of the farmworker focus group participants expressed interest in cooking or processing items to be sold at various venues. Many women at the labor camp already engage in food preparation to generate extra income. Because there are many single men in the camp, the women can prepare foods like tamales and tortas and sell them. There was interest in forming some sort of cooperative umbrella group to share resources, like a community commercial kitchen. They identified a need to borrow money to get the enterprise started. Most of the women at Adelante Mujeres were also interested in value-added food production and echoed the need for a community commercial kitchen. Professional interviews also highlighted the profitability of value-added food products, in fact one interviewee stated that value-added models, CSAs, hoop houses, and niche markets were the only way to be profitable in the agricultural industry.



The Latino community has a variety of skills that they can capitalize on to start new businesses and increase their livelihoods.

*Photo credit: © Kristen Finn 2010*

## BEYOND AGRICULTURE

In addition to economic opportunities in agriculture, many farmworkers expressed a desire to work in completely different industries. Some economic development professionals desired to see more opportunities for farmworkers to engage in “green collar” jobs. Green jobs are seen as being in demand and they potentially offer greater benefits and income to workers. In turn, training and work experience in green jobs such as habitat restoration, weatherization, and landscaping offer skills that can be transferable into other jobs and even entrepreneurial endeavors.





# SCENARIOS

To respond to the diversity of needs and opportunities expressed by stakeholders, this report explores a range of housing and economic scenarios. The scenarios are intended to provide a set of models, some of which are already in place in Washington County, that can be further developed to provide improved housing and economic opportunities for the farmworker population.

Each scenario draws on successful models both locally and nationally, and attempts to synthesize the best aspects of existing work into a model that would best respond to Washington County conditions and needs of the farmworker population. Each scenario includes a discussion of the main benefits and challenges associated with it, particularly within the local context. Context matters for success, and a special combination of conditions, partners, and in some cases, policy shifts would be required for some scenarios to succeed.

### What are the scenarios?

The seven scenarios are models to provide improved housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers in Washington County. Each scenario targets the needs and interests of a certain group within the larger population; taken together they aim to respond to some of the most salient concerns and ideas emerging from stakeholders.

Each scenario includes:

- Description of the scenario
- Current application locally
- Relevant local and national models
- Related benefits and challenges

The scenarios presented in this section are designed to respond to some of the most salient concerns and ideas of stakeholders that emerged from the outreach phase of this work. The most important finding was that there is no “one size fits all” model that can improve opportunities for all farmworkers in Washington County because of the diversity of needs, interests and skills within the farmworker population. Even at the individual family level, needs

and interests change over time as families grow, explore new skills, and try new job opportunities. Therefore, each of the scenarios aims to best meet the needs of a significant subset of the population. For example, the homeownership scenario presents a range of ideas for helping families who want to settle in the community and build assets, but would not be appropriate for migrant individuals or families.

## EVALUATING THE SCENARIOS

Each scenario is evaluated in light of a set of criteria developed in consultation with expert stakeholders during a workshop to refine the scenarios. Two separate sets of specific criteria were developed for the housing and economic opportunity scenarios. These criteria form a baseline for success that all scenarios were held to. Additionally, the criteria are a stand-alone tool that can be used to evaluate potential housing models not included in this report that similarly aim to expand housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers.

The seven scenarios are not intended as alternatives, and thus are not ranked in any order. Rather, they are intended as a suite of options to help improve the lives of farmworkers. It is important to note that these scenarios are not mutually exclusive, and especially in the case of housing options, can be seen as more of a continuum to meet some of the most pressing needs across the farmworker population. The scenarios are not comprehensive, however, and cannot meet the needs and interests of every farmworker in Washington County. The scenarios are designed to work in tandem with the broader set of recommendations included in the Recommendations, which aim to fill in some of those gaps not addressed by these scenarios.

# HOUSING SCENARIOS

The goal of this section is to identify potential housing models that might serve as inspirations to Washington County in addressing farmworkers' housing needs. There is currently a very large gap between the housing available for farmworkers and their needs for housing. As documented in Section 2, there is an unmet housing need for approximately 10,400 – 11,400 beds for farmworkers and their family members in Washington County. Quality, affordable housing units can currently only accommodate 1,400 farmworker residents. In addition to some farmworkers housed in generally poor conditions in on-farm labor camps, the vast majority of farmworkers in the county must find their own ad hoc accommodations affordable on a very low salary.

Scenarios identified here to help meet the diverse housing needs within the farmworker community and experienced by individuals over time include:

1. *Urban-based Nonprofit Housing*  
*Developments:* Subsidized multi-family housing developments in urban areas that incorporate on-site services targeted to meet residents needs, such as ESL classes and childcare, and provide good access to a full range of services within the community.
2. *Healthy Housing in Rural Areas:*  
Re-imagined housing in rural areas near agricultural job opportunities that is not linked in any way to employers, with access to transportation and services.
3. *Home Ownership Assistance for Families:*  
Models that make homeownership affordable for families with low incomes who are looking to establish roots and build assets in the community.

## 4. *Vouchers and Demand-Side Housing Assistance:*

Tools that provide assistance with housing costs to allow farmworkers to seek housing on the open market within the broader community.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following housing criteria were developed as minimum thresholds for successful housing options; there is no relative importance of the criteria and appropriate scenarios should fulfill all criteria, which include:

### **Access to Services and Transportation:**

Farmworker housing should be accessible to transit and other amenities such as shopping, schools, hospitals, etc.

**Affordable for Farmworkers:** Housing should be affordable for families making an average of \$10,000 to \$16,000, or the average wages of the intended residents if targeting a particular segment within the farmworker community. Keeping housing affordable will likely require subsidies for residents. Securing funding for operating costs is an important component of long-term, successful housing models.

**Community Support:** Residents should not feel isolated either from members of their own community or from the broader community.

**Culturally Appropriate Housing:** The developer should take into consideration the housing preferences of the farmworker population, both functional and aesthetic. For example, many farmworkers live with extended families so having additional bedrooms to accommodate larger families may be desired. Other cultural preferences may include ground-floor entrances, colorful walls, central space

for community gatherings, and community gardens.

**Humane, Quality Housing:** The same standards that apply to conventional multi-family housing should apply to farmworker housing, including standards of construction, building materials, accessibility, indoor air quality and overall durability of the structure. Housing should be “normal” housing where anyone would be happy to live.

**Land Use Regulations:** All housing developments should be allowed under local land use regulations.

**No Formal Tie to Employment:** Housing should not be operated and/or managed by employers or in any way tied to farmworkers’ place of employment, to avoid employers’ abuse or the appearance of abuse of farmworkers.



Bienestar provides 254 dedicated farmworker units throughout Washington County. *Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



FHDC offers quality housing for farmworkers. Featured here is Nuevo Amanecer in Woodburn, Oregon (FHDC). *Photo credit: Tierra Planning*



The Tierra Nueva Farmworker Housing offers a community center that seeks to integrate the farmworker housing development into the community.

*Photo credit: Colorado Rural Housing Development Corporation*

# SCENARIO

## 1

## Urban-based Nonprofit Housing Development

High-quality new or rehabilitated housing is the most visible form of non-profit developed farmworker housing in Washington County. This model provides apartments or homes in urban areas at subsidized rates for farmworkers, often integrating services such as education and healthcare. These developments are located close to services and amenities, but often farther away from agricultural job opportunities, which can present transportation challenges. Dedicated farmworker housing also creates a community of people with similar backgrounds who can support each other.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

Bienestar, profiled below, is the sole developer of dedicated farmworker housing developments in the county, housing 254 farmworker families.

### MODELS

**Bienestar** – Bienestar is a non-profit developer that has provided safe, quality, and affordable housing for farmworkers and other low-income families in Washington County for nearly three decades. Bienestar manages ten properties in five cities with a total of 458 affordable apartments, about half are reserved for farmworkers and the other half for low-income residents, who are 99% Latinos. Bienestar offers various social services including computer classes, youth programs, ESL classes, GED classes, financial literacy programs, and homeownership counseling to its residents.  
<http://bienestar-or.org>

**Farmworker Housing Development Corporation** FHDC is a nonprofit organization that provides and manages 190 units of affordable housing for low-income farmworkers and their families in the mid-Willamette Valley in Oregon. FHDC complements its housing with educational and leadership programs and community centers for its residents. The

majority of FHDC's housing portfolio includes rental apartments but in 2004 they sold six homes to farmworker families at below market rates.

<http://www.fhdc.org/>

**Colorado Rural Housing Development Corporation's Integration of a Community Center** This new farmworker community in Center, CO revolves around a community restaurant where farm workers and townspeople can eat together and get to know each other. In addition, there is a migrant Head-start center on site providing education to families both onsite and offsite.

<http://www.nw.org/Network/neighborworksprogs/rural/documents/CenterColorado-CRHDC.pdf>

### BENEFITS

- Focus group discussion indicates that there is continued demand for this type of high-quality, low-cost housing for farmworkers.
- Community integration and service provision
- Living with other farmworkers promotes a sense of community and strengthens cultural identity, with greater opportunities to share resources such as transportation, cooking, or childcare.
- Green building and modular techniques could decrease costs.

### CHALLENGES

- NIMBY opposition in some communities
- High land costs & development costs
- Financing and tax credits becoming more competitive
- No financing available for resident services such as ESL. Instead, nonprofit housing developers raise money for resident services.
- Distance from agricultural job centers may introduce transportation challenges.
- It can be difficult for would-be residents to meet different definitions of "farmworker" to be eligible.



# SCENARIO

## 2 Healthy Housing in Rural Areas

To break with patterns of farmworker exploitation, the most essential characteristic of this model is that there be no links, formal or informal, between housing and employment. Housing in rural areas would provide single or multifamily units for farmworkers that would exceed current OSHA agricultural labor housing standards. Housing could be managed and potentially built as a partnership between a nonprofit and a farmer. Living in rural areas near agricultural employment opportunities could reduce commuting distances and challenges in accessing transportation.

This alternative looks at reimagining the possibilities for rural housing in agricultural areas to correct the abuses of traditional on-farm housing. Current labor camps in Washington County do not provide a viable on-farm housing opportunity because of generally poor living conditions in the camps.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

There are no current models of quality housing for farmworkers in rural areas in Washington County. The only rural housing currently available is in on-farm labor camps, which do not meet the basic evaluation criteria for farmworker housing opportunities. In 2009, there were ten state-registered camps in Washington County, with capacity for 1,034 farmworkers. Registered camps must meet minimum standards for living conditions. There are also unregistered camps including those that have fallen out of compliance and camps that have never been registered.

### MODEL

**Farmworker Housing Pilot Project** (Skagit Valley, WA) – Spearheaded by the Washington Farmworker Housing Trust, the Farmworker Housing Pilot Project is based around the dovetailing of two goals: quality, community-oriented on-farm housing and high-efficiency, sustainable development. Using modular structures and a collaborative partnership with a Seattle-based architect and two enthusiastic local farmers, they are able to keep the cost per bed down to between \$13,000 per bed (“light green” model) and \$22,000 per bed (“bright green model” - net zero with complete solarization).

[http://mithun.com/projects/project\\_detail/farm\\_worker\\_housing/](http://mithun.com/projects/project_detail/farm_worker_housing/)



The Farmworker Housing Pilot Project in Skagit Valley, Washington seeks to dovetail environmental sustainability and housing affordability. Photo credit: Mithun Architects



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Living near employment opportunities could improve job access, decrease commute times and the need for personal transportation, although it would depend on seasonal crops and labor demand at nearby farms
- Healthy, supportive housing would deepen appreciation for the land and connection to the agricultural lifestyle
- Offers opportunities to combine and co-locate with agricultural mentorship or skill-building programs

## CHALLENGES

- Housing that is tied to employment can lead to abuses of workers by employers, and should be avoided.
- This model is subject to local land use regulations. In Washington County, housing on-farm is not lawfully permitted unless the farmer can substantiate a need for labor on the farm. There are very few other parcels zoned for residential development in rural areas because of the prevailing state-wide interest of preventing the loss of farmland to urban sprawl.
- It is difficult to find farm owners who will undertake risk, given that land use regulations require them to initiate the housing development.
- Infrastructure such as water and sewer lines may be non-existent or in poor condition.
- May limit farmworkers' perception of work and living opportunities available.
- Potential for isolating farmworkers from broader society, making them invisible and fueling community fear and stereotypes.



The 60-bed River Ranch Farmworker Housing Center in St. Helena, California is owned and managed by the Napa Valley Housing Authority.

*Photo credit: CHDCorp, Brandenburger Taylor, Lombardo, LLP Architects,*



Owned and operated by the Washington Growers League, the Sage Bluff seasonal farmworker housing project houses 270 seasonal farmworkers every year.

*Photo credit: Grower's League*

# SCENARIO

## 3

## Home Ownership Assistance for Families

As farmworker communities become more established, there is an increasing desire among farmworkers to build assets. Models to assist farmworkers transitioning into home ownership run the gamut from Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to community land trusts, housing cooperatives, and sweat-equity programs. For farmworkers who have established their home in Washington County, homeownership may be a way to build wealth within a historically vulnerable community.

IDAs are matched savings accounts that help low-income households save and build assets. IDAs often help finance the purchase of a first home, pay for higher education, or help start a small business. IDAs commonly have 3:1 matched saving ratios and a cap amount.

Community land trusts are a shared equity model for qualifying low-income individuals and their families. Often a nonprofit acquires property and legally establishes it as a land trust. The nonprofit owns the land but the physical structures are sold to qualifying low-income individuals and families. Often homeowners have a long-term lease of the land on which their property is located within the trust. Homeowners who sell their homes must sell at an affordable price and to a qualifying low-income buyer to ensure that the housing remains affordable for another generation.

Sweat-equity ownership models, similar to Habitat for Humanity programs, allow families and individuals to put forth their own labor for the construction of homes in exchange for generous financing, including no down payment or 0% interest mortgages.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

There are few, if any, programs that explicitly promote homeownership among farmworkers in Washington County. Adelante Mujeres has an IDA program for its program participants. There are no community land trusts in Washington County. The county has explored this model with Proud Ground, a nonprofit organization located in Portland, Oregon, that provides affordable homeownership opportunities. Willamette West, a Habitat for Humanity affiliate, is located in Hillsboro and has built 60 homes since 1988 for low-income residents from the broader Washington County community.

### MODELS

#### California Farmworker Housing Cooperative

After nearly 30 years, there are 11 farmworker housing cooperatives operating in California. Cooperatives can fill the need between rental housing and homeownership due to lower share purchase costs, easier financial qualification standards and a higher density design. California's cooperative developments have different funding sources, equity structures and occupational restrictions. Nevertheless, they all give farmworkers an opportunity to collectively own and democratically operate their own housing.

*Rancho Sespe Cooperative Housing:*

<http://www.designadvisor.org/gallery/rancho.html>

#### Self-Help Enterprises (San Joaquin Valley, CA)

SHE allows a farmworker family to exchange 1,300 hours of labor building homes for down-payment assistance toward the purchase of their own home. On average, SHE helps 100 families obtain homeownership a year.

<http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org>

## OPPORTUNITIES

- The majority of Americans hold their wealth in their homes, and communities who have been unable to obtain homeownership lack this sense of security.
- Homeownership has been correlated to an increased sense of self worth, increased connection to neighborhoods, and greater achievement of children.
- Given that the farmworker population in Washington County is increasingly settled and includes a large number of families, homeownership may be appropriate for a growing segment of the farmworker population.
- Homeownership assistance may be one option for families who have established themselves in the area and are transitioning out of dedicated farmworker housing but still need support to obtain quality, affordable housing.
- Homeownership assistance would help fulfill the dreams of many farmworkers to own their own homes.

## CHALLENGES

- Many farmworkers face numerous difficulties qualifying for a mortgage because of documentation issues, credit history and unverifiable, intermittent employment.
- Mortgage payment schedule are particularly risky because of low wages and seasonal unemployment outside of the growing season.
- Underwriting loans
- Need for deep subsidies to make mortgage payments affordable for farmworkers earning very low wages.
- Many farmworkers are not settled well enough to invest in a long-term, fixed housing situation.
- Being tied down to a property decreases workers' mobility to pursue job opportunities in a traditionally mobile employment.



Sweat equity programs can help many Latino families achieve their dream of owning a home.

*Photo credit: Housing California*



Rancho Sespe Housing Cooperative, a 100 unit development in Ventura County, California, community is owned by the farmworkers' nonprofit corporation.

*Photo credit: Design Advisor*



Habitat for Humanity programs build homes for low-income families.

*Photo credit: Brandon Cirillo*



# SCENARIO

## 4

## Vouchers and Housing Assistance

Affordable housing policy has largely evolved from public housing projects to more demand-side programs offering vouchers. Such programs help people with low incomes afford decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the private market by subsidizing the cost of housing. Since housing assistance is provided on behalf of the family or individual, participants are able to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses and apartments.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

Few farmworkers are currently accessing housing assistance administered by the county, mainly because of eligibility concerns related to documentation. Low-income residents of Washington County are eligible for subsidized housing vouchers, however professionals estimate there is about a three-year waiting list to receive assistance. The local nonprofit Community Action does have limited funding for emergency rental assistance to help families stay in their homes, or to help homeless families obtain affordable housing. Families must be at or below 60% of Area Medium Income to qualify and due to the limited resources available not all eligible families will necessarily receive assistance.

### MODELS

**Housing Choice Vouchers** – Qualified applicants are issued a Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher that allows them to rent from any private landlord who cooperates with the Department of Human Services (DHS). Vouchers are portable nationwide. The tenant's portion of the rent is roughly 30% of their adjusted monthly income. Section 8 applications require a social security number for all those living in the housing, which is a significant barrier for many farmworker families.

<http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/>

**Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) of Washington State** – OIC provides rental assistance vouchers to seasonal farmworkers that need financial assistance to secure private market rental housing. Priority is given to farmworkers who are currently homeless or living in unsafe or overcrowded conditions. Funding can be used for first and last month's rent and monthly rental payment but not for security deposits and other fees. Families are only eligible for up to six months of assistance.

<http://www.yvoic.org/>

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Would give farmworkers broader choice of the housing units that best meet their needs related to size, location and unit type.
- Vouchers could bridge the affordability gap for those who are not eligible to be placed in nonprofit-provided farmworker housing based on the “farmworker” definition.
- A voucher program could give farmworkers more freedom and could help farmworker families to integrate into the greater community.
- The county has experience administering a voucher program and could expand the current Section 8 program or create a dedicated farmworkers voucher program with more funding.

## CHALLENGES

- Few if any farmworkers in Washington County are now utilizing housing vouchers due to an undersupply of vouchers, fear of government, and documentation requirements.
- Currently a very long wait for assistance.
- Providing services such as ESL classes and health care for a dispersed population is more difficult than integrating services into clustered farmworker populations.
- Can disrupt farmworker communities and networks.
- Sufficient market rate units may not exist for very low-income farmworker families.



Housing vouchers would assist families in obtaining market rate housing in Washington County. *Photo credit: Jeff Reed*



Housing vouchers could provide a way to bridge housing demand and housing supply by offering assistance to families who may not qualify for dedicated farmworker housing.

*Photo credit: Margaret Nea*

# ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY SCENARIOS

The majority of the farmworker population faces a series of challenges that hinder their economic opportunities and make it difficult to break out of the cycle of low incomes. The estimated annual household income for farmworker families in Washington County is \$10,000 - \$16,000, at or near the poverty level and far below what a family needs to meet their basic needs. The majority of farmworkers interviewed for this project were willing to work as hard as necessary in any job, as they already do in farm labor, and tap into their existing skills and entrepreneurial instincts to improve their families' well-being. However, farmworkers face many obstacles including limited support services, limited access to those services that exist, transportation, limited English language ability and a lack of cultural familiarity, all of which impede their socioeconomic advancement.

The three scenarios presented by no mean offer the full range of opportunities that could be realized by the farmworker population of Washington County. Particularly in the entrepreneurial arena where creativity is the norm, enterprising individuals will continue to

expand and seize upon previously unconsidered ideas. These models are intended to respond to the particular conditions and opportunities in Washington County, and include:

*Farmworkers as Future Farmers:* Designed to help interested farmworkers move into farm operations and ownership with programs to support skills development, access to land and capital, and marketing assistance.

*Farmworkers in Support Industries: Skill-building Models:* Recognizing that not everyone wants to be a farmer, this model targets skill development for support industries like accounting, making deliveries, and translation that would be applicable within the agricultural sector and beyond.

