

# HIGHROAD FELLOWSHIP REPORTS

## COMMUNITY GARDENING Case Studies and Recommendations July 2020

**Ashton O'Connor**  
**CALS '23, from Boise, ID**  
**2020 High Road Fellow**  
**With Grassroots Gardens of WNY.**



**ILR Buffalo Co-Lab**

The ILR Buffalo Co-Lab advances an equitable economy and democratic community, collaboratively integrating scholarly and practical understanding to strengthen civic action.

Since 1946, Cornell ILR has played a vital role in Western New York, working in partnership with businesses, unions, government, education and community organizations to build an economy that works for all.

High Road Fellowships were launched in 2009, in collaboration with community-based think-tank Partnership for the Public Good. They connect Cornell undergraduates with practitioners and creative community leaders who are driving change in the local economy.

Fellows are in Buffalo, NY for eight weeks in the summer, working on projects through their host organization.



# COMMUNITY GARDENING

Case Studies and Recommendations for the Buffalo Community



This report was prepared by Ashton O'Connor through the Cornell High Road Fellowship in partnership with Grassroots Gardens of Western New York.

Grassroots Gardens of Western New York is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that stewards over 100 community gardens in the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls, New York. A dedicated group of gardeners and activists, the organization's mission is to share knowledge, power, and resources to grow healthy food, heal systemic harm, and strengthen neighborhood connections through community gardens.

The High Road Fellowship connects students with practitioners who are driving change in the local Buffalo, New York economy. Since 2009, High Road Fellowships has placed 186 Cornell students in the co-laboratory of Buffalo, New York to learn, explore, and help revitalize the historic Rust Belt city.

#### Acknowledgements

ILR Buffalo Co-Lab Staff;

Nicole Golias, ILR Buffalo Co-Lab Communications and Program Support Specialist;

Jeanette Koncikowski, Grassroots Gardens WNY Executive Director;

Micaela Lipman, University of Buffalo PhD Candidate;

Nicholas Leete, Rooted Gardens Network Manager;

Deneine Powell, Groundwork Milwaukee Executive Director;

Rebecca Gross, Minnesota Parks and Recreation Board Community Garden Coordinator; and

Jenny Greenburg, Neighborhoods Gardens Trust Executive Director.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary</b>                                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Chapter 1: Case Studies from Around the Nation</b>       | <b>6</b>  |
| Snapshot  | 6         |
| Baltimore, MD   | 7         |
| Boston, MA  | 10        |
| Chicago, IL   | 13        |
| Cleveland, OH   | 16        |
| Detroit, MI   | 19        |
| Madison, WI   | 22        |
| Milwaukee, WI   | 25        |
| Minneapolis, MN   | 28        |
| Philadelphia, PA  | 31        |
| Providence, RI  | 35        |
| Seattle, WA   | 37        |
| St. Louis, MO   | 40        |
| <b>Chapter 2: Policy Considerations and Recommendations</b> | <b>43</b> |
| Overview  | 43        |
| Land Access, Preservation, and Zoning                       | 44        |
| Inclusion in Plans and City Documents                       | 50        |
| Financial Sustainability                                    | 52        |
| Advocacy  | 58        |

## GUIDE OVERVIEW

Community garden networks have had varying degrees of success across the country. Even though community gardening can have a tremendous impact on local communities, health, food access, adjacent property values, and decreasing crime, they have yet to be seen as a legitimate land use by many city governments, including in Buffalo, New York. However, there are a variety of laws, policies, and strategies community organizations have implemented to support the practice of community gardening. This report provides an overview of how community gardens are managed in twelve different cities across the country, especially relating to financial sustainability and protection of land. After a review of these case studies, this report provides a list of recommendations for the City of Buffalo as well as resident advocates on how they can support and expand community gardening.

This report:

- Provides an overview of how community gardens are managed through policies, government entities, and community organizations in twelve cities across the United States;
- Provides examples of local laws and policies that can help promote the sustainability of community gardening;
- Recommends state and local laws and policies and examines the potential impact on community gardening activities; and
- Provides a list of cities to conduct further research on.

# Executive Summary

*In Buffalo, 113 community gardens are managed by Grassroots Gardens of Western New York with PUSH Buffalo maintaining two other gardens. Despite these numbers, community gardens in Western New York lack municipal support and reliable funding practices. Residents of Buffalo and the gardening community must advocate for policy change and position gardening as a top priority, particularly for receiving revenue. Establishing practices for long-term sustainability of gardens will cement of their impact in regards to equitable local food production and beautification in the Buffalo-Niagara region.*

## Case Studies

Best practices for managing and supporting community gardening in a municipal context were researched in twelve cities across the United States: Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Madison, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Providence, Seattle, and St Louis. Through an analysis of these successful case studies, general themes and best practices emerged:

- Every city studied includes community gardens within their Comprehensive plans or as an actionable goal of their City's sustainability plan
- All but one have an amended zoning code that permits community gardening as a permitted use in any zoning district
- The majority utilize Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding
- Five out of the twelve employ community-supported-agriculture (CSA) programs as a way of generating revenue.

Community gardens in Buffalo practice none of these. Implementing these best practices should be a priority if Buffalo hopes to reach the same level of success in community gardening as these cities have.

## Strategies

Zoning is a crucial tool for reducing development pressure on gardens, legitimizing community gardening as a protected use of land, and eliminating the perception of community gardens as an interim use of land. Buffalo should include an amendment to the zoning code that permits community gardening in all zoning districts and explore an additional amendment to include community gardens as "open space" to count towards the City's goals or requirements of open space and park land. Residents should also push for the expansion of the Urban Homestead Program to allow vacant lots to be purchased for the purpose of community gardening, building gardens at low-income or public housing sites, and tax incentives for gardening such as waiving or reducing property taxes for land that contains community gardens.

