A Community Forum
Lend your voice. Help us decide.
How to Share the Harvest
Saturday, Oct. 20
2:00 to 5:00 p.m.
City Hall
401 N. Morton St.

Welcome!
This public deliberation forum is designed for participants 18 and older.

What is the mission of the Bloomington Community Orchard?
Dream, build, and share an orchard community.

What is a public deliberation process?
Public deliberation is an approach to politics in which citizens—not just experts, board members or politicians—are deeply involved in public decision making and problem-solving. Working with trained “impartial” moderators, citizens come together and consider relevant facts and values from multiple points of view; listen to one another and consider the underlying tensions and tough choices inherent to most public issues; and ultimately seek common ground to make recommendations.
Why are we using public deliberation?

Why are we using public deliberation as an approach to discuss facts and values and offer suggestions to the Bloomington Community Orchard Board of Directors as they determine how to distribute the fruit? Because it is critical to the well-being of the Orchard to hear your voices about this topic.

To understand more clearly, let’s get some history, written by Chair of the Orchard Board Amy Roche:

The question of “Who gets the fruit?” was first brought up by workday volunteers in the spring of 2010, a few months after the Orchard was formed. It hadn’t previously come up for any of the first orchard leaders beyond the original intent of donating a portion of the harvest to the Hoosier Hills Food Bank Garden and Gleaning Program. That intention remains. Since that initial inquiry, the question has become by far the most common question asked of us—at workdays, at tabling events, at presentations, in classes, at planting days and celebrations.

For months, we dodged the question by either saying we didn’t know, or saying our personal opinions, but after a while it became clear we had to have some uniform response. We decided that it made sense as a community organization to ask the questioners what they thought should be done with the fruit, and from there began the sharing of many interesting community opinions. When pressed to answer, many were speechless as we were at first, or blurted out some predictable answer—and then, with a little reflection, would start to speak what I came to see as socio-economic mores—ruling viewpoints that they didn’t seem to realize they had inherited until they took the time to think about it. Many times, people left the conversation in a state of indecision. I thought that was a beautiful impact for the Orchard to have on our town: getting people to question their preconceived notions about class, need, entitlement, justice, food equity, property, theft, respect, giving. The idea of giving the fruit away to anyone for free was challenging to most, but not to those of us who had started the organization.

After more months of answering the question with a question, and lots of casual conversations in and out of board meetings about what we could do with the fruit, such as organize harvest festivals, make value-added products as demos or for sale, have tastings, etc.—plus a sort of reckoning that this one site’s fruit isn’t the only way the Orchard shares fruit. We teach, we provide others hands-on experience, we propagate and give away saplings and show others how to plant and cultivate them (and with specific populations through Mother Hubbard’s Cupboard, for example), some members of leadership called for us to actually answer the question.

Most leaders/board members felt the decision needed to be strongly informed by the community. So, we held our first Community Forum as part of the Annual Meeting in January 2012. It was very loosely structured: a wide-open public comment session with no particular direction. The results of the January forum were ambiguous.

Meanwhile, this spring, strawberries fruited heavily in the Orchard and the need for a Community Forum for fruit distribution was brought to the surface again. Over the summer, we decided to work with Indiana University’s Political and Civic Engagement Program (PACE) to research what community members were thinking about the topic of fruit distribution and to create an informed public deliberation process to gather community input.

It is important that while we are trying to come to a decision point about the fruit harvest, this Community Forum is largely about the process of exploring the concerns, commitments, and motivations that lead people to suggest given methods. The Orchard Board will make a public statement about the results of today’s forum at the Annual Meeting in January.
What are some assumptions we are making as we think about projected tree fruit production?

Projecting fruit production for the Orchard’s near-100 fruiting plants is difficult because of the large numbers of variables involved (rootstocks, cultivars, pruning and training practices, weather, nutrition, pathology, insect pest pressure, etc.), not to mention the young ages of the trees in the orchard. Nevertheless, it is important to have some idea of how much fruit production potential we have in the orchard. To that end, we have compiled the following estimates, thanks to Michael Simmons, a member of the Orchard’s Board of Directors, which assume an average year (i.e., a year without a lot of unpleasant surprises in the weather, insect pest pressure, and pathology and with adequate maintenance practices). These estimates reflect yields from mature trees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fruit Type</th>
<th>Production per Tree</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semi-dwarf apple</td>
<td>2-8 bushels per tree</td>
<td>4-8 years of age until 15-25 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarf pear</td>
<td>1 bushel per tree</td>
<td>5-6 years of age until 12-15 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard peach</td>
<td>3-5 bushels per tree</td>
<td>5-6 years of age until 12-17 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard plum</td>
<td>2-3 bushels per tree</td>
<td>6-8 years of age until 15-17 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawpaw</td>
<td>25-50 lbs. per tree</td>
<td>10-12 years of age until 40+ years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persimmon (Amer.)</td>
<td>200-250 lbs. per tree</td>
<td>10 years of age until 15-20 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persimmon (Orient.)</td>
<td>50-100 lbs. per tree</td>
<td>10 years of age until 15-20 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard tart cherry</td>
<td>50-60 lbs. per tree</td>
<td>5-6 years of age until 15-17 years of age</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the trees are in production at the Orchard, we will have more of the data required for more accurate projections.