*Business Development and Value-added Models:* Designed to develop small business skills for farmworkers starting microenterprises, which may center around value-added food production such as local jams or tamales.

The economic opportunity scenarios focus on opportunities in the agricultural sector, which advance the position of farmworkers from cheap labor to entrepreneur or skilled employee. Yet, barring technological advancement or extreme unforeseen events, there will continue to be farm laborers in Washington County. Underlying all of the economic opportunity scenarios should be an effort to improve conditions for those who continue to work in the planting, cultivating and harvesting of Oregon's crops. Although the scenarios presented here do not respond directly to concerns about working conditions for farmworkers who remain in farm work, these concerns are addressed in the Recommendations.

## To Farm or Not to Farm

Farmwork is dangerous, difficult and disrespected, and many farmworkers view it as a stepping stone to future opportunities and may desire to leave the fields for good. Farming is labor-, land- and capital-intensive, and, as many farmers will attest, often only marginally profitable.

Despite these challenges, this report focuses on expanding economic opportunities in the agricultural sector, recognizing that many skills gained could be transferrable to other fields. Two compelling trends in the agricultural sector that point to possible opportunities for higher income and increasing responsibility for farmworkers are the strength of the local food movement in the Portland metropolitan area and the state-wide trend of aging farmers.



## EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria for economic opportunity scenarios were developed as minimum thresholds for successful scenarios; there is no relative importance of the criteria and appropriate scenarios should fulfill all criteria, which include:

**Accessible:** Programs should meet participants at their skill level, providing necessary education and training for them to advance. Programs should provide comfortable, welcoming spaces for participants to grow.

**Culturally Appropriate:** Programs should respond to cultural preferences of participants. For example, farmworkers expressed greater interest in cooperative models than competitive models.

**Empowerment:** Programs should empower participants to make choices about the direction of their lives. Participants should gain skills and knowledge that strengthens the farmworker community by building social capital, trust, and self-confidence.

**Expand opportunities:** Programs should build capacity and skills that provide opportunities for leadership and advancement within chosen fields as well as flexibility to move between fields.

**Foster independence:** Programs should be designed to increase skills and responsibilities of participants that help participants take on increasing levels of independence. Two nonprofits engaged in similar training programs stressed the importance of eventual “graduation” from the program, which allows successful graduates to transition out of the program and into independent positions, and

allows the program to serve more participants.

**Improve economic conditions:** Programs should improve incomes and future economic opportunities for farmworkers.

**Market Appropriate:** Programs should prepare participants for work and business opportunities that align with market demands and have strong future economic prospects.

## ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE SCENARIOS

In forming economic opportunity scenarios there are certain assumptions about the farmworker population. Farmworkers in Washington County are believed to be overwhelmingly Latino, often with limited English ability, and frequently immigrants. These assumptions were validated by five focus groups with farmworkers, discussions with local service providers and city and county planners. There is also the assumption that the Washington County farmworker population is interested in entrepreneurship and economic advancement. This assumption was again substantiated during focus groups when participants frequently expressed a desire to improve skills particularly English language skills. Many relayed an interest in a variety of entrepreneurial activities including farmers markets, and value added food production.



## Farmworkers as Future Farmers: Mentorship and Marketing Assistance Models

Farmworkers are well positioned to take advantage of expanding opportunities in the agricultural sector created by an aging workforce and the strong local food movement. Farmworkers have expressed a desire to build skills in order to gain responsibility and better wages, as well as entrepreneurial opportunities. This provides a potentially profitable alternative to the increasingly unprofitable commodity crop business, where Oregon farmers struggle to compete in an unpredictable international market.

There are three components of helping farmworkers become food-growing farmers: developing skills, accessing land and capital, and marketing their crops.

*Skills Development: Training & Mentorship*  
Essentially, the goal of these programs is to make capable farmworkers into capable farm-owners. The role of a nonprofit intermediary is to connect the two: producers and consumers, in ways that serve all interests. Farmworkers could capitalize on the local food market niche through participation in training programs that confer skills in everything from effective sustainable growing practices to business management and land acquisition.

### *Accessing Land and Capital: Land Trusts and Cooperatives*

Agricultural land trusts and cooperatives aim to decrease costs associated with starting a farm. The purchase of land is typically the largest investment farmers must make, and can be prohibitively expensive, particularly for traditionally low-income farmworkers..

### *Marketing Assistance: Co-ops & Regional Agricultural Collaboratives*

Direct marketing opportunities for new farmers include farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), and relationships with moderate-volume buyers (restaurants, mid-sized institutions such as schools, catering companies, and specialty shops).

Building off these practices, a regional collaborative model would bring Willamette Valley farmers together to form a local label and establish a distribution network. A non-profit intermediary in charge of marketing and aggregating would make it feasible for large-volume buyers to purchase and sell branded local food. Increasing awareness of where food comes from can lead consumers to consider how it is produced: the people who plant, grow and harvest their food. Fair labor certification would add value to these products because it would raise the standard of living for farmworkers and small farmers alike. While it may be many years in the making, this model offers farmers benefits of scale, predictable demand, and access to large markets that individual farmers simply cannot reach, and offers consumers convenient access to local food at prices comparable or lower than direct marketing.

## CURRENT APPLICATION

Nonprofits serving farmworkers in Washington County are providing skills training. However, the potential for mentorship programs could be increased. Finally, the Portland market has a strong latent demand for direct sales of local food that, with consumer education, could also encompass demand for fair labor practices.

## MODELS

### **Programa Educativo para Pequeños Agricultores (PEPA)** (Monterey, CA) – A small farmer education program of The Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA).

PEPA began in 1985 and combines free classroom training in agronomy, organic farming practices and business management with practical field work actually raising a market crop. Upon completion, students can opt to farm a small parcel from the organization's Rural Development Center (RDC) for up to three years in order to gain experience in the agricultural industry. At RDC, farm equipment is available to all on a cooperative basis, and there are classes that pertain to finances, record-keeping and organic certification processes. The program averages 15 graduates a year.

<http://www.albafarmers.org>

### The Asociacion Mercado Organica (AMO)

**Co-op** (Hollister, CA) – Comprised of 11 RDC graduates from the ALBA Organics program, AMO leases 60 acres near the town of Hollister, CA.

There, each farmer tends about five acres and grows organic vegetables to sell jointly, under the AMO label, at a premium. They share a new tractor and will soon own a refrigerated delivery truck.

<http://www.sare.org/publications/limited-resource/profile6.htm>

### The New Immigrant Agriculture Project

(Minneapolis, MN) – The New Immigrant Agriculture Project of the Minnesota Food Association (MFA) includes hands-on agricultural training and farm business management curriculum. In 2004, MFA launched a 250-acre Agricultural Training Center and CSA, as a place to provide a full array of education and training opportunities for new immigrants interested in agriculture as a career.

<http://www.mnfoodassociation.org>

**Farms for Farmers** (Turner, MA) – Equity Trust, Inc. is a non-profit organization that has adapted the community land trust model for farmers. Since aspiring and current farmers are being priced out of the market for land, they seek to preserve the affordability of land to promote locally produced agriculture. There is a 99-year long-term lease. A community land trust or conservation land trust holds the fee interest in the property. The farmer owns the improvements and physical structures such as a farmhouse. The lease often has stipulations that vary on a case-by-case basis but are often intended to require the farmer to give back to the community. On average, 40% of a farmer's household income needs to be derived from farming activity on the land. Other individualized lease restrictions may limit what one should grow. <http://www.equitytrust.org>

**Red Tomato** (Canton, MA) – Red Tomato bridges the space between non-profit sustainable agriculture and the marketplace. They coordinate a network of produce farmers across New England, managing distribution and marketing, and supply sustainable local produce to supermarkets, coops, distributors and other institutional buyers.

<http://www.redtomato.org>

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong local sustainable food movement in Portland area; latent demand for CSA shares and local produce.
- Farmworkers' desire for skills, self-employment, better wages, job security.
- Food security for farmworkers and their families.
- A generation of current farmers near retirement.

## CHALLENGES

- Farming is a difficult industry to break into. These models require either a permanent support network for farmers or clear routes to independence (access to capital and business skills).
- Access to affordable peri-urban land to rent or purchase.
- Gap in consumer awareness of labor conditions. With education, demand for "fair trade" or "farmworker friendly" farm products will grow.



Participants of Adelante Agricultura program learn how to run their own farm.

Photo Credit: Adelante Mujeres

# SCENARIO

## 6

## Farmworkers in Support Industries: Skill-building Models

Not every farmworker dreams of owning a farm, and many have skills that go beyond farmwork that they can capitalize on. This model provides farmworkers with skills and training to prepare them to support the agricultural industry, or to branch out into other industries. Advancement and opportunities within the agricultural industry could include jobs related to transportation and logistics, marketing, accounting, and translation. Related industries such as landscaping and environmental remediation require laborers and may offer more opportunities for advancement and higher initial wages.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

There are programs in Washington County as well as in the Portland metropolitan region that offer skills training in both the agricultural industry and other industries. Despite their hard work, there is still an unmet need.

### MODELS

**Adelante Mujeres** (Forest Grove, OR) – This program offers a small business development program through which aspiring entrepreneurs are given support and guidance in creating environmentally sustainable, and profitable small businesses.

<http://www.adelantemujeres.org>

**Verde** (Portland, OR) – Verde offers job skills training for work in green industries. Verde hires low income individuals, currently all are Latino, pays them living wages with benefits, offers free classroom and on the job training, and offers its employees a chance to start a small business. Verde specializes in sustainable landscaping and nursery products and will soon start a weatherization program.

<http://www.verdenw.org/>

**Centro Cultural** (Cornelius, OR) – Centro Cultural is an important facet of Latino culture in Washington County and provides education and empowerment programs such as English as a Second Language, Spanish Literacy, Computer Technology, Cultural Values, Leadership Training and community organizing, Information and Referral.

<http://centrocultural.org>



English language classes can provide valuable skills for Latinos interested in expanding their opportunities. Photo Credit: PCPC Missions



## OPPORTUNITIES

- Farmworkers in Washington County have limited economic opportunities and a great desire to do meaningful work. Building upon existing agricultural skills offers farmworkers an opportunity to move into higher paying jobs either within or outside the industry.
- Based on an Ecotrust feasibility study conducted for Verde the market for many green sustainable industries and jobs is growing favorably or even rapidly in the Portland area.
- Farmworkers already have many of the skills needed for entry level landscaping, construction of storm water facilities, or sustainable construction. Building upon skill sets provides an opportunity for farmworkers to create a livelihood that is not as physically taxing, this is especially important as people age.
- Policy mandates for on-site storm water treatment, sustainable landscaping, and weatherization in the county and region could help to promote greatly needed green jobs that are specifically targeted to low income disadvantaged communities.

## CHALLENGES

- While many farmworkers have the desire to receive increased training there are limited organizational resources to provide such training.
- Political pressure from community leaders and organizations will be needed to promote policies that mandate green jobs.



There are many support services needed for the agricultural industry, including transportation. *Photo Credit: ©Kristen Finn 2010*



Training in technology skills can open many doors for farmworkers interested in moving out of fieldwork. *Photo Credit: Adelante Mujeres*



Verde offers skill-building in green industries with living wages and benefits. *Photo Credit: Verde*

# SCENARIO

## 7

## Business Development and Value-added Models

In this model, farmworkers would start their own businesses that add value to local food products. These micro-economic development businesses could capitalize on farmworker ideas and skills while meeting the increased regional demand for local food.

One model that has been utilized around the country is an incubator that provides access to a commercial kitchen connected with curriculum about business management and technical and marketing assistance for new business owners. For example, there is demand among food entrepreneurs for low-cost access to community-based commercial kitchens. Without access to a kitchen, micro-economic development operations must cook out of their homes as they get started, and then must live in fear of being caught, fined and possibly shut down before they can truly get their business started.

### CURRENT APPLICATION

Entrepreneurial models have appeared in the Portland region that have promoted homemade value-added products that can be marketed to a broader population. Though Adelante Mujeres provides entrepreneurial support and technical assistance to the Latino population, arguably there is additional unmet need for those in Washington County.

### MODELS

**La Cocina** (San Francisco, CA) – provides commercial kitchen space and technical assistance to low-income entrepreneurs who are launching, growing and formalizing food businesses. La Cocina primarily serve women from communities of color and immigrant communities. Over 30 businesses share kitchen space at La Cocina; 22 are enrolled in an incubation program.

<http://www.lacocinasf.org/about-la-cocina/>

**Adelante Mujeres Adelante Empresas Program** (Forest Grove, OR) – This small business development program assists aspiring Latino entrepreneurs to overcome societal barriers and develop the skills necessary to start successful small businesses. Program components include start-up support, individual development accounts, communication training and facilities, marketing assistance, networking, mentoring, access to alternative capital, and training on environmentally sustainable business practices.

<http://www.adelantemujeres.org/Adelante-Empresas>

**Centro Cultural** (Cornelius, OR) – Centro Cultural provides a community kitchen that could be expanded to become a kitchen incubator.

<http://www.centrocultural.org>

**MicroMercantes Program** (Portland, OR) – A program of Hacienda Community Development Corporation, it pairs women living in their housing developments to produce and market tamales. MicroMercantes now sells tamales and beverages at nine farmers markets in the metro area. Each tamale vendor's annual income has increased by at least 20 percent due to participation in the program. Beyond the immediate income gains, MicroMercantes' vendors gain entrepreneurial experience that provides a path for upward mobility.

<http://www.haciendacdc.org/Programs/Microenterprise>



MicroMercantes provides low-income entrepreneurs with the opportunity to expand their skills and increase their incomes. Photo credit: Hacienda CDC



**Despierta! Hillsboro (Hillsboro, OR)** – A free monthly bilingual networking event aimed at minority business owners and run by the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce. The goal is to showcase and encourage local Latino businesses and bring together those who want to connect with the Latino community. The Chamber also provides funding for new minority businesses. The current effort is making the Latino population aware that these support programs exist.

<http://www.hillchamber.org/programs-events>



A community kitchen could serve as a kitchen incubator for micro-businesses in Washington County.

Photo credit: ©Kristen Finn 2010



Photo credit: MicroMercantes

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Increasing demand for local ready-to-eat or preserved food products.
- With a growing Latino population, there will also be a growing market for local products that fill market niches, from custom wedding cakes using local berries to specialty peppers to tamales using local meat and vegetables.
- Non-farmworker family members could see diversification of their income and increased monthly income from value-added marketing.
- Many successful kitchen incubators keep costs down by owning their buildings, operating in rural areas, or renting sub prime properties.

## CHALLENGES

- Cost of health certification (ServSafe, etc.), state license, and liability insurance can be a barrier to access.
- The food industry has a notoriously high cost of entry that discourage new food entrepreneurs.
- Fees for licensed and insured commercial kitchen space.
- Start-up costs to open a restaurant.
- Standards set to compete for shelf space at specialty stores and large retailers.
- Overcrowding and competition in the marketplace.
- Community kitchens have high operating costs.
- For-profit kitchens typically stay in business by charging higher fees than non-profit kitchens. Some have developed labels and product lines to supplement rental fee income.
- Nonprofit kitchens often need long-term supporting grants or aggressive marketing plans to stay in business.





# RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving the living situation for farmworkers in Washington County will require simultaneous actions from many stakeholder groups. The following four goals and accompanying strategies aim to improve housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers. The goals provide guidance for County staff, planners, service providers, and nonprofits in employing a range of strategies to improve opportunities for farmworkers, without suggesting one specific model or solution.

The strategies vary in their level of complexity and challenges for implementation. Some strategies entail massive educational and advocacy campaigns directed at shifting social perceptions, while others are less complex and could be implemented immediately. If realized, these goals would greatly improve the lives of farmworkers and their families in Washington County.

# GOAL

## 1

### Expand awareness of and respect for farmworkers

Given the great importance of the work farmworkers perform and the often abysmal conditions they face, food consumers, service providers, employers and elected officials should be aware of farmworker living conditions and should work to improve them. The following strategies will help to actualize this goal.

Local food systems organizations, farmworker advocacy groups, and other interested parties should:

- Combine forces to educate the broader community about farmworker issues;
- Inform farmers about farmworker labor rights and cultural issues through diversity training;
- Conduct outreach to consumers and growers about the benefits of fair-labor certification for their products, which would function similarly to organic certification. One existing model that could serve as a starting point is certification by Food Alliance, which incorporates fair-labor practices to raise wages and improve working conditions for farmworkers at participating farms;
- Provide labor rights informational sessions for farmworkers;
- Develop curriculum for fair-labor practices and social justice in high school and college agricultural programs;
- Explore fair-labor certification for nursery crops;

Government agencies should:

- Perform updated enumeration study of the farmworker population to better inform future planning efforts.

## Improve baseline living conditions and expand the spectrum of housing opportunities

Farmworkers have a range of housing needs. Some have recently arrived in Washington County and may find on-farm employer provided housing to be their only option. Others who have been in the state or the county for many years and have settled permanently may be interested in purchasing a home. The following are recommendations that could improve housing conditions overall and at specific stages in the housing continuum.

Housing Developers should:

- Explore low-cost methods of farmworker housing development currently in use in other states, such as high-efficiency design, modular buildings, cooperative models, sweat-equity finance, etc.;
- Formally recognize that future housing for farmworkers should break tie between farmworker housing and farmworker employers;
- Increase support for households transitioning out of exclusively farmworker housing into more mainstream housing as their incomes increase, recognizing that they still have low incomes and need specific, relevant support services.

Washington County should:

- Cooperate with state-level enumeration and planning efforts by the Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team;
- Improve farmworkers' awareness of available housing options;
- Advocate for a spectrum of affordable housing programs and types for farmworkers based on their financial stability and family dynamic;
- Spearhead an effort to improve living conditions in existing on-farm labor camps by increasing monitoring and enforcement of OSHA standards;
- Research the feasibility of providing transportation service for farmworkers without cars in rural areas who need to access services;
- Explore options to develop a community land trust.

The State of Oregon should:

- Spearhead an effort to improve living conditions in existing on-farm labor camps by increasing monitoring and enforcement of OSHA standards.



## Expand economic opportunities

Farm labor is often not a choice but a last resort for workers who have significant barriers in accessing other employment options. However, farmworkers often have skills and experience they can capitalize on to move into positions of higher responsibility, pay and even entrepreneurial ventures. The following are recommendations to expand economic opportunities for farmworkers within the agricultural industry; many could also expand opportunities in other industries.

Government agencies and nonprofit micro-economic development organizations should:

- Encourage alternative models for new farmers to access land to farm such as cooperative land ownership; market-based small plot leasing, community land trusts, easements, etc.;
- Develop a culturally appropriate network, similar to the iFarm Oregon Program to connect new and resource-poor farmers with experienced farmers to share land, capital, and knowledge. To alleviate computer literacy barriers, the program could be paper-based or a staff person could help those farmers and farmworkers in need of computer assistance enter information into a database.

Organizations that work with farmworker and Latino entrepreneurs should:

- Identify culturally sensitive models for economic development that build self esteem and empower Latinos;
- Identify market opportunities for goods and services that build social capital among the Latino community, expanding on work done by Ecotrust for Hacienda/Verde (eg. Latino farmers market, small business incubator spaces);
- Identify space for kitchen incubator targeted to Latino food start-ups - Centro Cultural's community kitchen could be a viable starting point;
- Enhance local relationships between training programs and professional mentors. Engage the Latino Chamber of Commerce to attract local business owners who are Latino and/or previously came from a farmworker household to serve as mentors;
- Build upon existing resources to empower and assist start-up businesses in their first few years;
- Celebrate and promote success stories; budding entrepreneurs need not only the means to succeed but also examples of success that they can identify with to show what is possible.

# GOAL

## 4

### **Increase communication among farmers, service providers, and government agencies**

Close collaboration between various agencies allows for more effective outreach and provision of services. Farmers who employ farmworkers however often have weak connections with service providers or government agencies. Engaging farmers in any advocacy process is key in improving conditions and broadening opportunities for farmworkers. Therefore, the following strategies are aimed at increasing connections between these groups.

- Involve farmworkers directly in the planning process;
- A neutral party should align the multiple definitions of ‘farmworker’ by various regulatory agencies to make it easier for farmworkers to qualify for services;
- Washington County should establish working relationships based on mutual interests of improving farmworker opportunities among farmers, service providers, and government agencies;
- Service providers should engage in outreach to farmers to recruit them as partners in connecting farmworkers to available services;
- Farmworker housing providers working in various counties across the state should collaborate to share successful strategies and explore partnerships for future housing developments. The Statewide Facilitation Team may provide a forum to begin the conversation.

