

BACK TO THE LAND

I often joke with Californians that even as their environmental regulations make MI's main industry defunct (admittedly, largely because of the short sightedness of Michiganders), MI will take over CA's role as the lead Ag state. CA, after all, is fighting water problems because of its own short-sightedness. We, on the other hand, have got water—lots of it. And MI is already the country's second most diverse agricultural state. Add a few degrees of temperature due to climate change (ignoring the signs that global warming seems to be making a cold sink stretching from MI to MN), and MI could be downright bountiful.

But there's a more serious side to it—the post-industrial side. Specifically, the increasingly urgent efforts to turn Detroit back into an agricultural bread basket.

“There's so much land available and it's begging to be used,” said Michael Score, president of the Hantz Farms, which is buying up abandoned sections of the city's 139-square-mile landscape and plans to transform them into a large-scale commercial farm enterprise.

“Farming is how Detroit started,” Score said, “and farming is how Detroit can be saved.”

[snip]

In Detroit, hundreds of backyard gardens and scores of community gardens have blossomed and helped feed students in at least 40 schools and hundreds of families.

It is the size and scope of Hantz Farms that makes the project unique. Although company officials declined to pinpoint how many acres they might use, they have been quoted as saying that they plan to



farm up to 5,000 acres within the Motor City's limits in the coming years, raising organic lettuces, trees for biofuel and a variety of other things.

Detroit has long been a symbol of America's industrial might. And yet, quickly, it has become a symbol not only of decay, but of the earth reclaiming the land. Frankly, I'm in favor of using Detroit's vacant space for farming (though I prefer it to be organic, small scale farming). But if Detroit is the canary in the coal mine of industrial society, we need to start preparing to return to an agricultural way of life.

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