



RAY WEST/Staff

PREPARING SOIL: EOA's Joe Windham plowing.

Garden yields hope for poor

By David Pendered

Staff Writer

Eva Davis was ready Saturday to farm her portion of the 20-acre vegetable garden being prepared at Key Road Farm in southwest Atlanta.

With her pants cuffs tied to her calves and a strong breeze blowing her hair, the 47-year-old president of the East Lake Meadows Tenants Association was spreading fertilizer on land being plowed by the director of Economic Opportunity Atlanta's new gardening program.

"Honey, this is a gold rush, and I'm here to stake a claim," she said. "This is one of the best programs the EOA ever presented to poor people, and we're going to make it work."

Economic Opportunity Atlanta, a social services agency, this month started a gardening program at the city prison farm on Key Road to help low-income families supplement their food budgets. George Windham, program director, said the purpose of the program is to help families maintain a properly nutritional diet while reducing their de-

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pendency on food stamps and related programs.

Families who qualify for the program are allowed to plant a variety of vegetables on land that the EOA has helped them prepare.

Saturday morning, Windham was plowing a portion of the 20 acres so that families from the East Lake Meadows public housing project could get their crops in the ground. About 15 people were there, but Windham

and Ms. Davis said more would participate once they learn that the EOA is serious in its offer to help them cultivate the land.

Along with the Key Road farm, Windham said, EOA has started gardening projects in Rockdale and north Fulton counties. In those counties, the EOA helped about 725 homeowners prepare backyard gardens, Windham said.

But the 20 acres on Key Road is the project flag carrier.

Windham said the city is providing the land at no charge and has

promised the EOA that an adjacent 30 acres is available if needed.

Windham also found contributors to provide an unlimited number of plants and seeds. Other sponsors supplied gardening tools and 10 tons of fertilizer.

The EOA will provide transportation as often as necessary to people who otherwise could not travel to the garden, Windham said.

Atlanta and Fulton County residents interested in the gardening program can contact Windham at 622-7781.