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Harvesting Opportunity: A Strategic Vision for  
Farmworker Housing and Economic Opportunities  
in Washington County, Oregon.

June 2010



# APPENDIX

## LIST OF APPENDICES

- A. Glossary
- B. Project Timeline
- C. Relevant Plans, Programs, and Initiatives
- D. Maps
- E. Stakeholder Involvement Methodology & Findings
- F. Subgroup Research Memos
- G. Team Member Biographies

# A. GLOSSARY

*Affordable Housing* - housing for which the financial cost does not threaten other basic needs and represents a reasonable proportion of an individual's overall income, often this is set at 30% of income.

*American Community Survey (ACS)* - An on-going, random sampling survey conducted by the US Census Bureau to approximately 250,000 households per month across the country. Results are averaged in three-year terms to provide demographic data on a more frequent basis than the 10-year Census. However, due to limited sampling and lower responses, the margin for error for ACS data is relatively high.

*CHDO* - Community Housing Development Organization under HOME. 15 percent of the HOME funds allocated to every PJ (a participating jurisdiction - city, County, multi-jurisdictional consortium, or state) are set aside for projects developed by CHDOs. The 15 percent CHDO set aside is Congress's explicit effort to direct HOME program funds into the hands of nonprofit developers.

*Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* - Annual grants distributed by the U.S. Department of Housing and Development to larger urban areas and counties to improve housing, general livability, and economic development opportunities for minority and low- and moderate-income populations. Washington County is a designated geographic area to receive CDBG funds. Projects within the County are prioritized for funding through the use of the Washington County Consolidated Plan.

*Community Land Trust* - A model for affordable housing and community development of which operates as a sovereign nonprofit entity that acquires parcels of land and sells the building- or development-rights to specific populations. By selling only the building or development rights and then offering long-term leases on the land, the owner does not pay full-land cost and is able to attain homeownership at a more affordable price.

*Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)* - A direct-to-consumer model for smaller

farms to sell "shares" of a season's produce. Typically a small farm maintains a membership of shareholders who receive a regular (often weekly) share of the farm's production.

*Exclusive Farm Use Zone (EFU)* - A county zoning designation as required and regulated by Oregon's statewide planning program that strictly limits development on rural parcels to maintain agricultural use.

*Farmworker* - "any person who, for an agreed remuneration or rate of pay, performs temporary labor for another in the production of farm products or in the planting, cultivating or harvesting of seasonal agricultural crops or in the forestation or reforestation of lands, including but not limited to the planting, transplanting, tubing, precommercial thinning and thinning of trees and seedlings, the clearing, piling and disposal of brush and slash and other related activities."

*Migrant farmworker* - meets the same definition as farmworker but "establishes for the purposes of such employment a temporary abode." (U.S. Code, Public Health Services Act, "Migrant Health")

*Seasonal Farmworker* - "An individual whose principal employment [51% of time] is in agriculture on a seasonal basis, who has been so employed within the last twenty-four months." Seasonal might mean that you go from Christmas trees in the fall to vineyards to harvesting.

*FHDC* - Farmworker Housing Development Corporation

*Goal 3* - Oregon statewide planning goal titled 'Agricultural lands' which states that agricultural lands shall be preserved and maintained for farm use, consistent with existing and future needs for agricultural products, forest and open space and with the state's agricultural land use policy expressed in ORS 215.243 and 215.700.

*Humane Housing* - Housing that conforms to basic standards with regard to security of tenure, availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure, affordability, habitability,

accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.

*Illegal Immigrant* – A non-citizen who has entered the United States without government permission or stayed beyond the termination date of a visa.

*Individual Development Account (IDA)* - Matched savings accounts that help low-income households save and build assets. IDAs often help finance the purchase of a first home, pay for higher education, or help start a small business. IDAs commonly have a 3:1 matched savings ratio and a cap amount.

*Labor Camp* – A poor type of housing provided by an employer or another person who provides living shelter typically to workers. In Oregon labor camps are supposed to be registered with OSHA to ensure a minimal level of adequacy however many remain in operation that are not in compliance.

*Market Rate Housing* - Housing units that are constructed without government subsidy for construction costs and are offered at the prevailing market price without assistance for low-income families.

*Microenterprise* - Small businesses, often started by entrepreneurs, which often lack access to financing from commercial banks. Instead, these enterprises utilize small non-traditional loans.

*NIMBY (Not In My Backyard, or NIMBYism)* - An expression used to describe negative feelings by community members who oppose the placement of a development near their homes and often effectively hold up construction/development.

*NAWS* - National Agricultural Workers Survey, a nationwide, random survey that obtained information directly from 6,472 farm workers in 2001 and 2002.

*OSHA* - Occupational Safety and Health Administration

*OHDC* - Oregon Human Development Corporation

*Permitted use (or allowed use)* - A type of land use that is allowed outright in a given jurisdiction and does not require additional conditions of approval otherwise written into the jurisdiction's zoning and development code.

*PCUN* - Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste, or Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United

*Self Sufficiency Standard* - An index developed by the University of Washington to measure how much income is needed for a family of certain composition in a given geography to adequately meet its basic needs without public and private assistance.

*Subsidized Units* - Monthly housing costs are subsidized by federal, state or other entities. The subsidy often covers the portion of rent above 30% of household income.

*Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)* - Regional boundary managed by Metro, the Portland metropolitan-region's regional planning agency, which is meant to limit growth. Land within the UGB is considered urban and is subject to urban development zoning, while land outside of the UGB is designated resource lands (forest land, farm land, and very limited rural development).

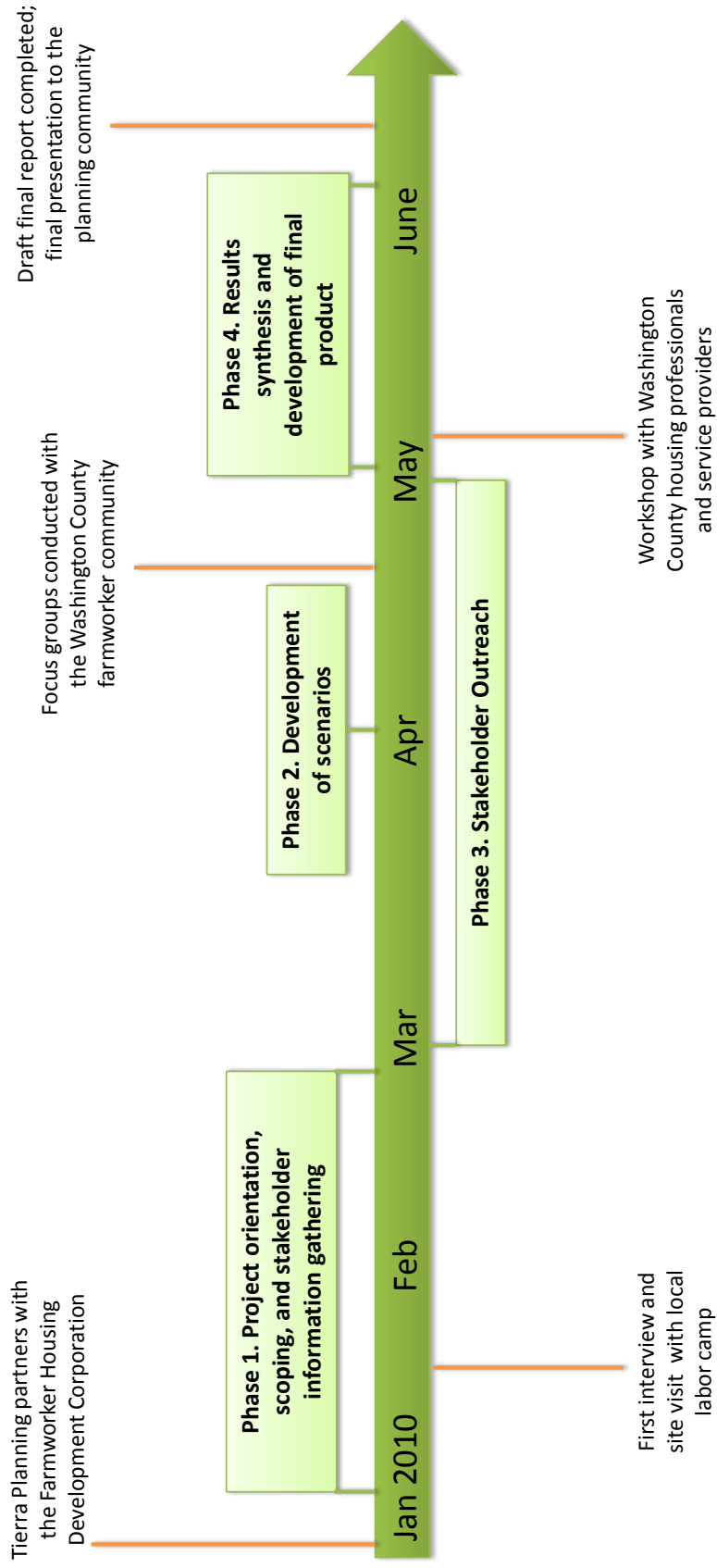
*USDA Rural Development* - An agency with the United States Department of Agriculture that runs programs intended to improve the economy and quality of life in rural America.

*Value-added model* - A model of small-scale production related to an existing industry to increase the value of a household or person's existing work. Value-added models include a household who processes agricultural products such as jam, honey, etc. and sells the products as a form of additional income.

*Vouchers (also, Housing Subsidies)*- Considered public housing assistance, typically in the form of Housing Choice Voucher Program (also known as Section 8 within the HUD) Voucher, to help low-income families rent within the private housing market. Vouchers are portable nationwide and are so that the tenant's portion of the rent is roughly 30% of their adjusted monthly income.



# B. PROJECT TIMELINE



# C. RELEVANT PLANS, PROGRAMS, INITIATIVES

## STATEWIDE

### Oregon Statewide Land Use Planning Program

The Oregon Legislature enacted a comprehensive statewide planning program in 1973 with the premise of conserving prime resource lands, namely agricultural and forest land, while simultaneously directing growth into concentrated urban areas. The foundation to the statewide program is a set of nineteen goals by which local and county governments are required to comply with and actively plan to achieve every goal<sup>[1]</sup>

Goal 3 of the statewide establishes a priority “to preserve and maintain agricultural lands.” Largely this has been achieved with the designation of EFU zoning, large-lot agricultural zoning with a minimum size of 80 or 160 acres, west or east of the Cascades, respectively. Originally there were six allowed uses on EFU lands designed to support agricultural activities and rural communities, but there are now over 50 allowed uses, divided into outright permitted uses and conditional uses. <sup>[2]</sup> Allowed uses are intended to meet the needs of rural communities, originally including educational, religious, and recreational uses, utility services, and meeting places for the rural community, and have expanded to include everything from destination resorts to greyhound kennels and biofuels processing. Uses are defined at the state level, and LCDC continues to refine the uses allowed and any conditions associated with such uses. Following the *Brentmar v. Jackson County* decision, no additional conditions can be placed on allowed uses at the county level; counties must implement the EFU zoning code as written by the state.

### 2001 House Bill 3171 and 3172

The passage of the State of Oregon House Bills (HB) 3171 and 3172 during the regular legislative session of 2001 officially deemed “[t]he availability of affordable, decent, safe and sanitary housing opportunities for persons of lower, middle and fixed income, including housing for (seasonal and year-round) farmworkers, is a matter of statewide concern”<sup>[3]</sup>. Two key provisions within these two bills include: Formation of the Statewide Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team tasked with facilitating discussions between state, regional, and local governments as well as non-profits and service providers who have a stake in Farmworker housing. Housing all statewide matters of Farmworker housing within the Housing and Community Services Department as a central hub of information and funding resources

The Facilitation Team experienced an unfortunate lapse in operation; however the group was reconvened in late 2009 and has been meeting regularly since with current tasks which includes redefining the term “Farmworker” for all agencies within Oregon and developing an enumeration study in the hopes of determining the true need for Farmworker housing within in the state.<sup>[4]</sup>

## REGIONAL

### **Metro and the Urban Growth Boundary**

The Portland metropolitan's unique regional government body, Metro, manages the urban growth boundary (UGB) required by Oregon's statewide land use program to effectively direct development and growth within an urban, political boundary. In essence, UGBs are the flip side of EFU zoning: UGBs draw a line beyond which urban development is not allowed, permitting that land to be zoned for agricultural and rural use. By law, Metro must reexamine the extent of the UGB every five years to ensure that it contains sufficient land to accommodate the projected residential and industrial growth projected for the next 20 years. [5]

Metro has recently pioneered a longer-term approach to plan for regional growth with the designation of Urban and Rural Reserves. With county input, Metro has identified areas best suited for growth and inclusion in the UGB over the next 40 years, when and if expansion is necessary, and significant resource lands, including farms and forests, to be protected from growth in Rural Reserves.

### **Washington County**

#### **Washington County Consolidated Plan 2010-2015**

Published by Washington County's Department of Community Development, this five-year strategic plan serves as the update requirement for receiving funds from the federal agency Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The most recent Washington County Consolidated Plan (2010-2015) identifies the Farmworker population as a "special needs" population in regards to underserved affordable housing. A key component to the plan is the annual Action Plan to be completed by the County that outlines specific programs and actions to receive funding for the upcoming year. The frequent need to update and create annual Action Plans, in tandem with the explicit acknowledgment of Farmworkers in Washington County being an under-served population with great need in regards to housing, provides a potential opportunity for the Farmworker rights community in Washington County to advocate for federal funds.

#### **Washington County Comprehensive Plan (1980)**

Although nearly 30 years old at the time the Harvesting Opportunities report was written, the Washington County Comprehensive Plan provides insight into the County's stance on lack of housing and potential for farm labor-related housing in rural communities as early as 1980. The Comprehensive Plan is made up of a "Comprehensive Framework Plan for Urban Area", a "Rural/Natural Resource Plan Element", and numerous community plans, service area plans, and public infrastructure plans. While the specific community plans addressing every incorporated jurisdiction within the County were not analyzed at the time of this report, the "Framework Plan for Urban Areas", which specifically guide development in unincorporated areas in Washington County that are inside the regional Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), highlights the need for affordable housing projects that provide unmet needs for under-served communities, specifically focusing on federal community development funding which coincidentally is the main funding stream for the current Washington County Consolidated

Plan 2010-2015. Also interesting to note is the “Rural/Natural Resource Plan Element” policy sections that refer to housing within the unincorporated areas outside of the UGB as strictly housing that directly relate to agricultural-serving activities and/or promoting the local agricultural sector. Within this rural component of the plan, housing for the labor of the agricultural sector is made explicit as a possible future need that will have to be addressed by means of the community planning code.

### **Plan to End Homelessness, 2008-2018, Washington County**

Sponsored by Washington County but compiled and written by an extensive network of working groups made up of local government officials, policy writers, and key staff within agencies, service providers, and nonprofit organizations, the Plan to End Homelessness for Washington County is closely allied with the recently completed Washington County Consolidated Plan 2010-2015. This particular plan identifies homelessness as a function of a complex socio-economic concern which requires a systemic analysis to ensure that Washington County residents are less likely to become homeless and are able to shorten any experience of homelessness. With the exception of a small statement within the report of qualitative data, the Farmworker community was left out of the analysis; however, the report’s emphasis on a holistic and systemic response to homelessness has the potential to bring valuable resources and programming to all underserved populations within Washington County.

### **Farmworker Leaders Group, Washington County**

An informal, ad-hoc group of Farmworker leaders meet regularly within Washington County, with group lead by the executive director of Washington County’s primary Farmworker housing development corporation, Bienestar. The group is comprised of staff of support agencies and organizations, government staff, and attorneys. Recently, the work of the Farmworker Leaders Group has sought to promote the work of Farmworker rights and advocacy locally through Portland-area print media as well as provide support to the statewide Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team.

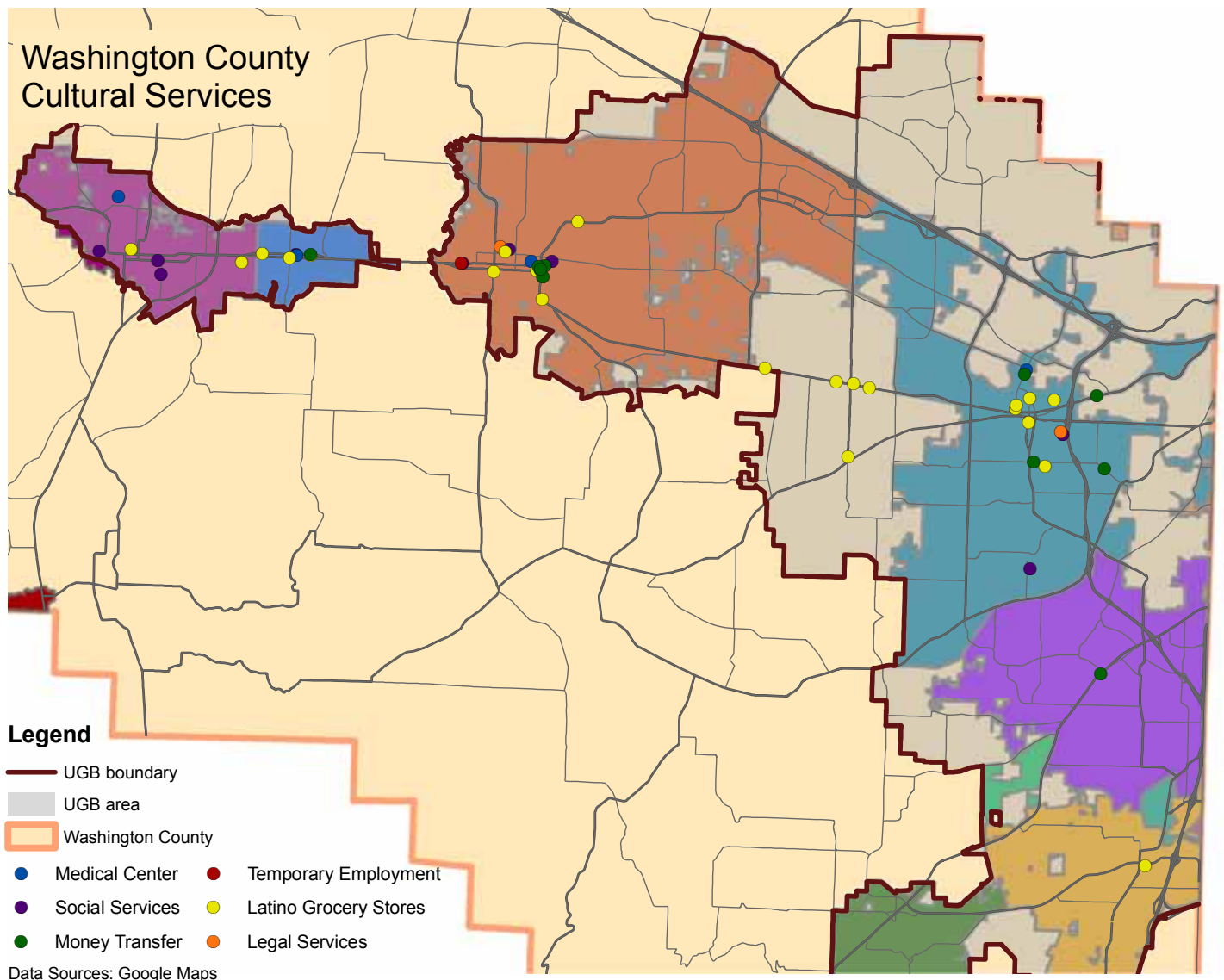
### **Washington County Housing Advocacy Group**

With the goal of promoting the availability of affordable housing throughout the Washington County area, the Washington County Housing Advocacy Group (HAG) meets monthly with local policy makers and other collaborative housing advocacy groups to educate the public on the need for affordable housing.

