



Gaia Gardens co-founder Poki Piottin, left, helps Rebecca Miller and her son, Joseph, buy fresh vegetables at the urban garden's produce stand last year. NEW MEXICAN FILE PHOTO

MY VIEW: NELSY DOMINGUEZ

Benefits of urban farms

There has been a lot of recent buzz related to farming in metro areas. While there always are multiple aspects to consider, making the most of urban farms and gardens provides the opportunity to bring together a broad spectrum of fields — including health, urban planning, transportation, education, environment, food and sustainable agriculture, and economic development — in creating healthy communities.

As a nonprofit organization devoted to promoting locally based agriculture, Farm to Table's programs strive for equity in our food system. As such, we consider city-based farms and gardens exceptional venues in reducing the disconnect that happens when the only food consumed is store-bought.

Regardless of income level, urban farms and gardens enhance our quality of life. They can improve community nutrition and physical activity, maintain

cultural traditions and help enhance food security by providing opportunities for community-members from all income-levels to grow or purchase local fresh produce. Low-income communities, where fresh produce is often hard to find and expensive, greatly benefit by having nearby urban farms and gardens that provide access to healthy options, which otherwise are not available.

As an entrepreneurship venture, urban farming can be an economic development option that, while requiring regulation to ensure multizone neighborhoods work well together, has benefits that surpass a routine business transaction.

Beyond increasing the accessibility of local fresh produce, urban farms and gardens build local leadership, have the involvement of volunteers and community partners, and include skill-and-awareness-building opportunities for community members of all ages and interests.

Likewise, Farm to Table supports engaging children in gardens and agricultural-related activities that help develop the understanding of the interdependence of all living things. Many educational goals can be addressed through gardens, including personal and social responsibility, such as how to be a good neighbor and how to care for a livable environment. Gardens and agriculture integrate several subjects, such as science, math, art, health and physical education, with social studies, storytelling, creativity, visioning and play.

We hope Santa Feans share Farm to Table's support of urban farming and gardens, and, as such, embrace livable spaces that add options and access to healthy foods in our community.

Visit us at www.farmtotablenm.org to learn about all of our programs.

Nelsy Dominguez is the deputy director of Farm to Table.