**Name:**

**The BSG** (Building Super Gardens) **Foundation**

**Mission statement:**

Faciliate the creation of community gardens and educate consumers about the benefits of locally-grown produce.

**Vision:**

The vision of the BSG Foundation is to help create high-production, vertical gardens in community green spaces now devoted to grass and other non-food producing landscaping. We will do this by:

* identifying suitable green spaces (on publicly-owned, institutionally-owned, and/or privately-owned land);
* developing community support, both for the concepts of growing food in local green spaces and for the gardens themselves;
* coordinating the production of formal, permit-ready landscaping designs and plans;
* writing grants and serving as liaison in the coordination of governmental oversight (budgeting, planning, permitting, inspecting, etc.);
* performing other such functions as needed to create working vertical gardens;
* educating consumers about the growth of, consumption of, and methods of preparation of fresh fruits and vegetables;
* producing and publishing studies and reports documenting our process and results;
* researching and recommending policy initiatives.

**Reasoning:**

Our poorest citizens, particularly the urban poor, often do not get adequate nutrition from their diet. While many reasons contribute to the problem, food pantries now exist throughout the South Florida community to supply free (or low-cost), generally non-perishable food to those urban poor who find themselves with neither food, nor the funds with which to purchase food. Pantries all share some basic features:

They are often housed in religious or semi-private institutions,

They are often staffed by volunteers, and/or staffing may be supplemented by institutionally-paid staff,

They are stocked with food paid for by some combination of grant, food-bank sponsorship, and donations from both corporate and private “angels,”

Pantries supply non-perishable food usually just once (without documented need), or as often as once-a-month (with documented need),

**The food they supply is at low or no cost to the recipient or to the taxpayer.**

Non-perishable food products are not usually the healthiest nutritional choices, as many are preserved with salt or sugar. Recent studies have shown that a diet based on canned and shelf-stable products is not nearly as healthy as a diet based on freshly-grown, freshly cooked fruits and vegetables. Research has shown that the quality of one’s nutritional intake in the early years (specifically, the first 1000 days) is an important factor in determining the health of that person as an adult. And at the other end of life, many elderly in South Florida are now food-pantry clients, as longevity and inflation have taken their toll on stagnant or dwindling retirement funds.

Our reliance on combustion engines has caused pollution problems which we, as a country, only partially address with Clean Air Act regulations and with Environmental Protection Agency standards. Our polluted air currently has deleterious effects on the breathing of tens of thousands of South Floridians. One way in which South Florida already tries to improve air quality is through the requirement of community and parcel green spaces. Green spaces are areas within the design of a property where landscaping is required. All of our South Florida communities, as a whole, and each individual property have required green spaces, in large part covered with aesthetically pleasing, non-food producing plant matter that is already being watered and maintained.

High-production vertical gardens could use some of this green space to both to improve our air quality (due to the net increase of plant matter) and to provide very low cost food in the local setting, **at little or no net cost to either the taxpayer or the consumer**.

At first, the BSG Foundation will seek to identify likely garden spaces, generate community support, fundraise, write grants, and provide planning/governmental coordination services, as needed, to erect specific vertical garden projects. Ultimately, cities with large green-space requirements could be helped to offer, at reduced-cost to their residents, fresh-grown fruits and vegetables, and the Florida Legislature could pass legislation designed to encourage vertical gardens, both as regulation (in new construction) and as incentive to retro-fit existing homes, multi-family structures and condominiums.

**Current status:**

At this time, the BSC Foundation has $2,000.00 in funds that may only be used to incorporate; currently, about another $5000 has been pledged (as soon a legal 501(C)3 has been created).

The first garden site has been located and is ready for transformation. The SOREF JCC has a space currently designated as a community garden, and is amenable to improving the yield, provided it is at no cost to the JCC. They have already received a $500 grant, a small portion of which has already been expended (I think there may be $350 or so of “seed money” left). The JCC has knowledgeable maintenance men who may be able to help erect the garden, and many volunteers to help plant and maintain it.

FAU is amenable to assisting with a design contest for the first hurricane-resistant vertical garden, designated to be built in the SOREF JCC garden space. The Request For Proposal (RFP) regarding the goals of the design contest is being created, with assistance of FAU professors, the Small business Development Center, and JCC staff.

Grant proposals are being researched in conjunction with the Small Business Development Center at FAU.

The downside:

In time, those who currently sell fresh produce will sell significantly less; some businesses may close.

Initially, gardens may need protection from vandals or thieves. Later on, as gardens and fresh produce become ubiquitous in the community, protection may be less necessary.

The upside:

Currently landscaping requires regular maintenance and water to produce an aesthetically-pleasing result. Vertical gardens that are aesthetically pleasing would achieve a similar result with the bonus of low-cost fruits and vegetables.

Poorer people who are getting free or extremely low cost fresh produce would be free to spend money on other things in the community (poorer people are often forced to spend all they get, just to “make ends meet ” and they travel out of the community less frequently, so this should also stimulate local businesses).

Currently, the many vertical garden systems available for purchase are not designed to be hurricane resistant. The design contest will hopefully produce a hurricane resistant design. The contest winner(s) will receive royalties if their design proves to be saleable; the Foundation would own the design.

Fresh, seasonal produce provided at approx 10% of the cost one would otherwise pay to purchase it (once the garden is in production). Initial cost to erect a vertical garden in the JCC space is estimated to be approximately $18,000-24,000. Until the design contest is held, it will not be possible to estimate produce yield, except to note that a vertical garden generally yields 5-times the usual in-ground garden (once the design contest is held, then more precise costs and yields will be available).

Increased Amounts of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) will be converted into Oxygen (O2) as the yield is growing

Since a garden would be built into a specific existing community, landscaping and natural walking paths could easily be beautified, as a function of the project. New construction could incorporate plans for a garden.

Owing to the public/private nature of these projects, excess produce would never be sold, however, communities could donate produce and/or diversify the number of items grown, within growing-season and space limitations.

Not sure which side:

US Produce imports will fall

US Produce exports will rise