#### **Endnotes:**

- [1] Department of Land Conservation and Development, State of Oregon, “Oregon’s Statewide Planning Goals & Guidelines”, March 2010.
- [2] Sullivan, Edward and Ronald Eber. (2008-2009). The Long and Winding Road: Farmland Protection in Oregon 1961 – 2009. San Joaquin Agricultural Law Review. Vol 18, No 1.
- [3] Oregon House Bill 3171 (2001)
- [4] Farmworker Housing Facilitation Team, Meeting Minutes for March 18, 2010
- [5] Metro, <http://www.oregonmetro.gov>

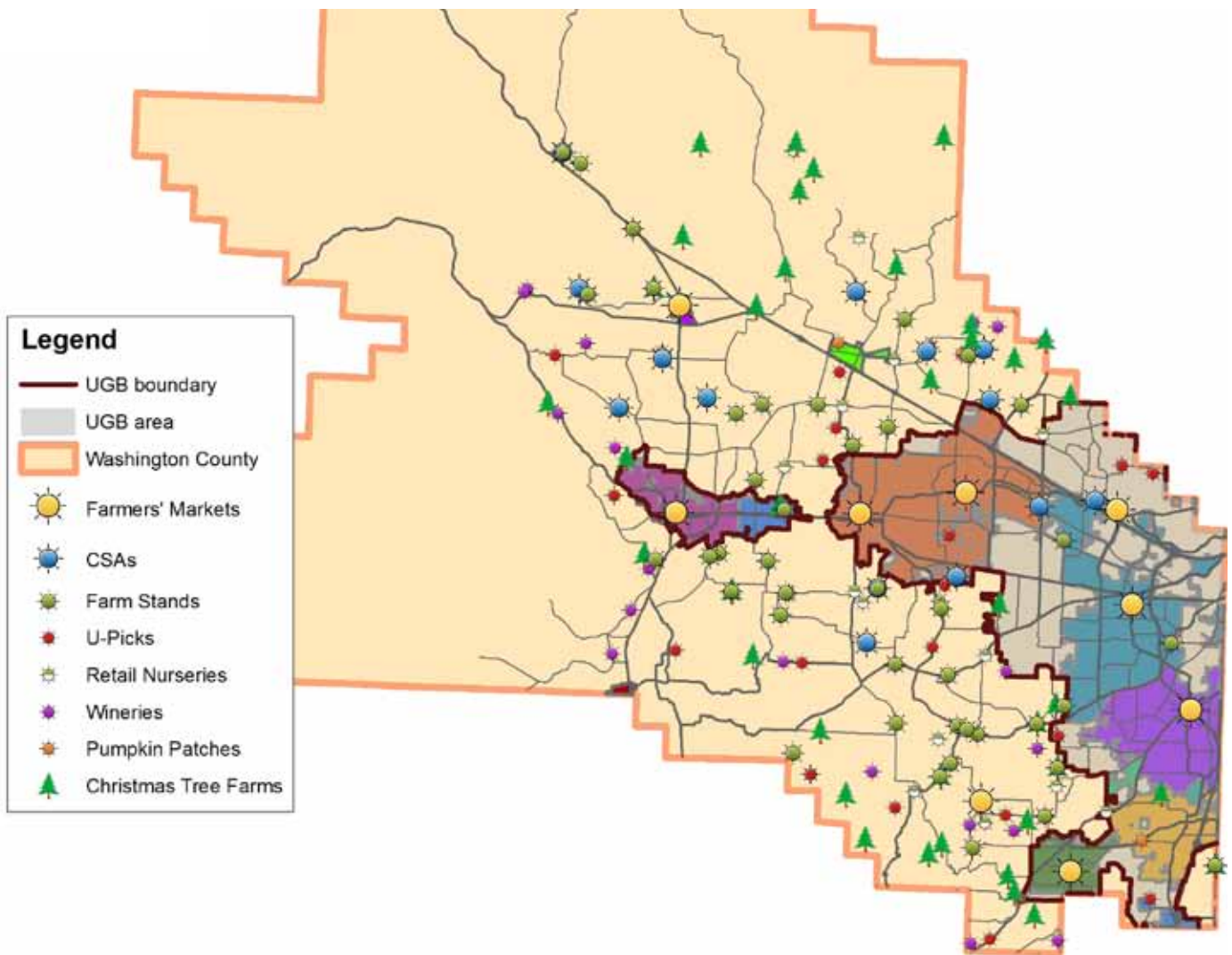
## D. MAPS



**Figure A-1: Washington County Cultural Services**

Building off the Opportunity Maps completed as part of the Washington County 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan, this map identifies cultural services heavily utilized by the farmworker and Latino communities. The opportunity mapping process identifies a range of services that are vital for daily living, from health care providers to quality schools, and maps access to these services to determine the best locations to locate low-income housing. Given the unique needs and preferences of the farmworker and Latino populations, an additional consideration in the housing siting process is access to culturally relevant services.





**Figure A-2: Washington County Agri-Economic Activity**

Farmers in Washington County pursue a variety of economic avenues to make agricultural operations profitable, including setting up farm stands to directly market their goods to the public. The majority are located in rural areas on the farm properties themselves, although some farmers have also sought out direct marketing opportunities in cities through farmers' markets or other venues. Farm stands are sometimes as simple as a shed, while others offer are large retail spaces offering a selection of local produce, crafts and souvenirs. Beyond traditional farms, income-generating activities on agricultural properties run the gamut from Christmas tree farms to wineries. Mapping agri-economic activity gives a sense of both the breadth of activities taking place and their geographic distribution.

# E. STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

Tierra Planning approached public engagement efforts from three broad stakeholder groups. Initially, professionals with knowledge related to land use, micro-economic development, and housing were targeted for personal interviews and later were invited to a workshop. Washington County growers and farm owners were targeted for phone interviews. Most importantly, Washington County farmworkers were approached to participate in focus groups.

## PROFESSIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

The project team conducted extensive secondary research in land use, economic development and housing. With a baseline of research Tierra Planning interviewed professionals involved in some capacity with the three research areas, in particular professionals working with the farmworker population of Washington County were targeted. The breadth of professional stakeholder interviews was by no means exhaustive and as a result certain ideas and possibilities were likely lost. Some potentially informative interviews were not conducted for a variety of reasons including a lack of responsiveness, time constraints and simple ignorance of the project team. In total, fifteen in-depth interviews occurred over the first period of the project time line. Questions varied for each interview given the interviewees' expertise and involvement with the farmworker population in Washington County. Key findings from those interviews are outlined below.

## HOUSING

### Finance:

Through interviews Tierra planning learned that Washington County agencies are collaborative; there is recognition that agencies need each other to be effective and accordingly they consider who is best for a particular job and avoid duplicating efforts or misplacing limited funding. Housing professionals in Washington County explained that there are a variety of funding sources for farmworker developments but that resources are extremely limited and specific conditions of funding sometimes are not aligned with community needs. Affordable housing in Washington County can be funded with the following: HOME investment Partnerships Program, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs), HUD 202/811, State programs like Tax Credit Assistance Program and tax-exempt bonds programs, Housing Authority bonds, Project-Based Section 8 vouchers, and USDA Rural Development financing. Yet funding for housing is scarce, Washington County office of community development gets a limited amount of money (~30-50K) from HUD to spend on Community Development Corporations. USDA rural development funding is also a scarce resource, and housing developers must compete for the funding. Given the economic climate, Low Income Housing Tax Credits are now largely unobtainable for small developers because investors are not willing to buy the credits. In addition, most grants and funding sources require very specific focuses that can detract from broader community needs.

### Conditions in Washington County:

Through interviews Tierra planning learned that there is a long history of farmworkers and farmworker housing in Washington County. However, Washington County does not have an accurate recent count of the farmworker population. In addition there is not a streamlined

definition of farmworkers that further complicates tracking the group. Several interviewees mentioned that there are some indications that workers in the agricultural industry are becoming less migratory and as a result are looking to become more integrated into the communities of Washington County. Some members of this group of more established farmworkers would likely benefit from general affordable housing rather than farmworker specific housing.

Hillsboro was described as having an employment/housing mismatch: the jobs that are available and growing are low wage. To afford a two bedroom-housing unit in Washington County requires \$15/hr in full time employment, many full time employees are making far less. Farmworkers do not make the minimum salary needed to afford housing and are therefore in need of assistance. There has been some opposition from the general public to developing housing that is purely for farmworkers, farmers however are believed to support farmworker housing projects. Changing immigration laws also tend to affect the demand for farmworker housing.

## LAND USE REGULATIONS

### On-farm Housing:

In order to be approved for on-farm housing farmers or land owners must demonstrate the need for farmworker housing for the viability of their agricultural operation. However, if on-farm farmworker housing is pre-existing to that regulation then it exists as a non-conforming use and the landowner could improve the housing without demonstrating a need for agricultural laborers. This stipulation would allow non-profit organizations to manage on-farm housing that is not tied to employment. Non-conforming uses can theoretically go on forever, but usually the landowner will need a permit of some sort. To get a permit the landowner would need to be found compatible with existing regulations.

At the state level, the term “farmworker housing” is not used - such housing is considered “accessory farm dwellings”. The key to this phrasing is that it implies in order to build an accessory farm dwelling; an existing dwelling must already be on the property. Washington County also uses the term accessory dwelling rather than farmworker housing when placed on a farm. The most recent farmworker housing developments in rural Washington County was about 10 years ago, it included 30-40 mobile manufactured homes with bunks. OSHA has its own standards unrelated to land use regulations for farmworker housing.

### Allowances on Farm:

From the state land use perspective every new idea for allowances in farm zones must be weighed against preservation with the knowledge that some land owners will try to find loop holes which threaten farmland. Many interviewees highlighted that Oregon stands out for its farmland protection that has been far more effective than other states, but Oregon farmland is still vulnerable as shown by measure 37. The state would be interested in new ideas for farmland such as micro-enterprise opportunities and mentorship programs for farmworkers but problems arise when land becomes parceled and housing is built.

### Viability of Farming:

Farming is an important part of Oregon’s economy and many would like it to remain robust: farming totals 10% of the state’s output, while forests total 11%. Many professionals would agree that as a state Oregon has fairly successfully preserved land, but has been less successful in preserving farming activity. Exclusive Farm Use zones which came out of state wide planning goal 3 are focused

on farm LAND protection, not farming or farmer protection. One criticism is that EFU zones do not allow small enough parcels for beginning farmers. However, land use professionals explained that there are in fact many separate, small, legal parcels near Portland, including in Washington County.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Farming:

Professionals frequently stated that there is an unmet demand for local food in the Portland Metropolitan Region and consequently opportunities exist in this sector. Several tips were given to promote successful and competitive farming operations including: shifting crops based on demand and building community networks for marketing products. Based on demand for local food, farming was seen as a potentially profitable business, in particular, hoop greenhouses, value-added farm products, CSA's and niche marketing to restaurants. Finding land, entering into a lease, purchase agreements and raising capital were all cited as major challenges for new farmers. When farmers rent land they risk moving and losing their crops every year. Another challenge for small scale and new farmers is delivering food to market(s) – interviewees spoke of a need to provide a delivery service that could serve several small farms.

Farm stands and farmers markets are one particularly popular way to sell produce. The Washington County farmer's market director mentioned that demand exceeds supply for products sold at local farmers markets, but customers want it to be as easy as going to the grocery store. In order to have a successful farm stand at Washington County farmers markets, vendors need to have English and Spanish skills as well as computer literacy. There is a current movement in Washington County to set up a farmers' market for Latinos. More than sufficient customers are believed to exist but vendors are still needed. The marketing potential of Mexican, and Central-American products was demonstrated by a successful Washington County local grocery store owner who, upon hearing that Walmart was moving in, changed his entire inventory to cater to Mexican, and Central-American consumer products so as not to compete.

### Agricultural regional economic development:

In order to effectively tap the Portland local food market and economic development specialists stated that scale is key, distributors cannot currently access the disaggregated supply of local small farmers. There is interest in establishing a 6 county agricultural collaborative with a regional brand. Certification is hugely important in branding, marketability, and the creation of higher value agricultural products. If a local brand takes off it would be labor intensive and the local market might start to demand fair labor certification programs. Hence this regional plan could if coupled with consumer awareness campaigns create more farmworker jobs in the willamette valley that are higher paying. Counties need to work together to accomplish economic development on a regional scale. Counties together could market a rural oregon experience that highlights farms and rural activities all around Portland. They could offer an experience to tourists of what its like to live and work in the pacific NW.

### "Green collar jobs":

Green collar jobs have an environmental and sustainable focus and are expected to be a growing industry. Rather than staying in agriculture some farmworkers may prefer to transition into these sorts of jobs. VERDE in North Portland is training and hiring low income latinos including some former farmworkers to work in green jobs. Farmworkers could be trained to do a variety of needed jobs in Washington County including: habitat restoration and greenbuilding systems monitoring

aligned with the work of Energy Trust. Professionals in this area explained that creating green jobs requires an organizing strategy which involves making a connection between protecting the environment and economic opportunities for low income minorities. For this to be successful, policy work is very important, there is a need to advocate for green regulations which involve mandates to create jobs for low income people.

### **Farmworker employment conditions:**

The agricultural economy in Oregon has changed, farmworker-dependent crops are declining; over the past 40 years, people have been settling out of farmwork into other employment options. Yet there is still a significant farmworker population in Washington County and they are the lowest of low paid workers, the average farmworker makes under \$10,000 a year, poverty level for a (family of 4) in Washington County is ~\$20,000. For farmworkers other employment opportunities are limited especially in the current high unemployment economy. Higher skilled workers are taking lower skill jobs, which is increasing unemployment among less skilled workers.

## **WORKSHOP FINDINGS**

In addition to in-depth personal interviews a broader base of professional stakeholders were also invited to a workshop with the purpose of informing proposed alternatives. Fifteen participants attended the workshop from a variety of housing, micro-economic, land use, and service provision backgrounds. After listening to a presentation about the harvesting opportunities project, participants were asked to join a housing or economic development breakout group. Workshop attendees critiqued alternatives and offered criteria used for evaluating both housing and microeconomic opportunities for farmworkers.

### **KEY POINTS MADE DURING THE HOUSING BREAKOUT GROUP**

#### *Alternative #1 Urban-based Housing:*

##### **Challenges:**

- Financing, Tax credits have become more competitive and are really hard to get now.
- Finding affordable and available land.
- There isn't financing for resident services, housing developers have to raise money to provide ESL and other needed services.
- There are a lot of false perceptions about farmworker housing, including that they crowd the schools and are magnets for criminal activity.
- People seem to want farmworkers to be invisible.

##### **Opportunities:**

- Socialization opportunities are great it truly offers a community for residents.
- Urban-based non-profit housing is the most consistent alternative with the current land use regulations.
- Proximity to transit alleviates the need for residents to own a car, which is a financial benefit to farmworkers. Residents are also closer to a variety of services.
- Housing provided by urban-based non-profits is typically run by staff who truly care about the residents.
- Senior housing for farmworkers will become increasingly important and this would fit into

alternative 1. Also tends not to be as much push back for senior housing.

### *Alternative #2 Healthy On-farm Housing:*

#### **Challenges:**

- Jobs are typically tied to housing which makes it much more likely for people to put up with abuses and exploitation.
- From the land use standpoint the connection to needing labor is the reason for allowing on-farm housing so the land use regulations would have to change for this to be a good option.
- Currently rural development is the only financing for on-farm.
- OSHA compliance rules are extremely minimal and yet many Washington County labor camps fail to even meet them.
- Some studies indicate that a portion of farmworkers might prefer to live on-farm however this may be more of a desire to live in rural areas, not a desire to live in employer provided housing. Also some farmworkers may wish to actually own and run their own farm.
- Farmland infrastructure is not designed for a lot of housing.
- Transportation and access to services is a huge concern.

#### **Opportunities:**

- If a non-profit ran the housing and ensured that it was not tied to employment, on-farm might be a feasible option.
- Non-profits could provide or oversee a ride share service to connect on-farm residents with services. This in turn could be an economic development opportunity for the farmworker population.
- If on-farm housing is already lawfully un-conforming the land owner could improve existing housing to make it a better situation for residents. Given the non-conforming status residents would not need to be employees which would allow for non-profit run on-farm housing under the current land use regulations.

### *Alternative # 3 Homeownership:*

#### **Challenges:**

- Underwriting loans for farmworkers is extremely challenging given inadequate credit, instability of income, and documentation.
- Really deep subsidies would be needed for the down payment along with provisions for monthly mortgage assistance because farmworkers have regular periods of unemployment.
- Those in Bienestar housing have an average family income of \$20,000, even with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) they are only saving \$20 / month. Without a deep subsidy the number of people able to get through the barrier is small.
- Often it can take seven people working to buy a home. At FHDC the average family of 5 only makes \$16,000.
- With foreclosure and the sub-prime crisis the mortgage market has become much stiffer.
- Most growers in Washington County won't verify employment

#### **Opportunities:**

- Mobile homes could potentially work for those in the upper level of income and stability.
- The second generation might be able to buy homes and home-ownership models could be



useful for them.

- Assistance examples include IDAs.
- Community Land Trust models have been explored with proud ground.
- Mutual Self Help is a better form of sweat equity than Habitat for Humanity for farmworkers; mortgages can be 1/2 of a percentage point.

### *Alternative #4 Vouchers:*

#### **Challenges:**

- Documentation and cultural resistance to government programs is a big reason why this is not a good alternative for farmworkers, many would not qualify.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Vouchers could work if they were administered by an intermediary non-governmental agency.
- Project based vouchers have been used but they are fairly small and very few people qualify for them.

#### **Partnerships needed to strengthen and improve housing for farmworkers:**

- Policy makers need to become champions for this population.
- Immigration reform needs to make the link between housing and immigration.
- Set asides for farmworker housing in Oregon Housing and Community Services.
- Strengthen education
- Outreach to growers.
- Build constituency and support at farmers markets.
- Those who have residency and status need to speak up for those who do not in order to create better policies.

#### **Criteria for good farmworker housing:**

- Needs to be of good quality, and affordable to farmworkers.
- Should be culturally specific with space for extended families, gas stoves, colorful walls, separate living and dining rooms.
- Should be space for community gatherings, community gardens, community space for services like ESL and other classes.
- Single story buildings are useful because residents have said they are tired after a hard day of work and don't want to carry strollers and packages up several flights of stairs.
- Central space to wash of boots and work clothes is important to keep pesticides out of the home area.
- Most importantly housing should be separated from the employer.
- Housing should be owned and operated by farmworker advocates who have the best interest of the population at heart.

### **KEY POINTS MADE DURING THE MICRO-ECONOMIC BREAKOUT GROUP:**

#### **Barriers:**

##### *Barriers to Farmworkers as Future Food Growers*

- High costs of capital and land are prohibitive to starting a new agricultural operation.

- Models to connect Latino farmworkers to aging farmers willing to mentor and assist with capital are severely lacking. In other areas of the country, formal resources are available for young farmers to develop long term relationships with existing growers to can both mentor and share capital as the business transitions from the current farmer to the younger farmer. Unfortunately, programs like this have kept farms and land within white farming families.
- Uncertainty regarding cooperative distribution models. Well-known cooperative-style regional distribution models that assist small farmers struggle to keep razor thin margins.

#### *Barriers to Skill-building for Support Industries*

- There is a lack of culturally appropriate skill building models. “Skills” such as improving psychological strength, mental wellbeing, self-sufficiency, and building strong communities are seen as necessary for farmworker advancement, however such skills are not recognized.
- Lack of professional Latino mentors overall, and especially within agriculture or agriculturally-related industries
- Existing state funding streams to assist Latino immigrant farmworkers to build skills contain specific stipulations to promote farmworkers leaving the agricultural sector; in other words, there is a lack of funds for programs without strings attached to assist farmworkers who wish to advance within the agricultural industry

#### *Barriers to Value-Added Production*

- Language and cultural barriers are the biggest barriers to all economic development for farmworkers, and especially for entrepreneurs
- Lack of trust towards real or perceived authorities (which includes service providers, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies) prevents farmworkers from seeking information on how to start a business and develop skills.
- Lack of visibility of Latino entrepreneurs and/or business owners is seen as discouraging for farmworkers

#### *Overarching Concerns*

- There are obvious gaps in services for language and cultural barriers that prevent farmworkers from seeking information needed for most, if not all, economic development opportunities available to the community.
- The need for continued programming, funding, and research to improve the wellbeing of farmworkers is severely understated and needs to be emphasized.

#### **Opportunities:**

- Addressing Marketing Challenges
- Farmer’s Market phenomenon can take advantage of latent demand for local foods
- More demand for CSAs than supply, the key is in finding access one way could be through ecumenical ministries.
- Cooperatives are familiar, very common and popular in Mexico (long-established community landholding pattern); they are an opportunity to neutralize adversity; non-competitive, alternative to dominant paradigm; and cooperatives that former farmworkers are able to create and construct is a self-confidence boost to farmworkers.

#### *Addressing Challenges to Starting a Business*

- Adelante Empresas is a great example of incubator model that hopes to integrate with agriculture, cooperative marketing model

- Possibility for Individual Development Account programs for farmers that would help to build start up capital.

