Interview with David Beller, Mercy Corp NW, 2010 (audio)

David Beller

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Interview Index:

Interviewee: David Beller
Interviewer: Kyle Koonce
Date: 2/25/10
Location of Interview: MercyCorp Office, NW Naito Parkway, Portland, OR
Research Assistant: Dan Stillinger
Interview Series: Sustaining Northwest Landscapes & Communities
Recording Equipment: Digital Recorder (Windows Media Audio Files) With an External Omni directional Microphone

Time: Notes:
0-1m Intro, Name, Date, Location, Group, Introduce Interviewee
1m-2m Interviewee Biography, employment position, background
1m-2m “What is MercyCorp all about?”
   “Helping limited income entrepreneurs improve their lives and economic standing through sustainable agriculture.”
3m “We’re hoping to start working with African refugees”
4m “How do you acquire the plots of land?”
5m “English language skills restrict the progress of refugees and the potential for their economic situations.”
8m “We have great success with farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs as a distribution outlet.”
9m “What kinds of costs are associated with the project?”
9m “Local funding, but mostly from federal grants”
11m “It is difficult to leverage and organize tax breaks”
12m “Diggable Cities -> viable for land acquisition?”
13m “The city has a lot of unused land, but often has plans for it years down the line”
14m “There are a lot of bureaucratic barriers to our progress”
16m “Our practices are required to be organic”
16m “We try to maximize the flavor and quality of our products”
18m “How do you promote your projects?”
   “Urban farming can be empowering to those who want to, but don’t have access to farming”
“How do you find participants?”
“Various groups that recommend potential refugee farmers – difficulty building connections and acquiring land grants.”

“What do you see as the biggest future challenge?”
“Making income to suit our marketing issues.”

“We are exploring a centralized marketing system, and designing a new product distribution organization.”

“High costs to ensure good water sources and reduce soil toxicity.”