New Arrivals: Options for Successful Resettlement of the Somali Bantu

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NEW ARRIVALS:
Options for Successful Resettlement of the Somali Bantu

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2004 Planning Workshop
Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program
Portland State University
Planning Workshop, the capstone course for Portland State University’s Master of Urban and Regional Planning program, provides graduate students with professional planning experience. Student teams develop consulting contracts with clients for planning services that address local and regional issues and the students' personal and professional interests. The Workshop provides experience in planning for constructive social and environmental change, while considering the planner's ethical responsibility to serve the public interest.
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Our Team
RefugEEE Consulting formed around a mutual concern for refugee issues and an interest in innovative approaches to community development that emphasizes equity, environment and economic opportunity.

Members in Focus
Aaron Abrams, BA, MURP, has a varied background in a wide range of writing, editing, technical design and printing skills, along with training in Oregon land use law and site design.

Kristin Dahl, BA, MURP, brings to the team a strong sense of leadership in and experience with sustainable development and project management, building on a B.A. in Economics and International Studies.

Ryan Hunter, BA, MURP, has spent the past several years working as an organizer for environmental and fair trade non-profits in Oregon and Alaska, along with community development activities with numerous non-profit organizations in Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Jennifer Kenny, BA, MURP, spent a number of years reporting on social and environmental issues for newspapers and magazines in the western United States and Ireland, along with community development experience among a variety of non-profits.

Angela Southwick, BA, MURP, has focused her professional career on empowering, organizing and engaging strong communities. Additionally, she assisted in the organization and management of the Milwaukie (OR) Sunday Farmers’ Market for four years.
Options for Successful Refugee Resettlement

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In 1999, the US State Department declared the Somali Bantu a persecuted minority group, which cleared the way for nearly 12,000 of them to begin the process of immigration to the US as refugees. In February 2004, after a decade of living in Kenyan refugee camps set up for victims of Somalia's civil war, the first of approximately 200 Somali Bantu began arriving in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan region.

Upon their arrival, a network of government agencies and non-profit charities devoted to assisting with refugee resettlement will handle the Somali Bantu’s initial integration into the region. This assistance includes finding housing, English language instruction, employment training, and job placement. These services usually last anywhere from one to five years and can be disjointed and narrow in scope, offering few resources for building community capacity. This type of assistance, typical of refugee resettlement nationwide, does not address the long-term needs of refugee groups, as service providers often have a difficult time obtaining resources needed to meet even the short-term needs of refugees. Under the current system, refugee populations have experienced problems with unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, crime, and poor mental and physical health (See Appendix D).

While the Somali Bantu have a strong work ethic, are eager to learn English, have a proven record of tenacity and adaptability, and have past experience as a minority group in a challenging environment, they will still face tough challenges integrating with US society. They have high
rates of illiteracy, little formal education, little or no command of the English language, and may not be prepared for the demands of the US job market. Moreover, they are black Muslims in a predominately white Christian country where institutionalized racism can have broad ramifications including greater poverty and illness rates. Being the first wave of Somali Bantu refugees to be resettled in the US, they are further disadvantaged in that they do not have a pre-existing ethnic community from which to draw support, unlike other refugee groups such as the Hmong refugees of Southeast Asia.

For these reasons, resettlement of the Somali Bantu will require a more comprehensive approach to ensure greater success in integrating with US society. The National Somali Bantu Project (NSBP) is committed to pursuing a more comprehensive approach and is interested in connecting the Somali Bantu refugees with their agrarian roots to foster cultural and social ties and provide economic development opportunities. With this goal in mind, the National Somali Bantu Project asked that RefugEEE Consulting investigate the possibility of implementing a comprehensive resettlement approach with an agrarian component that could be pursued once the Somali Bantu refugees have settled into their new environment over the next one to three years. This document serves as a decision-making guide to be used when the National Somali Bantu Project moves forward with its resettlement assistance.
Seven Objectives for Successful Refugee Resettlement

Literature review, research into best practices, interviews with refugees and resettlement experts, and consultations with the National Somali Bantu Project revealed seven key components that contribute to a more successful resettlement experience. Integrating these seven components should be the objective of a comprehensive resettlement project. Place-making activities suggested later in this report are intended to help the Somali Bantu achieve the objectives listed below.

Gaining English Proficiency

Gaining English proficiency as quickly as possible is of utmost importance. English language skills greatly enhance the ability of individuals and communities to navigate successfully in US society, including using the public transit system, obtaining a driver license, finding work, and conversing with one’s work supervisor. A Slavic refugee mentioned, for example, that his previous employer associated English proficiency with intelligence, putting him at a disadvantage because he had very poor English skills. Once English is learned, however, it becomes much easier to learn “the system” and to meet basic needs, allowing for quicker and smoother adaptation to US society. Data from the US Department of Health and Human Services (2001) confirms this fact in showing that English proficiency is directly tied to income and employment levels.
Obtaining a Formal Education
A formal education is important for economic advancement in the US, regardless of whether you’re a native citizen or a refugee. The US Department of Health and Human Services states that formal education is linked to refugees achieving economic self-sufficiency, therefore providing opportunities for a formal education must be a priority of any resettlement effort. African refugees in particular are among the least likely of all refugees to have a formal education upon arrival in the US but are also the most likely to pursue a formal education after arrival (US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

Achieving Economic Self-Sufficiency and Financial Stability
Existing resettlement efforts focus on job training and placement. These programs, however, often place refugees in low paying jobs that do not lift them out of poverty. A more comprehensive approach would assist refugees in obtaining fulfilling living-wage jobs and in generating wealth. In doing so, refugees will be better able to avoid stress, ward against incidental costs, and have a greater sense of purpose and responsibility.

Maintaining Cultural and Social Ties
Another important factor in the resettlement of refugees is their ability to maintain cultural and social ties within their ethnic community. Nathan Ngyun of the Asian Family Center in Portland stated that this is perhaps the most important factor overlooked by current resettlement efforts. Maintaining cultural and social ties may help to reduce substance abuse, crime, and poor mental health, while improving educational attainment. A study on alcohol and drug abuse among displaced persons, for example, suggested that those who adapt to their new environment while retaining important elements of their native culture are less likely to develop substance abuse habits (Johnson 1996). In another example Vang (1998) indicates that Hmong children whose parents have retained strong ties to their traditional culture have obtained higher educational achievement.
Fostering Connections with the Broader Community

Fostering connections with the broader host community can open up valuable opportunities for refugees to avoid misunderstandings or unnecessary conflicts with host communities. Many communities are strongly opposed to low-income housing in their neighborhoods and unfortunately racism may continue to be an issue. Therefore, many non-profit and local agency representatives stress the importance of approaching the receiving community prior to the arrival of refugees and working with important players such as schools, police, social service agencies, landlords, neighborhood coalitions, and so forth in an effort to educate the receiving community and help them prepare for the refugees’ arrival (Community Housing Director & Ngyun 2004).

Efforts to connect with the receiving community can also lead to some very innovative and collaborative projects. The New Entry Project, for example, is a Massachusetts program that links Asian immigrants with “mentor” farmers who lease land to them and share machinery, irrigation, and chores such as plowing and tilling. The program allows the immigrants, many of whom hold full-time jobs, to minimize operating costs and time needed to raise a crop. It also offers support in learning the skills necessary to grow and market vegetables sustainably (Sustainable Agriculture Network 2004).

Ensuring Access to Important Services and Jobs

Resettlement programs should facilitate access to important services, such as public transit, self-sufficiency centers, religious and educational facilities. Portland area Hmong and Slavic refugees note, for example, that proximity to places that teach English, such as elementary schools, high schools, community colleges, and community centers, is important for minimizing commute times and encouraging participation. Moreover, because refugee parents often work long hours and are unavailable to drive their children to school, it is important for the young to be able to walk to school, especially elementary students who are too young to drive or confidently negotiate public transit systems.

Slavic refugees also noted that it is important to live near grocery stores, parks, social services, and locations where community members gather for social or cultural events. Many people also stress the importance of living near both social services and jobs (Sharkova 2004). If refugees are located too far away from services or advocates, for example, they are at a greater risk of being exploited and abused (Community Housing Director 2004). Dissatisfaction with long commutes has been expressed by members of the Somali Bantu community who have already arrived in the Portland area.

Achieving Empowerment and Self-Determination

Finally, any effort to assist in the resettlement of refugees should be assessed based on its ability to empower and encourage self-determination among the refugee community. Ngyun of the Asian Family Center stressed that having a refugee driven process, or at the very least strong participation of the refugee community, is essential. This will result in more effective and culturally appropriate programs while also building the capacity of the refugee community to help itself in the future as problems arise.
Seven Objectives

Options for Successful Refugee Resettlement

Somali Bantu on their way to the United States
photo by Christophe Calais, (c) 2004
The following three place-making activities empower the Somali Bantu to achieve all seven objectives. These activities complement existing refugee programs and build capacity to promote healthy communities once conventional services have ended. The location of these activities, and their proximity to one another, has important ramifications for the daily life of the Somali Bantu. These ramifications will be explored in four different locational scenarios, presented later in this report.

**Place-Making Activities**

“Place-making is the way in which all human beings transform the places they find themselves into the places where they live.” - Linda H. Schneekloth and Robert Shibley, *Placemaking: the Art and Practice of Building Communities*

**Agriculture Activity**

Obtaining a parcel of land suitable for the Somali Bantu to practice their traditional, small-scale agriculture will provide an opportunity for them to maintain and strengthen cultural and social ties. Moreover, it will assist the Somali Bantu in achieving food security and good health by providing them with the opportunity to supplement their diet with homegrown, nutritious foods. Selling surplus food will allow the Somali Bantu to supplement their income, establish connections with the broader community, and integrate more fully into the local and regional economy.
Supporting Evidence
The Hmong refugees of Southeast Asia provide an interesting example from which to learn about reducing the negative impacts of resettlement through agriculture. Since 1975, over 100,000 Hmong refugees have been resettled in the United States. Like the Somali Bantu, the Hmong have a deep cultural bond and long experience with agricultural practices. Cultural traditions of both groups are strongly tied to farming the land and each are recognized for their farming expertise. Thus, maintaining ties to agriculture can prove to be a powerful link to their native culture and an effective measure to mitigate resettlement hardships.

Elizabeth Sheehan (2004) offers some insight as to the significance of farming practices for the cultural identity of the Hmong. Her report looks at Hmong communities in the Carolinas where nearly two thousand have obtained farmland that are owned either by individual families or by extended family groups. The report argues that American ecological, economic, religious and secular value systems have threatened Hmong ethnic identity and cultural survival. The Hmong have turned to agriculture as a defense against this cultural domination.

For the Hmong, fresh food is connected with physical and spiritual well-being. Eating homemade food secures the Hmong identity within the context of American society, while purchasing land strengthens Hmong culture in that it provides a common social space in which traditions are re-invented in response to the American cultural context. Practicing traditional agriculture, Sheehan concludes, offers some familiarity amidst an unfamiliar and even threatening social and physical environment.

A representative of the Portland Hmong echoes this point and offers additional factors to consider. Many Hmong would like to practice agriculture and live in rural areas because it would remind them of home. However, it is extremely important for the Hmong to live within one or two blocks of family members, in part because they provide valuable assistance to one another such as child-care, educating one another on how to negotiate “the system,” and providing financial assistance during hard times. The US Department of Health and Human Services (2001) confirms that familial support is directly linked to refugees’ ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Any consideration of moving further from the city is therefore countered by a concern of living far from family members.
techniques and culture may lend themselves well to providing cultural and organic agricultural education in exchange for the use of public land, however this option would likely require a significant degree of support from local government and agencies.

Additional low cost options that do not require the acquisition of agriculture-specific parcels of land include using the backyard space of housing purchased by the Somali Bantu to create garden plots, or using existing community gardens. It may be possible for some members of the Somali Bantu community to purchase housing next to each other in order to combine backyards to grow modest amounts of fruits and vegetables.

Preliminary interviews with the Somali Bantu indicated that they would feel comfortable farming land one to five acres in size. Interviews with Community Supported Agriculture farmers revealed that a one acre agricultural parcel in this region can be expected to provide fresh produce for approximately 120 people during the course of a six month growing season (Loeffler and McCurdy 2004). One to five acres of agricultural land would provide significant supplemental food for the initial Somali Bantu refugee population arriving in the Portland Metro region. Agricultural land smaller than one acre would not provide the Somali Bantu with the cultural and social building experience or supplemental food envisioned for this project. Obtaining land larger than five acres would not be financially feasible within the Urban Growth Boundary. Land outside the Urban Growth Boundary is more likely to be attainable at up to ten acres in size, though concerns about whether such a large parcel of land can be managed without machinery associated with large-scale agriculture is a question to consider.