#### *Addressing Challenges in Land Access*

- Possibility of establishing a Land Trust to preserve ecological resources in rural areas could work with organic, small-scale farmers who could farm on that land long-term as long as they remained compatible with ecological objectives
- Possibility to mimic a Washington state model of mentorship that connects existing farmers with younger generations of farmers
- iFarm Oregon and other forms of networking provide a good model that can be altered or adapted for the farmworker community
- It is possible to farm smaller parcels of land, aka “micro-farms”

#### *Addressing Policy Restrictions*

- Friends of Family Farmers Efforts
- Draft as Information Act
- Proposing Advocacy Efforts and policy changes - ie food safety
- Food Alliance Certification
- Certification - actively promote value and meaning to companies like Bon Appetit
- Transparency - performance has rewards

#### *What Food Alliance Looks for in a Healthy Workplace*

- Ecological quality of workplace
- Safe
- Compensate fairly
- Clear about expectations
- Be able to move up in profession

## **FARMER OUTREACH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The Washington County Farm Bureau and Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce were contacted for a list of area farmers and farm owners. Board members for the Washington County Farm Bureau were contacted to inquire if a farmer focus group could be held at their monthly meeting. This was not possible due to schedule constraints and time limitations. Washington County farmers were a difficult group to reach and to get into one room for a focus group. The public involvement phase took place in the spring when farmers became very busy planting crops and operating their farms.

As a result, alternative options such as phone interviews and electronic surveys were explored. After consulting with a staff member from the Washington County Bureau, it was decided that phone interviews would be the most effective form of outreach to farmers due to schedule constraints and time limitations. A list of 36 farmers was compiled from the Washington County Farm Bureau, Washington County Chamber of Commerce, and the Tri-County Produce Guide of U-pick Farms and Farm stands in order to make phone interviews.

Nine phone interviews were conducted with various farmers in Washington County. Farmers included nursery, small farm, and U-pick operators. Many of the farmers interviewed had farmed or been involved in agricultural-related work for 20 to 40 years. Several of their farms were family operated businesses that had been passed down across generations. With years of experience, they shared valuable insight into the evolution and current trends of the local agricultural industry.

### *Input from Washington County farmers involved the following issues:*

1. Agricultural labor force issues
2. The future of agriculture in the region
3. The effect of land use regulations on the viability of farming

To receive input on the above-referenced issues, the following set of seven questions were asked:

1. How long have you worked in agriculture, and how has the agricultural industry changed since you started? What do you think are future trends?
2. Since the farmer population is aging, who will be the new farmers? How do we promote farming to younger generations and other populations? Would you be interested in mentorship programs that connect entrepreneurial and interested farmworkers with seasoned farmers? Do you have suggestions for other programs/models?
3. Oregon's economy relies on agriculture as its second largest industry. How do farmworkers fit into this picture?
4. What would help ensure a healthy agricultural labor force?
5. Do you have any thoughts on the effect of land use regulations on farming? For example, do exclusive farm use designations provide enough opportunity for agricultural landowners to be competitive, remain profitable, and innovate?
6. How could policy makers improve agricultural zoning while ensuring that agricultural land will be preserved?
7. Overall, what do you think would promote the viability of our agricultural industry? What changes could be made to help improve or sustain this industry?

## KEY FINDINGS

Most of the farmers interviewed explained the affects of globalization on local farming. Many believe it is difficult to compete with the international market because labor laws and land use regulations are less stringent abroad. One farmer cited the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization for the shift away from local agriculture. He explained, "We've been feeding people from foreign countries. City people ride by on their bicycles or drive by in their Toyota Priuses with their stickers that say 'buy local,' but they haven't a clue and want to see farms but no Mexicans." There is a need to educate the local population about the realities of today's agricultural industry.

Others saw promise in the "buy local" movement. They project future trends will include sales to local grocery stores and farmers markets as opposed to large processors. There is more control over the pricing of products when you sell local. One farmer explained that 85% of what they grow is sold to farmers markets or grocery stores. She said, "We're getting .35 cents and pound for strawberries to processors but can sell them at farmer's markets for \$1 per pound." Some believed that certifications for locally produced foods could promote the viability of local agriculture.

Land use regulations also influence the viability of local agriculture. The majority interviewed believed that land use regulations are important for the preservation of farmland but seek a balanced approach. They complain that the regulations are too restrictive. They see the need to revise land

use laws to allow for innovation in order to earn a profit in creative ways that could also sustain and support local agriculture. Land use laws should be more flexible to encourage entrepreneurship. The law should redefine what constitutes as “agriculture.” Many find permitting rules expensive and restrictive. It is difficult to get an outhouse built let alone farmworker housing.

Of those interviewed, many had inherited land and/or an operation. Many of the farms were family-owned and passed down through generations. Acknowledging an aging grower population, many cited barriers to farming for younger generations. The cost to purchase land especially 40 to 80 acre minimums is an obstacle for prospective growers. Financing for the purchase of land is limited. Land values are high but revenue generated from crops are low. Therefore, it would be difficult to show projected cash flows and profit margins that are positive based on the existing market. One farmer believed that unless one inherits land, many new farmers are wealthy individuals who are interested in the country lifestyle and operating small farms or wineries. They are not interested in farming as a livelihood or means of making a living.

The idea of offering mentorship programs for prospective farmers was mixed. Of those interviewed, some expressed no interest from an economic standpoint, while others saw it as a valuable option for larger agricultural operations. One farmer already had a partnership with area schools and offered job shadowing and summer internships to students interested in the agricultural industry. They also have a continuing program to promote farmworkers from within, and have brought educators out to the farm to teach English and financial literacy.

Many of those interviewed explained the importance of farmworkers to the local agricultural industry. They also explained that the demographic of farmworkers were largely immigrant and Latino populations. One farmer said, “If you don’t have farmworkers, you don’t have any production. They are vital to agricultural.” The need for a guest worker program was identified on several occasions. Another farmer expressed dissatisfaction with the current H-2A program for temporary agricultural workers. He did not believe the existing program to be a feasible option for employers in Oregon because of the seasonal nature of the industry. Instead, one farmer proposed a program where one would have a temporary workforce that could enter the U.S. legally and return to their home country safely. Employers could provide adequate health care benefits and housing to guest workers. While one farmer expressed an interest in providing such benefits to his farmworkers, others would not. There were varying sentiments. One farmer explained, “I tried farmworker housing years ago and it didn’t work. It’s a terribly complicated issue. These people don’t have respect for peoples’ property and then I have to pay for repairs and get fined for it.”

## FARMWORKER FOCUS GROUPS

### APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

#### Recruitment and Focus Group Sites:

Tierra Planning held five farmworker focus groups at two sites in Washington County. One set of focus groups was held at a labor camp in a rural part of the county and the other set was held in Forest Grove at Adelante Mujeres a non-profit organization that works with the farmworker population. These two sites were chosen because they offer contrasting opportunities for farmworkers and because we had developed a connection with leaders at both sites who could secure focus group participants. Given cultural, economic and language barriers farmworkers are a difficult population for outsiders to solicit for input. Consequently, Tierra Planning contacted several

organizations in the County who work with farmworkers as a means to organize focus groups. Given time constraints and responsiveness, Adelante Mujeres was the only organization that was able to host focus groups. The set of focus groups held at a local labor camp was organized with the help of the camp manager who is respected by the residents. Utilizing trusted leaders encouraged focus group participation while lessening potential fears.

Recruiting focus group participants from programs offered at Adelante Mujeres was straightforward. Staff at Adelante Mujeres agreed to incorporate the focus groups into their scheduled programs, so participants did not have to make an extra effort to attend the group. The women at Adelante Mujeres had been preparing to interview past graduates of the program so they were familiar with interview techniques and were therefore reasonably comfortable participating in a focus group. The men were involved in the Adelante Agricultura program and were also able to have the focus group during their regularly scheduled class time, this encouraged participation while validating the legitimacy of the focus group.

Recruiting focus group participants at the labor camp was somewhat more challenging. The support and promotion of the event by the trusted camp manager was crucial in securing participants. However, on the evening of the focus group despite prior announcements Tierra Planning group members and volunteer translators still needed to walk through the camp and individually invite available residents in order for them to feel comfortable in attending the focus group. The evening focus groups at the labor camp and Adelante Mujeres included dinner for the participants, which proved to be a very appreciated yet small contribution for people's time.

### **Demographics:**

Along with a location differences, focus groups were also divided by gender. Through conversations among farmworker service providers we learned that Latina women are much more apt to freely express themselves in single sex groups. When possible we tried to have facilitators and translators also of the same gender. However because Tierra Planning is comprised entirely of women and because we were limited in options for volunteer translators all of the men's focus groups had at least a female facilitator. One of the women's focus groups at Adelante Mujeres also had a male translator. In total, 61 participants were involved in five focus groups ranging in size from 8- 15 people. Each group was facilitated by a member of the Tierra Planning team and was assisted by a fluent Spanish speaking volunteer for translation.

The vast number of participants from both the labor camp as well as from Adelante Mujeres was from Mexico. Most spoke Spanish although there were a few from both sets of focus groups who spoke both English and Spanish. Participants' ages ranged from 16 as the youngest to between 60 and 70 as the oldest, with most between 20 and 40 years old.

### **Survey Instrument:**

The initial development of focus group questions was informed by research into current housing conditions and national housing models for farmworkers. Questions pertaining to economic development were informed by research into various micro-economic development models and current economic conditions for farmworkers. All of the main questions strived to be open ended in order to best ascertain the needs and desires specific to the participants without leading them toward previously researched alternatives. Some follow up questions were tailored to specific scenarios such as ascertaining desires or interest in utilizing a community kitchen to produce value added food products to be sold at various markets. Farmworker Housing Development Corporation staff to ensure cultural sensitivity and appropriateness vetted all of the questions.



## Validity:

Focus groups among Adelante Mujeres clients and residents of one labor camp by no means offer a representative sample of the range of concerns and desires of Washington County farmworkers. However, these two sets of focus groups do offer insights into two very different groups of farmworkers. Participants involved in programming at Adelante Mujeres have been encouraged to dream about owning a business; many have received education in ESL, empowerment, and business operations. In addition, Adelante Mujeres staff can connect clients with other service providers in the area. As a result this group seemed to have more of their basic needs met and additionally had loftier goals and more experience in articulating their dreams. In contrast, labor camp residents are often not exposed to as many services or opportunities and therefore had a more difficult time imagining a different future. Labor camp residents did have access to some ESL classes on site and occasionally Virginia Garcia medical clinic would come to the camp, as would the food bank. As a result of varying opportunities for participants, comparing the two sets of focus groups provides a rich yet incomplete understanding of farmworker concerns and desires in Washington County.

Several factors could have potentially affected the range of responses and frankness of conversation. Most obviously, focus group facilitators from Tierra Planning relied upon volunteer translators to convey questions and relay responses. Certainly, nuances and details were lost in the translation process. Furthermore, the act of translation necessarily disrupted the flow of conversation and in some cases prevented natural spontaneous conversation. In addition, while efforts were made to assure participants that responses would not be attached to individuals, concerns about documentation likely affected some participants' ability to speak freely. Additionally, at the labor camp in order to save time and at the suggestion of the camp manager the men's and women's focus groups were held simultaneously in the same room. Women and men were in different circles but they could easily see each other, this may have affected the willingness of women participants to speak openly. Women who were married or partners to men at the adjacent focus group might not have wanted their partners to see them talking about some of the questions.

## FINDINGS FROM THE LABOR CAMP FOCUS GROUPS ON APRIL 25TH

### *Women's Group*

#### **Group Demographics:**

Ages: 3 between 15 and 25, 5 between 25 and 50  
Origins: majority born in Mexico, one born in Oregon  
Families: majority had children  
Languages: majority spoke Spanish, 2 were bilingual

#### **Major Findings:**

- Lack of transportation identified as a major barrier to finding better job opportunities and connecting to essential services like grocery shopping and English classes.
- In-town housing is largely seen to be out of reach because of the expense.
- Participants have already started some microenterprise strategies focused on food preparation, and would be interested to expand their work if they had skills, resources and access to capital.
- Mothers largely hope for their children's success, particularly for skills such as learning English, and fear it is too late for themselves to have better opportunities.

### **Tenancy:**

The majority of women have lived at the camp for a long period of time many had been there since arriving in Oregon; the earliest we heard was 1982, and others have been there since 1997 or 1999. One participant was even born in the camp and continues to live there at 18. Most of the participants has some family members at the camp, but spoke of large parts of their families being elsewhere. The focus group participants share the cabins with family including their children, or with friends.

There are several large camps in the area that operate on a seasonal basis, where everyone lives together and then goes to work at the same place, but those camps are used only for a few months of the year. The camp where focus group attendees live is inhabited year round. There are currently 84 residents, including about 10 children. Residents pay \$120 each per month, or \$240 for the whole cabin. One resident said she rented a house on the property for \$400 a month. Rent for any of the units includes utilities. Several residents mentioned that they liked the quiet and fresh air in the farmland where they lived. They enjoyed that there are few cars and appreciate the nice rhythm of life that they are used to. Apartments in the city were seen by the majority of participants to be too expensive, and very difficult to pay for year round without reliable and steady employment. Participants said it was hard to consider moving closer to town without more money and more permanent employment.

### **Home ownership:**

A younger participant expressed her opinion that having a home is the American dream for them as well, and she thought it was part of the reason why her parents and others came to this country. Others said they would be happy to settle here, that they like the area, particularly since their children have grown up here. Few expressed outright interest in purchasing a home (likely because it was too far out of reach to even consider).

### **Sense of community:**

Participants stated that there wasn't a particularly strong sense of community because so many people worked in different places, but that they occasionally cooperated on some things, like sharing trips to the grocery store. When asked about their preference for living with other farmworkers or mixed into the community, participants did not voice strong opinions. They said it might be harder to live with people who don't speak Spanish but that it might be an opportunity for them to improve their English, or that it might simply increase the translation burden on those who can speak English.

### **Services available:**

There is an elementary school just across the street that serves up to grade 7; having it close by makes it easier for the moms at the labor camp to pick up their kids after school. The older kids attend middle school and high school in Hillsboro, which they access via a school bus with a stop at the camp. Most grocery shopping is done in town, at Safeway or WinCo, but it can be difficult to get grocery stores as many of the women do not have access to a car in their family unit. Some service providers come to the camp, including some English classes, Virginia Garcia medical services, the Oregon Food Bank, and a catholic priest offers church services. One woman mentioned that she had been able to participate in a women's empowerment program through Adelante Mujeres that she really enjoyed, but she had difficulty getting there and was unable to continue.

### **Transportation:**

Lack of transportation options was seen as one of the major barriers to finding job opportunities or services. There's no bus nearby, which the participants said they would like to have. About half of the residents have cars, but most use them to get to work and everyone is on different schedules, so it's hard to find someone to go to the grocery store with or run errands. Since everyone works in different places, it's hard to get rides to work. Finding work is extremely challenging and unreliable transportation makes the challenge even greater. Some have had to turn down job opportunities because they didn't have a way to get there. If everyone worked at the same place, some employers would send a bus to pick him or her up, but it doesn't work at this camp since everyone works in different places.

### **Work:**

In the past, some people worked at the farm where they live, but there is no farming work at the camp now. Instead, everyone finds work other places as best they can. Many said they seasonally harvest berry crops in the area, but it normally lasts six months or less. Participants said the benefits of field work were the fresh air outside, and joked about enjoying the fresh fruit also--"one for the basket, one for me." They said there is some work with Christmas trees later in the year, but men do most of the work because the trees are very heavy. Several participants work for a hazelnut processing plant; one of the younger participants who is bilingual works as a shift supervisor for six other Hispanic women, and translates for them. There are some other foods processing jobs available. One participant said she worked for a while in a Chinese restaurant making food. Another worked several years on the night shift assembling computer parts.

In their current jobs, participants said their work skills included quality control, sorting, some computer work, and bilingual translation or English. Lack of English skills was seen as one of the biggest barriers to getting other work, as well as a lack of job history and difficulty securing transportation. The women described themselves as hard working and expressed interest in working in virtually any available opportunity.

### **Other economic opportunities:**

The women expressed some interest in growing food to sell or eat, but lack of access to land was seen as a major barrier. Some of the focus group participants already engage in food preparation to generate extra income. Because there are many single men in the camp, the women can prepare foods like tamales and tortas and sell them. There is nowhere near the camp to eat, so they see some opportunity to make money providing a lacking service. There was interest in forming some sort of cooperative umbrella group to share resources, like a kitchen, but they wanted each member to produce their own specialties. They identified a need to borrow money to get the enterprise started.

### **Skill building:**

English was seen as the most important skill to learn, but the participants placed the emphasis on their children learning to speak, rather than themselves. There are some English classes offered already, but it can be difficult to attend because of different work schedules, so sometimes they can go for a couple months, and then take a few months off. Several said they were too old to learn English at this point. Children were seen to have a better opportunity to learn English at school. Two of the younger participants had attended local schools through high school, one, along with her sister who did not participate in the group, was attending college classes now at PCC.

## Men's Group

### Group Demographics:

Ages: 6 (18-30); 4 (31-40); 3 (40-60)

Origins: most from Mexico

Families: many/most had wives and children; split between families here in Oregon/back in Mexico

Languages: all spoke Spanish

Time at this labor camp: ranging from 4 to 11 years

### Major Findings:

- Documentation and its ramifications are a major barrier. Without driver's licenses and other licenses, options for advancement are cut short.
- Transportation access (either driver's license or frequent, reliable transit) is also a major barrier to mobility, housing choice, location choice.
- Many of the men in attendance expressed pride in their work and found (at least some elements) very fulfilling.

### Tenancy:

Most of the men had lived at the labor camp for many years, ranging from four to eleven years. Most of the men had come from Mexico directly to the labor camp. Of 8 respondents, 6 had only lived at the camp, meaning it was the only housing they had experienced in the US. It was estimated by the camp manager (also a tenant) that there are more men than women at the camp, and of the men, approximately half are single and half are married. Some men live at the camp with their wives and children, others live with uncles, cousins, and friends.

Housing costs to live in the camp averaged approximately 25% of their monthly income. When asked how much housing might cost in town, they estimated it would be 50-60% of monthly income, in addition to utilities and other expenses such as transportation. Many of the participants expressed their preference for living outside of the city, citing the benefits of being close to nature and away from the "density". Many had lived and worked in agricultural areas in Mexico and preferred the openness of the countryside. Others made it clear that they were living outside of town because they felt they had no other option. One respondent said, "I would feel more dignified living in the community [in town], but I am here to work, so I do what I have to do."

### Documentation & Motivation:

Many men have skills that they are unable to capitalize on due to legal status and documentation. Among the participants were a baker, a butcher, a carpet layer, and several heavy machinery operators. Employers would not allow them to take on higher-responsibility jobs, such as driving a tractor, because they did not have required licenses.

Several mentioned that if their situations were more secure (legal status, employment), they would feel more motivated to invest in themselves (for example, learn English) and in the community. Many of the men expressed an interest in learning English, but deterrents to this include knowing where to find classes open to them, as well as time and energy to dedicate. One respondent explained that farmworkers are not looking for handouts but for the ability to have more opportunities.

## **Work:**

The majority of the respondents work as farmworkers. Many of them hold multiple jobs and work in landscaping or at nurseries and canneries. Some also work in construction related jobs such as painting and pouring concrete. One respondent explained that many of them hold two, three, four, or more jobs and that no job was secure.

When asked if they felt they had opportunities for advancement at their current job(s), many of them felt stuck and that there was not much else that they could do. They explained that language and documentation were major barriers for advancement. One respondent said, he knew professionals who were trained in business, carpentry, medicine, etc. in Mexico but who had no other option than farmwork in the U.S.

Some of them explained that while farmwork was hard and that they felt unappreciated and underpaid they enjoyed the sense of freedom of working outside in the fresh air. One man expressed a sense of pride in bringing fruits and vegetables to market and putting food on peoples' tables. He explained the disappointment in peoples disregard and/or lack of awareness of farmworkers' important role in the food industry.

When asked where they dreamt of working in ten years, many of the respondents expressed a desire to own and operate their own farm or business in Mexico. Others, saw themselves working as farmworkers in the U.S. or in Mexico but had different aspirations for their children. Many of them did not see themselves advancing but hoped to support their children in the advancement of their education and career opportunities. One respondent said that he dreams his children will not suffer as he had all his life doing difficult work and living in poverty.

