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The *locavore* movement is a movement in the United States and elsewhere that spawned as interest in sustainability and eco-consciousness become more prevalent ...

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The **locavore** movement is a movement in the United States and elsewhere that spawned as interest in [sustainability](#) and eco-consciousness become more prevalent.^[1] Those who are interested in eating food that is locally produced, not moved long distances to market, are called "locavores." The word "locavore" was the word of the year for 2007 in the *Oxford American Dictionary*.^[2] This word was the creation of Jessica Prentice of the [San Francisco Bay Area](#) at the time of [World Environment Day](#), 2005.^[3] It is rendered "**localvore**" by some, depending on regional differences, usually.^{[4][5]} The food may be grown in [home gardens](#) or grown by local commercial groups interested in keeping the environment as clean as possible and selling food close to where it is grown. Some people consider food grown within a 100-mile radius of their location local, while others have other definitions. In general the local food is thought by those in the movement to taste better than food that is shipped long distances.^[1]

[Farmers' markets](#) play a role in efforts to eat what is local.^[6] Preserving food for those seasons when it is not available fresh from a local source is one approach some locavores include in their strategies. Living in a mild climate can make eating locally grown products very different from living where the winter is severe or where no rain falls during certain parts of the year.^[7] Those in the movement generally seek to keep use of [fossil fuels](#) to a minimum, thereby releasing less carbon dioxide into the air and preventing greater [global warming](#). Keeping energy use down and using food grown in heated greenhouses locally would be in conflict with each other, so there are decisions to be made by those seeking to follow this lifestyle. Many approaches can be developed, and they vary by locale.^[8] Such foods as spices, chocolate, or coffee pose a challenge for some, so there are a variety of ways of adhering to the locavore ethic.^[9]

A related movement is the 'underground supper club' phenomenon, in which organizers use sustainable ingredients and use a Website to inform a waiting list of those who donate a given sum to pay for the food used.^[10]

[\[edit\]](#) [See also](#)

- [Local food](#)
- [Bioregionalism](#)
- [Sustainable agriculture](#)
- [Slow food](#)
- [Wild farming](#)

[\[edit\]](#) References

- ^a ^b [The Locavores website](#).
- [^] ["Oxford Word Of The Year: Locavore"](#). Oxford University Press.
- [^] ["Become a Locavore"](#). Easton Farmers Market.
- [^] ["Locavore or localvore?"](#), *Language Log*.
- [^] Drake Bennett (July 22, 2007). "The localvore's dilemma", *The Boston Globe*.
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- [^] Ratha Tep; Nick Fauchald (February 2007). "How to Eat Like a Locovore", *Food & Wine*.
- [^] <http://blogs.mercurynews.com/food/2008/01/24/the-locovore-challenge/>
- [^] ["The Lure of the 100-Mile Diet"](#), *Time* (June 11, 2006).
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[\[edit\]](#) External links

- [Small, Green, and Good: The Role of Neglected Cities in a Sustainable Future](#), a *Boston Review* article which argues that declining cities can use urban agriculture to provide local food sources

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Foodshed for Thought

Celebrate Your Foodshed

Eat Locally!

Welcome to Locavores:

We are [a group of concerned culinary adventurers](#) who are making an effort to eat only foods grown or harvested within a [100 mile radius of San Francisco](#) for an entire month. We recognize that the choices we make about what foods we choose to eat are important politically, environmentally, economically, and healthfully. [In 2005](#), we challenged people from the bay area (and all over the world) to eat within a 100 mile radius of their home for the month of August.....

In 2007 we extended that challenge to the month of **September** . We encouraged folks to try canning and preserving food for the wintertime. We hope you're enjoying your homemade creations.

LOCAVORE is the 2007 Word of the Year for the [Oxford American Dictionary!](#)

Only 3 years old and already we're ina dictionary.

Visit eatlocalchallenge.com to read people blogging about their locavore experience (and read about the [pennywise challenge!](#)).

We would like to urge people to use this website as a resource to continue paying attention to their food sources throughout the year.

Please [sign up](#) to let us know that you are a committed Locavore. The [community](#) continues to grow!

The Year: Locavore

Filed in [A-Editor's Picks](#) , [A-Featured](#) , [American History](#) , [Current Events](#) , [Dictionaries](#) , [Economics](#) , [Food and Drink](#) on November 12, 2007 | [ShareThis](#)

It's that time of the year again. It is finally starting to get cold (if you are worried about the global warming maybe you should become [carbon-neutral](#)) and the [New Oxford American Dictionary](#) is preparing for the holidays by making its biggest announcement of the year. The 2007 Word of the Year is (drum-roll please) **locavore**.

The past year saw the popularization of a trend in using locally grown ingredients, taking advantage of seasonally available foodstuffs that can be bought and prepared without the need for extra preservatives.

The “locavore” movement encourages consumers to buy from farmers’ markets or even to grow or pick their own food, arguing that fresh, local products are more nutritious and taste better. Locavores also shun supermarket offerings as an environmentally friendly measure, since shipping food over long distances often requires more fuel for transportation.

“The word ‘locavore’ shows how food-lovers can enjoy what they eat while still appreciating the impact they have on the environment,” said Ben Zimmer, editor for American dictionaries at Oxford University Press. “It’s significant in that it brings together eating and ecology in a new way.”

“[Locavore](#)” was coined two years ago by a group of [four women](#) in [San Francisco](#) who proposed that local residents should try to eat only food grown or produced within a 100-mile radius. Other regional movements have emerged since then, though some groups refer to themselves as “localvores” rather than “locavores.” However it’s spelled, it’s a word to watch.

Small, Green, and Good

The role of neglected cities in a sustainable future *Catherine Tumber*

Growing up in a small town, I regularly took bus trips with my mom and little sister into “the city”: Syracuse. Like most middle-class families in the 1960s, we had only one car, which my dad drove to work. So we would buy our tickets at the village pharmacy, board the Big Dog, and barrel through miles of farms and sparsely developed land until we reached the highway. Nearing the final stretch, we had to endure the stench of the Solvay chemical works to our right, and the creepy mint green of polluted Onondaga Lake on our left. But we would disembark in Syracuse’s vibrant downtown, all glittering lights and vertical planes, filled with department stores, jewelry and candy shops, theaters and movie palaces, “ethnic” food, and people who were interestingly not like us.