**Use Options**

Like the Hmong, the Somali Bantu can practice agriculture as a way of maintaining cultural and social ties. They can also benefit from the farm produce by supplementing their diet and reducing food costs. Agriculture can also serve as an opportunity to educate the broader community about the Somali Bantu’s history and culture.
If the Somali Bantu wish to pursue agriculture as a method for economic advancement, there are several paths they could choose, from selling excess produce at roadside stands or local farmers’ markets to establishing their own Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business. A CSA is a business model that cuts out the middleman and allows farmers to sell directly to consumers. Under the model, consumers pay at the beginning of the season to become members of the CSA and are guaranteed a portion of whatever produce comes off the farm on a weekly basis. The consumer pays the same amount regardless of how productive the yearly crop is, giving the farmer some financial predictability and thus stability. For example, Zenger Farm is operated as a CSA.

**Housing**

Providing opportunities for the Somali Bantu to own housing allows for wealth generation that leads to long-term financial stability and economic self-sufficiency. Furthermore, housing allowing as many Somali Bantu families as possible to live in close proximity to agricultural land addresses the concern raised by the Portland Hmong representative that practicing agriculture would entail being away from one’s family and ethnic community. It further strengthens opportunities to maintain cultural and social ties while also reducing long commutes and the associated negative impacts such as traffic, pollution, and increased expenses.

**Supporting Evidence**

Homeownership is one of the most accessible ways to build wealth in the US. Homes usually appreciate in value over time, can be used to leverage capital, and have beneficial tax advantages such as mortgage interest and property tax deductions. Fannie Mae estimates that in 2001 Americans withdrew about $80 billion in equity wealth out of their homes (Graves 2003). Though discrimination in the housing and finance markets limits low income and minority home ownership, when it is attained it serves a more significant role in wealth generation for low income and minority groups than for the general public. Well over half of the personal wealth of low income and minority home-owning households is tied up in home equity, a percentage larger than the national average of 42 percent. Moreover, low income and minority home-owning households have far more wealth than non-home-owning households of the same populations (Consumer Federation of America 2003).

The Portland Hmong community has been relatively successful in achieving home ownership as a way to generate wealth. According to a Portland Hmong representative, nearly 80 percent of the Hmong community owns a home and most purchased their homes after only five years in the US. They were able to achieve this through pooling resources of relatively large families. Slavic refugees state that the Slavic community in Woodburn also pooled resources to purchase homes. Both communities serve as an example as to how the Somali Bantu could generate wealth for themselves through homeownership.

**Acquisition Options**

There are a number of different ways the Somali Bantu could pursue housing as an equity building strategy. They could individually purchase their homes, pool their resources, or gain financial assistance from non-profit and government agencies, including Community Development Corporations. They may also want to consider tapping into an existing land trust or creating their own. Supplementary information regarding such housing investment strategies can be found in Appendix A.

**Use Options**

There are many options available to assist the Somali Bantu in living near one another. These options range from purchasing single family homes within the same neighborhood, to building or rehabilitating an existing multi-family structure, to developing an entire mixed-use site that could include multiple housing units, and a central gathering place. They can also use any of these options to live in a cohousing situation, an intentional community designed and managed
Place-Making Components:

Housing
Use and Acquisition Options

Acquisition Options
- Individual Private Purchase
- Pooled Resource
- Private Purchase
- Rent
- Assisted Purchase
- Use Backyard

Use Options
- Single Family
- Multi-family
- Cohousing
- Mixed Use Development

by residents that includes extensive common facilities and encourages community living and social contact. Cohousing is described in detail in Appendix A.

During the design phase of any housing development, the Somali Bantu should consider incorporating green and/or ecological building techniques into the design or remodel of their structure(s). There are a variety of additional resources available for projects incorporating ecological principles, not to mention the cost savings that may be realized through energy efficient design, reduced dependence on auto travel, etc. As design of the building is often as important as its location, some additional resources for further research regarding sustainable design and funding opportunities are provided in Appendix B.

Community Space

A community space for the Somali Bantu can help maintain cultural and social ties as a place for social and cultural events to occur. It can also serve as a facility for English language training, service provisions, distribution of agricultural produce, and as a location to interact with the broader community. Moreover, meals and child-care shared in a community space would save money and strengthen social networks.

Supporting Evidence

Practicing agriculture provides an opportunity for social and cultural gatherings as communities work together to manage their land. Interviews with refugees, however, have indicated that there is also a need for a shared space such as a community center for cultural and social events and the centralized provision of social services.

Both Portland area Hmong and Slavic refugees have emphasized the important role various cultural events such as weddings, new year celebrations, or other social gatherings play in their communities. These gatherings, which for some communities occur weekly, help
to educate the younger generation about cultural traditions and provide a networking opportunity where individuals can learn about job opportunities and other important information. They often do not, however, have a designated space in which to hold such events.

Slavic refugees in Southwest Portland participate in a Russian club at a city-operated community center in their neighborhood. In addition to sponsoring social events, the Russian club provides weekly supplies of free Russian style bread. The Portland Hmong representative mentioned that it is the dream of many Hmong community members to have a community center of their own. Most Hmong cultural or social events are currently held at individual homes, churches, or, for large events, they rent space at a Holiday Inn or at the Portland Expo Center.

**Acquisition Options**

As with agricultural land and housing acquisition, there are several options the Somali Bantu could pursue to obtain community space. Purchasing or constructing of their own community center as well as leasing or using a public facility are all options. Because purchase or construction would be prohibitively expensive, other options such as leasing existing spaces or using public facilities (Portland Parks and Recreation community centers, for example) are potentially more appealing in the short term.

**Use Options**

An informal survey of existing community centers has indicated that a typical community space is approximately 1000-2500 square feet. The specific size and layout of any facility however, would dictate the activities that could occur. Alternatively, an existing facility could be retrofitted to the desires of the Somali Bantu. Some of the features the Somali Bantu may be interested in considering include a stage so that they could perform traditional dances for themselves and the broader community, office space for a Somali Bantu non-profit organization, classrooms for English language training, a dining hall and kitchen for shared meals, and storage space for distribution of their farm produce.
Location, Location, Location

As previously mentioned, each of the three place-making activities can be utilized differently and have differing impacts depending on their location within the region, their location in relation to one another, and their proximity to necessary and important services and jobs.

Whether the place-making activities are located within the urban core or in a more rural setting is an important factor to consider. The Hmong mentioned in a study conducted by Elizabeth Sheehan, for example, arrived in the Carolinas only after the US Hmong community sent scouts to look for a geographic region that most resembled their home in SE Asia. Recently, the Hmong have also gravitated away from Fresno, California, once the largest Hmong concentration in the country, to the new concentration center of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The reason behind this migration was a desire to find viable employment and a safe social environment for their families. Likewise, many Somali refugees (non-Bantu) have resettled in the small town of Lewiston, Maine after the Somali community began looking for alternatives to large cities such as Atlanta. The Somalis were concerned about high crime rates and poor schools in the larger cities, but now enjoy the more subdued and affordable lifestyle of Lewiston (Jones 2004). Unfortunately, however, they also found the local population at times to be hostile toward their arrival because they are black (Jones 2004).

The desire for a quieter and safer neighborhood was cited by the Portland Hmong representative as one of the reasons why many Hmong would like to live in a more rural setting. That said, however, interviews with Slavic refugees revealed that those who came from urban areas prefer living in the city, while Slavic refugees from the country tend to locate in Woodburn.

Portland area refugees have stressed that it is also important for children to go to the same school as other children from the same ethnic refugee community. This allows the children to have a social support network that helps them better cope with the challenges of being a refugee in the US school system. Ethnic peers also provide peer pressure on the youth to maintain cultural identity and ties (Portland Hmong representative and Woodburn Russian refugee 2004).

Finally, each of the items can be located in varying proximity to one another, which will raise different considerations depending on the situation. More details will be provided on these various considerations in forthcoming sections.
**From the Kitchen of RefugEEE Consulting...**

Our recipe for successful resettlement of the Somali Bantu has three main ingredients: **agriculture, housing** and a **community center**. Portion size of each will vary depending on the collective tastes of the Somali Bantu along with the amount in their shopping budget. The meal will vary from one location to the next. Home cooked favorites include a sweet **co-housing option in the city** with a spicy **community center** nearby for dancing, served up with a portion of **Community Supported Agriculture** on an organic farm, tastefully placed **within the UGB**. The ingredients can be used in a variety of combinations to create the perfect blend of old and new cultures.
Before pursuing any of the three place-making components, the National Somali Bantu Project will need to consider several key concepts such as the necessity for a Somali Bantu led participatory process, cultural relevancy, political feasibility, and the transferability of the project concepts for use in other Somali Bantu resettlement cities. All of these considerations are intended to help guide the discussions necessary for the National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu to pursue a comprehensive strategy for achieving successful resettlement that could serve as a pioneering example for future refugees.

Key Considerations

Before pursuing any of the three place-making components, the National Somali Bantu Project will need to consider several key concepts such as the necessity for a Somali Bantu led participatory process, cultural relevancy, political feasibility, and the transferability of the project concepts for use in other Somali Bantu resettlement cities. All of these considerations are intended to help guide the discussions necessary for the National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu to pursue a comprehensive strategy for achieving successful resettlement that could serve as a pioneering example for future refugees.

Participation

At the time of this report’s publication, only a small portion of the Somali Bantu have arrived in the Portland Metro area. The concepts put forth are therefore ahead of schedule, as they have not been generated through a Somali Bantu driven process. All of the concepts and considerations will be most useful in the future once the refugees have adjusted to their new surroundings and once the National Somali Bantu Project has determined it appropriate to begin such a planning process. The ideas contained in this report should be used as a starting point for a participatory community visioning and planning process driven by the Somali Bantu that focuses on long-term success. This process may not start for one to three years after the arrival of the entire Somali Bantu population in Portland.

Somali Bantu Visit Zenger Farm
Cultural Relevancy

Many of the concepts we present, including the agriculture activity and the housing investment alternatives, will have different cultural implications and meaning for the Somali Bantu. It is imperative for them to choose alternatives that are meaningful and that will help them achieve their goals. For example, if the Somali Bantu collectively choose to pursue farming activities, they ought to go through an exploratory process with the assistance of experts in Oregon agriculture to determine:

- What they would like their diet to consist of in the future;
- What they know how to grow and what they would like to grow;
- Farming skills or techniques they would like to learn;
- The differences and particulars of farming in Oregon and what new skills and/or knowledge will be required of the Somali Bantu in order to farm here;
- What are the varieties of fruits and vegetables that grow well in Oregon that may be similar to what they grew in Africa, and what some of the African varieties are that would do well here.

The answers to these types of questions will provide pertinent information for determining the size and attributes of the agricultural land required for their purposes. Answers will also help determine what kind of training or assistance might be needed in order to help them achieve their goals.

This style of thorough questioning will help the Somali Bantu reveal their aspirations and articulate their vision. As the National Somali Bantu Project is the authority on Somali Bantu culture, it will serve as the primary resource to ensure these types of questions get addressed for all aspects of the project as it moves forward.
Resources for Building Capacity of Receiving Community

Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement
www.portlandonline.com/oni

Project Interwoven Tapestry
Project Interwoven Tapestry is part of the Building the New American Community Project which is an effort to foster elements of successful integration - to understand what it means, what works, what doesn’t work, and why. The project recognizes that successful integration is a two-way process that takes supporting both the refugee and mainstream communities toward the common goal of integration. The Tapestry Project has focused on efforts that lead to systemic change including developing leaders, coalition building, and encouraging participation in the political process.

Interwoven Tapestry Project’s Small Grants Program
www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/Portland.htm

Capacity of Receiving Community

No matter where the Somali Bantu choose to locate their cluster of housing, community center, and agricultural activity, the National Somali Bantu Project and local government agencies will need to consider the repercussions of the activities on the receiving, or “host” communities. The National Somali Bantu Project should take a strategic approach to building the capacity of the receiving communities so as to support successful integration.

If they choose to locate within Portland’s city limits, the National Somali Bantu Project could seek assistance from the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) and the Portland Office of Neighborhood Involvement, organizations that have conducted immigrant and refugee receiving programs with community members in select Portland neighborhoods. The Interwoven Tapestry Project, a program designed to foster elements of successful integration, operates a small grants program through Portland’s Office of Neighborhood Involvement. This program is intended to foster integration by funding projects that encourage civic participation and community engagement between refugee and receiving communities. In 2003, the program awarded $21,325 to twelve projects promoting these efforts.