## **Transportation:**

Those with cars and driver's licenses often share the resource with others at the camp, for trips into town to get food and other necessities. Since many of the residents do not own their own cars or have access to transit, they felt it was important to live near employment.

## **Community:**

When asked about preference about living in housing specifically for farmworkers versus living with a mixed community, responses were mixed. Some cited that residents of the camp acted as a community and support network and that they could trust and rely on each other. Others, as stated by one respondent would feel more dignified living in town in a mixed community.

## **WOMEN'S FOCUS GROUPS AT ADELANTE MUJERES, THURSDAY APRIL 29TH, 2010**

### **Major Findings from the two groups:**

Several of the women currently own homes and almost all expressed a desire to own a home. Housing location preferences were mixed but proximity to a variety of services was desired. Almost all had at some point worked as farmworkers but very few still meet the housing definition of farmworker. This limits the amount of housing subsidies that are available to this group particularly for those who are undocumented.

The women largely dreamed of obtaining employment outside of the agricultural field but many did express interest in selling their own vegetables at a market and or utilizing a community kitchen to produce food items to be sold at a variety of venues.

English language skills, documentation, and access to money were seen as the biggest barriers to new employment opportunities.

### *Group 1:*

#### **Demographics:**

- 15 women participated
- All attend classes at Adelante Mujeres.
- Majority or all from Mexico
- All spoke Spanish

#### **Tenancy:**

Most of the women who participated in this focus group lived with their families including husbands and children. The majority lived in market rate apartments in urban areas. One woman shared an apartment with another couple. In stark contrast to participants at the labor camp several women said they owned their own homes. One of the homeowners owned a mobile home. Largely the women seemed satisfied with their current living conditions although one woman expressed a desire to have a washing machine and dryer in her home. Another wished that she had wooden floors.

#### **Home ownership:**

Virtually all of the women expressed a desire to own a home although that dream was still out of reach for most of the participants. Being exposed to home owning peers likely made the dream seem more attainable to women in the Adelante Mujeres program.

#### **A Sense of Community:**

Several of the women related that they felt a sense of community among their neighbors. They mentioned that in some cases their neighbors shared childcare and ran errands for each other.

#### **Home Location and Services:**

When asked if they would prefer to live in urban or rural settings several women mentioned that their husbands wished they lived in the country because of the fresh air, but the women seemed to agree that living in the country was less secure and didn't have adequate access to necessary services. They felt that virtually any location in an urban area would be close enough to all of the services that they needed. The women did express that living in the country would allow their children to play more freely, which would be desirable. In contrast, some of the women imagined that they would feel insecure at night in rural areas because there would be fewer people around and less light.

#### **Work Experience and Skills:**

The majority of the women have worked as farmworkers at some point in Washington County. The period of work ranged from 2 months to 12 years. The industries included working in nurseries, picking strawberries, packing mushrooms, sorting potatoes, and cultivating flowers. Other past employment unrelated to agriculture included cleaning, working in a deli, dishwashing, factory work, and child care.

In these jobs and in their experience with farmwork, the women cited skills they have developed including fine-motor skills, dexterity, caring for children, patience and creativity. The women are all currently studying full time with Adelante Mujeres learning new skills, developing their English, and ultimately learning skills to thrive in the workforce.



## Other Economic Opportunities:

When asked where they dreamed of working in 10 years, the women had many ideas. This ability to dream was not found among many of the labor camp focus group participants and is likely related to the Adelante Mujeres programming. Occupational dreams included cultivating plans, working as a cashier or as a receptionist, working with children, driving a school bus, working in the healthcare field with a two year degree, working as a dental hygienist, being a delivery person, owning a salon, and working in a factory as a supervisor. The women seemed excited to be able to express their dreams in the focus group.

## Group 2:

### Demographics:

- Thirteen women (2 between 20 and 30, 4 between 30 and 40, 4 between 40 and 50 and 2 between 50 and 60, one women declined to share her age range).
- All of the women spoke Spanish, many of them spoke some English and two were bilingual.
- All or most were from Mexico.

### Tenancy, Homeownership, and Assistance:

Similar to the other group of women at Adelante Mujeres most of these women lived in market rate apartments. However, two of the women are homeowners, one of which was able to recently achieve homeownership through Habitat for Humanity. The other home owner and had lived in her home for 4 years. Participants had been living in their current housing units from 2 months to 4 years. Some of the women liked where they were living and some did not. The homeowners were happy with their housing arrangement. Some of the women living in apartments wished they had more space. One woman lives in a two bedroom apartment with her family which numbers seven. All of the women expressed a desire to eventually own their own home.

None of the women or their families qualified for Bienestar farmworker housing. Several women raised the point that there is not enough affordable housing options available to them because they do not make 50% of their income from farmwork and therefore do not qualify for farmworker housing and many are undocumented so they do not qualify for other housing subsidies. They expressed a certain amount of confusion over why farmworkers were given so much help and other people with similar backgrounds could not get assistance. Currently the women were paying between 40-60% of their family income on housing. They were able to get assistance from local churches and food pantries for food, but utility and housing payments were a constant struggle for many of the women. All of the women also mentioned that they frequently send money home to family members in Mexico.

### Location Preferences and Services:

Housing location preferences were mixed among the group. When asked if they would prefer to live in agricultural areas, or in the city, about a third preferred to live in the country, a third wanted to live in the city, and a third wanted to live in a small city. It was important for them to live relatively close to schools, stores, hospitals, and transportation.

The women didn't think it was important to live in exclusively Latino housing development or neighborhoods, they felt like it would be easier to practice English if the housing was mixed.

## Work Experience and Skills:

All of the women had worked as farmworkers in Washington county in the past and one woman still seasonally does farmwork. The range of time working in agriculture was from 1.5 months to 18 years with the majority working in agriculture for three years. Agricultural work ranged from berry picking to assembly line work at the hazelnut factory. The women had mixed opinions about agricultural work, some worked in the industry because it was the only option available to them and they did not enjoy the work. One woman expressed that she preferred it to working in a restaurant; another mentioned that she enjoyed being in the open air and liked planting vegetables and tending them as they grew. Others also appreciated the beauty of being outside but did not enjoy the rain, cold, extreme heat, low pay, and physical exhaustion.

Past non- agricultural employment included assembly of electronics, child care, restaurant work, hair styling and salon work, housekeeping and most did a great deal of unpaid work in the home. Many felt that they could advance in the jobs that they currently hold or held in the past, however, because of documentation rules it would be difficult.

The top skills they felt they had acquired from current and past employment were patience, and an understanding of the value of time.

Barriers, which prevent them from switching jobs or advancing in their current jobs, include language, legal status, education and broad economic conditions. Despite significant barriers they were all optimistic that with hard work and the freedom to dream anything could be achievable. Many felt that learning English was the most crucial skill that they needed to acquire and they were working toward that knowledge with the help of Adelante Mujeres.

## Other Economic Opportunities:

When asked what they dream of doing in 10 years the women had no trouble expressing their goal. Two wanted to be nurses, one wanted to be a radiologist, several wanted to own their own business including a bakery, salon, restaurant and child care center, another joked that she didn't want to work but she wanted to be the boss.

In order to achieve their dreams they felt that they would need to learn English, obtain legal status, study, and access money.

In the shorter term many of the women expressed an interest in growing their own food to sell at a market and everyone was interested in making food at a community kitchen to sell at different venues.

## MEN'S FOCUS GROUP, MONDAY MAY 3RD, 2010

### Group Demographics:

- 10 men, 2 women
- Mostly from Mexico
- This group was from the Adelante Agricultura Program, a training program for people to cultivate agricultural and business skills with the ultimate goal that trainees produce and market their own food.
- Currently they are working on building the greenhouse and working the fields in on the land that Adelante Mujeres rents.
- Many of the men had jobs on the side.
- This was a more established community with several homeowners and business owners.
- There were seven between 30 and 40, four between 40 and 50, and two over 50 years.

## Major Findings:

- Several of the men were homeowners. Others, expressed a desire to own a home but cited low wages and documentation as barriers to homeownership.
- A few of the men were already business owners. Others, expressed a desire to own their own business or farm but cited language and documentation barriers.
- Several expressed the need for basic training at places of employment for cultural competency, respect, and labor rights.

## Current Work:

Two men currently work in construction, two work in landscaping (1 and 2 years), one man worked on an alpaca farm for six years, Several worked in nurseries with a range of 4 to 20 years. Several men owned their own companies including landscaping companies and nurseries. The men repeatedly said that there is little work in Washington County right now and that they have to take what they can get.

## Skills:

They have a myriad of skills and combined experience, including experience in cultivating and prepping soil, being creative and managing weather risks, treating soil with organic means, construction experience with building a greenhouse from the bottom up and managing the temperature, and electrifying a greenhouse. In addition, the men possessed skills in operating heavy machinery and plumbing. One man mentioned that he started off doing masonry and eventually was managing the entire masonry aspect of buildings. Another man said that he had an interest in becoming a supervisor but was deterred because one of his supervisors had said that if you wanted to be a supervisor, you had to “step on everyone.”

## Farmwork:

One group member said that he had worked picking strawberries and cucumbers and that this work was backbreaking. They said that they liked farmwork because you worked in fresh air and “felt free,” but that it was cold in the winter. They explained that the pay is too low and that their labor is not appreciated. Wages vary from farm to farm but as a rule are low and are not regulated at the state level.

## Dreams:

The men are part of a training program to build long-term skills, so many of them said they wished to own their own farm or company in 10 years. They said that learning English opens many doors. One man dreamed of progressing with his current business, potentially expanding so that he could provide materials to other nurseries.

## Barriers:

One man said, “we work so hard but are surrounded by a force where we cannot advance.” One man explained that they would like to see programs at nurseries that would cultivate respect, cultural understanding, and worker’s rights. The respondents see their community as vulnerable. One man said that he saw Russian and Chinese people opening businesses but not many Latinos.

### **Housing:**

The men had lived in many areas and many different apartments. Several had “fulfilled the dream” of becoming a homeowner.

### **Barriers to Homeownership:**

A major barrier to buying a home is documentation. One man explained that he was a nursery owner and that his wife had her own cleaning business but that they still could not own their own home because of lack of legal documentation.

### **Living in the Country:**

Several men dreamed of owning a small farm outside of town. Several men said that they preferred to live on the outskirts of town as an adult, but one said that this might not be best for the children. They “would like to live in peace.” In order to live in the country, they would need bus services for their children to continue their education. One man explained, “to live in the outskirts of town, you need a really good reliable car.”

### **Community:**

When asked if they wanted to live with other farmworkers, Latinos, or with the general population, they wanted to know if the question was asking if they wanted to live in a labor camp or in apartments. One of men seemed interested in living in a community where they had something in common with other families. Another man said he was happy with his apartment in Cornelius, but there was too much vandalism there currently.

## Background Research Memos

- 1) Housing
- 2) Microenterprise
- 3) Land Use



**Memorandum**  
**DRAFT – Internal Use Only**

To: Jessy Olson, Rose Architectural Fellow, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation

From: Tierra Planning

Date: April 6, 2010

Subject: Farmworker Housing Research Brief

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**Changing Trends in Immigrant Labor and Farmworker Housing**

Historically, most Latino immigrants settled in “gateway cities” such as Los Angeles or New York. However, in the 1990s the landing destinations of Latino immigrants diversified significantly, transforming the demographics of many medium-sized cities and small towns surrounded by rural agricultural areas (Nelson). This is compounded by the trend of land conversion to less land-intensive industries such as nurseries and greenhouse crops in order to realize the benefits of value-added products. In turn, many farmworkers choose to remain in one place for most of the year, taking work in several different farms or even industries, essentially creating year round demand for farmworkers in the Portland region (Nelson).

However, many farmworkers still live in overcrowded, ad hoc situations. Government and nonprofit sector provided housing is unable to meet demand in many regions. From 1964 to 2004, federal funding programs implemented at the local level have financed “nearly 35,000 homes for farmworkers and rehabilitated thousands more,” (Wilson).

On the demand side, “standard” housing at normal room occupancy rates is very expensive relative to stagnant farmworker wages. In 1999, the median personal income of a farmworker “was between \$5,000 and \$7,500, unchanged since 1988,” (Goodno). The 2006 National Agricultural workers found that hired farmworkers were paid an average of \$9.87 per hour, and nonsupervisory hired farm labor, at \$6.75 per hour (Kandel).

In Oregon, 71.4% of farmworkers surveyed in 2001 were year round employees, compared with Texas at 29.4% or Idaho at 22.2% (Wilson). Thus, the majority of farmworker housing in Oregon should be geared towards year round residents and provide adequate amenities in order for these families to thrive. In these units, farmworkers can get to know surrounding families and develop a community (Nelson).



## Farmworker Demographics

Demographic data for Farmworkers in Washington County is limited. The most recent research was done by Alice Larson in 2002. According to that study, there were approximately 12,800 migrant and resident seasonal farmworkers and their families in Washington County in 2002. Out of that group, 7,800 were working in agriculture and comprise 1.5% of the County's population. In 2000, the farmworker population earned 20% of Area Median Income for Washington County. As a result, farmworkers face challenges in obtaining market rate housing. According to the Oregon Employment Department, Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) Division, there were 27 registered and unregistered farmworker camps with approximately 1,500-2,000 beds in the County. Bienestar, a high quality farmworker housing developer in Washington County, has ten affordable units available for migrant farmworkers and 232 affordable units for year-round permanent housing for farmworker households. However, a significant gap exists between the demand and supply of housing with an additional 6,532 beds or housing units needed.

Despite unmet housing needs, Bienestar has reported a diminished demand for their housing units that may relate to potential residents' inability to meet USDA farmworker definitions. The decreased demand may also be caused by income restrictions for housing or immigration policies. There is also a sentiment in Washington County that perhaps segregated farmworker housing is not the most beneficial arrangement for farmworkers and decreased demand could reflect a desire to be more integrated in the broader community.

The 2007 American Community Survey, estimates Washington County residents on average pay \$834/month on rent. That amount of rent is affordable to households earning 58% of Area Medium Income which is well above the average farmworker income. Rents in outlying communities are significantly less such as \$514/mo. in Gaston, \$539/mo. in North Plains, \$614/mo. in Forest Grove, and \$671/mo. in Cornelius. Median mortgage payments in Washington County were \$1,723/mo. in 2007. Relative to rental costs, mortgage payments were also significantly lower in outlying communities. From 2000-2007, average mortgage payments increased 27% and outpaced inflation.

The Housing Assistance Council (HAC) surveyed 4,625 farmworker housing units around the country from 1997-2000. HAC found the median national farmworker rent to be \$345/mo.

## Farmworker Definitions

As experienced by Bienestar, there are various definitions of "farmworker" and funding sources use different definitions of "farmworker" for eligibility criteria.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines "Farm Labor" as "deriving a substantial portion of income from services in connection with cultivating the soil, raising or harvesting any agricultural or aquaculture commodity; or catching, netting, handling,

planting, drying, packing, packaging, grading, storing or preserving in its un-manufactured state any agricultural or aquaculture commodity or delivery to storage, market, or carrier for transportation to market or to processing any agricultural or aquaculture commodity.”

A substantial portion of annual income is 65% for domestic labor. Migrant farmworkers must have at least 50% of their annual income meeting the above agricultural definition. Alternatively, working in the industry for 110 full days per year also qualifies someone as a farmworker (US Department of Agriculture).

The Oregon Farmworker Housing Development Tax Credit program uses the Oregon statute to define farmworkers (ORS) 315. 164. “Farmworkers perform temporary labor for someone else. They are either involved in a. the production of farm products, or b. planting, cultivating, or harvesting of nursery stock, or c. Planting, cultivation or harvesting of seasonal agricultural crops, or d. forestation or reforestation of lands.”

Farm owners and relatives do not qualify as farmworkers. Similarly, corporation shareholders, relatives, and partners also do not qualify as farmworkers.

The inconsistency in the definition of the term “farmworker” affects who may qualify for certain services and farmworker housing depending on who funds the program or project and how it is financed.

### **USDA Section 514/516 Farm Labor Housing Program**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Section 514/516 Farm Labor Housing Program, “provides funding to buy, build, improve, or repair housing for farm laborers,” (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). While the USDA is a primary source of financing for farmworker housing, its housing stock accounts for only a small percentage of farmworker housing throughout the U.S. (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). “Given the high program demand and the poor condition of farmworker housing in general, the current funding levels for these programs are not nearly adequate to address the tremendous need for decent, affordable farmworker housing,” (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). There are a total of 787 active USDA housing projects that account for more than 14,000 units located throughout the U.S. (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). The majority of these housing projects were built prior to 1990. The development of units has continued to drop over the last 25 years. The result is an aging housing stock.

The USDA farmworker housing stock exists on-farm and off-farm. “Of the 787 total projects in USDA’s portfolio, two-thirds are on-farm while only a quarter are off-farm,” (Housing Assistance Council, 2006). However, there is a decrease in on-farm development. Historically, on-farm development was characterized by employer-assisted housing. Since 1990, there has been a steady increase in off-farm development (Housing Assistance Council, 2006) because less farm owners are providing employer-assisted housing. “While there are considerably more on-farm housing projects than off-farm, the number of off-farm units far exceeds those that are on-farm,” (Housing Assistance

Council, 2006). The majority of off-farm units are owned by non-profit organizations. The trend toward off-farm housing is due in part because of the lack of employer-assisted housing but also because living near amenities and services is seen as more favorable.

### **On-Site Farmworker Housing versus Off-Site Farmworker Housing**

On-site labor camps often act as self-contained settlements, which make them invisible to the surrounding community and reinforce stereotypes and social isolation (Nelson). Growers see the provision of on-site farmworker housing as a good that they can bundle in a "package of amenities," sometimes offering free housing to full-time farmworkers. Increasing regulations on housing and water quality require camps to be registered with the state, so farmers have chosen to eliminate their rental units rather than rehabilitate them and upgrade water treatment facilities (Forbes). Farmers have little incentive to provide quality on-site housing at significant cost when other farmers benefit from farmworkers in close proximity but do not contribute to the housing costs (Qenani-Petrela et al.). Many farmers reserve high-quality on-farm housing for farm managers or more technical workers, who work exclusively on the farm, as a way to build loyalty. (Wilson)

### **Ownership potential for farmworkers**

Home ownership is unattainable to most farmworkers due to inadequate credit and wealth. Some low-income farmworkers are able to own homes in the U.S. by living in substandard conditions, by accepting subprime or predatory loans, and by living in colonias with poorly developed basic amenities (Wilson). Aside from a financial inability to own desirable housing, ownership may not be a desirable form of tenure for farmworkers that need to move for seasonal work. However, home ownership and home equity is the primary source of wealth for most Americans and potential exists in some situations for farmworkers to benefit from home ownership (Wilson). In addition, ownership offers a way for farmworkers to escape exploitative housing situations (Wilson). Due to limited incomes this is most frequently realized through sweat equity programs, cooperatives, Land Trusts or first time homebuyer programs (Bandy).

### **Challenges in Providing Farmworker Housing**

Barriers to the construction of farmworker housing include the following:

- A lack of funding to subsidize the capital and operating costs for housing projects;
- A lack of legal immigration status affects farmworker housing opportunities because the majority of farmworker housing developments are funded through federal agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Development Agency. Federally funded farmworker housing programs require that residents be legal residents, excluding the housing needs of undocumented farmworkers;
- "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY) Syndrome. Opposition to farmworkers and farmworker housing due to blatant discrimination;
- The ability for projects to accommodate residents with very low incomes or short occupancy periods;

- A long development process and complex financing from multiple sources;
- High cost capital and infrastructure
  - capital costs to escalate for farmworker housing developers: unincorporation, zoning and limited space;

The result is that politicians are unwilling to invest in broad-based, long-term solutions. Instead, most projects are shortsighted, temporary, and built with low-quality materials.

### **Affordable Housing**

In addition to barriers to build and provide farmworker housing, farmworkers face barriers to obtaining mainstream housing or affordable housing. They have language barriers, a lack of credit history, and are often not able to pay first and last months' rent or security deposits (Nelson, 2007). Their earnings cannot cover the cost of mainstream affordable housing. Migrant farmworkers in particular have difficulty acquiring mainstream housing because they are not prepared to pay security deposits or sign leases.