To ensure municipal inclusion, the City of Buffalo should hardcode community gardens in Buffalo's Comprehensive Plan. Establishing concrete metrics such as one community garden for every 2500 households would aid in holding the City accountable for supporting gardening across Buffalo's neighborhoods.

Monetarily, Buffalo should enact policies that support revenue generating activities, such as selling produce grown on site through farmers markets or CSA programs and selling compost produced on site.

Advocacy and community engagement are key to successful community gardens and to enacting supportive policy change. Buffalo residents must engage with the City of Buffalo by regularly meeting with leadership and inviting government staff to serve on urban agriculture task forces or the Buffalo Food Policy Council. This increased exposure to gardens supplemented with their already attractive appearance and their societal benefits would raise gardens onto the City agenda more frequently securing protection and funding.

# Case Studies

Twelve cities across the nation were examined for their community gardening policies / best practices.

## Snapshot

|                            |      |       |         |           |  |                        |   |   |  |        |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|------|-------|---------|-----------|--|------------------------|---|---|--|--------|--|--|--|
| <b>Buffalo<sup>1</sup></b> | 256k | 2,000 | 110 / 2 | \$457,499 |  | Grassroots Gardens WNY | ✓ | ✓ |  | Grants |  |  |  |
|----------------------------|------|-------|---------|-----------|--|------------------------|---|---|--|--------|--|--|--|

| City                | Population  | Volunteers | Numbers of Gardens* | Revenue       | Fee | Organizations                         | Rustbelt | Land Trust | Zoning | Primary Funding                               | CDBG | Inclusion in Plans | CSA |
|---------------------|-------------|------------|---------------------|---------------|-----|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|--------|---|------|--------------------|-----|
| <b>Baltimore</b>    | 600k        | 184        | 150                 | \$201,795     | ✓   | Baltimore Green Space                 | ✓        | ✓          | ✓      | Grants  |      | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Boston</b>       | 695k        | 15,000     | 175                 | \$20 million  | ✓   | Trustees of Reservations              |          | ✓          | ✓      | CDBG  | ✓    | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Chicago</b>      | 2.7 million | 2,600      | 600 / 109           | \$1.4 million |     | NeighborSpace                         | ✓        | ✓          | ✓      | OSIFs, Government                             |      | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Cleveland</b>    | 384k        | 5,000      | 250                 | N/A           | ✓   | Ohio State University Extension       | ✓        |            | ✓      | CDBG  | ✓    | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Detroit</b>      | 673k        | 1,500      | 374                 | \$973,814     | ✓   | Keep Growing Detroit                  | ✓        |            | ✓      | Program service revenue                       | ✓    | ✓                  | ✓   |
| <b>Madison</b>      | 258k        | N/A        | 60                  | \$545,149     | ✓   | Rooted                                |          |            | ✓      | Plot fees                                     | ✓    | ✓                  | ✓   |
| <b>Milwaukee</b>    | 592k        | 211        | 177 / 120           | \$479,426     | ✓   | Groundwork Milwaukee                  | ✓        | ✓          | ✓      | CDBG  | ✓    | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Minneapolis</b>  | 425k        | N/A        | 300                 | N/A           |     | Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board | ✓        |            | ✓      | Government (Parks budget)                     |      | ✓                  |     |
| <b>Philadelphia</b> | 1.6 million | 860        | 470 / 49            | \$583,503     |     | Neighborhood Gardens Trust            | ✓        | ✓          | ✓      | PHS, FarmPhilly                               | ✓    | ✓                  | ✓   |
| <b>Providence</b>   | 179k        | 1,200      | 58 / 21             | \$1,516,785   | ✓   | Southside Community Land Trust        |          | ✓          | ✓      | Grants  |      | ✓                  | ✓   |
| <b>Seattle</b>      | 745k        | 3,125      | 90 / 57             | \$268,405     | ✓   | GROW                                  |          | ✓          | ✓      | Grants, parks bond funds, and membership fees | ✓    | ✓                  | ✓   |
| <b>St Louis</b>     | 318k        | 4,000      | 200                 | \$825,134     |     | Gateway Greening                      |          | ✓          |        | Grants (CFP) and Wells Fargo                  |      | ✓                  |     |

\* [total number of gardens] / [number of protected gardens through a land trust]

<sup>1</sup> Grassroots Gardens WNY 2019 Annual Report

## The Case of Baltimore, Maryland

### Introduction

Baltimore is home to more than 150 community gardens and open spaces. Numerous resources exist to support community gardening including the City-run initiatives of Power in Dirt, which has simplified the process for adopting vacant lots and provides unlimited water access to gardens for a yearly fee of \$120, the Garden Irrigation Fund, which provides monetary support for the installation of direct lines into garden sites, and the City Farms Program, a Recreation and Parks program that offers garden plots for rent to Baltimore residents for \$30 per year across eleven City parks. The City also facilitates transferring plots of land to the nonprofit Baltimore Green Space. Various City departments promote community gardening such as the Department of Housing and Community Development's Adopt-A-Lot and Side Yard Programs and the Office of Sustainability leading Green Network. Homegrown Baltimore and Urban Agriculture Tax Credits support gardens with the purpose of food production.