If the Somali Bantu end up resettling in a small town, the National Somali Bantu Project will want to investigate what types of organizations operate in the community that could assist with a receiving community capacity building effort. For example, in Canby, the National Somali Bantu Project could work with the Canby Community Education Program, the Canby Area Chamber of Commerce, or the REACH Center to develop a community training program to promote successful integration.
Ethnic Organizational Support

Ethnic organizational support serves an important role in helping many refugee communities adjust to US society. Organizations that provide assistance to a specific ethnic refugee community are extremely valuable in that they often advocate on behalf of the community, provide important services, and help maintain cultural and community ties. In Minnesota, for example, many in the Hmong community rely on the Hmong Cultural Center, a non-profit organization, to foster sustained cultural identity among Hmong youth and adults. The Center offers a variety of Hmong programs including traditional dance and music programs, a youth cultural arts mentorship program, a cultural customs program, as well as English language and citizenship courses. But the Center also educates non-Hmong professionals and service workers about the background and cultural-specific needs of the Hmong population.

A Portland Hmong representative expressed a wish for an organization that would help members of the community find jobs after assistance from the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization runs out. Nathan Ngyun of the Asian Family Center in Portland also stressed the importance of organizations like his that empower the Asian and other African refugee communities.

The National Somali Bantu Project has discussed the idea of assisting the Somali Bantu with the creation of a 501(c)3 tax-deductible organization in order for them to pursue grant money. This type of organizational structure would provide a solid base for the Somali Bantu to pursue almost any one of the dimensions of this demonstration project. With non-profit status, the Somali Bantu could create a land trust, a community development corporation, or acquire monies to establish an educational farm. When setting up an organization for the Somali Bantu, the National Somali Bantu Project may want to look to informal organizations such as the African Community Center and the African Coalition of Oregon for ideas on how an organization can assist an African population in Portland.

More Information:

Developing a Participatory Process

For assistance with developing a participatory process, contact the Center for Public Participation in the Executive Leadership Institute at Portland State University.

The Center for Public Participation provides communication and information services for dialog between agencies, citizens, practitioners and public officials. CPP strives to fill the gaps in the practice of public participation by identifying and facilitating needed services. It is the only academically based program focused specifically on the theory and practice of public participation.

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Fax: 503-725-8250
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www.eli.pdx.edu/cpp/index.htm
Political Feasibility

Executing a comprehensive project of this nature will undoubtedly necessitate the assistance of many private organizations and public agencies. Innovative concepts such as multi-use development combining housing, agriculture and a community center, may pose a threat to the status quo in some locations. The National Somali Bantu Project will find that relatively few parcels of land have been zoned for mixed-use development throughout the Portland Metropolitan area. Requesting a zoning change may be necessary in order to create such a development. Gaining political support from Portland City Commissioners like Erik Sten or Dan Saltzman, as well as from receiving communities, may help pave the way for an innovative solution. By framing this project as a demonstration project, The National Somali Bantu Project could likely garner support from a number of different partners, both in the public and private sectors.

If National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu decide to use the concept of sustainability (see Sustainability consideration, pg. 23) to frame their projects, political support could be sought through an innovative, integrated solution with the assistance of Oregon Solutions. Oregon Solutions is a program at the National Policy Consensus Center designed to assist communities in developing sustainable solutions to problems that support state economic, environmental, and community objectives. The program assists communities by facilitating a multi-stakeholder process that brings together businesses, government, and non-profit organizations to achieve the goals of the project.
Partnership Potential

Each location considered for place-making activities may present different opportunities for organizational partnerships. For example, if the Somali Bantu decide to relocate a portion of their population to the Canby area, opportunities may arise to partner with organizations such as the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust or the Oregon State University Agriculture Extension Service. A partnership with either of these groups may open doors to small-scale organic farming mentors or by trading the use of some agriculture land in exchange for community education.

By locating in the city of Portland, the Somali Bantu may have a chance to develop partnerships with the City of Portland Parks and Recreation, Portland Public Schools, Friends of Zenger Farms or the Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF). A group such as CLF that facilitates the Food Policy Working Group may have a vested interest in assisting the Somali Bantu obtain agricultural land to improve food security. Other groups such as Growing Gardens or Portland Community Gardens may have an interest in assisting them develop smaller scale community gardens until they can obtain a larger piece of land for a potentially economically viable operation. The National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu may find that certain types of partnerships may prove to be more valuable for the project over the long-term.

More Information:
Potential Partners

**PORTLAND**

Mercy Corps Northwest  
www.mercycorpsnorthwest.com

Coalition for a Livable Future  
Food Policy Working Group  
www.clfuture.org

Growing Gardens  
www.growing-gardens.org

City of Portland Parks and Recreation  
www.parks.ci.portland.or.us

City of Portland’s Bureau of Environmental Services  
www.portlandonline.com/bes/

For a listing of CSAs in Portland  
www.pacsac.org/AlphaListing.html

Portland Public Schools  
www.pps.k12.or.us

**CANBY**

Oregon State University  
Agriculture Experiment Station  
Extension Service  
agsci.oregonstate.edu/research/aes.html

Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust  
www.osalt.org
Cost/Affordability

Considering the financial constraints of the Somali Bantu during their early years of resettlement, selecting alternatives for the three place-making activities will, to a great extent, depend on the affordability of different alternatives. Financial constraints may direct the National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu to pursue creative strategies that could be implemented in phases, starting with the most beneficial or relevant activity.

Consideration will need to be given to the fact that the price of land generally tends to decrease as one moves out from the metropolitan center. In particular, the price of open land suited for small-scale agriculture outside the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) is going to be considerably lower than anything comparable inside the UGB. According to one Portland realtor, properties inside the UGB are going to run at least three times the price of property outside the UGB. Depending on zoning, onsite structures, surrounding uses, past uses and improvements like septic or electricity, the price inside the UGB can easily run five, six or even ten times higher (Kelly 2004). If the Somali Bantu decide that having the agriculture activity take place in the city of Portland is important, they may want to pursue a creative public/private partnership to use vacant public land rather than trying to outright purchase a piece of property.

Alternatives will also need to be weighed on the basis of not only "What is affordable now?" but also "What does this location mean for affordability and financial success in the future?" It is not enough to simply search out the least expensive piece of property in the least expensive neighborhood or location. This approach may lead to lower up-front costs, but may increase the costs of day-to-day living for the Somali Bantu, driving down affordability, and constraining opportunities for economic success. The entire life-cycle cost of a piece of property including transportation costs, maintenance costs, opportunity costs, and resale value will need to be carefully examined when the refugees weigh property alternatives.

Access to Services

Different locations considered for establishing housing, a community center or an agricultural activity will afford the Somali Bantu differing levels of access to necessary or important services. Because the Somali Bantu will initially be heavily dependent on everything from social welfare to community colleges for English and job training, the location of these services in relation to their cultural or residential centers needs to be carefully evaluated.

In order to facilitate English language and educational advancement, for example, housing should be located near schools. Because it may be difficult for the women of the household to transport their children to school, living within walking distance to elementary, middle and high schools would be optimal. The proximity to community colleges, self-sufficiency centers, mosques and/or grocery stores where they can purchase Halal meat should also be a primary consideration. As finding the perfect site close to all of these amenities is a significant challenge, having public transportation nearby can make distant locations more accessible. By having public transit at their disposal, the Somali Bantu community will also have the option to avoid the additional expenses of purchasing a car and its associated negative environmental and societal impacts.

Consideration should also be given to the proximity of available jobs in fields such as construction, manufacturing, and agriculture, as these will most likely be the areas in which early Somali Bantu refugees are able to find employment.
Economic Opportunity

When deciding where to live, the Somali Bantu will need to investigate what types of employment opportunities are available in the various location alternatives they consider. For example, the City of Portland may be rich with opportunities in the retail, manufacturing and education, health, and social service sectors, while smaller towns on the periphery may provide greater access to employment with nurseries, wineries and tree farms. The Somali Bantu will want to select a location that offers employment opportunities in the trades they are most likely to pursue given their skill sets. When looking into employment opportunities, they will want to think about not only the types of jobs available in a particular location, but also their accessibility. While more people report to have farming, fishing or forestry occupations in Portland than in Canby or North Plains, that type of work may be more accessible in a small town as the job site may be closer to their place of residence, making commute times shorter and potentially even eliminating the need for an automobile.

### NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED BY OCCUPATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Portland Number</th>
<th>Portland Percent</th>
<th>Canby Number</th>
<th>Canby Percent</th>
<th>North Plains Number</th>
<th>North Plains Percent</th>
<th>Hillsboro Number</th>
<th>Hillsboro Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management, professional and related</td>
<td>102,760</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>13,695</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and office</td>
<td>73,250</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>9,057</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>41,441</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>4,713</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production, transportation and material moving</td>
<td>38,646</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6,067</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction, extraction &amp; maintenance</td>
<td>19,405</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming, fishing, and forestry</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Table DP-3, Profile of Selected Economic Characteristics, 2000

### More Information:

**Employment for the Somali Bantu**

The placement of newly arrived refugees in occupations in which they have skills, such as mechanics, small-scale farming, and construction, would enable them to more quickly learn their new jobs and prove their worth as employees. Working in semi-rural, non-migratory agriculture may help some Bantu better acclimate to American society by placing them in a residential and work environment that is more familiar to them than standard modern-economy jobs in urban areas.

Bantu women have primarily worked in the home and on the farm. Some women acquired land in Somalia in order to earn their own money. Their hard-working and resourceful nature will help Bantu women find and keep jobs in the United States.

*Source: The National Somali Bantu Center*
Sustainability | Environmental Footprint

As the Somali Bantu move forward with these place-making strategies, the concept of sustainability should frame all aspects of development. Not only should the projects contribute to improving social conditions and creating economic opportunity, but they should also find ways to contribute to a healthier environment. In other words, all decisions should be made with regards to their environmental impacts. Alternatives to promote a healthier environment should be chosen over other options. This may require substantial education to help translate the Somali Bantu’s already low-impact customs to new Western situations. To this end, the Somali Bantu should consider:

**Location:**
- Reducing travel by locating activity centers in close proximity
- Locating activity centers near necessary services to reduce travel
- Locating activity centers in walkable communities

**Farming Practices:**
- Using organic farming methods to eliminate pesticide use
- Striving for Food Alliance organic certification
- Using efficient methods for watering crops
- Educating the local community on organic farming practices
- Growing own food to reduce reliance on non-sustainable produce

**Building:**
- Rehabilitating or developing housing using green design
- Reusing existing structures when possible
- Using recycled building materials
- Incorporating energy and water efficient technologies
- Diverting stormwater runoff from the City’s storm-water drains
- Finding ways to purchase and use energy from renewable sources

**Transportation:**
- Walking, biking or taking public transportation instead of driving
- Purchasing fuel-efficient vehicles
- Using alternative fuels such as biodiesel

For more information, consult our sustainable resources section in Appendix B.
Water

Water costs should be an important factor to include when estimating the cost of a particular piece of property for the agriculture activity. The types of fruits, vegetables or nursery plants the Somali Bantu decide to grow will ultimately dictate the amount of water required. If the Somali Bantu decide to pursue a piece of agricultural land within any city limits they will be required to use city water. If they choose to farm a piece of land outside city limits, they will need to acquire water rights and make sure the property has access to water either through a well, or nearby surface flows.

In Oregon, water rights are associated with the land, so selecting a piece of property that already has water rights associated with it will lower up front costs. However, if the water rights have been given back to the state of Oregon, or somehow disassociated with the piece of property in question, the Somali Bantu will have to apply for water rights from the Oregon Water Resources Department. Often, the process of obtaining water rights can be lengthy and expensive. One farmer estimates that one could spend $2000 to $3000 to obtain water rights between the application and filing fees, and hiring the soil and hydrology engineers required to do the water feasibility studies (Newman 2004).

Farmers who farm land outside of city limits must pay for the costs of obtaining the water rights, drilling the wells, installing the irrigation system, maintaining the irrigation system, and then paying electricity costs on a monthly basis to run the electric irrigation pumps. The farm manager for Sauvie Island Farm estimates that they pay $150-200 per month to pump water during the peak growing season for various crops that require various irrigation methods on eight and a half productive acres. This would equate roughly to $140 per acre over the course of a growing season. In the past, the Oregon Office of Energy has worked with rural farmers to install solar panels to run irrigation systems off of the sun’s energy. This is one way the Somali Bantu could reduce their water costs and decrease their environmental footprint.