### **Farmworkers and Public Services**

One may assume that farmworkers would utilize public services at higher rates than nonagricultural wage and salary workers. However, "roughly half of all crop farmworkers and an undetermined yet substantial proportion of livestock farmworkers lack legal authorization, which limits their access to certain Federal public services," (Kandel, 2008). Undocumented individuals are found to use public services less than authorized residents or citizens because of a fear of deportation (Kandel, 2008). The United States Department of Agriculture's, "2008 National Agricultural Worker's Survey (NAWS)," found that of hired non-citizen farmworkers, 2% live in public housing and .5% receive government housing assistance. Citizen farmworkers access services at slightly higher rates. 2.3% of citizen farmworkers live in public housing and .7% receive government assistance (Kandel, 2008).

To help make farmworker housing more affordable and to help support developers and or farm owners with employer-assisted housing, state and local housing authorities may extend Section 8 rental assistance to farmworker housing. The rental assistance would alleviate housing costs for farmworkers. It would also provide developers and farm owners assurance of rental income that could help leverage development financing (Housing Assistance Council, 2007).

However, even if Section 8 covered farmworker housing, US citizenship status or other specified categories of lawful immigration status are required to qualify for Section 8 housing vouchers (US Department of Housing and Urban Development). Therefore, many farmworkers do not qualify for Section 8 and would not even if Section 8 housing vouchers could be used for farmworker housing. In general, to qualify for Section 8 one must meet lawful immigration status criteria and a family's income may not exceed 50% of the median income for the county or metropolitan area in which they live (US Department of Housing and Urban Development).

## Potential Models

***Desert Alliance for Community Empowerment (DACE), Oasis, California.*** Develops farmworker housing that endeavors to limit debt through keeping the cost per bed to \$20,000 or less “by using polished concrete floors, pre-fabricated panelized housing, and other modest building techniques,” (Goodno). These methods help reduce the risk of the project and free up funds for other projects. Oasis is, unlike many communities, more receptive to farmworker housing, which also eases the burden of non-profit developers.

***Farmworker Housing Pilot Project, 2009, Skagit Valley, Washington.*** The Seattle Archdiocesan Housing Authority and architecture firm, Mithun sponsored the construction of low-cost, pre-fabricated, environmentally sustainable housing for underserved Washington state farmworkers. By dovetailing a community goal for attractive farmworker housing and green buildings, this project is an opportunity for farmworker housing to gain a better reputation. It could serve as a model to address seasonal worker housing needs throughout the country. The modular units feature “solar power and hot water, passive heating and cooling strategies, advancing framing techniques for a more efficient envelope, ultra-low flow plumbing fixtures, Energy Star appliances, and FSC certified wood,” (Farmworker Housing Pilot Project). Developers conducted interviews with farmers and farmworkers to design units consistent with their needs and preferences. They designed units to be “family-friendly, offer privacy, and provide flexible indoor and outdoor living areas for up to four people” (Goodno).

***Self-Help Enterprises (SHE), San Joaquin Valley of California.*** An alternative to relying solely on traditional financing mechanisms for farmworker housing is a mutual-help model. SHE allows a farmworker family to exchange 1,300 hours of labor building homes for down-payment assistance toward the purchase of their own home (Pacheco, 2007). On average, SHE helps 100 families obtain homeownership a year ([www.selfhelpenterprises.org](http://www.selfhelpenterprises.org)).

***The Mutual Self Help Housing Program (MSHHP), California.*** Offers a model of how homeownership can be realized for farmworkers. MSHHP is able to purchase land and materials and pays subcontractors with a USDA 502 loan (Bandy). Residents cooperatively build their own single-family homes in construction groups comprised of five families. Each family is required to contribute 30 hours per week. This requirement is explicit from the beginning and families that fail to meet the requirement lose their position (Bandy). Stringent requirements are in place to ensure that the programs are successful for the long run. Individual homes are not decided until the construction is complete to promote optimal construction techniques on each home. The USDA loans are sometimes as low as 1% and repayment periods can extend for 38 years with no down payment required (Bandy).

***The Snake River Correctional Institution Modular Home Project, Ontario, Oregon.*** In accordance with Oregon’s Measure 17, the program provides affordable modular housing for migrant workers while training inmates in meaningful work at the Snake River Correctional Institution. The completely furnished homes involve the inmates in all phases of residential construction on-site. Once completed, the homes are transported to

the customer's location. These modular homes are suitable for on-site farmworker housing, since Oregon Housing and Community Services offers grants and tax credits to qualified buyers.

***The Washington State Farmworker Housing Trust.*** The Trust is a non-profit organization that secures funds for permanent and temporary farmworker housing throughout the State of Washington (Pacheco, 2007). While not a developer itself, it helps generate funding from private and public philanthropic sources for housing developers interested in building farmworker housing.



## Memorandum DRAFT – Internal Use Only

To: Jesse Olson, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation  
 From: Tierra Planning  
 Date: April 6, 2010  
 Subject: Microenterprise and Economic Development Research Brief

### Introduction

Agriculture has always been part of the foundation of our country's economy. And even with mechanization and industrialization of our fields, agricultural labor is still vitally important to our ability to feed ourselves and the world. Although fewer people now work as farm laborers, there are still many tasks that simply cannot be mechanized or automated, and farm labor is crucial to the agricultural economy in Oregon particularly. Farm work has taken many forms in the past, and there are a variety of historical and contemporary models of accomplishing farm production, methods with varying levels of justice and equity.

In this memo, we seek to explore the economic opportunities available to farm workers, particularly focusing on very small scale, microenterprise models that might provide a first step from low wage farm labor to entrepreneurship and expanded opportunity. We recognize both that the labor farm workers perform is critical to Oregon's agricultural system; and that in order to provide for their families, farm workers need higher-wage employment with greater stability throughout the year.

### Farm Work: Livelihood or Stepping Stone?

As one of the lowest paying occupations in Oregon, farm work can be the work of individuals with few other options. According to the 2001-02 National Agricultural Workers Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, most farmworkers (72%) anticipate working in agriculture for more than five years. Legal status in large part determines a farmworkers perceived employment options outside the agricultural sector. Citizens are three times as likely as unauthorized workers to believe that they could obtain a non-farm job within a month. Conversely, unauthorized respondents had worked in agriculture for fewer years than authorized workers.

Processing tends to increase the profitability of farming by adding value to farm products. Similarly specialty or niche crops such as heirloom varieties are another way to reap greater profits. Value-added by processing and handling varies greatly from one commodity to another. Fruits and vegetables generally are processed within Oregon, contributing significant value. Wheat and livestock are exported out of state prior to processing and added value accrues elsewhere.

Low-income immigrant farmers may face specific barriers preventing them from farming these higher value products. John Haines, Executive Director of MercyCorpsNW, identified several of the reasons. They may face challenges in delivering food to markets. Language may also be a barrier in terms of marketing products and negotiating with distributors or grocers. They may also face difficulties in basic ordering seeds or supplies. Some Latino farmers may also be illiterate in Spanish, which would add additional barriers to running a successful business.

### Pitfalls of Entrepreneurship for Low-skilled Workers

There has been a great rise in self employment in the last three decades, leading to a belief that entrepreneurship can be an panacea for individual and community economic benefit. A more nuanced approach is necessary: education and job skills can do far more in raising low skill workers out of poverty. A recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California on entrepreneurship in that state found that although they make up nearly half of the business owners in the state, low skill entrepreneurs (those with a high school diploma or less) fare less well than their higher skill

counterparts. Particularly important to our project, they typical low skill entrepreneur earns less annually than low skill wage earners do. Long-term economic benefits of entrepreneurship for low skill immigrants differed by gender. While successful self-employed low skill immigrant men can break free from poverty (the threshold was around 3 years), their female counterparts were not able to earn enough to escape poverty. Therefore, because the earnings gains between low and high skilled workers (both employees and entrepreneurs) are so great, PPIC advocates skills training over policies encouraging entrepreneurship. In our research, have identified several training and mentorship programs that build in-demand job skills as well as skills for business development necessary to break free of poverty. (Entrepreneurship among California's Low-skilled Workers, Public Policy Institute of California, April 2010).

## **LATINOS AS FUTURE FARMERS**

Between 1997-2002, the proportion of US farms reporting "Spanish, Hispanic or Latino" principal operators grew from 1.51 percent to 2.37 percent. There are several key variables that strengthen the case for drawing from the pool of Latino immigrant farmworkers as the farming landowners of the future.

A 2003 survey of 475 Latinos living in central Washington found that the vast majority of Latinos have a positive view of agricultural work and say they will encourage their children to pursue agricultural careers. The authors of this study find this to be particularly heartening: "As traditional rural populations eschew agriculture, and enrollments in agricultural programs of study decline, Latino agriculturalists and their children are a significant pool from which future farmers and professional agriculturalists can be cultivated."

Many Latino communities can galvanize nontraditional financing arrangements in order to skirt bank credit requirements. For example, in one case a farmer's former employer co-signed for a small loan and banks were subsequently willing to loan after he showed that he was a successful farmer.

Latino farmers often practice organic farming more willingly because they see firsthand the detrimental effects of pesticides on their family members. As well, they are able to charge a premium for organic produce. In addition, many Latino farmers have a desire to give back to their community in the form of donations to food banks or informally by, for example, announcing that the end of season crops are available for everyone just before the first frost.

### **Barriers to Entry**

Farming is a difficult industry to gain entry, for small-scale and disadvantaged would-be farmers alike. Marketing expenses for small farms limit opportunity. Grocery chains want to buy vegetables in truckloads, which come from large-scale factory farms. Small farmers have to be not only growers but also marketers. Start up costs limit many potential farmers from farming. In addition to one-time expenses of equipment and land farmers yearly have to buy fertilizer, seeds, and water. These expenses are made before any income is generated which is limiting to potential farmers without secure savings or credit. In the case of one Latino farmer, hired labor makes up 51% of expenses, whereas fuel/machinery repair make up 26% of expenses.

Small farmers are also challenged to keep up with changing demands. In order to stay profitable they must continually improve their businesses by offering niche products. This however can involve stiff competition with other local small-scale farmers who are going after the same niche market. Small farmers from the New England survey also expressed that competing with larger farms at farmers markets is challenging because they are unable to grow the same quantity.

Farmers are also challenged by food prices that are declining due to international competition. Due to high land costs and low incomes, many small farmers lease farmland. Leasing land while more affordable leaves farmers vulnerable to a sudden loss of many years worth of work on the land.

Building up fertile soil and designing a farm layout takes years to perfect, yet when land is not owned that effort can easily be lost (Erskine, 2009). Lost also is the identity of the farm, patrons come to develop allegiances to a place and a constantly moving farm will likely have a harder time maintaining a strong clientele.

## **MARKETS, BRANDING & CONSUMER DEMAND**

Portland, Oregon, one of the leading cities in the sustainability movement, provides farmers with significant demand for local, organic, and humanely harvested farm products. Farmers markets in the metro area are strongly supported and economically successful. There are great opportunities for farmers interested in meeting this demand. However, there are serious barriers to accessing the local food market for emerging and immigrant farmers, including language and cultural barriers, social networks, distribution and logistics, as well as general awareness of consumer preferences. We found several possible ways to match small scale Latino farmers to consumer demand for locally grown produce, including Community Supported Agriculture, online matching of suppliers and buyers, as well as the possibility of a regional produce brand. In all these endeavors, consumer perceptions are critical to financial success: certification, brand recognition, and personal relationships translate into premium pricing and loyalty. Here too is an opportunity to expand consumers' expectations for local produce. Certifying worker conditions (via PCUN certification, fair trade, or other means) – positively affects all farm workers when consumers demand transparency, asking whether workers were paid well and treated humanely.

### **Community Supported Agriculture**

CSAs are becoming an important alternative for small farmers in Washington County. Currently there are four CSAs in Washington County. CSA farmers in Washington County estimate that they can gross between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per acre from a small CSA operation, making small land plots more viable.

According to a CSA operator we interviewed, there is latent demand for CSA shares in Washington County. A 2009 nationwide survey showed that the main surge in demand comes from consumer interest in locally grown and/or organic foods, word of mouth from existing shareholders, and product quality. CSA farmers are usually younger, new farmers, more educated than traditional farmers. More women are involved. Many do not own land. The two greatest factors in setting CSA share price are (1) prices at other local CSAs and (2) overhead or fixed costs of production. For most CSA operators, diversity is key for crop survival and economic viability. CSA operators are proud of the amount of crops they grow. In addition, value-added products such as garlic and pepper wreaths, and jam are important income generators, sometimes providing over half of gross income.

Development of a CSA model for new Latino farmers could be an important model for income generation. In a case study of new Latino farmers in Minnesota, the farmers switched from retail avenues to a common CSA and wholesale distributing since marketing to individual stores and restaurants was very time consuming. By selling in farmers' markets/CSAs, farmers can charge more for organic produce. If selling wholesale, some farmers would not be able to cover the cost of production.

### **FoodHUB**

One direct marketing technique that is unique to the Portland area is FoodHub, which offers a robust online platform connecting a comprehensive catalog of buyers and sellers trading over 1,000 agricultural products. This web-based tool could be useful for Latino farmers if they read and write adequate English (or if the interface included translation), and if they have reliable access to the internet.

### **A Regional Produce Brand**

Given the strong demand for local and organic produce in the Portland metropolitan region, there is opportunity to create a trusted regional brand for local producers. We spoke with a planner in Clackamas County interested in doing just that: putting the pieces together to form a regional brand for small family farmers in the 6-county Portland metro. Following two successful models in California and Boston, MA, this would require establishment of a non-profit agent, responsible for marketing, branding, public relations and coordination; a mid-tier aggregator working to connect local farmers and a large-scale distributor, who would otherwise be unable to access the producers due to scale. Once established, consumers would have access to a brand of locally grown produce available in major grocery chains and accessible by institutional buyers (hospitals, schools, major employers) who demand reliable, safe, consistent quantities in bulk.

## **MENTORSHIP**

Due to steep start up costs and low wages for farm employees there is a saying among aspiring farmers about breaking into the industry: “there are two ways to get into farming: marry in or inherit.” Farm Link programs and mentorship programs are one way to broaden access to the profession. We found several successful contemporary examples of mentorship programs for beginning immigrant and/or Latino farmers.

### **Minnesota Food Association - The New Immigrant Agriculture Project**

Established in 1998, this program stemmed from three years of contracting with local Minnesota farmers to grow food for legal immigrants removed from the Food Stamp Program. Program managers saw an opportunity to provide training, and they receiving funding through USDA’s Farm Service Agency to launch the New Immigrant Agriculture Project. During the first three years, the project worked with Southeast Asian (particularly Hmong), Hispanic/Latino, and West African (particularly Somali) immigrants. They also started publishing a farm business management curriculum, *Breaking New Ground*.

In 2004, MFA launched the 250-acre Agricultural Training Center, including the May Farm CSA, as a place to provide a full array of education and training opportunities for new immigrants interested in agriculture as a career and/or lifestyle. NIAP anticipates that in 2006, 10-15 farmers will grow on a minimum of three acres each and will successfully complete yearlong classes on farm business management. Additionally, more than 30 micro-farmers will grow on a half-acre each for family consumption and market, and upwards of 40 community gardeners will grow on smaller parcels.

*Implications for Oregon new Latino farmers:*

This project provided small plots to persons with limited resources who are interested in farming. Those interested in producing on a market scale, while learning the “ins” and “outs” of sustainable/organic farming and farm business management can enroll in the Immigrant Agriculture Project.

### **MercyCorps Northwest (MCNW) - New American Agriculture Project**

This project's goal is to connect the emerging local food movement with stream of immigrants in need of income and livelihood. The project seeks to build skills, income, connection to urban markets, and ultimately catalyze independent operations by the immigrants. MCNW hopes to facilitate purchase of land near urban areas. Approximately 18 families are involved. The diversity of languages among refugees is a barrier for farmers trying to market their goods. The farmers do not form a cooperative, but they do share a farm stand in Damascus. This program is small compared to MCNW’s other programs and is difficult to scale because so much hands-on training and services are needed.

### **Adelante Mujeres - Adelante Agricultura**

Adelante Mujeres is a nonprofit in Washington County working for microenterprise development through sustainable agriculture. The Adelante Agricultura program has three objectives:

- Increase opportunities for the farmers of tomorrow through entrepreneurial training, mentoring and access to land.
- Strengthen direct marketing capacity of Spanish speaking small-scale farmers with limited resources.
- Advocate ecological awareness and action for a sustainable economy and healthy communities.

To achieve these objectives, the program offers a sustainable farming course, access to land, direct marketing support, business counseling and access to alternative capital.

### **Verde**

Verde is nonprofit in Portland, OR offering environmental job training to improve the economic health of disadvantaged communities. In addition to job skills training in nurseries, landscape and energy efficiency, Verde offers employment opportunities with their in-house enterprises (nursery, landscape and energy businesses), as well as business skills training to encourage small business development among their participants. Verde was born out of an effort at the Hacienda CDC to foster environmentally-focused microenterprise opportunities tenants in their housing developments. A scoping brief prepared by Ecotrust helped to identify industry sectors with favorable or growing demand, moderate entry expense and teachable job skills. Verde now has three businesses employing more than a dozen employees from the training program. The program has not yet graduated any of the participants; the executive director estimates that 3 years of training and experience is sufficient to gain skills and transition to other opportunities.

## **VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING**

### **MicroMercantes Program - Hacienda CDC**

This program for tamale vendors is aimed at women who are residents of Hacienda. Pairs of women rotate Saturday shifts to give more women a chance to participate. MicroMercantes now sells tamales at nine farmers markets in the metro area. At least 80 percent of the vegetables come from farmers markets, and meats are sourced from local grocers. MicroMercantes also offers typical Mexican beverages made of natural fresh ingredients. The women prepare them using traditional methods.

#### **Outcomes:**

- Each tamale vendor's annual income has increased by at least 20 percent due to participation in the program.
- Beyond the immediate income gains, MicroMercantes' vendors gain entrepreneurial experience that provides a path for upward mobility.

### **Community Kitchens**

Community kitchens provide opportunities for food-related entrepreneurship but often have high operating costs. Non-profit kitchens often need long-term supporting grants or aggressive marketing plans to stay in business. West CAP Crossroads Kitchen Incubator is located in a visible downtown location and will house an established retail client. This client, a natural food cooperative, will act as an anchor tenant and a retail outlet for kitchen clients.

For-profit kitchens typically stay in business by charging higher fees than non-profit kitchens. Some have developed labels and product lines to supplement rental fee income.

Nationally, universities and state governments support some of the most successful community kitchens because they can offer additional regulatory and technical assistance and have access to public funding and resources as key to their success.

## **PROGRAMMING**

### **Oregon State Agricultural Extension Service**

The Ag Service provides a program called Growing Farms, which is designed to provide beginning specialty crop and livestock farmers with the tools and knowledge to manage both the biological and financial risks of farming. The course includes both classroom and field sessions taught by OSU faculty, experienced farmers, and professionals. Participants gain the skills to assess their farm enterprise and develop a whole farm plan. The program attracts 30-35 participants each year at each site. The program also produces a newsletter and website that generates over 1,000,000 users per year. In addition, the OSU Small Farms Conference had over 600 attendees this year and has been growing steadily since it was started about 6 years ago.

**Rural Roots** (1997), a small acreage farming organization, began partnering and pooling resources with the University of Idaho and Washington State University to offer small acreage educational programs (workshops, farm tours and conferences, and conducting direct marketing research).

They found participants needed:

1. More in-depth programs on all aspects of small acreage production and business planning;
2. To learn from successful farmers and others that are "doing it;"
3. More on-farm experience; and
4. Programs that allow people with full-time jobs and families to participate.

### **Washington State University Agricultural Extension**

WSU Ag Extension provides courses on business and farm management, followed by one-on-one counseling. In addition they provide a regular one-hour broadcast on Spanish-language Radio Cadena (KDNA), "Farm walks" that promote hands-on learning and information exchange among producers and university specialists, forums with state lawmakers and state and federal agency officials to discuss drought mitigation strategies and resources. Finally, WSU offers a Spanish-language hotline; assistance accessing federal programs; sessions on completing loan applications; and support for farmer-led organizations.

### **Federal Funding for Technical Assistance**

- ATTRA Risk Management - The program currently has five priority topics for grants: production risk, price or marketing risk, human resources risk; legal risk (e.g., liability and environmental risk); and financial risk.
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers – This program provides grants to educational institutions and nonprofit organizations that offer outreach, training and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

## **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

If successful, microenterprise and self-employment can be a path out of poverty to economic independence and great community benefit for farmworkers. However, many low skill entrepreneurs work more hours and earn less annually than their low skill wage-earning counterparts. Long-term financial gains for low skill immigrant men are relatively high; women entrepreneurs rarely come to earn enough to escape poverty. Therefore skill development programs, such as the mentorship models that transfer valuable job and business skills, can do most to improve the economic outcomes for low-skilled farmworkers, whether they have entrepreneurial aspirations or not. We see programs such as Verde that provide participants with in-demand job skills, temporary employment opportunities, and business skill training, as one of the best ways to foster economic success and independence for farmworkers.