### Baltimore Green Space

Baltimore Green Space is a nonprofit organization that was founded in 2007. Baltimore Green Space is a land trust that partners with communities to preserve and support community gardens, forest patches, pocket parks, and other green spaces managed by city residents. At the request of community groups, Baltimore Green Space acquires community-managed open spaces from the Baltimore City government and provides support to those who care for them. The organization also provides informal protection through qualified community managed spaces, which the City will not actively market but may still sell if approached by a buyer. To become a member of the land trust, the site is required to have been established for at least five years, have a site manager and assistant site manager, and a community partner. The Office of Sustainability, along with other staff from the

Planning and Housing Departments, helps transfer City-owned lots to Baltimore Green Space for \$1 per lot. Baltimore Green Space has also played a leading role in policy issues having authored the City's policy on disposition of vacant lots, developed the Garden Irrigation Fund, and, most recently, written a white paper on the value of forest patches in Baltimore. Baltimore Green Space now preserves ten green spaces. In 2017, Baltimore Green Space earned \$201,795, mostly through contributions and grants, spent \$30,568 on advocacy with total expenses equaling \$191,487, and had total assets of \$142,341.<sup>2</sup>

### Equity

According to the Community Greening Resource Network, **of the approximately 70 food-producing community gardens in Baltimore in 2012, 75% were located in areas where residents live below 185% of the poverty rate** (qualifying them for SNAP benefits). This indicates that the majority of community gardens are located in areas where there is great need for fresh, affordable food.

### Funding

1. Baltimore Green Space receives the majority of its funding from contributions and grants, including \$71,911 from government grants.<sup>2</sup>
2. The Baltimore Office of Sustainability's Green Network was awarded \$300,000 in 2015 through the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) and Wells Fargo & Company Community WINS grant program.

### Policies

1. Baltimore Green Space's gardens are classified as "qualified community-managed open spaces" (QCMOS), which allows the City to provide them protection. City government will not actively market QCMOS lots but may sell them to a buyer who

<sup>2</sup> 990 (2017)

- approaches the City. QCMOS are required to have been in existence for at least 2.5 years, have an identified site manager, and an existing Adopt-A-Lot license.<sup>3</sup>
2. *Zoning:* The Baltimore City Zoning Code was updated in 2011 to permit community gardens and urban agriculture projects in most areas and allowed on-site farm stands. In 2018, the zoning code went through a comprehensive update and now includes new use categories and standards for community gardens (under the category of “QCMOS”) and urban farms (under the category of “Urban Agriculture”). Both are a permitted use in all zoning districts with the exception of industrial zones and permit temporary greenhouses and similar structures during the growing season. Accessory structures, such as sheds, gazebos and pergolas, are also permitted.<sup>4</sup>
  3. *Adopt-A-Lot and Side Yard Programs:* The Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community maintains the Adopt-A-Lot program<sup>5</sup> which allows residents to adopt City-owned lots in their neighborhood for community green space for free. The Side Yard program<sup>6</sup> allows sale of City-owned vacant lots to adjacent owners for a fixed price of \$500 for up to 1500 square feet. These programs encourage the use of adopted or purchased lots for community gardening and green space. The City also allows green space stewards of these lots to request access to municipal water at a rate of \$120 a year. The City maintains a map of City-owned lots that are available to adopt in support of this program.
  4. *Care-a-Lot program, BMORE Beautiful:* BMORE Beautiful is a City-led beautification program. The Care-a-Lot program is an initiative of BMORE Beautiful and allows 501(c)(3) organizations to receive funds to maintain vacant lots in their neighborhood. Groups can receive grants for up to \$5,500 to care for up to 25 lots during the grant period of May-October.<sup>7</sup>
  5. *Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing Initiative:* The Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing Initiative allows farmers with at least a year of experience to apply for five-year leases for City-owned for farming at a cost of \$100 per year.<sup>8</sup>
  6. *Water Access:* The City of Baltimore offers unlimited water access to community gardens for \$120 per year and provides up to \$3,000 for the installation of direct lines into garden sties through the Garden Irrigation Fund.
  7. *Urban Agriculture Tax Credit:* In 2014, the State of Maryland updated its Tax Code to allow for tax credits for urban agriculture. In 2015, the Baltimore City Council enacted new legislation to implement this tax credit in Baltimore City. This credit gives farmers 90% off of their property taxes as long as the parcel is used for urban agriculture for five years, produces a minimum threshold of value, and is not used for any other purpose that would normally subject it to property taxes.<sup>8</sup>
  8. Per State law, land used for agriculture is assessed at \$500 per acre, resulting in a very low tax burden. However, sites must be at least 3-acres to qualify.<sup>9</sup>
  9. Site categorized as QCMOS and Urban Agriculture using existing soils are required to submit a Soil Safety Plan.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <https://baltimoregreenspace.org/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.baltimoresustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Transform-CMOS-and-UA.docx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/nd/adopt-lot-program#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Adopt%2Da,vacant%20lots%20in%20their%20community.>

<sup>6</sup> <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/side-yard-program>

<sup>7</sup> <https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2019-02-06-care-lot-grants-now-available-mow-clean-green-vacant-lots>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.baltimoresustainability.org/projects/baltimore-food-policy-initiative/homegrown-baltimore/urban-agriculture-2/>

<sup>9</sup> Cocke, Abby. Urban Agriculture in Baltimore City PowerPoint

10. Urban agriculture is exempt from Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sediment Control under certain circumstances and with other plans submitted in their place.<sup>9</sup>

### Inclusion in City-wide Plans

11. *Homegrown Baltimore*: Homegrown Baltimore is the City government's urban agriculture program with the goals of reducing vacant blight, increasing food access, and creating new opportunities for education and employment in Baltimore. The Urban Agriculture Subcommittee of Baltimore's Food Policy Action Coalition will oversee implementation of the Homegrown Baltimore Plan alongside the Baltimore Office of Sustainability. The Homegrown Baltimore's Urban Agriculture Plan includes an entire chapter on community gardens.