Obtaining Water Rights in Oregon

Water rights are obtained in a three-step process. The applicant first must apply to the Department [of Water Resources] for a permit to use water. Once a permit is granted, the applicant must construct a water system and begin using water. When water is applied, the permit holder must hire a certified water rights examiner to complete a survey of water use and submit to the Department a map and report detailing how and where water is being applied. If water has been used according to the provisions of the permit, a water right certificate is issued based upon the report findings.

In most areas of the state, water is no longer available for new uses on a year-round basis. Ground water supplies may also be limited in some areas. Adding new users to the water system is done carefully to preserve the investments already made in the state, whether in farms, factories or improvement of fish habitat.

Water rights are not automatically granted. An opportunity is provided for other water right holders and the public to protest the issuance of a permit. Water users can assert that a new permit may injure or interfere with their water use, and the public can claim that issuing a new permit may be detrimental to the public interest. This provides protection for both existing water users and public resources.

*Source: Oregon Water Resources Department*
More Information:

**Soil and Water Issues**

Information available through [Oregon Water Resources Department](http://www.wrd.state.or.us).

From OWRD's site, access the new [Water Rights Information System](http://www.wrd.state.or.us) - a warehouse of information pertaining to water rights.

Information on current water rates available on the [Portland Water Bureau website](http://www.portlandonline.com/water/).

[Oregon Soil and Water Conservation District Program](http://www.oda.state.or.us/nrd/swcd)

[OSU Agriculture Extension Service](http://agsci.oregonstate.edu/ext/)

The [Oregon Office of Energy](http://www.energy.state.or.us) offers information on solar programs and tax incentives for residential and commercial projects. Visit their website and contact this agency to learn more about past projects to use solar panels for irrigation pumps.

Laura Masterson of 47th Avenue Farms, a community supported agriculture business, who farms within Portland’s city limits, reports that she spends just over $2000 to water one acre of productive land over a six month growing season - from April to October. If the Somali Bantu decide to farm three acres, they could spend over $6000 per growing season on water alone. This variable monthly cost may appear substantially higher than the variable monthly costs for using water outside city limits, however, by using city water, one would avoid the up front capital costs of obtaining the permit and installation, and the ongoing cost of maintaining the irrigation system.

**Soil and Site Conditions**

When the Somali Bantu are ready to select a site for agricultural use, they will need to investigate soil and site conditions. Growing a mix of fruits and vegetables requires healthy, fertile soil that can be tilled. Some sites designated for agricultural use may not be suitable for harvest crops. For example, a site visited in Beaver Creek, Oregon, a small town in Clackamas County, was designated agricultural land. Upon further investigation however, the soil was found to be riddled with boulders, making soil preparation nearly impossible. Soil conditions will need to be evaluated for their bearing capacity, porosity, stability, erodibility, fertility and acidity. Other site factors to assess include the topography, hydrology, geology and climate - including such things as solar access (Largo Jr. 2001).

Historical and surrounding uses also need to be investigated so as to ensure that past or present industrial use has not contaminated the soil. Sites within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) are more likely candidates for soil contamination. While brownfield sites may offer an opportunity to obtain vacant land at an affordable price within the UGB and promote sustainable reuse, such sites are not suitable for growing edible produce. Soil contamination is something that needs to be taken very seriously as it can pose serious health risks.
Transferability  | Measuring Success
Ultimately, this type of a comprehensive resettlement project for the Somali Bantu should be considered a demonstration project for other Somali Bantu refugees across the US, and for other refugee groups living in America. Therefore, it is imperative the National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu document their process and communicate their progress as they move ahead. A well-documented process will ensure that someone in the future could replicate the steps taken.

Solid criteria for measuring the success of the project should be developed at the outset, and measurements should be taken at the start of the process and at regular intervals throughout. Progress should be well documented and results should be analyzed in order to create a feedback loop to determine if the decisions made have resulted in beneficial outcomes. All steps taken to assist the Somali Bantu should in some way be moving towards a shared vision of success developed by the Somali Bantu. These criteria should be shared with other refugee groups.

As progress is made, the National Somali Bantu Project should consider developing materials to share their progress and results with other refugee groups across the country. These materials could be shared through the National Somali Bantu Project website and through specialized training modules and print materials that detail the case study. Any special assistance acquired should also be well documented and shared with other groups who may choose to follow a similar path.
Choose Your Own Adventure: Four Relocation Scenarios

In the following scenarios, three place-making components—housing, community space, and agriculture—are put forth in various combinations. As finding land suitable for agriculture has posed the most difficulty, the following scenarios have focused on the agriculture component. Some combinations may be more culturally appropriate, more desirable, more affordable, or easier to implement. Any of the components from one scenario could be combined with components from different scenarios and will likely be implemented in stages depending on the resources and priorities of the Somali Bantu. In a sense, the scenarios are an application of a menu of choices that serves as a Somali Bantu decision-making tool. By presenting a range of options, the National Somali Bantu Project should have enough information to facilitate a rich discussion in a future Somali Bantu driven planning process.
**Scenarios**

**4 Possibilities**

**Inner Urban Cluster Scenario**
Agriculture, Housing, and Community Center Clustered in the Central City

**Outer Urban Cluster Scenario**
Agriculture, Housing, and Community Center Clustered Outside of the Central City, but inside the UGB

**Separate Scenario**
Housing and Community Center Located in the Central City, Agriculture outside the UGB

**Small Town Scenario**
Housing and Community Center located in a small town outside the UGB, with Agriculture nearby
Scenario 1: Inner Urban Cluster

Overview
This scenario envisions the agricultural land, community center, and housing structures to be either on the same plot of land within Portland city limits or located within close proximity to one another on separate city blocks. The Somali Bantu will pursue their traditional agrarian practices on one to five acres of land, while also having convenient access to the economic, cultural, and educational opportunities in Portland’s urban core. Approximately 50 Somali Bantu would live on one site or in neighborhoods near a small-scale organic farm. The rest of the Somali Bantu will locate wherever is most convenient for them throughout the city. A public community center would be used until a permanent community center can be developed on or near the selected agricultural site.

Day in the Life
The approximately 50 Somali Bantu families that live in the Inner Urban Cluster have access to a variety of services and amenities within walking distance or a short bus ride. The agricultural site, community center, grocery store, and elementary school are all readily accessible by foot, which saves money on bus fare and eliminates the necessity of a car. Even the junior high and high school are just a short bicycle ride away. Social services are easily accessible by public transit. The remaining Somali Bantu who live off site find the location convenient, as it is located near a major freeway and multiple bus lines.

While the children primarily learn English in school, multiple generations congregate at the Somali Bantu Community Center to improve their language skills. Since the community center is located within a couple blocks from home, right next to their agricultural site and the elementary school, and easily accessed from other parts of the city, it provides an ideal place for language training. The center also accommodates traditional Somali Bantu practices such as dancing or religious services. Bringing people together for shared activities allows them to build on their existing cultural ties while forging new bonds with their neighbors.

Because the housing is as concentrated as possible, there are ample ways in which Somali Bantu community members can support each other with child care, carpooling and general assistance. Also, because they are within Portland they have access to mosques, Halal butchers and other culturally relevant services.

Utilizing a Community Supported Agriculture model, the small-farm supplies produce to all the Somali Bantu refugees living in Portland throughout the year. Because the farm is on Portland Public Parks’ property through a public/private partnership, all the profits are required to go to support a Somali Bantu community non-profit. Portland school students also benefit by attending workshops to learn about traditional and organic farming practices, while also gaining exposure to another culture.
Inner Urban Cluster: Example Site Location

**Scenario**

**Example Site Criteria**

- Within Portland city limits
- 1 to 5 acres agricultural land
- Housing for 5-10 households and a community center on site or within walking distance
- Within walking distance to public transit
- Within walking distance to elementary school
- “Convenient” distance to: junior high school, high school, community college, self-sufficiency office, library, grocery store, IRCO language training classes, National Somali Bantu Project offices, urban jobs
Analysis

Access to Services
Locating within the City of Portland offers easy access to services like self-sufficiency offices (welfare offices), grocery stores, schools, libraries, etc.. Many services are a short walk away, cutting down on bus fare. Proximity to public transportation provides alternatives to personal auto use, so purchasing a car isn’t necessary.

Political Feasibility
Because the cost of potential agricultural land is likely to be prohibitively expensive within the City of Portland, a public/private partnership might prove the most viable acquisition option. A partnership with Portland Parks and Recreation, however, would require additional political support because the Bureau’s managers are not permitted to deviate from the Bureau’s mission without a special directive from the council or other city agencies. Such political support would benefit any effort to partner with a public agency.

Economic Opportunity
Locating in the city of Portland provides access to the most number of jobs in the region. Primarily urban by nature, these jobs would typically be in the service and manufacturing industries. However, these opportunities will be limited by the Somali Bantu’s English skills, especially in the initial stages of resettlement. Creating a Community Supported Agriculture farm would allow the Somali Bantu to recoup expenses of the farm. This model would provide a ready-made market, as the initial consumers are the Somali Bantu themselves.

Affordability
Land and housing prices within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) are going to be significantly higher than those found outside. The Somali Bantu will have to consider both the purchase price of land up front and the property taxes in perpetuity. Land that may be vacant or that may still be used as farmland will in most cases have been zoned for some type of residential, commercial, or industrial use, or as open space, as the goal of the UGB is to convert land inside its boundary to its highest and best use. The zoning and the development pressure have forced land rents high enough so that the only financially viable uses are housing, commercial, or industrial. The price of this land might not only be prohibitively costly, but it may be difficult to find parcels where an agricultural activity would be compatible with surrounding uses.

Under the right conditions, however, this scenario could allow for the community center, housing and agriculture to take place together on the same piece of property, the benefits of which may provide significant advantages to offset the high price of land. While an outright purchase of a parcel may not be feasible, pursuing some kind of a partnership with the City of Portland to farm public land in exchange for educational programs may be one of the best options available to the Somali Bantu. Other alternatives for implementing this scenario may be to seek grant money or assistance through Community Development Corporations.

Water & Soil
Estimates for watering a small farm within the city limits are approximately $2000 per acre over the course of a six month growing season. While this may appear prohibitively costly, urban farmers do not have to worry about obtaining water rights, drilling wells, or maintaining an irrigation system. Paying for city water is significant and should be considered when weighing alternatives. Finding suitable parcels of land that provide rich, unadulterated soil may be difficult in the Inner Urban Scenario as many vacant lands may have been contaminated by toxics.
Example site in the Parkrose neighborhood, just north of I-84 and just east of NE 122nd Avenue. The entire site is currently being farmed, but a portion of it is owned by Portland Parks and Recreation, providing an opportunity for a public/private partnership.
Environmental Footprint
Locating in the city gives the Somali Bantu the opportunity to leave less of an environmental footprint if they utilize public transportation. Also, growing produce near their homes decreases consumption of produce grown outside the region. Farming in a sustainable manner reduces soil erosion, water loss, and contamination by using sustainable soil retention practices, organic pest control methods, and efficient water systems, while also accommodating traditional agricultural techniques.

Partnership Potential
Coalition for a Livable Future’s Food Policy Working Group is working with Portland State University students to create an agricultural land inventory within the Urban Growth Boundary. When this is complete, it will be a useful resource when locating scarce agricultural sites for the Somali Bantu.

The most reasonable opportunity for realizing the Inner Urban Cluster scenario is through establishing a public/private partnership. Currently, Portland Public Schools is partnering with a nonprofit organization to create a community garden on PPS owned property, and may be interested in partnering on a similar project on a larger scale with the Somali Bantu. Portland Public Schools, however, insists that any profits realized in such an endeavor be reinvested in a nonprofit organization.

More Information:

Real Estate Prices
When looking to find property on the market, the Real Estate Multiple Listing Service allows preliminary searches before contacting a real estate agent
www.rmls.com

Inner Urban Example Site, Parkrose neighborhood, Portland, Oregon. Notice Elementary School Adjacent to Agriculture
Scenario 2: Outer Urban Scenario

Overview
In this scenario, agricultural, housing, and community center components are grouped together to create a cluster that acts as a nucleus for the Somali Bantu community in the Portland area. It is located outside Portland’s city limits, close to the urban edge but still within the Urban Growth Boundary. It provides access to agricultural jobs in the nurseries, small farms, and vineyards that encircle the metropolitan area while also providing access to employment in the urban area. This scenario assumes that five to ten families (approximately 50 people) will live on a site of three to five acres that they own, while the remaining Somali Bantu will find other housing opportunities. If possible, a community center will be included on the site, or the Somali Bantu will rent or buy an existing facility nearby. A small-scale agricultural operation (approximately two cultivated acres) will be created on the site, and is intended to act primarily as an activity to build community and maintain cultural practices.