Smaller American cities, places like Syracuse—and Decatur, New Bedford, Kalamazoo, Buffalo, Trenton, Erie, and Youngstown—were once bustling centers of industry and downtown commerce, with wealthy local patrons committed to civic improvements and the arts. In the '70s they began a decline from which they have not recovered. Today, most are scanted as doleful sites of low-paying service jobs, with shrinking tax bases and little appeal to young professionals or to what urban theorist Richard Florida calls the “creative class.” In Syracuse itself the center of gravity has shifted northward, toward Carousel Mall, leaving a ghostly downtown where Rite-Aid, now the largest store, presides over parking lots and abandoned buildings.

Historians and economic demographers generally attribute the decline of small-to-mid-size cities of 50,000 to 500,000 souls to deindustrialization, since many sit in the Midwestern Rust Belt or the Northeast. But the history of smaller-city decline is more complex than that. Smaller cities were also victims of post-war development policies better suited to large cities—or rather, that were painful, but less disastrous, for large metropolitan areas.

Extraordinary mid-twentieth century changes in transportation, zoning, housing construction, mortgage financing, and domestic taste facilitated the creation of wide swathes of “bourgeois utopias” that now ring our cities far out into the exurbs. They are the products of a radical transformation of land-use policy that extended supply chains with vast highway systems, further separating people from their workplaces, energy producers from consumers, and farmers from their markets. Large cities survived the changes and the resulting onslaught of suburban shopping malls—itsself a reaction to extended supply-chains—in the late '70s. In smaller cities, malls decimated what was left of retail districts already damaged by massive downtown highway systems that choked off commercial centers from surrounding urban neighborhoods.

Neglect of the smaller city, as both place and idea, continued through the rest of the century. As large-metropolitan real estate values skyrocketed in the 1990s, big cities attracted millions of dollars in capital improvements and large-scale development. “New Urbanism” among designers and architects, though not in theory intended only for big cities, attracted funding for pedestrian-friendly thoroughfares, mixed-use building, open spaces, and the preservation of historic architecture that enhanced the metropolitan boom. Now, with the call for reducing the urban carbon footprint, cosmopolitan living is going green. Two recent books proposing models for a low-carbon economy—Thomas Friedman’s *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, and Jay Inslee and Bracken Hendricks’s *Apollo’s Fire*—speak throughout of “villages” and “large cities.” Not a word for the distinctive role smaller cities might play in a low-carbon world.

That is too bad. Smaller cities have idiosyncratic charms of their own-worthy of sustained attention and renewal. And, fortuitously, they have a distinctive and vital role to play in the work of the new century: smaller cities will be critical in the move to local agriculture and the development of renewable energy industries. These tasks will almost certainly require a dramatic rethinking of land-use policy, and smaller cities have assets that large cities lack. Their underused or vacant industrial space and surrounding tracts of farmland make them ideal sites for sustainable land-use policies, or “smart growth.”

Yet current urban planning models offer little guidance on how we might begin to make those changes. Nor, until recently, has there been a national forum that matches smaller-city renewal initiatives to national needs. The Revitalizing Older Cities Congressional Task Force, formed just last year, held its first national summit (organized by the Northeast-Midwest

Institute) in mid-February. Local governments and advocates of eco-sustainability must build on this new conversation for they have a shared stake in the future.

Sustainability advocates could be missing the large, strategic, regional and economic advantages smaller cities can offer a national policy over the long term.

The Portland, Oregon-based Post Carbon Cities project offers one bold way to start thinking about national policy, with its call for the “relocalization” of cities, a form of decentralization grounded in local food systems and energy resources. An alternative to the traditional idea of “balancing” economic and environmental needs, relocalization aims to maximize both by dramatically reducing reliance on costly and environmentally damaging supply chains—long transportation routes geared to truck or air transportation—while increasing sustainable agriculture and energy security and creating local jobs that cannot be outsourced.

Taking energy security first, the smaller cities of the United States, with their large parcels of vacant, relatively low-value property and proximate surrounding land, could serve the alternative energy industry well. Smaller cities are not only more likely to be located near sources of clean energy—such as waterways, forests, and fields—but they can also generate more energy proportionate to their size.

One large obstacle for the clean-energy industry and its advocates is that the current energy infrastructure disadvantages them in competition with coal, natural gas, and oil, which together provide about 70 percent of electrical power in the United States. Achieving “grid parity”—the point at which renewable energy is as cheap as or cheaper than power from prevailing sources—is extremely difficult. The grid, built decades ago for local utility monopolies and now used by a deregulated national energy industry, is in a terrible state of disrepair. More immediately, it is oriented toward large “base loads” traveling over long distances to major population centers, a strain that threatens the fragile system. The United States’s “third-world grid,” as many are now calling it, is particularly unsuited to storing or transferring small, supplementary loads of electricity—the kind of loads produced by renewable energy sources in their current form. Moreover, keeping energy more local has the advantage of limiting grid transmission loss, which can run as high as 10 percent.

If smaller cities are to reap the benefits of renewable energy development, the transmission and distribution network must be both modernized and decentralized—changes that electrical energy experts agree are necessary anyway. Local contributions to a first-world energy grid would then vary, depending on terrain and natural resources. Hydrokinetic power harvested from underwater ocean currents shows promise in coastal areas. Hydropower from rivers would generate the most electricity in the West and Midwest, where the drop is higher and the water rush more forceful than in other parts of the country. Solar power on a large scale works best in sunny climates, and wind power on the coasts and in the Great Plains. And, according to a *Washington Post* report, geothermal energy tapped from the thirteen Western states that sit within the trans-Pacific “Ring of Fire” could provide up to half of the nation’s current level of electricity output.