### Advocacy

1. *Food Policy Action Coalition*: Food PAC has grown from 18 to over 60 members, representing nonprofits, universities, farms, businesses, hospitals, and residents. Facilitated by the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, Food PAC provides opportunities for collaboration and idea sharing around food-related organizations in Baltimore.
2. Baltimore Green Space has played a leading role in advocacy having authored the City's policy on disposition of vacant lots, pushed for access to water for community green spaces by helping to develop the Garden Irrigation Fund, and worked with the City to create its criteria and process for transferring land in community use into qualified land trusts for \$1 per lot.<sup>3</sup>

## The Case of Boston, Massachusetts

### Introduction

Boston has one of the oldest and largest community gardening systems in the United States with 175 gardens spanning 500 acres and involving over 15,000 gardeners. **As a result of decades of activist work and coordinated efforts between various nonprofit groups, community gardens in Boston are among the most secure and protected in the country.** The majority of gardens in the city are protected through the Trustees of Reservations land trust, however, the City of Boston also owns many community garden properties through the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the Boston School Department, the Department of Neighborhood Development, and the Parks Department. The Parks Department currently owns six gardens within public parks land and administers a Seed Grant Program to fund small-scale capital improvements for community gardens which has awarded nearly \$50,000 to 130 gardens in its first six years.<sup>10</sup> The Trustees of Reservations is the largest owner of community gardens in the city and currently operates 56 community gardens totaling 15 acres and coordinates activities for all of the city's 176 gardens reaching more than 15,000 individuals including through their Master Urban Gardener training program. The size of the Trustees was a result of the merger between Boston's four predominant community gardening organizations: Boston Urban Gardeners, Boston Natural Areas Fund, Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve, and the South End/Lower Roxbury Open Land Trust. Additionally, Boston is home to the Dudley Neighbors Land Trust, an urban village and Community Land Trust that provides affordable housing, a mini orchard, and a community garden funded in part by the Community Investment Tax Credit. The Boston Housing Authority also provides community gardening

opportunities at numerous housing developments across the city.<sup>10</sup>

### Grassroots Program

The Grassroots program is an initiative of the City of Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development that supports the development of community gardens. The program provides CDBG funds up to \$100,000, City-owned land, and assistance to community organizations who want to start or maintain a community garden in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods. Requests for Proposals are issued offering land and funding to initiate a project, and once finalized, the Department of Neighborhood Development makes a commitment of funds and conveys the property. Sites for this program are selected through consultation with local residents and stakeholders and are required to have long-term maintenance plans. In the past five years, the program has awarded \$20 million in federal funds to more than 130 gardens throughout Boston and has been critical in the protection of open space and infrastructure by the Trustees of Reservations.<sup>11</sup>

### Community Grown Program

The Community Grown program is a three-year partnership between the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, the Trustees of Reservations, and TD Bank to highlight the role of community gardens in Boston's neighborhoods. The program aims to engage and enhance up to 40 community gardens and is funded through TD Bank's commitment of \$225,000 over three years.

### Equity

Through Grassroots, gardens that receive CDBGs are required to be in neighborhoods where 51% of the population is of low- or moderate-income.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> City of Boston Open Space Plan 2015-2021

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/housing/grassroots-and-open-space-development>

## Funding

1. The Department of Neighborhood Development assists community gardens with planning and development through Grassroots which is funded by the federal CDBGs. This funding source provides grants up to \$100,000 and has awarded \$20 million in federal funds to more than 130 community gardens throughout Boston since its inception.<sup>11</sup>
2. Gardens are managed by a volunteer leadership team, often an elected slate of officers that is connected to the land-owning entity. All of the gardens have a system to sign up for plots. Plot-holders pay an annual membership fee and must participate in maintenance chores and seasonal clean-ups. The annual membership fee, which is to cover costs, is generally no more than \$30 per year.
3. Before the South End/Lower Roxbury Open Space Land Trust merged to eventually become part of the Trustees of Reservations, the land trust generated \$28,352 through a sliding scale membership fee and \$28,724 through their annual garden tour.
4. Fenway Victory Gardens offers membership in the Fenway Garden Society to all Boston residents, and currently charges a regular membership fee of \$40 per plot and a senior membership fee of \$25 per plot.

## Policy

1. *Zoning Code Article 33*: Boston established a specific community garden category that can be zoned as a sub-district within Boston's Special Zoning District, the Open Space District.<sup>12</sup>
2. *Community Preservation Act, 2016*: By adopting the Community Preservation Act

(CPA), the City has created a Community Preservation Fund. The City finances this fund in part by a 1% property tax-based surcharge on residential and business property tax bills. The City uses this revenue to fund initiatives consistent with CPA guidelines such as open space and community gardens. The Mayor recently proposed \$500,000, \$250,000, and \$150,000 for three separate community gardens for the inclusion in the next round of CPA funding.<sup>13</sup>

3. The Dudley Neighbors Land Trust became a Massachusetts 121A Corporation in 1988 which allowed them to accept the power of eminent domain to acquire privately-owned vacant land.
4. *Community Investment Tax Credit*: The Community Investment Tax Credit was signed into law in 2012 to support high-impact, community-led economic development initiatives. It leverages private contributions by providing donors a 50% state tax credit on donations over \$1,000. The Dudley Neighbors Land Trust was awarded \$150,000 in tax credits for year of 2019.<sup>14</sup>

## Inclusion in City-wide Plans

1. In the Parks Department's Open Space Management Mission, recommendations for community gardens over the next two years include: supporting and expanding programs such as the City Gardener Certificate Program, supporting organizations that institutionalize a support network of City and State agencies, landowners, nonprofit organizations, and garden leaders, and providing weather-resistant bulletin boards within each community garden to facilitate the dissemination of information.