A Day in the Life
In the Outer Urban Cluster scenario, five to ten families living in homes clustered together on a three-acre site in Hillsboro form the nucleus around which the wider Somali Bantu community revolves.

Agriculture and housing are located within walking distance to Max and various bus lines. This proximity to transit enables the Somali Bantu to more easily travel to and from social services such as language lessons and job training. The site is also relatively close to agricultural jobs in vineyards and nurseries located outside of the urban area, as well as job opportunities available inside the Urban Growth Boundary. Many of the Somali Bantu working at local nurseries live on the three-acre site and carpool to work. Others, however, have found employment in Portland at factories and hospitals, and have chosen to live closer to their jobs. Those living away from the site visit regularly, taking advantage of its proximity to transit.

Families living on the site walk their younger children to school, and older residents benefit from educational opportunities at the nearby high school, or at the Rock Creek Campus of Portland Community College located a bit further away. Also, because they are within the Portland metro region they have access to mosques, Halal butchers and other culturally relevant services.

The produce grown on site serves as an important connection to Somali Bantu heritage and addresses food security issues. Several families run the day to day operations of the farm; though the remainder are involved in regular “farm days” in which adults and children gather to assist with weeding, crop planting, and harvesting. Additionally, the products of the farm are shared among the Somali Bantu community, allowing them to supplement their diet with traditional agricultural products.

The nearby community center is primarily used for social activities such as dancing and celebrations, along with the possibility of hosting cultural exchanges with the wider community.
Outer Urban Cluster: Example Site Location

- **Scenarios**

  **Example Site Criteria**

  **Within Urban Growth Boundary**
  
  1 to 5 acres of land allowing agriculture and housing

  Housing for 5-10 households and a community center on site or within walking distance

  Within walking distance to public transit

  Within walking distance to elementary school

  “Convenient” distance to: junior high school, high school, community college

  Services accessible by public transit
The map shown shows example site at the corner of Baseline and Cornelius Road in Hillsboro.
Analysis

Proximity to Services
Proximity to transit allows the Somali Bantu to take advantage of nearby educational opportunities. However, this location may make it more difficult to access services such as language and job training provided by government agencies and non-profit organizations in the urban center.

Affordability
Demand for large tracts of land suitable for development remains high at the outskirts of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Land zoned residential, commercial or industrial is currently at a premium throughout the entire Portland metropolitan region, as the population continues to grow. This demand would make the outright purchase of a large parcel for this scenario difficult for the Somali Bantu. However, housing does tend to be slightly more affordable as you move away from the center of the UGB. Therefore, pursuing housing, a community center, and land for farming on separate parcels near one another could be a viable option. As with the Inner Urban Scenario, the Somali Bantu may wish to pursue financial assistance through a Community Development Corporation or similar organization, pool resources to create a community land trust, or seek to develop a creative partnership with a public or private landowner (see Appendix A).

As the site is located outside city limits, the Somali Bantu will have to investigate whether or not the land has water rights or a well, and how much it would cost to install an irrigation system and maintain it over the long-term.

Economic Opportunity
Locating close to the edge of the Urban Growth Boundary provides the Somali Bantu with the opportunity to pursue employment opportunities in agriculture by commuting a relatively short distance to nearby nurseries, farms, and vineyards. Jobs in the services and light manufacturing sectors that the Somali Bantu are likely to obtain during the early stages of resettlement are well represented in the Western suburbs of Portland.

However, until the Somali Bantu are able to gain more extensive job skills and training, as well as English proficiency, jobs anywhere in the region will be difficult to find. When one adds the additional issue of the relative lack of public transit services outside of the urban core, and the accompanying constraint on mobility this will represent to many of the Somali Bantu, getting to and from what work is to be found will be difficult. Employment may therefore require commuting by car, adding an additional financial burden on the Somali Bantu.

Environmental Footprint
The Somali Bantu will certainly have a larger environmental impact living and working in the United States than the traditional agriculture-based society of their past. Driving to work will likely be a necessity for a large number of Somali Bantu, and driving will be necessary for the distribution of produce grown on the site’s farm.

Opportunities do exist however, for reducing the environmental impact of the outer urban cluster scenario. Organic farming methods used to supplement food supplies will lessen their dependence on agricultural products purchased at the supermarket, and the accompanying dependence on fertilizer and chemical pesticides. Additionally, the location of the site close to schools and transit should encourage the Somali Bantu to use alternatives to auto transportation.

Partnership Potential
Working with existing Community Supported Agriculture farmers in the area could provide guidance for local agricultural issues, such as planting seasons and native plant varieties.
Scenario 3: Separate

Overview
This scenario envisions a community center near downtown Portland and three to five acres of agricultural land within one mile outside of the Urban Growth Boundary. The primary goals of this scenario are twofold. First, land would be purchased outside the UGB to minimize cost while being located within a mile of the UGB to reduce commute times to and from the farm. Second, locating the community center downtown provides a central location at which connections between the Somali Bantu and the broader Portland community can be fostered. While housing is not directly addressed within this scenario, it is expected that the Somali Bantu will find housing where available and will receive homeownership assistance from the National Somali Bantu Project.

A Day in the Life
In this scenario, a select group of Somali Bantu interested in farming commutes from Portland to a Somali Bantu owned farm of about five to ten acres just outside of the Urban Growth Boundary. The farm is accessible by public transit with a commute time of about sixty-to-ninety minutes. Eventually, the commute is made easier and faster as the Somali Bantu community purchases one or more trucks. The produce grown supplements their income through sales at farmers’ markets. The Somali Bantu own the land collectively, giving them the independance to adapt to changing community resurces and needs. While a core group tends the farm, it is visited and worked by nearly all the members at various times.
Meanwhile, the Somali Bantu community gathers regularly at the community center for art activities, dancing, socializing, communal meals, religious activities and classes. The center is within close proximity to the offices of the National Somali Bantu Project, located at Portland State University. Normally such real estate would be out of reach financially, but partnering with another organization to share a space makes it possible.

As housing is distributed throughout Portland, proximity to schools, including higher education, social services, religious/cultural services such as mosques and Halal butchers, as well as retail outlets will depend on individual locations; though all are widely available throughout the city.

Economic realities mean many of them work and live in different neighborhoods, and like many people, they go where the jobs are and find housing wherever it is most financially feasible. However, through interaction at the community center and on the farm, they maintain their cultural and social ties as they interact with new neighbors, new bosses and new environments.

Separate Scenario Example Site near Oregon City, Oregon. Much of the agricultural land near the UGB has been developed for high end housing - “Martini Farms”.

Separate Scenario Example Site near Oregon City, Oregon - more development adjacent to property.
Separate Scenario: Agriculture Site Location

Agriculture Site:
Outside UGB, but within one mile of it
3 to 5 acre agricultural parcel
Within walking distance of public transit

Inner City Community Center Site:
Within five miles of Portland City Hall
Land use is commercial or vacant
Within walking distance of public transit
Structure is 1000 - 2500 sq.ft.

Housing Site:
Located throughout region
Agricultural Parcels Near the Urban Growth Boundary

This map shows agricultural land between three and five acres within one mile outside of Portland's Urban Growth Boundary.

Map created by RefugEEE Consulting
Data Source: METRO RLIS Database
Analysis

Proximity to services
The location of agriculture is accessible by transit, but not near social services and retail such as grocery stores. Conversely, the downtown Portland location of the community center is ideal for accessing these services. The proximity of housing to services, however, will vary depending on where each family lives, though a wide variety of services are available within the city limits.

Economic Opportunity
Farming could provide supplemental income for the community. Also, the Somali Bantu will have job opportunities within Portland since they will be living in homes throughout the city, and are therefore able to take advantage of a greater variety of jobs. Most or all of the families will save money on groceries because they will receive produce from the farm.

Affordability
The location of the farm within one mile of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) may provide the Somali Bantu with the least up front costs as they would remain in their affordable rental housing scattered throughout Portland and would only be pursuing a piece of property for farming outside the UGB. As noted earlier, the price of agriculture land outside the UGB is significantly lower, as much as one-tenth the cost, in some cases. However, transportation and time/opportunity costs may be prohibitively higher than in a scenario where the three activities are taking place in close proximity to one another. With respect to locating a community center, using shared public space at existing community centers may be more feasible than purchasing a space, if they choose to carry out these activities in downtown Portland.

Water & Soil
Water outside the UGB will either come with water rights or the Somali Bantu will have to obtain them. In either scenario, they will have to confront the cost of installing, maintaining and operating the well and irrigation systems. These costs should be compared with the cost of paying for city water by volume inside city limits.

Environmental Footprint
greater pollution is created due to the long commutes involved with this scenario. On the other hand, this site spares agriculture land from potential future development and instead preserves an ecosystem, assuming the Somali Bantu practice sustainable farming and don’t sell to developers if the land is brought into the Urban Growth Boundary. The location of the community center, furthermore, provides ample opportunity for use of public transit, walking or biking.

Partnership Opportunities
The Somali Bantu will have the opportunity to partner with another community group to share space for a community center. Other potential partnerships with respect to agriculture include agencies holding public land, other farmers’ market participants and others who may be commuting to land near the farm.
Scenario 4: A Small Town

Overview
This scenario envisions a cluster of about 40-60 Somali Bantu living in a small town near Portland. The rest of the Somali Bantu would remain in the Portland area and the two groups would be connected by public transportation or less than an hour’s drive. The cluster living in the small town would have easier access to farmland for their agricultural activity and easier access to jobs in the agriculture, construction, or manufacturing sectors. The Somali Bantu would lease or buy a three to ten acre farm just outside of the small town’s Urban Growth Boundary on which they would grow a variety of fruits and vegetables for personal consumption and for sale at the local farmers market. They would invest in single-family housing units within close proximity of one another, or a multi-family complex. In addition, a Somali Bantu community center would be established in the center of town, either at an existing facility or in a space of their own that they would purchase. This community center would serve as a hub of learning and service for the greater Somali Bantu population.

A Day in the Life
In this scenario, approximately 10-15 Somali Bantu families live, work, attend school, and farm in Canby, Oregon, while the rest of the Somali Bantu proceed with their urban life in Portland. The two communities make regular trips to visit one another using their own cars or public transportation, but because the cultural hub exists primarily in Canby, the Portland group makes more trips to Canby than vice versa. Because they commute during off-peak hours, they are able to drive down on Highway 99E in half an hour, or take public transportation in just over an hour.

The greater Somali Bantu community congregates at a community center based in downtown Canby where the Portland and Canby groups reconnect and sell their arts, crafts and extra produce to the surrounding community. From time to time they will host cultural dance performances for the community.

The Somali Bantu in Canby farm a five-acre piece of agricultural land held in trust by the Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Land Trust just five minutes out of downtown Canby. They intensively farm the land to produce a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, both local and exotic varieties. One or two families manage the farming activities, while numerous others work the land on a rotational basis. The produce grown is sufficient to operate a successful roadside produce stand as well as sell the products of the farm in town from their community center. Other nearby work includes nurseries or vineyards, retail, construction, or manufacturing. Individuals not able to find work in Canby may commute a short distance to nearby towns such as Aurora, Molalla, Oregon City or Wilsonville to work similar jobs.
Small Town Scenario: Example Site Location

City Selection:
- Outside Portland’s UGB
- Transit connections to Portland
- Near Community College
- Nearby agricultural land
- Town size large enough to accommodate population increase
- Convenient distance to services and employment

Agricultural Site Selection:
- 3 to 10 acres
- Within 3 miles of town limits
- Water rights
- High soil quality
Example Small Town Location: Canby, Oregon

Map shows three to five and five to ten acre parcels of agricultural land just outside of the Canby city limits.
The majority of the Somali Bantu own their homes in Canby. Some live in single-family units clustered in the same neighborhood and others live in multi-family complexes nearby. They live close to one another so that carpooling to work, school or farm is easier and so that the children can play with one another regularly. Several families have refurbished their homes in a manner that increases material, water and energy efficiency and incorporates elements of green design and have done so with the help of special low-interest loans.

School-age children in Canby attend one of the four elementary schools, junior high school, or high school that are in close enough proximity to their homes to be able to walk or ride a bike. This reduces the burden on the women of the household who may be responsible for transporting the school-age children to and from public school. The children attending school would be serviced by REACH, a local organization that provides important services to incoming students, English Language Learner students, and the District staff.

