

Millionair Club Charity's Urban Farming Program **A Social Enterprise Initiative**

Providing Jobs and Fresh Produce Through Urban Farming

The Millionair Club Charity has partnered with UrbanHarvest to launch an urban farming initiative to build commercial hydroponic farms in Seattle that will provide fresh produce for homeless individuals and create job training and employment opportunities. In keeping with the Millionair Club Charity's mission to provide pathways to employment for men and women experiencing unemployment and/or homelessness, the program will create part- and full-time job opportunities that pay a fair wage. Workers in the urban farming program will also receive training on hydroponic urban farming techniques.

A portion of all produce grown will be devoted to food philanthropy. Fresh produce will be used to feed homeless individuals in the Millionair Club Charity's meals program as well as through other partner non-profits serving the homeless. The majority of the produce will be sold commercially to restaurants and grocers to fund the operations and expansion of the urban farming program.

The Millionair Club Charity Hydroponic Demonstration Garden:

The Millionair Club Charity and UrbanHarvest completed construction in November on a 250-square-foot Hydroponic Demonstration Garden in the basement of the Millionair Club Charity building on Western Ave. in Seattle's Belltown neighborhood. The Hydroponic Demonstration Garden uses energy efficient LED grow lights and water soluble mineral salt fertilizer to produce lettuces, kale, spinach, bok choy, basil and other greens. The garden will produce approximately **800 plants per month, equivalent to 1,600 bowls of salad monthly** (19,200 bowls annually). The first plants will be harvested in February.

The Hydroponic Demonstration Garden will be a working urban garden as well as a training site for Millionair Club Charity workers as the program expands.



About Hydroponics:

Hydroponic farming is a method of growing plants using nutrient-rich water instead of soil. This allows plants to be grown much more efficiently—for example, what would take 10,000 square feet in traditional farmland can take as little as 250 square feet in a hydroponic urban farm. The water needed to grow the plants hydroponically is typically one-tenth what is needed in traditional farming. Water soluble mineral salts are used as fertilizer, which are much cleaner and more environmentally friendly than any other form of fertilizer (including "organic"). Unlike organic fertilizers that are generally composed of feces, mineral salt fertilizers do not contain any harmful bacteria or antibiotics. Therefore the risk of having pathogens enter the food from the fertilizer is eliminated, and our fertilizer doesn't contribute to the evolution of disease-resistant bacteria.

Hydroponic farms can take advantage of a variety of unused urban spaces such as vacant lots, empty warehouses or basements, unused sections of parking garages and rooftops. Materials needed to build a hydroponic farm include lights, fans, fertilizer and sources of water and power.

Opportunity to Meet Community Demand:

Local produce is a huge consumer demand in the Seattle region. Recent studies have shown that consumers and restaurants now prefer “local” over “organic” in looking for fresh produce. The Seattle City Council adopted the Seattle Food Action Plan in 2013 to increase access to fresh produce in urban areas. P-patches and home gardens are currently the only options for Seattleites to access hyper local produce. There is tremendous opportunity to create commercial-scale production of fresh produce to support community demand.

Environmental Benefits of Hydroponic Urban Farming:



The shorter the distance between the farm and the consumer, the lighter the impact will be on the environment. The advantages of hydroponic urban farming include reduced carbon emissions due to shorter delivery routes, reduced water usage, reduced storm water runoff from buildings and reduced agricultural water pollution.

In addition, there is no need for pesticides or herbicides and more people can be fed without creating new farmlands.

About the Millionair Club Charity

Founded in 1921, the Millionair Club Charity rebuilds lives by restoring dignity to unemployed men and women in the greater Seattle area. Through programs that encourage self-reliance, the Millionair Club Charity provides jobs, hot nutritious meals, housing assistance, shelter space, showers, laundry services, vision care and preventive medical care to support our workers’ success and to address unemployment and homelessness in the region. More than 4,300 homeowners and businesses hire screened and background-checked Millionair Club workers each year. For more information, to hire a worker or to make a donation, call 206-728-JOBS or visit millionairclub.org.

About UrbanHarvest:

UrbanHarvest is a cutting edge urban farming and services company based in Seattle. We offer clients a full spectrum of services including farm conceptualization, financial modeling, infrastructure development, farm operations and sales. Our ultra-fresh produce is sold hyper-locally to restaurants, grocers, food services, distributors and consumers within 15 miles of our farms. By utilizing state-of-the-art controlled environment agriculture technology, we maximize production and quality while minimizing our environmental footprint. For more information, visit urbanharvest.com.

Project Needs:

The Millionair Club Charity together with UrbanHarvest hopes to expand its program from the Hydroponic Demonstration Garden to other sites. **The new most urgent needs are funding and free or low-cost spaces to build the new farms.**

Contact:

To learn more, contact **Chris Bajuk, Millionair Club Charity Urban Farming Program Manager**, at (206) 305-1694 or chrisb@millionairclub.org.