## Advocacy

1. In the early 2000s, the Boston Natural Areas Network completed a strategic plan

<sup>12</sup> <http://cityofboston.gov/bra/pdf/ZoningCode/Article33.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.boston.gov/community-preservation>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.dudleyneighbors.org/land-trust-101.html>

for Boston's community gardens and helped develop the Boston Community Garden Council which consisted of community gardener representatives from neighborhood gardens.

2. Although there have been many attempts to redevelop Fenway Community Garden into uses such as overflow parking for the nearby baseball field, Fenway Park, the Fenway Garden Club prevented such conversions as a result of continuous petitioning to City government to establish the site as City-owned parkland.
3. In 2008, Boston Natural Areas Network secured a grant from the Boston Public Health Commission, the Centers for Disease Control, the Department of Neighborhood, and several philanthropic organizations that allowed for the creation of the community outreach program, Boston is Growing Gardens, in order to demonstrate to people in low-income communities that the gardens had potential to provide food security for the residents in the community.

## The Case of Chicago, Illinois

### Introduction

Chicago is home to more than 600 community gardens with 70 gardens located in Chicago's parks and 109 gardens supported by NeighborSpace, a nonprofit urban land trust that grew out of an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Open Space Impact Fees have also helped fund eleven gardens since 1998. Much of the land held by NeighborSpace was once owned by the City. The City often donates land and invests in garden infrastructure because successive administrations and City Council members have prioritized these community spaces. NeighborSpace also acquires land by transfer of City-owned, tax-delinquent property for \$1. The Chicago Park District plays a part in community gardening beyond its involvement in NeighborSpace by hosting nearly 70 community gardens on Parks land and by providing guidance, support, and resources to dozens of community garden groups across the city. Community garden groups must register and meet with the Park Advisory Council to obtain a letter of support to be able to garden on park property. Gardens may collect a nominal annual fee provided 100% of the funds are invested back into the garden. The Chicago Park District also runs a Harvest Garden program in sixteen parks that teaches kids how to plant and maintain a garden. Numerous other community organizations such as the Chicago Community Gardeners Association and Advocates for Urban Agriculture support community gardening. **The success of community gardens in Chicago can be attributed to the amount of vacant space, progressive land zoning policies, and the City's innovative, entrepreneurial spirit.**

### NeighborSpace

NeighborSpace is the only nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that preserves and sustains community gardens for community groups. The trust currently provides long-term protection to 109 gardens and engages 2,600 volunteers. NeighborSpace provides liability insurance, holds title to the land, and coordinates property tax exemption for gardens in its network. NeighborSpace does not collect fees from community members, however, individual gardens can charge plot fees.

NeighborSpace was created from the 1996/1998 agreement between the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the Food Preserve District of Cook County to ensure the implementation of the City's open green space initiative, "CitySpace Program." Each of the three founding agencies provides \$100,000 in support for NeighborSpace annually.<sup>15</sup> NeighborSpace also receives funding from Open Space Impact Fees, charitable donations and grants, and from focusing on expanding income from foundations and private donors. NeighborSpace reserves seats on its board for designees of the three founding government partners.

To ensure long-term sustainability of their gardens, NeighborSpace uses a rigorous application process for gardens that requires a partner community organization, at least three garden leaders, ten community stakeholders, and a long-term management plan. NeighborSpace partners with Bartlett Tree Experts to provide free woodchips and tree care services to its affiliated gardens and with Lake Street Landscape Supplies to offer discounted soil and compost delivery. In 2018, NeighborSpace earned \$883,429 in government grants and \$1,442,052 in total

<sup>15</sup>

[https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/10459/DeCaro\\_etal\\_5-31-19\\_WOW6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/10459/DeCaro_etal_5-31-19_WOW6.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

revenue, spent \$1,050,489, and had \$6,424,938 in assets.<sup>16</sup>

## Chicago Community Gardeners Association

The Chicago Community Gardeners Association is composed of working groups that meet regularly to support community gardens through education and networking events as well as providing material resources. Most importantly, the Resources Committee cultivates seedlings and distributes plants to an average of 130 gardens per year including 2,000 spring annuals and 5,000 vegetables and flowers. The committee is primarily funded through registration fees at distribution events and plant sales bringing in \$5,210 in 2018.<sup>16</sup>

## Equity

Although there does not seem to be any explicit policies or practices that encourage racial and socioeconomic equity within the gardens, 51% of NeighborSpace's green spaces serve majority Black, low-income communities.

## Funding

1. *Open Space Impact Fees:* Open Space Impact Fees (OSIF) are run through the Department of Planning and Development and are generated by new residential development projects to improve and expand public open spaces. Fees ranging from \$313 to \$1,253 are allocated then applied to new residential developments to pay for land acquisition and park improvements with an alderman's support. NeighborSpace received \$375,000 in OSIFs for the Grow Uptown Garden along with additional funding for many other gardens.<sup>17</sup>
2. NeighborSpace serves as a fiscal agent on behalf of select gardens in its network. For fiscal agency accounts less than \$10,000,

NeighborSpace will charge a fee on an annual basis to the amount of 3% of the balance. For fiscal agency accounts greater than \$10,000, terms will be negotiated. All interest on fiscal agency funds go to the NeighborSpace general fund and are used to offset administration costs.