College age youth and adults would be fifteen minutes away by car or Canby Area Transit shuttle ride from Clackamas Community College (CCC) in Oregon City. At CCC, the Somali Bantu have access to English language courses of all ability levels and professional training programs in everything from building construction to medical assistance to wildlands fire fighting. Courses for obtaining a drivers’ license are also available.

They obtain the majority of their social services at the Department of Human Services in Oregon City, just fifteen minutes away. They have set up a system amongst themselves to carpool up to Oregon City once a week. Here they receive employment assistance, pick up welfare checks and food stamps, receive public health care, deal with any outstanding housing issues, and access translators as needed.

**Analysis**

**Proximity to Services**

A small town will likely provide the Bantu access to quality education and if selected properly, easy access to a community college. Canby offers exceptionally easy access to Clackamas Community College and social services in Oregon City, however this may not be true of all small towns. The Somali Bantu will need access to social services such as welfare, housing assistance, and translation during their first few years in the US.

**Economic Opportunity**

Relocating to a small town in rural Oregon may provide the Somali Bantu with greater and easier access to jobs in the agricultural sector and other manual labor work. Canby, for instance, has a mix of manufacturing, construction and agricultural industries and is near other small towns, expanding job opportunities. However, the number of jobs available may be limited due to the size of the town.
Affordability
While the home values in Canby may be on the rise and possibly even reaching comparable values to housing in Portland, many small towns in Oregon offer more affordable housing rates in comparison to those within Portland’s city limits. The Somali Bantu may also discover that leasing a community center in a small town is less expensive than leasing space in Portland. In addition, agricultural land outside of Portland’s Urban Growth Boundary is less expensive than land inside. So, not only does the small town scenario provide for agricultural land in closer proximity to their residence, than the separate scenario, it also affords them the opportunity to purchase or lease land at a lower cost than land inside of or very close to Portland Metro’s Urban Growth Boundary. One expert farm realtor in Canby estimated a five-acre parcel zoned Rural Residential Farm/Forest Five Acres without a home, currently runs about $125-150,000 (Ross 2004). If the land comes with water rights, or a house, the price is usually substantially higher.

Because many of the Somali Bantu would still live scattered throughout Portland in this scenario, the costs associated with the commutes between Portland and the small town would need to be taken into account. The Somali Bantu in both locations would likely travel between the two locations on a frequent basis.

Water & Soil
Some parcels of agricultural land outside Canby may come with water rights and existing wells onsite, others may not. The Somali Bantu will want to look for a piece of land with water rights and wells, but if they do not find one, they will need to consider the cost of obtaining water rights, drilling the wells and installing an irrigation system. Soil conditions around Canby are exceptional, including predominantly Amity and Aloha soil types. As you move further towards the east, the soil becomes heavier and more clay-like, called Jory soil, and not as conducive to farming. If farms with good soil are not available around Canby, the Somali Bantu may want to investigate properties around Silverton, Estacada or Beaver Creek.

Environmental Footprint
Approximately one hundred and fifty Somali Bantu still living in Portland will travel to Canby several times per month for community activities. This alone creates congestion and additional pollution from public transportation or their own vehicles. If the produce grown on the farm will be distributed to the greater Somali Bantu population, either someone from Canby will have to drive everything up to Portland for distribution, or consumers will commute to Canby once a week. However, if the produce were sold at a roadside stand or another local venue, this would mitigate long commutes. Furthermore, the Somali Bantu that live in Canby travel to and from the farm via a private automobile because public transportation will not likely pass their farm. Opportunities do exist, however, to do organic farming and to incorporate green building techniques with any remodels or new construction.

Partnership Potential
Oregon State University operates a research farm near Canby and may be a good partnership opportunity. It could provide educational opportunities for the university’s students and supply the Somali Bantu with viable farmland.
RefugEEE Consulting visited over a dozen different potential sites throughout the Portland Metropolitan Region while investigating the four scenarios presented.

**Mollala, Oregon:**
A small town Southeast of Canby. Molalla lacked access to services relative to Canby.

**Oregon City, Oregon:**
Speaking with the owner of this farm next to Oregon City High School revealed that its soil was littered with large river stones, making agriculture nearly impossible.

**Portland, Oregon:**
This site in Southeast Portland looked good on paper, but a visit revealed it to have been designated a public wetland.

**Outside Oregon City, Oregon:**
This agricultural parcel near Oregon City was directly beneath large powerlines, showing that on the ground investigation often reveals unexpected results.
Weighing the Scenarios

The previous scenarios—the Inner Urban Cluster, Outer Urban Cluster, Separate, and Small Town—are intended as examples to help the Somali Bantu and the National Somali Bantu Project visualize how the three place-making activities could play out depending on location. Each scenario offers differing opportunities and challenges for the Somali Bantu depending on which consideration is being addressed. The comparison table (right) illustrates the way in which the scenarios can be evaluated according to the considerations.

The comparison table is based on several assumptions that may or may not play out in reality. For example, the table is based on the general assumption that land and housing costs decrease as one moves away from the metropolitan center. In general this assumption is valid, though individual characteristics of sites may influence the cost so as to buck the general trend. Likewise, the Outer Urban Scenario was marked down with regards to partnership potential because few potential partnerships were identified during the course of this project, but they may in fact exist upon further investigation. Consequently the comparison table indicates the separate scenario as being the most appealing with regards to the considerations, but the evaluation is so contextual that it is only of value for demonstration purposes. The scenarios can therefore be evaluated in multiple ways depending on the relative weight given to each consideration.

An in depth participatory process with the Somali Bantu should provide insight as to how to weigh the various considerations and consequently how to go about evaluating various scenario options. The Somali Bantu may then choose to move forward with one of the scenarios presented here, choose to develop their own scenario, or choose not to pursue the three place-making activities at all and instead develop alternative avenues toward success. Such decisions should be based on the needs and desires of the Somali Bantu and how those needs and desires are prioritized.
### Scenarios

**Comparison Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Inner Urban Cluster</th>
<th>Outer Urban Cluster</th>
<th>Separate</th>
<th>Small Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to Services</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost/Affordability</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Opportunity</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Feasibility</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Potential</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water (costs)</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil conditions</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Sustainability</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity of receiving community</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining SB Social Networks</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Somali Bantu will face many challenges as they start a new life in Portland. Nevertheless, they will no doubt find ways to turn these challenges into opportunities. Our goal was to formulate innovative ways in which to recast refugee resettlement. Little planning has been done for comprehensive resettlement and the field lacks concrete examples; however, we can say with a high degree of certainty that the “do nothing” course too often leads to the myriad of social problems mentioned in the introduction. What is needed then is a “leap of faith” from a springboard of planning expertise, sensitivity to the plight of refugees, and familiarity with relevant cultural issues to implement an innovative resettlement approach.

Through our interviews, literature review, and thoughtful discussions we have learned much about the experiences of refugees and receiving communities alike. It quickly became clear what a complex physical, psychological and social process it is for a group of people to be uprooted from their native land and move to a new place with entirely different cultures, landscapes, and political and economic systems. In Portland, only about ten percent of the 200 Somali Bantu have arrived, but some of the typical resettlement problems are already emerging. The housing acquired through the nonprofit agencies is widely dispersed throughout the city. The two clusters that do exist in Beaverton and in Southeast...
Portland have difficulty organizing social activities with one another. Also, one refugee is commuting two hours to and from work, leaving little time for his family and the community. Partnerships and outside assistance already influence the resettlement process, but re-examining the focus of this aid may improve the chances for success.

For all these reasons, we are convinced of the urgent need for governmental and social service agencies to consider refugee resettlement as a local and regional planning issue - on equal footing with planning for environmental protection or economic development. Unless world peace is achieved and natural disasters, famines, and diseases are eliminated, we can expect that people will continue to be uprooted and will continue to seek refuge in the United States. For many cities and towns throughout the world it is not a question of whether or not refugees will be resettled there, but rather when and how many. Therefore, planning for successful resettlement of people, whoever they may be, must be constantly revisited on both ends of the resettlement process.

Many possibilities lie before the National Somali Bantu Project and the Somali Bantu at this point. It is our hope that this report will be a useful guide as the National Somali Bantu Project moves forward with a participatory process for the Somali Bantu. Difficult decisions still need to be made, specific goals must be identified and prioritized, and well-developed criteria for assessing success are crucial. However, Portland’s strong network of community groups, small-scale farmers, social service agencies and our planning suggestions will hopefully provide a supportive foundation that will serve the Somali Bantu well.
Appendices

Appendix A: Housing Investment Strategies
Appendix B: Resources for Sustainability
Appendix C: Oregon’s Land Use Planning System
Appendix D: Literature Review
Appendix E: Refugee Interview Summaries
Appendix A: Housing Investment Strategies

The Somali Bantu refugees relocating to Portland and the US will in most cases arrive with few financial resources. Alternatives to private investment for obtaining agricultural land or housing will therefore be needed. The alternatives outlined in this section demonstrate that there are a variety of ways for individuals to purchase homes or for the Somali Bantu to creatively pool their resources.

Five investment strategies are outlined in this appendix on how to obtain housing: individual purchase, cohousing, community development corporations, land trust, and rehabilitation strategies. Each item includes a brief explanation of the strategy, the benefits and challenges of implementation, knowledgeable contacts, and some example programs and developments. This information is intended for National Somali Bantu Project to share with the Somali Bantu interested in purchasing housing or to the Somali Bantu non-profit when it forms.

Individual Purchase Strategy

There are many ways for households to purchase housing and property with funds available through federal, state and county agencies as well as nonprofit organizations. The existing programs and agencies are numerous and depend on household characteristics like income levels and county or city of residence. The most resources are available to Portland residents, but a few are targeted toward people willing to locate in small rural towns where populations are decreasing. Most programs that would help the Somali Bantu fall into three categories: housing purchase educational programs, wealth building/grants to help provide additional funds for purchasing housing, and low- or zero-interest loans to purchase housing.

This strategy offers flexibility for where households locate. Households could work together to find larger properties near each other to set up a communal garden. Alternatively, households could buy properties surrounding an existing Somali Bantu garden or anywhere else that is convenient if housing, agricultural land, and a community center are developed incrementally.

The major difficulty with this scenario is that most housing programs constantly have funding issues. Not only does this mean that waiting lists can be very long, but it is sometimes difficult to determine which programs will be offered from year to year.
CONTACTS:

Housing Self Sufficiency programs, also known as GOALS in Portland, will probably be around for a few more years, depending on funding. These programs serve as an educational resource and these contacts know a lot about the other existing programs available in each county.

**Housing Authority of Portland**
Peggy Martini
135 SW Ash Street
Portland, OR 97204-3540
peggym@hapdx.org
www.hapdx.org

**Housing Authority of Clackamas County**
PO Box 1510
13930 South Gain Street
Oregon City, OR 97045-0510
503.655.8267
www.co.clackamas.or.us/SocialServices/cap/self.htm

**Department of Housing Services, Washington County**
111 NE Lincoln Street, Suite 200-L, MS 63
Hillsboro, OR 97124-3072
(503) 846-4794
Fax: (503) 846-4795
www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/hse_serv/housmain.htm

PROGRAMS:

**Section 8 to Homeownership**
This program allows current Section 8 participants to utilize these funds to purchase a home. To find out more about this program, contact the housing authority in county where the household lives.

**Portland Housing Center**
This organization is another educational resource with financial fitness classes. They also work with buyers to find low-interest first and second loans to purchase or rehabilitate housing.

Yvette Davis, Homeowner Basics Assistant
3233 NE Sandy Blvd.
Portland, OR 97232
(503) 282-7744 x101
yvetted@portlandhousingcenter.org

**Habitat for Humanity**
This program allows home buyers to contribute “sweat equity” so the price of housing is less.

Erika Kennel
1478 NE Killingsworth
Portland, OR 97211
503.287.9529
Cohousing Strategy
Cohousing is a type of housing development that is created when groups of people pool their resources to purchase or construct an intentional community. Cohousing developments usually consist of private dwellings that include normal features such as a kitchen, living-dinning room, etc., but also extensive common facilities. The common house could include a large dinning room, kitchen, lounges, meeting rooms, recreation facilities, library, workshops, and children’s space. Indeed the common house could be the Somali Bantu’s “community center.” Cohousing communities are usually designed and managed by the residents, and are intentional neighborhoods. Residents are committed to living as a community - the physical design encourages this by facilitating social contact. Typical cohousing communities consist of 20 to 30 single-family homes along a pedestrian street or around a courtyard. There are now more than a hundred cohousing communities in the US and Canada.