But smaller contributions from alternative energy sources should not be overlooked. Small hydropower, defined as producing up to ten megawatts of electricity (enough to support 10,000 homes), is underdeveloped in the United States, lagging far behind Canada, Australia, New Zealand, parts of Asia, and the European Union, where it is found mostly in its fast-developing smaller cities. In New England, a number of projects are under way that will

generate three megawatts or less, enough to power a hospital, large shopping center, or small factory.

As ideal sites for new energy industries, smaller cities would in turn gain from job creation.

Alternative energy technologies are in various stages of development, but one thing is already clear: if they work, they will require space that dense metropolitan areas cannot provide. Solar power, which among alternative energies has come closest to achieving grid parity, can make use of rooftops and awnings in big cities, but offers far greater potential when staged on ground mounts on polluted brownfields, suburban greyfields, or open land. One of the world's largest solar farms, sitting on more than one thousand acres in Kramer Junction in California's Mojave Desert, consists of row upon row of solar panels, which power generating stations at the facility. According to the company that operates it, at capacity, it produces enough power (150 megawatts) to support 150,000 homes. A good rule of thumb, at this point, is that one megawatt of solar-generated power requires about eight acres of land.

Wind power, unless sited offshore, also requires large tracts of land. And, by definition, biomass and biogas technologies require farm and forest land to generate the raw resources required, as well as space for the physical plant that conducts the conversion. This year BioEnergy Solutions announced a partnership with Vintage Dairy, of Riverdale, California (just outside Fresno) to convert manure from its 5,000 cows into methane by flushing animal waste into an anaerobic-digester, a covered lagoon "equal in size to the area of nearly five football fields and over three stories deep."

As ideal sites for new energy industries, smaller cities would in turn gain from job creation. A 2007 American Solar Energy Society report claimed that renewable energy and energy-efficient industries had already created nearly 8.5 million jobs in the United States, a little more than half in indirectly related fields such as accounting, information technology, and trucking. Many are blue-collar jobs in maintenance and manufacturing. A September 2008 proposal from the Apollo Alliance estimates that its New Apollo Program—a renewable energy proposal on a scale akin to that of the Kennedy administration's space program—could create five million "high-quality" green-collar jobs over the next decade. Indeed, many have pointed out that bold low-carbon policy initiatives could launch the next Industrial Revolution. Happily, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, signed by President Obama in February, is consistent with Apollo's aims and suggested funding levels. Smaller American cities could participate creatively in this emerging world. In the past, jurisdictional disputes over land use have plagued urban development in smaller cities, so federal investment in regional transportation and energy infrastructure must include pressure to resolve squabbles.

The proximity of abundant, relatively cheap land also gives smaller cities a structural advantage in meeting the growing demand for local, sustainable agriculture. As Michael Pollan demonstrates in his best-selling *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, agribusiness puts down an enormous carbon footprint. Sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry not only produce more nutritious food and less cruelty to animals, they are also far less dependent on petroleum for long-distance transportation, fertilizer, and neurotoxic pesticides (not to mention antibiotics). Building on the work of organic farmers and environmental activists since the '70s, Pollan's call for relocalizing agriculture coincides with rising alarm about the perils of climate change and dependence on foreign oil. Even the United Nations, which has long embraced agribusiness as the key to famine prevention, is beginning to recognize the role of sustainable, localized practices in food security. The change in public perceptions has created

a critical mass of “locavores,” most living in big cities far from the heart of agribusiness, who are driving a growing market for organic products.

Farmers’ markets, community-supported agriculture, community gardens, and green roofs have become increasingly popular, forcing big supermarket chains to offer local, organic produce. New York City alone went from two farmers’ markets in 1979 to more than 45 in 2008. Meanwhile, the appeal of farming, on a smaller, more diversified, independent model, is growing among young adults and mid-life professionals. The number of organic farms in New York State almost doubled between 2003 and 2007, from 404 farms to 735. And the number of people aged 45—54 operating farms of under fifty acres shot up by 70 percent. Increasingly, urban professionals are investing in farmland and taking on agricultural work as a second vocation.

If urban farming—growing food within city limits or on nearby small-scale market farms—and sustainable agriculture in general are to succeed, however, they must be integrated with the larger workforce and with urban and regional planning. Detroit, home to one of the country’s first urban farms, pioneered this work. Today eighty acres throughout the city have been appropriated for agriculture and are under cultivation through the Detroit Garden Resource Program Collaborative. Its member organizations provide training in soil management and crop cultivation, bee-keeping, orchard building, composting, and the like through various faith communities and the local schools, and provide on-the-job training and summer employment to teens and adults. The yield for 2007 was 120 tons of food and promises to grow much higher. The county treasurer’s office allowed the nonprofit Urban Farming to grow produce on twenty tax-foreclosed vacant properties in 2008.

To some extent, the urban agriculture movement is primarily a big-city phenomenon, not least because large cities have received disproportionate publicity and funding. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation sponsors one of the larger and more daring philanthropic initiatives. Its Food and Fitness program provided planning grants to nine community-based projects that emphasize access to local food and physical exercise among disadvantaged families. Six of them are located in big cities (including Detroit), two in rural areas, and only one in a smaller city—Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Funding and advocacy organizations have nothing against smaller city initiatives. Far from it. Kellogg’s Ricardo Salvador notes that “the metaphor of sustainability itself is lots of small communities, whether they are city neighborhoods in densely populated areas or small rural communities.” As Daniel Lerch, of Post Carbon Cities puts it: “This is not just an issue of scale. Very soon we’ll see cities of any size going down the path of sustainability with regard to food and watershed.”

By minimizing the importance of scale, however, sustainability advocates could be missing the large, strategic regional and economic advantages smaller cities can offer a national policy over the long term. Martin Bailkey, coauthor of a 2000 Lincoln Institute of Land Policy working paper on the history and viability of entrepreneurial “farming inside cities” says “it shouldn’t matter whether farms are fifty or sixty miles from, say, New York City, or ten miles from a smaller city like Madison, Wisconsin.” But he notes that post-industrial cities with declining populations, particularly in the Midwest, are better positioned to shift urban land-use policy toward farming.