Issue Guide Considerations: Access & Equity

Access

Encouraging On-site Experience

Utilizing fruit grown at the Orchard in activities on-site could have some unique contributions. There are educational opportunities for nutrition, and proper harvest technique and timing. Harvesting the fruit collectively might also help reinforce a sense of community among participants.

Things to think about:

- Fruit is usually not all ripe at once, so having a large harvest day might be difficult. Additionally, a longer harvest period gives more opportunities to teach and use the site as an educational tool. What type of seasonal approach might the Orchard want to consider?
- Direct participation in educating about the harvest might be a great way to develop ‘community,’ but people might have trouble attending due to time or financial constraints. What other ways could the Orchard promote educational initiatives to establish proper harvesting techniques and nutritional information about the fruit?
- The expected harvest yield varies and will assumedly mature over time. Will there be enough fruit to use both at the Orchard and other places? Would organizing “harvest festivals” be a way to gather people around fruit distribution and bring more people on-site?
Gaining Access

Public access to the site is always available at the Orchard. However, given the location and the desire to serve a diverse population from various locations, access to the Orchard (i.e. citizen transportation) may be an issue for some. Another access issue is people getting access to the fruit either at the Orchard or elsewhere.

Things to think about:

- What about having ‘satellite’ locations for fruit pick-up?
- Could some sort of ride-share system be implemented to assist those without transportation?
- Are there other access considerations you can think of which might need to be addressed or have an impact on the Orchard and those who would potentially receive fruit?

Ensuring Sanitary Procedures

As our orchard begins to mature and bear fruit, guidelines for harvest and storage of the fruit will need to be added to the “To Do” lists on site. How can we best store fruit not distributed immediately? How can we assure minimum waste of fruit? What sort of sanitary measures will be necessary if fruit is stored on site?

Things to think about:

- At the Orchard, as with any volunteer organization, “many hands make light work”. Keeping volunteers on the same page with processes for fruit storage procedures will be important. How will this happen?
- What sort of containers will be used/available? Will they be property of the Orchard, or will participants bring their own?
- Who will be responsible for checking produce for spoilage, composting it, notifying (who) about fruit that needs to be used or distributed quickly?

Equity

Honoring Claims

We must remember to honor the many promises that the Orchard has made to the Bloomington community. The Orchard defines “community” broadly to signify that everyone should get fruit. Their motto has been and continues to be, “Free fruit for all.” What claims are being made and by whom? Whose claims are the most important? Can we satisfy all of them?

Things to think about:

- The Orchard received its original Edy’s grant with a promise to give some of the harvest to Hoosier Hills Food Bank Garden and Gleaning Programs. Overall, the Orchard aims to provide everyone with fresh fruit. Many people especially want children to have access to fruit. How can the Orchard ensure that fruit is not wasted? Should those receiving the fruit be educated to know what to do with the fruit?
- Those who have put their time into helping make the Orchard what it is today, particularly the volunteers, may have claim to some of the harvest. If volunteers are the ones who receive the fruit, what other groups of people would miss out? Should volunteers have priority to take fruit, beyond what they eat while at the Orchard on workdays?
Another goal of the Orchard is to sustain itself and provide educational opportunities. Fruit can contribute to these goals. Should the Orchard prioritize creating value-added products (like jam or cider) even though they are not financially dependent on this? Also, should the Orchard use the fruit as props for educational purposes during programs at the Orchard?

**Ensuring Food Equity**

Equity can be defined in numerous ways. The concern about fairness encompasses issues of rights, needs, earnings, etc. Who deserves the most fruit? Does anyone deserve fruit more than anyone else?

**Things to think about:**

- One measure of fairness might be to distribute fruit based on the amount of time a person has put into the Orchard. What about people who are enthusiastic about the Orchard but have other employment or family commitments that prevent them from participating?
- Another consideration about food equity is that some people do not have access to fresh, organic fruit. On the premise that everyone needs fruit, this factor of “need” should be considered. How could the Orchard determine who exactly needs fruit? Would giving fruit to those in need take away opportunities to give fruit to those who want it? What are some other implications to consider?
- Based on differing interpretations of fairness, how can the Orchard reconcile various individual expectations about what is fair for fruit distribution?

**Overcoming Barriers**

Some of the most common barriers to a fair distribution of fruit include time, knowledge and money. The Orchard needs to eliminate barriers that prevent the following opportunities: getting to the Orchard, working in the Orchard, harvesting the fruit, or being a recipient of the harvest, among others.

**Things to consider:**

- To overcome these barriers, the Orchard may need to create balanced opportunities for all community members. How can this be accomplished? Who could lead the work in overcoming the barriers?
- If the Orchard focuses externally on helping community members who encounter these barriers, how could they ensure that this does not take away from the Orchard's ability to sustain itself and maintain an internal focus?
- Since these socio-economic barriers are typical in our culture, how can the Orchard be an example of breaking through these barriers? What resources would be required to do this? What support is needed?

***A KEY TIDBIT:*** We’re partnering with IU’s Political And Civic Engagement Program (PACE). PACE is training moderators and offering guidance for the small group discussions. Some moderators will be taking notes for research and educational purposes. Fear not! Your name will not be attached to any comments. Segments of the forum may be video recorded, with your permission.