

Leasing Public Lands for Urban Farming: Lessons Learned from Other Cities

	City/County (Lessor)	Farmer (Lessee)	History and Current Status
Formal Bid Process	Baltimore, MD Department of Planning; Housing and Community Development	Non-profit and for-profit farmers	Request For Qualification (RFQ) issued March 2011. 10 applicants, 5 chosen. Currently matching available land with farmers and negotiating leases.
	Boston, MA Department of Neighborhood Development (DND)	Non-profit and for-profit farmers	Request For Proposal (RFP) issued July 2011. 2 applicants, 2 chosen. Short leases issued to provide access for site preparation. Full leases are being prepared.
	Salt Lake County, UT, Open Space and Urban Farming Program	For-profit farmers	RFP issued April 2010. Three farmers started leasing land in August 2010. The county hopes to issue another RFP soon to expand the program.
	Seattle, Department of Planning and Development (DPD)	Non-profit and for-profit farmers	The city is currently developing a proposal for a pilot project for commercial farming on city land, which will result in an RFP.
No Formal Bid Process	Detroit, MI Recreation Department	Non-profit (Detroit Black Community Food Security Network); Individual farmers	DBCFSN approached the city to ask for a 99-year lease, then negotiated to get a 10-year lease. The city and county allow short-term urban farming on vacant lots with informal agreements.
	Portland, OR Bureau of Environmental Services	Non-profit (Friends of Zenger Farm)	In 2001, Zenger Farm began a 50-year lease on city property in Southeast Portland that was already preserved for environmental protection.

Important Factors:

- Land Availability & Farm Size
 - Key issue:* finding land suitable for agricultural purposes without development plans
 - Land leased by other cities ranges in size from .1 acres to 18 acres of land
- Bid Process
 - Key issue:* how extensive to make the application and bid process
 - The three RFP/RFQs already issued took longer than expected to get farmers on the land
- Farm Business Structure and Farmer Experience
 - Key issues:* leasing to non-profit or for-profit farmers or both; what level of farming experience
 - Several cities are starting with experienced farmers to ensure the program is a success
- Length of Leases
 - Key issue:* creating leases that are long enough for farmers to make necessary investments
 - Leases were for 3-5 years through the bid processes vs 10 and 50 years for the non-profits
- Costs & Liability Insurance
 - Key issues:* property taxes, water and utility access, revenue considerations
 - Fees ranged from \$100-\$1500 through the bid processes vs \$0 and \$1 for the non-profits
 - All the cities require the farmers to obtain specified levels of liability insurance
- Environmental Criteria
 - Key issue:* ensuring sustainable farming practices without imposing burdensome requirements
 - None of the cities require organic certification, but list required sustainable farming practices
- Public Benefits
 - Key issue:* ensuring that farms are providing public benefits while farming on public land
 - All the cities require farmers to provide public benefits, some list specific benefits in RFP
 - Salt Lake County requires farmers to sell all food produced locally as part of the lease