Even more intriguing, he says, is the notion that the “mosaic” of smaller cities located in the heartland could one day anchor a regional agricultural shift from industrial monoculture to

more localized biodiversity. Large farms now used for federally subsidized commodity crops—mainly corn and soy—could over time be made available in smaller parcels for market farming on a scale that cannot be undertaken within city limits.

The Land Connection, based in Evanston, Illinois, is working to do just that. One program helps heirs to farmland put agricultural easements on their property, and its training and transition programs assist farmers who want to replace monoculture with sustainable, organic practices. Founder Terra Brockman says that some of the newer farmers, who may be first-timers or returning to the family business, “are making the decision to sell in smaller cities . . . where the demand didn’t exist fifteen years ago.” What they need, says Brockman, “is really quite simple: land, trained farmers, local processing facilities (which disappeared in the sixties), and logistical transportation.”

Why not turn the roof and vast parking lot of Irondequoit Mall into a solar “brightfield,” and the indoor space into hydroponic market farms?

Developing an effective transportation infrastructure is critical to making smaller cities hubs in a relocalized, agricultural economy. As Kellogg’s Gail Imig suggests, it might be easier for smaller cities “to work out local distribution systems for transporting food” than for big cities. Still, federal leadership will be crucial. Gayle Peterson of The Headwaters Group Philanthropic Services—consultants for foundations ranging from Kellogg, Mott, and Weyerhouser to community foundations—says: “There is a huge movement among foundations supporting regional food systems uniting networks of cities and towns in a large agricultural food basket . . . but there are as yet no group initiatives that cut across the issues.” Her colleague, John Sherman, adds: “If anything significant is to take place, the thrust will have to come from economic development agencies” that can provide government funding and coordinated policy leadership.

One nonprofit, the Michigan Land Use Institute (MLUI), is emerging as a model of state and regional planning. One of the projects it supports, The Grand Vision, aims to integrate economic opportunities into a working rural landscape and provide land-use experts to help grassroots groups organize and manage their campaigns.

Located in the area around Traverse City, a large town of 14,532 that anchors a “micropolitan statistical area”—a term established in 2003 denoting a new federal census standard—with a population of 131,342, The Grand Vision emerged in 2006 when plans for a highway bypass and bridge around Traverse City met with community protest. With the cooperation of Senators Debbie Stabinow and Carl Levin and U.S. Representative Dave Camp, federal highway funding was diverted to a two-year community-planning process. The process was coordinated by consultants with the full involvement of local citizens, municipal bodies, businesses, environmental groups, and social services agencies, all organized into “charrettes.” The final results will be unveiled in May.

One of MLUI’s highly successful programs is Farm to School, which is part of a growing nationwide movement that connects local farm products with school cafeterias. MLUI links the program to a larger state initiative based on a study showing that helping farmers sell to local supermarkets and farmers’ markets could increase net farm income in Michigan by nearly 16 percent and generate up to 1,889 new jobs.

Smaller cities might also be better able than large ones to recover for market-farming purposes land lost to suburban sprawl. Filmmaker Nancy Rosin—who produced a

documentary on the history of Rochester, New York's farmers' market—explains that before the rise of grocery store chains after World War I, small-market farming appealed to working people, particularly immigrants from Italy and Eastern Europe, who brought their horticultural skills with them. They grew food on city lots where they lived and, over time, grew much larger quantities in the adjacent suburbs—or what we would now call suburbs—in particular, Irondequoit, less than ten miles from Rochester's downtown market. A sizeable number, she says, held full-time jobs with companies such as Kodak and became known as “Kodak farmers.” By mid-century Irondequoit “had the largest square footage of greenhouse glass in the world to support the demand for food in a climate with long, cold winters.” A fifty-something Irondequoit native who blogs for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* brings that world to life:

I grew up in the Flats, on St. Joseph Street. My dad was born there in the old homestead, his parents farmers. My siblings and I were raised there. Although it had changed from when my dad was growing up, I still remember all the farming that went on down there. The greenhouses, the tractors, listening to the frogs on a hot summer night . . . it was like living in the country. A drive through the Flats today shows quite a different story. The farms are gone. There are no tractors going up and down the street with trailers bobbing behind them. The greenhouses are gone. Most of the 'old timers' have passed. There are houses where there were fields and wetlands. There has been a lot of change.

By the early 1960s Irondequoit was fast being paved over, making way for homes, highways, and strip malls. In 1963 the once-powerful Irondequoit Grange closed and later became the House of Guitars. The gigantic Irondequoit Mall opened in 1990, and, today, after only eighteen years in business, it is considered officially “dead,” with less than 50 percent retail occupancy and an uncertain future. What should become of such worn-out retail outlets, which were multiplying by the thousands across the country even before the current economic downturn?

A happier future for a smaller city like Rochester, where Kodak alone shed some 45,000 jobs over the past twenty-five years, may involve the restoration and growth of sustainable food systems. One of Kellogg's earliest Food and Fitness pilot programs tried to do just that on several acres where a small vineyard tended by an Italian family years ago still grows. (The program is currently languishing due to conflicts among the community organizations that originally established it.) A series of community “Vision Plans” similar to those in Traverse City called for continuing an existing program of riverfront development, as well as more affordable housing, mixed-use buildings, and pedestrian-friendly streets—all familiar New Urbanism strategies. One recent charrette also called for tearing down part of the Inner Loop freeway, built in 1965, that circles the downtown business district. Here is another idea: why not turn the roof and vast parking lot of Irondequoit Mall into a solar “brightfield,” and the indoor space into hydroponic market farms? Why not rebuild those greenhouses? And why not introduce green job-training programs in Rochester, a city that has one of the highest high-school dropout rates in the nation?