3. NeighborSpace receives funds from vacant property development programs as outlined in the 1998-2005 Tax Reactivation program.
4. NeighborSpace receives donations from the Clif Bar Family Foundation, Richard H Driehaus Foundation, Field Foundation, Home Depot Foundation, Walter S Mander Foundation, Prince Charitable Trust, Baird Foundation, and Captain Planet Foundation.<sup>16</sup>

## Policies

1. *Urban Farm Ordinance, 2011:* The Mayor passed an urban farm ordinance that clearly designates community gardens and urban farms as acceptable land uses and allowed by right in all residential, downtown, business, and commercial districts, as well as parks and open space. This ordinance also expanded the size limit of community gardens to 25,000 square feet and allowed for more hydroponic and aquaponic operations. **Since the ordinance passed, acreage in the city devoted to urban farming has grown from 1.4 acres to now over 18 acres.**<sup>18</sup>
2. *Chicago Compost Ordinance Amendment, 2015:* The Chicago Compost Ordinance allows community gardens in Chicago to compost various types of organic waste including food scraps such as vegetables. Under the new ordinance, compost containers can measure up to 10 cubic yards without needing a permit. Farms

<sup>16</sup> 990 (2018)

<sup>17</sup>

[https://chicago.councilmatic.org/search/?q=&selected\\_facets=topics\\_exact:Open%20Space%20Impact%20Funds](https://chicago.councilmatic.org/search/?q=&selected_facets=topics_exact:Open%20Space%20Impact%20Funds)

<sup>18</sup>

[https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Sustainable\\_Development/Publications/Urban\\_Ag\\_Ordinance\\_9-1-11.pdf](https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Sustainable_Development/Publications/Urban_Ag_Ordinance_9-1-11.pdf)

generating less than 4,000 tons of compost annually only have to pay \$300 for a permit, as opposed to the previous fee of \$3,000. The ordinance also creates a citywide community garden registry and a streamlined urban farm composting operation permit process.<sup>19</sup>

3. *Water Access: Temporary Water Use* Permits are provided for community gardens in the Chicago Municipal Code Section 11-12-280. For each 3,000 square feet of garden the permits cost \$106.73 per season.<sup>20</sup>
4. In Illinois, 501(c)(2)s are exempt from property taxes. NeighborSpace coordinates property tax exemptions for gardens in its network.
5. Chicago has a public inventory of City-controlled vacant lots.
6. *Large Lot and Adjacent Neighbors Acquisition Programs:* Chicago introduced programs to encourage community stewardship of vacant lots by allowing neighborhood residents to purchase large vacant lots at significantly discounted prices.<sup>21</sup>
7. *The Chicago Urban Agriculture Mapping Project, 2015:* The Mapping Project developed an interactive map and directory that links detailed profiles for each growing site. It is a collaboration between Advocates for Urban Agriculture, DePaul University, NeighborSpace, and the Chicago Food Policy Council.

## Advocacy

1. NeighborSpace reserves seats on its board for designees of the three founding government partners. Three seats are filled by representatives from the Chicago Park District, three more by City officials, and three from the Forest Preserve.
2. In 2009, Dorchester Community Garden was uprooted to serve as a construction staging area. To preserve the community's space, NeighborSpace identified two city-owned vacant lots one block to the south and moved the garden there in 2010. The alderman, who had been an active gardener in another NeighborSpace site nearby, supported the move but was reluctant to sign off on permanent transfer of the land. He was concerned about community commitment and instituted a three-year rule for new community gardens who would have to demonstrate success for three seasons before he would support their preservation under the NeighborSpace land trust.
3. Advocates for Urban Agriculture, a coalition supporting sustainable agriculture in Chicago, organizes food sovereignty action days for community groups that bring in volunteers to expose community members to the impact of urban agriculture.
4. When the City developed its CitySpace Program in 1995 through the City's Department of Planning and Development, representatives from Department of Planning and Development, the Chicago Park District, and the Cook County Forest Preserve District consulted many community leaders and nonprofit organizations to develop the best strategies

<sup>19</sup>  
<https://chicago.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2320948&GUID=994EF1DA-3981-4D77-882E-63E168C901DA&Options=Advanced&Search=>

<sup>20</sup>  
[https://chicagocommunitygardens.org/resources\\_menu/chicago-](https://chicagocommunitygardens.org/resources_menu/chicago-)

water-hydrant-policy/#:~:text=Community%20Gardens%20are%20%E2%80%9Cgardens%20sprinkled,Section%2011%2D12%2D280

<sup>21</sup>  
[https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp\\_info/adjacent\\_neighborslandacquisitionprogramanlap.html](https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/adjacent_neighborslandacquisitionprogramanlap.html)

to preserve and expand open space.  
Leading nonprofits recommended a land  
trust to be established.

5. As part of the Chicago Architecture Biennial, NeighborSpace maintains a public photo exhibit at a Water Tower site to highlight the many NeighborSpace gardens throughout the city.