The cohousing concept fits well with the objective of maintaining cultural and community ties among the Somali Bantu, as the typical design facilitates frequent interaction among residents. The common house is a good location for cultural events, festivities, and shared meals. Shared meals in particular have the potential to lower individual food expenditures and reduce the daily work load for those preparing meals. However, because cohousing designs often focus inward, it may not do well in fostering connections with the surrounding community. Moreover, cohousing requires a conditional use permit in the city of Portland and likely in other cities as well, making the establishment of such a community more difficult.

COHOUSING RESOURCES:

The Cohousing Association of the United States
This organization is the main resource for cohousing in the US. They promote and encourage the cohousing concept, support both individuals and groups in creating cohousing communities, provide assistance to established cohousing groups for improving their systems for living together in a community, and provide networking opportunities for those involved or interested in cohousing.

510-844-0790
www.cohousing.org

The CoHousing Company
This is an architecture and development firm that provides architectural designs, group formation, site search, land acquisition, marketing, development, financial and project management services.

1250 Addison St. #113
Berkeley, CA 94702
(510) 549-9980
coho@cohousingco.com
www.cohousingco.com

Cohousing Resources, LLC
This firm specializes in the early stages of development including land acquisition, feasibility, budgeting, scheduling and assembling the professional team.

8721 Rosario Place
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110
(206) 842-9160
Chris@CohousingResources.com
www.cohousingresources.com

Support Financial Services, Inc..
Provides early stage financing for qualified cohousing groups.

3577 Nyland Way
North Lafayette, CO 80026
(303) 413-8066
COHOUSING EXAMPLES:

Cascadia Commons
4377 SW 94th Ave.
Portland, OR 97225
503-650-7169
cccoho@easystreet.com
www.cascadiacommons.com/index.asp

East Portland Cohousing Group
503-948-8968
east_portland_cohousing@yahoogroups.com
www.eastportlandcohousing.org

Trillium Hollow
9601 NW Leahy Rd
Portland, OR 97229
503-297-1696
info@trillium-hollow.org
www.trillium-hollow.org
Community Development Corporations

A Community Development Corporation (CDC) can be used to assist low and moderate-income earners in renting or buying affordable housing. CDCs work with various lenders to buy or develop housing units that can then be sold or rented to community members. Qualification for CDC housing is typically based on one’s income being lower than 50-60% of the median family income. There are approximately 20 CDCs in Portland.

This strategy works best when a CDC has a minimum of 300 units, but 800-1000 is optimum, as the CDC becomes more resource efficient at higher levels and, in the city’s case, because of the particular loan structure of the Portland Development Commission. This strategy works well for large and small families, various ethnicities and can be helpful, in some cases, for those seeking further social services that may be a component of a particular CDC.

Unfortunately, Portland’s CDCs are unable to meet the rising demand for affordable housing and several have followed national trends in merging operations to become more viable. Thus, the climate for creation of a new CDC is very poor and reliance on existing ones is challenging. Also, while some CDCs serve specific community members, such as Latinos, it is illegal for any such organization to deny any qualified applicants assistance. In the case of the Somali Bantu, arranging housing together under a CDC may be formidable. Utilizing existing CDC housing is possible but is generally done individually and doesn’t easily facilitate developing a group hub or center.

CDC CONTACTS:

Community Development Network
Michael Anderson, Communication Coordinator
2627 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room 202
Portland, OR 97212
(503) 335-9884
Fax: (503) 335-9862
mike@cdnportland.org
www.cdnportland.org

Downtown Community Housing Inc..
This organization also develops community and retail space.

Sam Galbreath, Executive Director
Tanya Wolfersperger, Housing
7720 SW Macadam #20
Portland, OR 97219
(503) 244-3435
Fax: 503-244-7416
mailto:Samg@teleport.com

Catholic Charities
This organization could be pursued as component of other resettlement activities involving Somali Bantu, and the group operates throughout western Oregon

Dennis B. Keenan, Executive Director
Terri H. Silvis, Housing and Special Projects Program Manager
231 SE 12th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97214-1342
(503) 231-4866 *153
Fax (503) 231-4327
terri_silvis@hotmail.com
www.catholiccharitiesoregon.com
CDC EXAMPLES:

Hacienda CDC
This would be a good “how to” resource. Also, Hacienda has completed several multi-family housing complexes that include services such as a health clinic and a community garden.

Jose Rivera, Executive Director
6856 NE Killingsworth
Portland, OR 97218
(503) 595-2111
Fax: (503) 595-2116
jose@haciendacdc.org
www.haciendacdc.org

Housing Development Center of Northwest Oregon
This organization has been pursuing purchase of agricultural land for Somali refugees.

Linda Netherton, Co-Executive Director
220 SE 12th Ave., Suite A-100
Hillsboro, OR 97123
(503) 693-2937
Fax: (503) 693-4639
lnetherton@farmworkerhousing.org
www.farmworkerhousing.org
Land Trust Strategy

Land trusts are 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations where the members hold property in common with the intent to keep the land for a specific use. The most common land trusts involve affordable housing/homeownership, agriculture and natural areas. Land trusts keep the price of the land from rising too quickly, allowing the housing to stay more affordable. Since homeowners buy the housing based on reduced land prices, the seller does not receive full market value either. However, the homeowners typically earn 25% of the increase in property value when they sell the property, as long as they have lived there for at least five years. The land is actually owned in common with all the land trust members since the homeowner is not the sole owner of the land, it is leased from the land trust for a minimal monthly fee. This lease is often for an extended amount of time (like 99 years), is renewable, and can be passed down to heirs.

If the Somali Bantu decide to pursue this strategy, they can either utilize an existing land trust or start their own. Existing organizations may consider a partnership with an existing nonprofit or households may consider becoming members (but there are often waiting lists). Starting a new land trust can be difficult and time consuming, but there are agencies that provide technical assistance. Washington County does not currently have a land trust to tap into, and though the City of Portland has a land trust, it does not extend to the rest of Multnomah County.

LAND TRUST CONTACTS:

Clackamas Community Land Trust
Loretta Walker, Homeowner Coordinator
Nancy Yuill, Executive Director
2316 SE Willard
Milwaukie, OR 97222
(503) 654-1007
walker@nwhousing.org
yuill@nwhousing.org
www.clackamasclt.org

Portland Community Land Trust
Allison Handler, Executive Director
2300 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, OR 97212
(503) 493-0293
Fax: (503) 493-7333
allison@pclt.org
www.pclt.org

Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Trust
P.O. Box 1106
Canby, Oregon 97013-1106
(503) 263-8392
Fax: (503) 266-8082
osalt@teleport.com
www.osalt.org
LAND TRUST EXAMPLES:

Clackamas Community Land Trust Property
11111 SE Fuller Rd.
Milwaukie, OR 97222
(Property currently under construction)

Portland Community Land Trust Property
632 NE Killingsworth Court.
Portland, OR 97211-3863

Portland Community Land Trust Property
532 N. Skidmore.
Portland, OR 97217-3054
Rehabilitation Funding
A wide variety of resources are available for the rehabilitation of existing housing. Largely targeted towards low-income residents, these resources are available from federal, state and local sources, and can be accessed via public agencies, or through private lenders specializing in public/private partnerships. Rehabilitation resources are usually available in connection with home purchase loans, although some rehabilitation funds are available for general home improvement after purchase, particularly in the areas of hazard mitigation (lead paint removal, repairing dangerous wiring, etc.), and “green” upgrades such as energy efficiency.

The most common, and perhaps the most useful strategy for rehabilitation funding comes via “bridge loans.” These loans, usually available with low or zero interest and deferred payment options, are used to provide the additional capital necessary for upgrading existing housing stock so that it is suitable for purchase and habitation. Many of these loans are available for upgrading multi-family housing, or for converting single-family residences into multi-family units, and so may be particularly useful for the Somali Bantu.

These loans are often accessed via complicated processes through multiple agencies and funders. Navigating the ins and outs of arranging these loans can be difficult, and requires expertise. Additionally, most of the funding available for rehabilitation is in the form of loans, and so may not serve the needs of the Somali Bantu until such time as they are able to reasonably assume that their long-term employment prospects are sufficient to shoulder relatively large debt loads. However, the interest rates and terms of these loans are very reasonable in comparison to a market rate mortgage, and many jurisdictions offer loan counseling and advising services to low-income residents.

REHABILITATION EXAMPLES:

The 203(k) loan program
The 203(k) program provides gap financing for rehabilitation projects in conjunction with housing purchases. Available for a first-time homebuyer wishing to access additional funds to improve an existing one to four unit residential property, the 203(k) program is accessed through private lenders. The 203(k) program originates with the lender and borrower. The borrower asks the lender to look into additional financing through the Federal Bureau of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HUD is then contacted by the lender in order to access 203(k) funds.

www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/203k/203kabou.cfm

Housing Redevelopment Program
Clackamas and Washington Counties offer zero interest deferred payment loans and deferred interest-bearing loans for low-income residents. Rehabilitation loans are available for up to $35,000 in Clackamas County and $25,000 in Washington County, and can be used for a wide variety of interior and exterior improvements.

www.co.clackamas.or.us/cd/rehab.htm
www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/comm_dev/housrehb.htm

REHABILITATION CONTACTS:

Clackamas County Community Development
www.co.clackamas.or.us/cd/rehab.htm

Washington County Housing Rehabilitation Program
www.co.washington.or.us/deptmts/comm_dev/housrehb.htm

The Portland Development Commission Housing Program
www.pdc.us/housing_serv/default.asp
Opportunities with the
Portland Development Commission

The Fannie Mae HomeStyle Loan
Offers an affordable down payment for low-income applicants along with additional funding available for rehabilitation of existing building stock.
www.pdc.us/housing_serv/single_family/fmstylel.asp

Shared Appreciation Mortgage (SAM)
Generally restricted to specific geographic areas where an agency has targeted its SAM resources and can range up to $15,000. The loans are repaid upon sale of the home that has been purchased or rehabilitated.
www.pdc.us/housing_serv/single_family/samp.asp

The Residential Loan Program
Allows low-income residents to add the amount needed to renovate a residential property to the amount they wish to borrow when purchasing the property.
www.pdc.us/housing_serv/single_family/state_res_loan.asp
Appendix B: Resources for Sustainability

If the National Somali Bantu Project decides to approach this demonstration project with a focus on a triple-bottom line solution that simultaneously creates economic opportunity, improves social equity and makes a positive impact on the natural environment, there may be a variety of additional funding sources and assistance available. Assistance may come in the form of political support, strategic partnerships, grants, lower-interest loans, tax rebates or training.

These funding sources would only be available if the National Somali Bantu Project decides to make a strong commitment to the principles of sustainability and use it as a central organizing theme. This could take the form of incorporating green building practices in a new or rehabilitated housing structure, paying special attention to energy efficiencies in any aspect of the project, avoiding pesticide use or inefficient technologies in farming practices, locating housing and community space with care to reduce the number of automobile miles traveled, increasing equity for an underserved population, and taking a multi-sectoral approach to developing the project.