There is no question that the infrastructure of large metropolitan areas can and must be redesigned and retrofitted for energy efficiency. And not surprisingly, that is where green urban planners have been focusing their efforts: after all, big cities contribute the largest share of the world's carbon output. But focusing on big cities may also reflect what urban historian James J. Connolly calls “metropolitan bias.” Even those who have written about smaller urban areas, he argues, have “made little effort to distinguish large and smaller cities from each other,” treating them as “essentially interchangeable case studies of developments that

unfolded on a national and even an international scale.” That model, established by sociologist Louis Wirth’s influential 1938 essay “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” assumes continued modernization, growth, and centralization of political and economic power in big cities. The idea of the “metropolis as the quintessential urban form” was further reinforced by the postmodern cultural turn, which saw global cities as “sites” for the formation of “transnational” identities; by implication, smaller places are repositories of more provincial, outmoded, and “destructive nationalisms.”

If we temper the metropolitan bias that pervades the sustainable cities movement, green advantages and opportunities distinctive to smaller cities come into focus. But we first must abandon the perpetual-growth paradigm and, when appropriate, embrace shrinkage, not as decline but as a framework for creative reinvention. Several American cities are taking a cue from Europe’s Shrinking Cities project, spurred by radical population decline particularly in the former East German Republic. Youngstown, Ohio, the population of which dropped from 170,000 to 82,000 with the decline of the steel industry, was the first American city to make downsizing a matter of formal policy. The Youngstown 2010 initiative has spent upward of \$3 million to date to demolish vacant houses and buildings; open access to the Mahoning River; cut back sewage, plowing, and other costly services; further concentrate the population; and open green space for parks and agriculture. According to the city’s chief planner, Anthony Kobak, urban-farming incentives are not yet under consideration.

Other so-called weak-market cities have launched similar efforts, with greater emphasis on environmental sustainability. In 2008 nearby Cleveland’s Neighborhood Progress, Inc. announced a major project, supported by a grant from the Surdna Foundation, exploring the possibility of turning vacant city lots into agricultural and renewable energy sites. Similar plans are under way in Flint, Michigan, which now owns 10 percent of the city’s vacant property through the Genesee County Land Bank.

Meanwhile, we need to revisit the cultural mythology about smaller places. Sociologist Kenneth Johnson’s 2006 study, which tracked demographic changes in rural America, found that since 2001 rural population gains have swung modestly upward in an “uneven” pattern. “Gains have been greatest,” he writes, “in the fringes of metropolitan areas and in rural areas that are proximate to metropolitan areas that include smaller cities and that contain natural and recreational amenities.” Johnson’s study also contradicts two seemingly intractable stereotypes. Immigrants, particularly Latinos, “are dispersing more widely” and account for much of this small metro growth, thus belying the notion that large urban areas are the exclusive preserve of “transnational” pluralism. And rural does not necessarily equal farming. Johnson shows that “the proportion of the rural workforce employed in manufacturing is nearly double that in agriculture,” while “many rural areas have also now become thriving centers of recreation and retirement.”

A new literature is taking shape that recognizes the distinctive characteristics and potential of smaller cities. From the *Journal of Urbanism*, launched in March 2008, to recent studies by the Brookings Institution’s Jennifer S. Vey, to PolicyLink’s 2008 report *To Be Strong Again: Renewing the Promise in Smaller Industrial Cities*, to the work of Ball State University’s Center for Middletown Studies, small cities are gradually being taken seriously again. That quiet shift reflects changes in the rest of the world. A 2008 UN population study predicted that, by the end of that year and for the first time in history, half the world would live in urban centers and that the trend toward cities would continue, with most of the growth taking place in cities of less than half a million. China alone is planning to build 400 small cities by 2020, to accommodate its shifting rural population. All of this is attracting attention from urban

planners and architects. But the growing interest in smaller cities also reflects an imaginative resizing, a spiritually overdue compression of the gigantic, “unsustainable” ambitions of economic-bubble culture.

When it comes to the urban-rural divide, small-to-intermediate-size cities may offer the best of both worlds. For all the rural romanticism of the '70s-era homesteading movement—or for that matter, the vaunted folksiness of “small-town values,”—urban life has its allure. Smaller cities are large enough to offer the diversity, anonymity, and vibrancy of urban culture, as well as levels of density that offer efficiencies of scale. They are also small enough to maintain proximity to sustainable food production and renewable energy resources.

An inversion is at work here: placing smaller cities at the center of analysis leads to an imaginative template that is *decentralized*, *deconcentrated*, *relocalized*. One of the Obama campaign's strokes of genius was bypassing big-city power centers, where self-appointed national leaders claim to speak for minorities, and working directly with the decentralized grid of smaller-city community organizations across the land. As policymakers rethink the American agricultural economy and invest in renewable energy, they, too, should be looking at smaller cities. Local and municipal leaders also have much to gain in the twenty-first century if they have the eyes to see it.

The Food Issue

California's Food Banks Go Locavore

By DOUGLAS McGRAY

ONCE A MONTH a tractor-trailer rolls up to the Family Early Learning Center, a one-room [preschool](#) in East San Jose, Calif., that doubles as a food pantry for poor families with young kids. On a bright Friday in August, a dozen or so women from the neighborhood gathered for the truck's arrival. Volunteers as well as customers, they had come to help unload the monthly delivery of groceries from the [local food](#) bank.

The truck driver moved a huge pallet of potatoes onto a pallet truck and rolled it to the door of the school. Then came big, round watermelons; then purple onions.

“Cantaloupe?” the driver called out, wondering where to unload it.

“We're going to do that outside,” a woman answered.

The women broke down the pallets as fast as they could. A crowd of customers would gather soon. Anything the women could carry went inside the school — boxes of celery, onions, eggs, pinto beans, generic corn flakes, rice and creamy peanut butter. Outside, the driver unloaded green peppers, plums, apricots, bags of potatoes, ears of corn and pears, arranging everything in two rows of big, open bins.

It didn't look like food for the needy. It looked like a farmers' market.

