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Author Sheds Light on Eating Locally: Somerton Tanks Farm recognized as a successful urban project

While it may sound a bit odd, farming within Philadelphia's city limits can be quite a lucrative business and even helps support the local economy, according to author Brian Halweil.

Halweil, a senior researcher for the Worldwatch Institute and author of *Eat Here: Reclaiming Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket*, will be discussing portions of his book on Thursday, March 31 at 7:00 p.m. at the Grass Roots Coffee Shop, 110 Cotton Street in Manayunk.

While the book talks about how eating local foods helps support the local economy and environment, the Philadelphia Somerton Tanks Farm project is specifically mentioned in a section about the money-making potential of urban farming, and how city residents could find meaningful work as urban farmers.

Located at 201 Tomlinson Road, the one-half acre farm is built on Water Department property, next to two red and white checked water storage tanks. Not only is the farm providing the City with freshly grown, chemical-free crops, but the tilled landscape helps reduce stormwater runoff.

Halweil also talks about how more and more Americans are preparing meals of vegetables, fruits and meats using locally grown items instead of nationally shipped or imported goods. He also argues that the long term success of this trend depends on extending beyond everyday consumers and reaching out to restaurants, corporations and other institutions.

Founded in 1974, the Worldwatch Institute is an independent research organization located in Washington, DC. Their focus is on interdisciplinary studies, and they pride themselves on being a "leading source of information on the interactions among key environmental, social, and economic trends."

The farm idea was realized when the Water Department began searching for ways to minimize the expensive task of lawn and landscape maintenance. Not only would a farm have potential to encourage growth of a new agricultural economy, it would also turn urban soil into healthy farmland that would return cleaner water to the natural water cycle. Cleaner water reduces the amount of storm water runoff that needs to be treated at one of the City's three water pollution control plants.

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