The National Somali Bantu Project may find however, that competition for these very trendy resources may be stiff. The purpose of the project and its contribution to a more sustainable society will need to be clearly articulated in any funding proposal.
Financing Sustainability

Smart Communities Network, Finance & Sustainability  
(A project of the US Dept. of Energy)
This section on Financing introduces strategies and resources for mobilizing capital toward sustainability projects. The Financial Strategies subsection outlines grant programs and information, taxes and fees, voluntary programs, bonds, and loans. The remaining subsections provide links to resources for financing projects in the primary focal areas of community sustainability.

www.sustainable.doe.gov/financing/intro/shtml

ShoreBank Pacific
ShoreBank Pacific is the first commercial bank in the United States with a commitment to environmentally sustainable community development. They believe that long-term community prosperity goes hand-in-hand with a healthy environment. Through their lending programs, they support individual and community efforts to bring together conservation and economic development. With each loan, they provide information on conservation improvements that can increase the value of the borrower’s business. ShoreBank Pacific helps borrowers use energy efficiently; reduce waste and pollution; conserve natural resources; and plan for the long term.

www.eco-bank.com

Cascadia Revolving Fund
Cascadia Revolving Fund is a nonprofit community development financial institution serving Washington and Oregon. They have been pooling socially responsible investments to make loans and provide technical assistance to low-income entrepreneurs since 1985.

www.cascadiafund.org

The Bullitt Foundation
The mission of The Bullitt Foundation is to protect, restore, and maintain the natural physical environment of the Pacific Northwest for present and future generations. The Foundation invites proposals from nonprofit organizations that serve Washington, Oregon, Idaho, British Columbia, western Montana (including the Rocky Mountain range), and coastal Alaska from Cook Inlet to the Canadian border.

www.bullit.org

Oregon Community Foundation
The Oregon Community Foundation, in partnership with its donors, is one of the premier philanthropic organizations in Oregon. Their purpose is to improve life through philanthropy. Grants and scholarships provided from their funds support humanitarian, educational, and cultural programs that benefit communities throughout Oregon.

www.ocf1.org

Meyer Memorial Trust
The Meyer Memorial Trust invites proposals for its grantmaking programs from qualified tax-exempt applicants in Oregon and Clark County, Washington. The Trust operates three grantmaking programs: General Purpose Grants, Small Grants, and Support for Teacher Initiatives. Specific information, including a grant application guideline for each program, is available at this web site, or in print form from the Trust office. The Trust does not provide grants, loans or scholarships to individuals, nor does it provide assistance to for-profit businesses.

www.mmt.org
Home Specific Sustainability Financing

Oregon Office of Energy’s Energy Loans
The purpose of the Energy Loan Program (also known as SELP) is to promote energy conservation and renewable energy resource development. The program offers low-interest loans for projects that:

- Save energy
- Produce energy from renewable resources such as water, wind, geothermal, solar, biomass, waste materials or waste heat
- Use recycled materials to create products
- Use alternative fuels

Energy Loan Program
www.energy.state.or.us/loan/selpmhme.htm

Oregon Office of Energy
www.energy.state.or.us

Oregon Housing and Community Service
Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program
The Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program provides weatherization and energy conservation services at no cost to households below 60% of Oregon Statewide median. Major funding is from the US Department of Energy with other funds from the US Department of Health & Human Services, utility companies, and the Bonneville Power Administration.
www.hcs.state.or.us/community_resources/energy_wx/liwap.html

Earth Advantage Homes
www.earthadvantage.com/homes/home

Political Support and Strategic Partnerships for Sustainability

Coalition for a Livable Future
The Coalition for a Livable Future is a network of 60 non-profit and community-based organizations working together to create a more equitable and sustainable Portland metropolitan region.
www.clfuture.org

National Policy Consensus Center’s “Oregon Solutions” Program
Oregon Solutions is an NPCC-hosted program that helps communities develop sustainable and collaborative projects that address challenges or opportunities. It provides the mechanism and the forum to bring diverse stakeholders together and help them reach agreement on what they will do together to solve the problems at hand.
www.policyconsensus.org/issues/sustainability.html
www.orsolutions.org/

Sustainable Northwest
Sustainable Northwest partners with communities and enterprises to achieve economic, ecological, and community vitality and resilience.
www.sustainablenorthwest.org
Appendix C: Oregon’s Land Use Planning System

An incredibly fertile land suitable for a wide variety of agricultural uses greeted the early settlers to the State of Oregon. The State’s history is inextricably bound with the land and its products, and this relationship has led to a unique system of land use laws and protections designed to preserve and protect this heritage. This unique system bears some explanation as it directly impacts the ability of the Somali Bantu and the National Somali Bantu Project to realize a placed-based refugee resettlement plan, particularly one that involves an agricultural component.

Passed in 1973, Oregon Senate Bill 100 set the groundwork for the creation of a series of land use regulations and laws that govern every corner of the State. Out of Senate Bill 100 arose a series of statewide land use goals designed to protect agricultural and forestry land from what was perceived to be the threat of urbanization. All local governments were required to draw up land use plans, and demonstrate compliance with statewide land use goals. Of particular relevance to the Somali Bantu and the National Somali Bantu Project is the adoption of Goal 3, designed to protect agricultural land, and the creation of a system of Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs).

Goal 3 restricts the development on agricultural land to a relatively small set of allowed uses deemed to be consistent with preserving agriculture as a mainstay of the Oregon economy. Goal 3 restrictions make it exceedingly difficult to build anything more than a single farm house on most designated agricultural land throughout the State, and effectively precludes the creation of the agricultural-housing-community center cluster envisioned in our place-making approach to refugee resettlement.

UGBs, and particularly the UGB surrounding the Portland Metropolitan region have increased demand for developable land close in to urban centers. Created as a means to control “sprawl” and direct development back towards the central city, UGBs have led to a relative scarcity of vacant land that would be suitable for agriculture activity. Land designated for development within the UGB can be worth ten times the value of farmland outside of a UGB, potentially placing it out of the price range of the Somali Bantu refugee community and the National Somali Bantu Project.

It would seem that Oregon’s land use system has made the task of finding affordable land for agriculture in the city limits nearly impossible; however, by preserving a supply of agriculture land just outside of the UGB, Oregon’s system may actually offer the Somali Bantu more opportunities to engage in this type of activity. Additionally the restrictions placed on cities by the creation of UGBs has helped to lead local jurisdictions to create a more flexible system of zoning ordinances that do not segregate land uses in the extreme manner that can be found in some states. This creates opportunities for “mixed use” development, including development that combines housing, a community center, and small-scale agriculture.
Appendix D: Literature Review, Resettlement Falling Short

Initial services provided for refugees under current resettlement practices are extremely important during the refugees’ early months in the US, however; they alone do not necessarily result in refugees’ successful long-term adjustment. Measuring such adjustment is difficult, however, because there is no data that clearly indicates levels of integration in US society and refugees vary widely in their experiences. The US Census Bureau (2002), for example, collects information on foreign-born residents and ethnic background, but not specifically on refugees. Their data indicates that foreign-born residents are less likely to be educated or employed, and are more likely to earn less and have higher rates of poverty than the native born population. Specifically, with regards to poverty in Portland, 18 percent of foreign-born residents were living in poverty in 2000 as compared to 8 percent of the native population (Lotspeich et al. 2003). Data in 2001 from the US Department of Health and Human Services (2001) confirm that these trends tend to hold true for refugee populations, but indicates that the longer a refugee has been living in the US, the more likely he or she is to be employed and to be earning a higher income. African refugees in particular, however, were among the most likely of US refugees to be unemployed, under-educated, and utilizing welfare services (US Department of Health and Human Services 2001).

The literature reveals additional challenges faced by refugees. For example, stress related to past trauma, together with a lack of social and economic coping resources, may contribute to substance abuse as a maladaptive coping mechanism among displaced persons (Johnson 1996). Cowart & Cowart (1996) found that Asian refugees were resettled in poor, crowded, multiethnic, high-crime, inner-city areas of Dallas where they endured robberies, assaults, burglaries, and vandalism daily. They seldom reported these crimes due to fear of police and a lack of knowledge of resources. The study suggested that Asian refugee youth in these communities turned to gangs because they were unable to satisfy expectations of success through acceptable means.

The impact of resettlement on refugee health is another concern. Hmong refugees in California, for example, were found to have high rates of hypertension, obesity, and self reported illnesses (Kunstadter 2000). A study of emigration impacts on Southeast Asian refugees found that stress created by acculturation was the strongest overall predictor of mental health (Nicholson 1997). Mental health impacts can include among other things increased levels of depression, frustration, and even suicide. Between 1998 and 2003, for example, eight Hmong teens in Fresno, California killed themselves, making up nearly half of all teen suicides in the city (Yang 2003).
Appendix E: Refugee Interview Summaries

The Importance Of Process:
At least one interviewee stressed the importance of involving refugees in the decision making process. Any assistance effort should be driven by the refugees themselves and be directly related to the needs they have identified. The refugees should develop their own measures of success and should be empowered to help build their community. Outside assistance can help in building capacity and in helping to set up an ethnically focused aid organization.

Achieving Success:
A consensus exists among interviewees that learning English is perhaps the most important task for a refugee in the US. So much depends on a person’s English skills, including the use of the public transit system, obtaining a drivers license, finding work, and conversing with one’s work supervisor. A Slavic refugee mentioned that his previous employer associated English proficiency with intelligence, making his work environment much more difficult because he had very poor English skills. Once English is learned, it becomes much easier to learn “the system” and to meet basic needs. Education in general was frequently mentioned as being important for success.

Maintaining Cultural and Community Ties:
Frequent interaction with members of one’s ethnic community is a prominent theme in discussions about maintaining cultural and community ties. This is even more valuable if there is an established ethnic community when new refugees arrive. For the Portland Hmong community, it is very important to live close (within a few blocks) to one’s family members. Family and ethnic community members provide a wide array of assistance to one another whether it be child-care, educating one another on how to negotiate “the system,” or providing financial assistance during hard times.

Another important feature are the various cultural events such as weddings, new year celebrations, or other social gatherings. These gatherings, which for some communities occur weekly, help to educate the younger generation about cultural traditions as well as being a networking opportunity where individuals can learn about things such as job opportunities.

It was also stressed that it is important for children to go to school with other children from the same ethnic refugee group. This allows the children to have a social support network that helps them better cope with the challenges of being a refugee in the US school system. Ethnic peers also provide peer pressure on the youth to maintain cultural identity and ties.

A final point is the tension between younger and older generations. Due to widely differing life-forming experiences, they often have widely different perspectives and the older generation feels challenged in trying to pass on their cultural heritage, discipline the youth, and in general trying to keep the ethnic community focused inward rather than outward toward the broader community.

Community Leadership And Support:
Some interviewees commented on the importance of having an ethnic focused organization that provides aid particularly to their community. The Portland Hmong, for example, expressed a wish for an organization that would help members of the community find jobs even if they have been living here for more than five years (currently organizations provide such service for the first year after arrival). A representative of the Asian Family Center stressed the important role organizations such as his provide for refugee communities.

Fostering A Connection With The Outside Community:
The connection with the receiving community is a sensitive and important issue to consider. Many communities are strongly opposed to low-income housing in their neighborhoods and unfortunately racism
continues to be an issue in some communities. Many of the non-profit representatives we spoke to mentioned the importance of approaching the receiving community prior to the arrival of refugees and working with pivotal players such as schools, police, social service agencies, landlords, neighborhood coalitions, and so forth so as to educate them and help them prepare for the refugees’ arrival.

Location Factors:
With the knowledge that English is a key factor in success, interviewees noted that proximity to places that teach English is important, such as elementary schools, high schools, community colleges, and community centers. Moreover, because parents often work long hours and are unavailable to drive their children to school, it is important for the young to be able to walk to school, especially elementary students who are too young to drive or negotiate public transit systems.

Slavic refugees also noted that it is essential to live near grocery stores, parks, social services, and locations where community members gather for social or cultural events. Several interviewees stressed the importance of living near both social services and jobs. One person noted that if refugees are located too far away from services or advocates they are a greater risk of being exploited and abused. Several people mentioned that long commutes to work is a problem for refugees.

As mentioned above, it is critical for the Hmong in particular to live in close proximity to their family members and ethnic community. However, many Hmong also desire to live away from the central city because it would be quieter, safer, and remind them of their rural roots. Slavic refugees who came from the city, however, prefer living in the city, while Slavic refugees from the country tend to locate in Woodburn.

The Need For A Community Center:
A community center is an asset commonly mentioned by many interviewees because it is a location where English is taught, cultural and social events occur, services and assistance is provided, and where they have an opportunity to interact with the outside community. The Portland Hmong mentioned that it is their dream to have their own community center. Most Hmong cultural or social events are currently held at individual homes, churches, or, for large events, they rent space at the Holliday Inn or Expo Center. This seems to be a common experience for many refugees.

The Agricultural Question:
When the question of agriculture arose it was often noted that large-scale agricultural activity is expensive, difficult, knowledge intensive, and generally not recommended. Small scale, organic agriculture, however, is possible, though labor intensive, and can be an important tool for maintaining cultural heritage. For the Portland Hmong, many would like to own a farm outside the city, but the costs and the fact that their jobs and family members are in the city make it a difficult option to pursue. Slavic refugees living Woodburn, however, have found work in the agricultural industry. Some also expressed the concern of creating an isolated community outside the city and made the point that many refugees may not want to continue their agricultural practices.

Transportation Challenges:
Transportation challenges were often noted in interviews. A lack of English proficiency makes using public transit difficult and a Slavic refugee mentioned how a road near an old apartment was so unfriendly for pedestrians that walking to a community center was unpleasant and dangerous. Also, as mentioned above, several interviewees noted that traveling long distances to work is difficult and expensive, stretching their meager incomes thin.


Ledezma, Daniel. Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development. 2004. Email Correspondence with Angela Southwick. Email copy, Portland, OR. April 9.