Traditionally [food banks](#) have gathered mostly leftover or damaged boxes and cans from supermarkets, food processors and other mass distributors and then passed along the food to soup kitchens and food pantries like the one in East San Jose. Food banks have always found

some fresh produce to give away; a few have managed to give away a lot. But for the most part, they have trafficked in processed foods — widely available free, simple to transport and warehouse and quick to fill empty stomachs.

Increasingly, though, food banks have been looking to agriculture. California is at the forefront of this change. Since 2005, the California Association of Food Banks has struck deals with farms and packers across the state, where, on behalf of its members, it collects truckloads of fruits and vegetables that are too small, ripe or misshapen for supermarkets to sell.

This shift toward more healthful food is partly about obesity and its rise among the poor. But it's also a product of necessity: the food industry has become more efficient, squeezing the traditional supply of surplus cans and boxes. Fresh food offers a big, new food supply — and maybe, for the food banks themselves, a beneficial new role.

“There’s an almost unlimited supply of produce that’s not being adequately distributed,” says Vicki Escarra, the president of Feeding America (formerly America’s Second Harvest), the national network of food banks. Last month she formed a fruits-and-vegetables task force and plans to bring in 25 percent more farm produce through national donors in the next fiscal year. “Identifying where it is and how we can get it and how we can subsidize it — there are a lot of lessons that can be learned in California,” Escarra says. “What they’re doing is really innovative.”

BILL FOLTZ STOOD ankle deep in sandy soil. It was a scorching September afternoon in California’s Central Valley. Beside him, a farmer named Nathan Mininger dusted off a sweet potato and took a bite. Foltz works for the California Association of Food Banks, for the Farm to Family project. He and his colleagues are a bit like “gleaners” — the church or charity volunteers who walk the fields after a harvest and carry home leftover fruits and vegetables in gunny sacks. Foltz, however, deals in 20-ton loads and commercial freight. And for the right crop, he can offer a few pennies a pound.

Late last harvest season Foltz met Mininger for the first time at a nearby food bank, where Mininger donated some sweet potatoes now and then. A few weeks later they met for coffee at an old diner off a narrow country road. Foltz was looking for a big haul of free sweet potatoes. “I’d quickly realized that wasn’t going to happen,” he recalled to me, “not in the volume I was looking for.”

The reason was simple. Supermarkets buy the best sweet potatoes — good size, smooth skin, not too crooked. But just about all the rest, the “No. 2’s,” farmers can sell to food processors, for everything from fries to baby food. With most crops Foltz can watch the market and solicit donations when he sees that a glut from a big harvest will perish in storage. But not with sweet potatoes. Kept cool and dry, they can last a whole year. Sellers can be patient.

Foltz was motivated, though. Sweet potatoes are one of the most healthful and hearty vegetables in the produce aisle: they’re so prized, and so hard to get, that food banks in California paid more per pound for sweet potatoes than for any other fruit or vegetable last season. Foltz explained all this to Mininger, as the two men drank their coffee.

“It’s too bad you can’t use white sweet potatoes,” Mininger said. He explained that high-end supermarkets will pay a premium for No. 1’s, but there is no demand for white-sweet-potato

fries or white-sweet-potato pie filling. So, unlike with regular sweet potatoes, a white-sweet-potato grower picks only the best potatoes and leaves a lot in the field.

Foltz was intrigued. He and Mininger headed out to the field together to have a look. They followed a harvest crew as it inched down a row. A big blue tractor pulled a shaded, mechanized harvester, carrying six workers in hats and bandannas, and six large wooden bins. A conveyor belt dug white sweet potatoes out of the sand. The workers chose the best ones, put them in bins and let the rest drop off the back of the belt to the ground.

Foltz chatted with Mininger about the added cost of collecting those No. 2's. Mininger said he could do it for a relatively minimal fee and break even, because his workers were already there collecting the No. 1's.

When Foltz returned to the fields in September, for the first day of this year's harvest, one of the six wooden bins had been replaced by a cardboard bin, for the food banks. Foltz and Mininger stepped aboard and peered into the bin, which was slowly filling with small sweet potatoes. In a few days the first shipment would be on a truck bound for Oakland, San Jose and San Francisco. They might get half a million pounds or more by season's end. "This," Mininger said, "is what Mr. Bill is going to feed the world with."

A FEW DAYS LATER I drove out to the Alameda County Community Food Bank, a big warehouse near the Oakland airport. A group of volunteers from Chevron, in matching company T-shirts, sorted and bagged ears of corn and red plums that arrived the day before. Five years ago, less than 10 percent of the food that passed through Oakland's food bank was fresh produce — a pretty typical figure, nationally. Today, fruits and vegetables account for almost half. The Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties, which serves San Jose, has nearly tripled the amount of produce it distributes. At the San Francisco Food Bank, 60 percent of the food that it gave away last year was fresh fruit or vegetables.

Sorting corn and plums is a far cry from the way things used to work. When food banks spread across the country in the 1970s and '80s, a food solicitor at a bank would contact supermarkets, food processors and distributors and arrange to pick up truckloads of dented soup cans or breakfast cereal that got lost in a warehouse and passed its sell-by date. Then volunteers from local soup kitchens, food pantries and church groups would show up at the food bank in vans and station wagons and take the food back to their neighborhoods.

But the food industry has cut back on waste. Factories are quicker to catch mistakes on a production line. Computerized inventory means stores have a better idea what to order, and when, and fewer shipments get lost or expire. Manufacturers have changed the way they reimburse supermarkets for damaged goods, too. The Grocery Manufacturers Association says that unsalables, as a share of gross sales, have fallen significantly since 2005.

There is still surplus and damage and waste. But food businesses have other ways, now, to unload it. Dollar stores and discount outlets have boomed in this decade, and increasingly they buy and sell food — including leftovers and unsalables that food banks used to get free. Donations of unsalables to Feeding America have fallen at least 7 percent a year for eight consecutive years. The San Francisco Food Bank saw donations from manufacturers drop 18 percent in the last year alone.