- Farm labor is low skill, low pay; it is also necessary for the Oregon agriculture industry.
- Small-scale farming has significant barriers to entry.
- The Portland-area food market has significant latent demand for local produce and other farm products.



- Education and job skills training is the most reliable means to lifting low skill workers from poverty.
- There is a wealth of examples of successful programs working to better the economic livelihood of farmworkers and others through agricultural and ecological microenterprise opportunities.



**Memorandum**  
**DRAFT – Internal Use Only**

To: Jessy Olson, Rose Architectural Fellow, Farmworker Housing Development Corporation

From: Tierra Planning

Date: April 2, 2010

Subject: Land Use Regulations in Washington County

**OVERVIEW:** The purpose of this memo is to review the current land uses in Washington County and applicable regulations that affect agricultural and rural areas, particularly those that govern the provision of farmworker housing and on-farm commercial activities. Notably, agricultural land use regulations must be understood in both the statewide and county-specific context, given the strength of Oregon’s statewide planning system.

**Current Land Use:** Washington County has a mix of urban and rural uses, with a substantial focus on agriculture.

Washington County is located within the fertile Tualatin Valley which serves as the drainage for the Tualatin River. The eastern portion of the 727 square miles is considered the urbanized half of the county with several large cities, while the west side of the county borders the Oregon Coastal Range. Almost all of the urbanized County land is located within the Portland-Metro Urban Growth Boundary, with additional unincorporated rural lands slated for future development under the recent Urban/Rural Reserves planning process.

One of the primary uses of rural land in the county is for agriculture. Washington County ranks fifth in the state of Oregon in value of agricultural production, with just over \$300 million in cash receipts reported in 2008. The average farm in Washington County reported \$176,820 in sales. The 2007 Agricultural Census for Washington County estimates nearly 203 sq mi of land are utilized in some form of farm production, which constitutes 28% of the county’s total land area. The median farm size is 73 acres, up from 69 acre average in 2002 despite overall acreage decreasing, but the majority of Washington County farms are 10-49 acres in size, indicating that there are many very small and very large farms. Of farmland currently in production in Washington County, 72% is actively used for crops, as opposed to pasture, woodlands, or other uses. The top five commodities in Washington County for the year 2009 include nursery crops (\$110 million), greenhouse crops (\$29 million), tall fescue (\$14 million), wheat (\$10 million), and wine grapes (\$9 million). Despite the economic value of farm products, over half of farmers in Washington County report “Other” as their primary occupation, suggesting that many farmers in Washington County rely on other jobs for income, possibly in the Metro area.

The 1980 Comprehensive Plan for Washington County is the most recent plan governing land use in the county. The plan includes urban planning, rural/resource land planning, community, transportation, and other plans. “Volume III: The Rural/Natural Resources Element” of the Washington County Comprehensive Plan serves as the framework for all land outside of the Urban Growth Boundary within the County. Incorporated land within the UGB is addressed with the “Comprehensive Framework Plan for the Urban Area,” and unincorporated areas are addressed within eleven individual community plans. All plans repeatedly emphasize the importance of coordinating with other agencies, primarily with regional and local agencies within the UGB and the state outside of the UGB. Within the Rural/Natural Resource areas, the County has the primary responsibility of implementing Goals 3 and 4 of the Oregon Statewide Planning Program which define Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) areas and Exclusion Forest and Conservation Use (EFC) areas.

**Rural/Agricultural Land Use Mechanisms:** There are a variety of land use mechanisms in place that govern rural land use and agricultural uses in the County. The majority of the regulations originate at the state level, but there are several regulations specific to Washington County as well.

### **Statewide Regulations**

**Agricultural zoning:** Goal 3 of the statewide establishes a priority “to preserve and maintain agricultural lands.” Largely this has been achieved with the designation of EFU zoning, large-lot agricultural zoning with a minimum size of 80 or 160 acres, west or east of the Cascades, respectively. Originally there were six allowed uses on EFU lands designed to support agricultural activities and rural communities, but there are now over 50 allowed uses, divided into outright permitted uses and conditional uses. Allowed uses are intended to meet the needs of rural communities, originally including educational, religious, and recreational uses, utility services, and meeting places for the rural community, and have expanded to include everything from destination resorts to greyhound kennels and biofuels processing. Uses are defined at the state level, and LCDC continues to refine the uses allowed and any conditions associated with such uses. Following the *Brentmar v. Jackson County* decision, no additional conditions can be placed on allowed uses at the county level; counties must implement the EFU zoning code as written by the state.

The main benefits of EFU zoning is that it is applied fairly uniformly across the state and provides broad protection for all agricultural lands at very low cost to the state and counties. One possible concern is that EFU zoning does not provide permanent protection, and could be undone if the statewide planning system were ever seriously challenged, such as Measure 37.

**Urban growth boundaries (UGBs):** The UGBs of the various cities in Washington County play a critical role in preserving agricultural area by limiting the extent of urban development. UGBs are the flip side of EFU zoning: UGBs draw a line beyond which urban development is not allowed, permitting that land to be zoned for agricultural and rural use. UGBs are a regulatory approach to preventing sprawl that has been applied fairly consistently over the last 40 years. By law, Metro must reexamine the extent of the UGB every five years to ensure that it contains sufficient land to accommodate the projected residential and industrial growth projected for the next 20 years.

Metro has recently pioneered a longer-term approach to plan for regional growth with the designation of Urban and Rural Reserves. With county input, Metro has identified areas best suited for growth and inclusion in the UGB over the next 40 years, when and if expansion is necessary, and significant resource lands, including farms and forests, to be protected from growth in Rural Reserves. A map of Washington County Urban and Rural Reserves is available at: [http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/core4\\_regionalreserves\\_021810\\_wash.pdf](http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/core4_regionalreserves_021810_wash.pdf).

**Right-to-farm laws:** A companion to EFU zoning, right-to-farm laws protect owners of agricultural land who actively engage in standard agricultural practices from nuisance suits from nearby land owners, who may be offended by the dust or noise created by certain agricultural practices. The laws are designed to emphasize the rights of agricultural users and protect farmers from residential landowners who “come to the nuisance” by moving to an agricultural area.

**Differential taxation:** All EFU lands and other designated agricultural parcels are assessed according to their use value for agricultural, rather than the value of the land on the open real estate market. This helps to lower property taxes for agricultural landowners and protect them from speculative rises in property values which would otherwise raise their tax burden, potentially making their agricultural activities unprofitable.

Although beneficial to active farmers, one concern is how to limit the abuse of differential taxation by other rural landowners who are not engaged in agriculture. Anecdotes tell of rural residential property owners who simply plant a minimum number of Christmas trees to qualify for the differential tax rates. The concern, beyond the loss of tax revenue to the state, is that by artificially lowering tax rates for rural property owners, we subsidize the purchase of agricultural lands for non-agricultural uses, decreasing the available supply of viable farmland and increasing potential conflicts between farmers and non-farmers.

### **County Specific Regulations**

**Rural Zoning:** Prior to the creation of EFU lands, there was a long history of parcelization in Washington County which has created a range of smaller agricultural parcels zoned AF-20, AF-10 and AF-5, in addition to three other rural zones shown in the chart below. Generally, Washington County code permits activities that directly involve the productivity of the farm and/or the rural and agricultural physical and economic characteristics of the area. Uses are divided into three categories: Type 1 (permitted uses), Type 2 (uses presumed appropriate but requiring some discretionary review), and Type 3 (conditional uses).

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Notable Uses</b>
AF-5	Agricultural and forest, 5 acre minimum	Type 3: Housing for seasonal farm and forest labor
AF-10	Agricultural and forest, 10 acre minimum	Type 3: Housing for seasonal farm and forest labor
AF-20	Agricultural and forest, 20-80 acre minimum	Type 2: Accessory dwelling units Type 2: Facilities for processing farm crops Type 2: Commercial activities in conjunction with farm use Type 2: Community centers

RR-5	Rural residential, 5 acre minimum	Type 1: Residential use
R-COM	Rural commercial	Type 1: Residential use Type 2: Variety of commercial uses
R-IND	Rural industrial	Type 2: Variety of industrial uses

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of these parcels are not used strictly for agricultural use for two reasons: their desirability as rural residences near the urban core for wealthy landowners seeking “rural ranchettes,” and the resulting high cost of such parcels which makes them unaffordable for beginning farmers looking to use the land for actual farming.

**Marginal Lands:** Washington County is one of two Marginal Lands counties in the states, a byproduct of a 1983 state statute that has since been repealed. Land deemed appropriate for agricultural use based on soils but unfit for productive agricultural use due to existing uses, dramatic geography, etc was given “Marginal Land” status with certain outright exemptions that made it legislatively different from EFU/EFC areas. However, very little land in the County was affected by the Marginal Lands designation and the program has largely been abandoned.

**Rural Centers:** Counties also have the ability to designate unincorporated rural communities, such as a crossroads with a post office and a school, as rural centers, where additional uses beyond those allowed in EFU lands may be allowed. However, this provision is rarely used anymore and LCDC has limited the creation of new rural centers and only recognizes previously existing rural centers.

**Allowed Uses on EFU Lands:** Among the many uses authorized by state statutes, both housing for farmworkers and some types of on-farm commercial activities are allowed on EFU parcels.

Oregon state law has two subsections of state law that describe the permitted uses in EFU areas. There are two types of uses: a handful of uses are permitted outright so long as they meet additional requirements defined in the regulation (referred to as “sub 1” uses) and a longer list of conditional uses that are subject to some local discretion and a quasi-judicial process (referred to as “sub 2” uses). Washington County, according to state law, must implement sub 1 uses outright, where as sub 2 uses can be weighed against the plans and goals of the specific county.

Permitting some non-farm uses and dwellings “recognizes that within farm zones there are areas that can accommodate rural uses supportive of the local farm community, or a dwelling on a small lot, without affecting an area’s overall viability for farm production,” (Ed Sullivan, 2010). The most controversial type of use subject to approval in an EFU zone is a residential dwelling. According to Oregon statute, a farm related dwelling “requires that it be customarily provided in conjunction with farm use,” (Sullivan, 2010). Following Statewide Land Use Goal 3, LCDC further requires that a farm dwelling be approved “only if the existing parcel is determined to be appropriate for the continuation of the existing commercial agricultural enterprise within the area,” (Sullivan, 2010). One condition for obtaining a building permit for a new residence is proof of active and profitable agricultural activity. Would-be homebuilders must show that they have earned \$80,000 from the sale of agricultural products annually for two consecutive years as part of their application for a new primary dwelling unit.

**Farmworker housing** is allowed on EFU land under the definition of “accessory farm dwelling” and requires approval from the County through a Type 2 procedure.

Changes at the state level have redefined the definition of “accessory farm dwelling uses” to include farmworker housing, rather than defining it as a separate use. Accessory farm dwellings are defined by OAR 660-033-0130(24). The key provision is that residents of accessory farm dwellings must be “principally engaged in the farm use of the land and whose seasonal or year-round assistance in the management of the farm use, such as planting, harvesting, marketing or caring for livestock, is or will be required by the farm operator.” Washington County reviews applications for an accessory farm dwelling via the Type II procedure, which includes a hearing and public testimony, to ensure that all conditions of the regulation are met. A farm/forest waiver of remonstrance against accepted farm and forest practices is also required for approval.

In order to build on-farm farmworker housing the applicant bears the burden of proof and must substantiate the need for farmworker housing for the grower’s operation. Farm operations may be on more than one property and they do not have to be immediately adjacent. The burden is on the applicant. In order to document need, the County relies on an OSU extension report, “Characteristics of Commercial Agriculture in Washington County.” The report includes a profile of commercial agriculture characteristics in the county. There are six operation agriculture operation types including berries, field crops/vegetables, grains, horticulture, livestock, and tree fruits. Each operation type has a specified capacity that would be used to determine the need for on-farm farmworker housing.

A variety of **on-farm income-generating activities** are allowed in Washington County under EFU regulations and county-specific zoning regulations, including farmstands and processing.

One of the most common commercial uses on EFU land is farmstands, which is a sub 1 allowed use. There are two key limitations. First, 75% or more of the gross sales from a farmstand must be generated from sales of agricultural products produced on the farm or in the local agricultural area, which includes the entire state of Oregon and any Washington counties adjoining Washington County. Second, up to 25% of the gross sales may come from fee-based activities, sale of products from outside of the local agricultural area (such as bananas and mangoes), or retail incidental items (soda, t-shirts, canning products). The fee-based activities must “promote the sale of farm crops or livestock sold at the farm stand.” Different counties interpret the fee-based activity provision more or less strictly. Traditionally, corn mazes are upheld as “promotional” activities along with pumpkin patches and harvest festivals, but activities that use the farm as an event venue, such as for a concert or wedding, have been denied, although interpretation has been uneven.

Enforcement of the farmstand regulations varies from county to county. Washington County does not actively enforce farmstand regulations, including the 75/25 rule, even if it receives complaints about certain farmstands. There are currently over 100 farmstands in Washington County, including farm markets, u-picks, nurseries, lavender farms, pumpkin patches, and Christmas tree farms.

Future changes to the farmstand regulations may emerge after 2013, when a new regulation designed to regulate similar fee-based activities allowed at wineries on EFU land comes up for review. LCDC has indicated that they will more comprehensively review the full sweep of activities and special events allowed at both farms and wineries on EFU land at the time.

Processing facilities for farm crops less than 10,000 sq ft in size are also a sub 1 allowed use in EFU zones.

#### **Appendix A: Regulations on Accessory Farm Dwelling Units per OAR 660-033-0130(24)**

(24) Accessory farm dwellings as defined by subsection (24)(e) of this section may be considered customarily provided in conjunction with farm use if:

(a) Each accessory farm dwelling meets all the following requirements:

(A) The accessory farm dwelling will be occupied by a person or persons who will be principally engaged in the farm use of the land and whose seasonal or year-round assistance in the management of the farm use, such as planting, harvesting, marketing or caring for livestock, is or will be required by the farm operator; and

(B) The accessory farm dwelling will be located:

(i) On the same lot or parcel as the primary farm dwelling; or

(ii) On the same tract as the primary farm dwelling when the lot or parcel on which the accessory farm dwelling will be sited is consolidated into a single parcel with all other contiguous lots and parcels in the tract; or

(iii) On a lot or parcel on which the primary farm dwelling is not located, when the accessory farm dwelling is limited to only a manufactured dwelling with a deed restriction. The deed restriction shall be filed with the county clerk and require the manufactured dwelling to be removed when the lot or parcel is conveyed to another party. The manufactured dwelling may remain if it is reappraised under these rules; or

(iv) On a lot or parcel on which the primary farm dwelling is not located, when the accessory farm dwelling is limited to only attached multi-unit residential structures allowed by the applicable state building code or similar types of farm labor housing as existing farm labor housing on the farm or ranch operation registered with the Department of Consumer and Business Services, Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division under ORS 658.750. A county shall require all accessory farm dwellings approved under this subparagraph to be removed, demolished or converted to a nonresidential use when farm worker housing is no longer required; or

(v) On a lot or parcel on which the primary farm dwelling is not located, when the accessory farm dwelling is located on a lot or parcel at least the size of the applicable minimum lot size under ORS 215.780 and the lot or parcel complies with the gross farm income requirements in OAR 660-033-0135(5) or (7), whichever is applicable; and

(C) There is no other dwelling on the lands designated for exclusive farm use owned by the farm operator that is vacant or currently occupied by persons not working on the subject farm or ranch and that could reasonably be used as an accessory farm dwelling.

(b) In addition to the requirements in subsection (a) of this section, the primary farm dwelling to which the proposed dwelling would be accessory, meets one of the following:



(A) On land not identified as high-value farmland, the primary farm dwelling is located on a farm or ranch operation that is currently employed for farm use, as defined in ORS 215.203, and produced in the last two years or three of the last five years the lower of the following:

(i) At least \$40,000 in gross annual income from the sale of farm products. In determining the gross income, the cost of purchased livestock shall be deducted from the total gross income attributed to the tract.

(ii) Gross annual income of at least the midpoint of the median income range of gross annual sales for farms in the county with the gross annual sales of \$10,000 or more according to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, Oregon. In determining the gross income, the cost of purchased livestock shall be deducted from the total gross income attributed to the tract; or

(B) On land identified as high-value farmland, the primary farm dwelling is located on a farm or ranch operation that is currently employed for farm use, as defined in ORS 215.203, and produced at least \$80,000 in gross annual income from the sale of farm products in the last two years or three of the last five years. In determining the gross income, the cost of purchased livestock shall be deducted from the total gross income attributed to the tract; or

(C) On land not identified as high-value farmland in counties that have adopted marginal lands provisions under ORS 197.247 (1991 Edition) before January 1, 1993, the primary farm dwelling is located on a farm or ranch operation that meets the standards and requirements of ORS 215.213(2)(a) or (b) or OAR 660-033-0130(24)(b)(A); or

(D) It is located on a commercial dairy farm as defined by OAR 660-033-0135(11); and

(i) The building permits, if required, have been issued and construction has begun or been completed for the buildings and animal waste facilities required for a commercial dairy farm; and

(ii) The Oregon Department of Agriculture has approved a permit for a "confined animal feeding operation" under ORS 468B.050 and 468B.200 to 468B.230; and

(iii) A Producer License for the sale of dairy products under ORS 621.072.

(c) The governing body of a county shall not approve any proposed division of a lot or parcel for an accessory farm dwelling approved pursuant to this section. If it is determined that an accessory farm dwelling satisfies the requirements of OAR 660-033-0135, a parcel may be created consistent with the minimum parcel size requirements in OAR 660-033-0100;

(d) An accessory farm dwelling approved pursuant to this section cannot later be used to satisfy the requirements for a dwelling not provided in conjunction with farm use pursuant to section (4) of this rule.

(e) For the purposes of OAR 660-033-0130(24), "accessory farm dwelling" includes all types of residential structures allowed by the applicable state building code."

# G. TEAM MEMBER BIOGRAPHIES

Tierra Planning is a team of students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Program at Portland State University. The culmination of the MURP Program is a client-focused, two-term workshop project. Students work in teams and select a real world client and planning problem and project to work on. Tierra Planning worked with experts in the land use, economic development, and housing professions as well as with area farmers and farmworkers to conduct research and make recommendations regarding housing and economic opportunities for farmworkers.



# BIOGRAPHIES

*Raihana Ansary* is an urban planner specializing in land use. Particular areas of interest include public involvement, sustainable development, and social equity planning. Raihana received her Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Portland State University in June 2010. Here, she also received a Real Estate Development Certificate. Raihana previously earned her Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Political Science from the University of Oregon in June 2004.

*Nadine Appenbrink* is urban planner with an interest in environmental planning, land use and sustainable design. In June 2010, Nadine received her Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Portland State University. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Science from the University of Kansas, and worked for three years as an environmental scientist. Before coming to Oregon, Nadine studied at the Ecosa Institute in Arizona, where she gained holistic ecological design skills.

*Elizabeth Decker* is an urban planner specializing in policy research and development, GIS mapping and developing communication tools for multiple media. Particular areas of interest include urban adaptation for climate change and food systems. Elizabeth plans to complete her MURP degree from PSU in early 2011. Her work in the private sector includes two years experience as the communications and outreach coordinator for civil engineering consultanting firm Wallis Engineering. Prior educational and work experience includes a BA in History from Rice University and two years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Azerbaijan.

*Kate McQuillan* is a community planner who specializes in community development, civic engagement, general land use processes, food systems planning, and social equity. Kate earned her Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Portland State University in June 2010. In May 2006, Kate earned her Bachelors of Arts in Environmental Studies and Spanish from Mount Holyoke College located South Hadley, Massachusetts.

*Karla Nelson* is an urban planner with notable capabilities in research, GIS mapping, and stakeholder interviews. She graduated in June 2010 with a Master's of Urban and Regional Planning at Portland State University, where she specialized in land use. Karla is passionate about affordable housing, public involvement and social equity.

*Emily Picha* is an urban planner specializing in economic development, public outreach, data analysis, and web development. She has a passion for working with groups who traditionally are left out of the planning process and transforming complex planning analysis into a public-friendly, digestible format.

## CONTACT US:

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Please visit our website: <http://tierraplanning.org/>

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