## The Case of Cleveland, Ohio

### Introduction

For over 30 years, community gardening in Cuyahoga County has been run by the Ohio State University (OSU) Extension Office's Urban Agriculture Program and their Summer Sprout Program, a partnership between the City of Cleveland and the OSU Extension Office. This partnership began in 1976 and played a key role in advancing food policy within the City of Cleveland municipal government and is funded in part by the City's Division of Neighborhood Services in the Department of Community Development. There are more than 250 community gardens in Cuyahoga County and more than 5,000 residents dedicated to their care. Plots on community gardens range in cost from \$25 - \$45 a season based on size. Most community gardens are located within the City of Cleveland with suburban gardens accounting for 35% of all OSU Extension-sponsored gardens. Cleveland has played an important role in urban agriculture by pioneering the first Urban Garden District as part of the zoning code, arguably the most protective Urban Agriculture regime in the U.S. Cleveland's success with community gardens has been due in part to the willingness of the City to help convert vacant lots into community gardens, the City's decision to use CDBG funds to assist gardens through the Summer Sprout program, and the advocacy work of organizations such as EcoCity Cleveland, a nonprofit environmental planning organization. In 2004, EcoCity sponsored community-wide events to develop policy recommendations such as the incorporation of community gardens into the City's planning departments, according special status to land bank lots with community gardens on them, and an urban food steering committee.

### Ohio State University Extension's Urban Agriculture Program

The Summer Sprout program is Cleveland's community garden program managed by OSU Extension of Cuyahoga County's Urban Agriculture Program and funded by the City of Cleveland Department of Community Development. The program provides seeds, plants, reduced-rate hydrant permits, educational workshops from OSU Extension, and other resources for qualifying gardens. Throughout the summer, OSU Extension staff and interns conduct site visits to troubleshoot problems, give recommendations, and suggest community resources available to gardens such as grants and local community development corporations. Plots in these gardens are on a first-come first-serve basis and costs \$25 or \$45 a season based on size which covers tiling of the soil, free vegetables and seeds, garden tools, water, coaching from Master Gardeners, and garden events. OSU Extension works with the City of Cleveland Land Bank to develop land tenureship for garden sites. About one third or one fourth of the City's community gardens are located on Land Bank lots, which are at a higher risk of development. There have been a few cases where gardens have been lost to new development, but the issue is not as pressing in Cleveland as it is in other cities. The Extension office also runs a Suburban Community Gardening Program, aimed at assisting residents in suburban communities and the Dig In! Program, a community garden training program and a required class for community garden leaders as part of the Summer Sprout Program.

OSU Extension's Master Gardener Volunteer program provides intensive training on how to start and grow vegetable gardens to interested Ohio residents who then volunteer their time assisting gardeners at community gardens. Master Gardeners also play an advocacy role by educating and informing local community groups about the possibilities and benefits of a

community garden. In 2019, the program matched 34 volunteers to 54 gardens.<sup>22</sup>

## Equity

Cleveland does not have any specific policies or practices to encourage equity, however 80% of community gardens are located in the lowest income neighborhoods and nearly 40% of gardeners identify as African American.

## Funding

1. *Community Development Block Grants: The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 allowed Cleveland to allot a portion of its CDBG funds to community gardening. Cleveland's decision to do so is key to the relative success of community gardening in the city. **CDBG funding helps defray the cost of gardening tools, materials, and infrastructure such as soil maintenance and tilling, and invests \$100,000 annually into the Summer Sprouts program.***<sup>24</sup>

## Policies

1. *Urban Agriculture Overlay District Zoning Ordinance, 2007 and 2010: Passed in 2007, this ordinance established an Urban Garden District that permits urban gardens and prohibits all other uses of a property, in addition to creating a new zoning category for urban gardens. In this zoning district, if a non-garden use is proposed, a public hearing is required. In 2010, zoning regulations were altered to permit agriculture as a principal use on all vacant lots in the city, allow for the creation of an Urban Agriculture Overlay District for larger scale urban farming, allow for the sale of produce grown on site, and allow structures such as greenhouses, hoop houses, cold-frames, and tool sheds.*<sup>23</sup>

2. *Farm Animals and Bee Ordinance, 2009: This ordinance allows residents to raise chickens, ducks, rabbits, and beehives within city limits.*
3. *Water Access: Cleveland has provided water access for community gardens in the Summer Sprout Program. The City offers community gardeners reduced-rate hydrant permits during the main growing season of May to October. Participants in the Summer Sprout program have access to hydrants for irrigation through unmetered permits offered at a flat rate of \$39 plus two metric cubic feet for the growing season (about \$78.48 total a season). In 2010, community garden and greening projects not part of the Summer Sprout program became eligible to apply for permits as well with an additional charge of 22 metric cubic feet per season (about \$600 total a season).*<sup>24</sup>
4. In the summer of 2008, the City of Cleveland introduced and passed legislation which created the Gardening for Greenbacks program that provides grants up to \$3,000 to businesses, merchants, or local farmers that operate an urban garden in the City of Cleveland. Grant recipients must complete the market gardener training program and have an arrangement to sell program either through a CSA, farm stand, market garden or other for-profit outlet.
5. *Cleveland's Steps Program: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' "Steps to a Healthier U.S." expanded its initiative to Cleveland in 2004 and awarded the City a \$1 million grant to fund chronic disease prevention activities. Cleveland Steps works in collaboration with the OSU Extension Community Garden Program and the City of Cleveland's Division of Neighborhood Services Summer Sprout*

<sup>22</sup> <http://mastergardener.osu.edu/>

<sup>23</sup> [http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/gravity\\_forms/7-1d999688265744f48ad862bf97cf7ab9/2015/04/document-2.pdf](http://growingfoodconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/gravity_forms/7-1d999688265744f48ad862bf97cf7ab9/2015/04/document-2.pdf)

<sup>24</sup>

[https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/water/docs/Cleveland\\_Community\\_Gardens.pdf](https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/water/docs/Cleveland_Community_Gardens.pdf)

program, and led to the creation of 31 gardens from 2006 to 2007. Gardens in the Cleveland Steps intervention neighborhoods receive additional support and free services.<sup>25</sup>

## Land Access

6. In 2010, the Cleveland Lank Bank updated their policies to support longer term leases for urban agriculture and through community input by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition eliminated the requirement of liability insurance for most small community gardens.
7. The Food Policy Coalition created a vacant land inventory which serves to support longer range planning by identifying strategic parcels for urban agriculture use, supporting farmland preservation, and informing land use decisions by the City and County land banks.