A few years ago, San Francisco's food bank anticipated this crunch and began to look farther afield for sources of food. Food banks were traditionally expected to solicit food in only the

counties they served. But San Francisco seemed just about tapped. California's big rural middle, meanwhile, had lots of farms and food manufacturers and presumably more surplus food. A volunteer named Gary Maxworthy, a retired executive from a big food distributor, proposed that Northern California's food banks hire a shared roaming solicitor, to look for missed opportunities across county lines.

The food banks assumed that they would turn up more boxes, more cans. But they found peaches — from a big stonefruit packer in Fresno, Calif., which was regularly donating as many peaches and nectarines as Fresno's food bank could accept and was still dumping millions of pounds of fruit each year, some of it perfectly edible. That gave the food banks an idea. In 2005 they decided to turn their roaming food solicitor into a farm-produce solicitor, and Farm to Family was created. Foltz, a retired logistics manager from a big poultry company, set out looking for fruits and vegetables. He wouldn't be bound by local demand or capacity; Farm to Family could ship wherever there was need. The group would even design delivery routes so that big food banks could get full 20-ton truckloads and smaller food banks could share an order.

That first year Foltz found 10 million pounds of fresh produce, mostly peaches, oranges, watermelons and potatoes. "We were pretty proud of ourselves," he said to me, laughing. "We had no idea how much was out there."

FOLTZ IS ONE of three Farm to Family solicitors now, including a retired fertilizer and pesticide salesman and a part-time hay farmer. Together they're on pace to bring California's food banks more than 80 million pounds of produce by the end of this year, including 66 different kinds of fruits and vegetables, from spinach and cauliflower to pluots, rainbow chard and honeydew. And they expect to find much more.

Each crop presents a different puzzle. Take carrots. According to Foltz, just two California firms supply a huge share of the national market. "And they're vertically integrated," he explained. "They'll grind the big ones down into baby-cut carrots and charge for that. They do carrot juice. They do shredded carrots for prepackaged salads." That makes them unlikely to sell anything at or near cost, much less to donate large quantities. So Foltz has to concentrate on smaller growers and packers.

Peaches, plums and nectarines are much easier to source. Farmers pick just about everything off the trees and take the harvest into a packing shed, where it gets sorted into grades and boxed up for delivery to supermarkets. But the fruit is fragile and it turns quickly, and there isn't much of a juice market, which means that packers have few options for unloading their ripening surplus. That makes it an easy target for Foltz.

But the very reason that soft, quick-ripening produce is so often available also makes it a challenge for food banks to handle. When Oakland's food bank moved into a new warehouse in 2005, it installed a huge cooler, as big as a suburban house. Suzan Bateson, the food bank's executive director, recently took me on a tour. "We built this with the vision that it would be our future," she said, as we stood shivering inside. That year her food bank became one of the first in the country to ban donations of carbonated beverages, which meant an immediate hit of roughly a million pounds to the food bank's most important statistic: pounds distributed. "I made a promise to the board that I'd replace it with fresh produce," she said.

Around that same time, food banks across the country were beginning to look more closely at the food on their shelves. "When I first came to the food bank, a lot of the shipments were

snack food and candy,” says Paul Ash, director of the food bank in San Francisco. Food banks have always preferred more healthful food, of course, but that didn’t seem nearly as urgent as empty stomachs. Suddenly, facing all the illnesses associated with obesity, from diabetes and heart disease to hypertension, it did. “It was like getting hit in the head with a hammer,” Ash says, “realizing that hunger and obesity could occur together.”

And so fresh produce has seemed increasingly worth the cost and the difficulty. Nationally, Feeding America has negotiated deals with giant supermarket chains, including Kroger and Wal-Mart, to salvage unsold produce, as well as meat, dairy and prepared foods before they spoil. It recovered 198 million pounds last year, up from 96 million the year before. The Vermont Foodbank actually bought its own 20-acre farm last year, and food banks across the country have contracted with growers or planted crops on their own small plots of land. (Such efforts have required food banks to raise more money. It’s not always an easy sell to donors; people like organizing food drives. But it usually makes sense: the money spent on a \$2 jar of applesauce could otherwise buy up to 40 pounds of Farm to Family apples.)

California’s bigger food banks have increasingly delivered their goods rather than having pantries come pick up the food. Produce often arrives near the end of its shelf life, and shoestring pantries can take only so much away. Early on, Oakland’s food bank set up a shipping route and sent a refrigerated truck around the county. Then it added another truck and more routes. Now it enlists five refrigerated trucks, each one stopping at as many as 15 or 20 local food pantries, schools and church parking lots each day and depositing only as much as an agency can give away in a couple hours.

When the vegetable in a big haul is a little out of the ordinary — say, artichoke or eggplant — the food banks even send along recipes to encourage customers to make use of it. “These efforts have dispelled the myth that low-income people don’t eat fresh produce because they’re too dumb or whatever,” says Joel Berg, director of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger. “Pantries will say their customers love, love this stuff.”

ON THE DAY of my visit, Michelle, a woman at the Family Early Learning Center, took two bunches of celery from inside the preschool and then stepped outside. She was full-figured, with a kind, round face, her hair in a messy bun. She added pears and peppers and bananas and plums — a couple or three of each — until her small cart was full.

Feeding America estimates that demand at food banks, nationally, has increased 30 percent in the last year, in some communities as much as 150 percent. In a survey last month, 98 percent of member food banks said that the increase was due mostly to people seeking emergency food for the first time. Michelle worked full time as a janitor for the last nine years, all for the same company, and made \$320 a week. In July she lost half her hours, and her mother moved in, to recover from heart surgery. So she found this place.

She can afford peanut butter, she said. But free fruits and vegetables are a big deal. She just started volunteering at a community garden that rewards its volunteers with small bags of vegetables. “Since my hours went down, I look at the Safeway ads and get whatever is cheapest,” she said. “You don’t get very good food.” I asked what she and her son typically ate. “Eggs with hot dogs cut up,” she said, pausing to think. “Rice and beans. Yeah.” She will eat better this week; and maybe next week. But nutrition will remain a luxury — especially on her salary; prices for fresh produce, she notes, remain high. Still, she said, placing her groceries in the car with care, “I’d rather do fresh than frozen.”

Douglas McGray is an Irvine fellow at the New America Foundation. He last wrote for the magazine about the check-cashing business.

- [Locavore – bewusst essen » Von Raul Krauthausen » Lebensmitteln ...](#)



7 Min. - 30. Okt. 2009

Seit einiger Zeit taucht im Zusammenhang mit gesunder Ernährung immer häufiger ein spezieller Begriff auf: *Locavore*. Was hat es damit *Locavore* ... alles-was-gerecht-ist.de/2008/03/11/locavore-bewusst-essen/ - [Weitere Videos](#)

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Seit einiger Zeit taucht im Zusammenhang mit gesunder Ernährung immer häufiger ein spezieller Begriff auf: *Locavore*. Was hat es damit auf sich? Es handelt sich hierbei um einen Ernährungstrend, der – wie könnte es anders sein – seinen Ursprung in Amerika hat. Daher auch die Bezeichnung, die sich von “eat locally” ableitet. Übersetzen lässt sich dies wohl am ehesten mit “regional essen”, Anhänger der *Locavore*-bewegung könnte man demnach auch als Nah-Esser bezeichnen.



Ausgerechnet in New York, das man kaum mit ländlicher Idylle und gesunden Lebensmitteln frisch vom Bauern assoziiert, fanden sich einige Menschen zusammen, die einfach genug hatten von Fertignahrung und Nahrungsmitteln unklarer Herkunft. Ein Thema, das Filme wie “[Unser täglich Brot](#)” und [We feed the world](#)” scharf beleuchten und das uns wohl alle betrifft. Wer die Bilder über industrielle Massenproduktion in Fabriken und Großfarmen gesehen hat, kann sich der Problematik nur noch schwer verschließen. Wann weiß man schon genau, auf welchen Wegen Discounter-Waren und Fertiggerichte in Schnellimbissketten zu uns gelangen und welchen Preis die Umwelt und letztlich auch wir dafür wirklich zahlen ?

Die *Locavores* haben es sich zur Philosophie gemacht, bewusster und kritischer mit ihren Lebensmitteln umzugehen und sich nur noch von Produkten zu ernähren, die innerhalb der umliegenden 100 Meilen gezüchtet, angebaut oder hergestellt wurden. Das entlastet einerseits das Transportnetz, andererseits unterstützt man regionale Lieferanten. In Deutschland ist eine solche Gruppierung noch nicht offiziell bekannt, aber für weiterführende Informationen lohnt sich ein Klick auf folgende amerikanische Links:

- <http://www.homestead.com/samascott>
- <http://www.catocornerfarm.com>
- <http://www.bluemoonfish.com>
- <http://www.angelicakitchen.com>
- <http://www.paladarrestaurerant.com>
- <http://www.bluehillnyc.com>

- [**Locavore: Extrem-Selbstversorger in New York - Videothek - Polylog.tv**](#)

Eine neue Bewegung aus den USA: *Locavores* nehmen die Worte bio und lokal wörtlich. Sie kaufen direkt beim Bauern oder bauen ihr Essen selber an - sogar in ...

www.polylog.tv/videothek/videocast/11191/ - [Im Cache](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

- [**Oxford Word Of The Year: Locavore : OUPblog**](#)

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The “*locavore*” movement encourages consumers to buy from farmers' markets or even to grow or pick their own food, arguing that fresh, local products are ...

blog.oup.com/2007/11/locavore/ - [Im Cache](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

- [**Locavore - Locavore Definition - Definition of Locavore**](#)

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Someone who eats exclusively – or at least primarily – food from their local area.

localfoods.about.com/od/.../g/locavore.htm -

- [**Locavore, Get Your Gun - New York Times**](#)

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14 Dec 2007 ... Hunters need to push a *new* public image based on deeper traditions: we are stewards of the land, hunting on ground that we love, ...

www.nytimes.com/2007/12/14/opinion/14rinella.html - [Ähnlich](#)

[The Food Issue - California's Food Banks Go Locavore - NYTimes.com](#)

California's Food Banks Go *Locavore*. Dru Donovan for The *New York Times* ...

www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/magazine/11banks-t.html

[Field Report - A Barefoot Hippie Baker Is Now a Locavore Hero ...](#)

Once seen as a barefoot hippie baker, Jeff Ford of Cress Spring Bakery is ...

www.nytimes.com/2009/10/11/magazine/11food-t.html

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- [**Do We Really Need a Few Billion Locavores? - Freakonomics Blog ...**](#)

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Freakonomics - *New York Times* Blog Being a *locavore* doesn't require that you make everything yourself just that you focus on seasonal ...

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- [**Locavores Gone Wild? - Freakonomics Blog - NYTimes.com**](#)

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1 Oct 2009 ... Putting the loca in *locavore* ... 4 on the Hindustan *Times* bestseller list this week. ... 2 on The *New York Times* bestseller list. ...

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- [**Local food - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia**](#)

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- [**La Vida Locavore - Come for the Food, Stay for the Politics**](#)

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16 Nov 2009 ... *New York* Event: The High Cost of Cheap Food. by: Jill Richardson This *LA Times* piece goes over the sometimes devastating long-term ...
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[www.huffingtonpost.com/.../ny-times-grumps-dump-on-l_b_117845.html](#) - [Im Cache](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

- [**Restaurants - Savoy in SoHo - Review - NYTimes.com**](#)

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10 Jun 2009 ... A *Locavore* Before the Word Existed. Christopher Smith for The *New York Times*. SINCE 1990 Savoy, in SoHo, was a pioneer in cooking with local ...
[events.nytimes.com/2009/06/10/dining/reviews/10rest.html](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

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[lightheartedlocavore.blogspot.com/](#) - [Im Cache](#)
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