## Inclusion in City-wide Plans

8. In its 2020 Citywide Plan, Cleveland committed to reserve land for both temporary and permanent use as community gardens in every neighborhood.
9. In 2010, Cleveland passed Resolution 54-10, "Promoting Healthy Foods and Urban Agriculture in East Cleveland," that recognized the importance of healthy, sustainably produced and locally grown foods, community gardens, and other forms of urban agriculture.
10. "Re-Imagining a More Sustainable Cleveland Plan" was generated in 2008 for repurposing vacant land. It promoted making land available for urban food

production as a way of improving food access for residents such as by creating an urban agriculture land use category and ensuring residents are within walking distance of farm and garden space.

## Advocacy

1. OSU Extension's Master Gardeners play an advocacy role by educating and informing local community groups about the possibilities and benefits of a community garden.
2. *Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition:* Cleveland has been able to move forward in urban agriculture because the City and surrounding county have an active and funded food policy coalition which has been intentional in engaging stakeholders in policy advocacy. They've worked to evolve Cleveland's planning commission and area land banks in seeing the value of urban agriculture to community development. The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition was founded in 2007 with funding support from the Cleveland Department of Public Health. While the coalition is no longer funded by the City of Cleveland and is not an official advisory group to the government, City and County staff are still largely involved in the coalition as part of its leadership team.
3. *GardenWalk Cleveland:* Modeled after the GardenWalk program in Buffalo, GardenWalk Cleveland is a free, self-guided tour of community gardens in Cleveland that helps expose residents to urban agriculture.

---

<sup>25</sup> Russell, Matthew and Taggart, Morgan. "Steps to a Healthier Cleveland: 2006 Community Garden Report"

## The Case of Detroit, Michigan

### Introduction

Detroit has one of the most robust urban garden networks in the country with more than 1,500 individual gardens, 374 community gardens, and actively engaging over 23,000 residents in urban agriculture. **Detroit was the first city in the United States to create an extensive municipally-sponsored urban gardening program using vacant lots in response to the economic recession of the 1890s.** Detroit has continued on this trajectory of supporting community gardening through City policy. In 2008, the City adopted a food security policy drawn up by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network that featured urban agriculture as one of eight work areas towards ensuring food security for all residents. Four years later in 2012, the Detroit City plan was updated to feature urban agriculture as a desirable activity. 2013 brought additional progress with the inclusion of urban agriculture in the Detroit Future City Strategic Framework and the adoption of the City's first urban agriculture zoning ordinance that formally permitted food production as a viable use of land.<sup>26</sup> The adoption of the urban agriculture ordinance was crucial because prior to 2013 the City was unable to sell vacant public land for food growing purposes. A nonprofit organization, Keep Growing Detroit, is the predominant community garden organization in the city with over 70 gardens and programs provided that support over 15,000 community gardeners. Additionally, Detroit is home to an urban village that was the result of a crowdfunding campaign to turn an abandoned playground into a garden. This effort culminated in It Takes a Village Garden which grows 30 plots and is integrated into a housing development. This allows the organization to combine Neighborhood Stabilization Funds with the City of Detroit Housing funds.

### Keep Growing Detroit

Keep Growing Detroit has over 70 gardens in its network and operates a number of programs to support community gardens. Its initiatives include Garden Resource Program which provides resources for vegetables gardens to approximately 15,600 residents and costs \$10 - \$20 a year and "Grown in Detroit" which provides urban gardeners the opportunity to sell produce they grow in local market and runs a 1.5-acre urban farm, bike tours of the city's gardens, and an online store for produce and merchandise. Keep Growing Detroit works with the Detroit Black Food Security Network to organize workshop, community training activities, and distribute produce. Keep Growing Detroit plays an active advocacy role by engaging the City of Detroit through regularly meeting with City leadership and having staff serve on both the Detroit Urban Agriculture Workgroup and the Detroit Food Policy Council. Keep Growing Detroit works with a \$973,814 revenue budget with 15% of their revenue coming from mission related earned income. They had total expenses of \$716,672 and \$661,465 in assets.<sup>27</sup>

### Equity

The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network is a nonprofit organization that works to raise awareness about food in Detroit and operates D-Town Farm, a seven-acre urban farm in northwestern Detroit. To celebrate Juneteenth 2020, the coalition established a new fund to help Black growers. They have played a crucial leadership role in "Undoing Racism" in the Detroit Food System Initiative and in establishing a food security policy for the City in 2008.

---

<sup>26</sup> International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems. "Case Studies 01: What Makes Urban Food Policy Happen?"

<sup>27</sup> 990 (2018)

## Funding

1. General Motors contributes its steel shipping containers to be repurposed as raised beds as opposed to recycling them.<sup>28</sup>
2. Keep Growing Detroit operates a CSA program and helps farmers sell produce at local farmers markets, which generates \$51,190 in annual revenue.<sup>27</sup>
3. Keep Growing Detroit receives funding as a Community Food Project which is funded federally through the U.S. Community Food Security Act of 1996.
4. Through the Garden Resource Program, families pay a \$10 annual fee while school gardens pay \$20 to receive 26 seed packets, 124 vegetable transplants, and discounts on educational programs. Community and market gardens pay \$20 per year to receive 78 seed packets and 364 transplants. This program generated \$52,405 in revenue in 2018.<sup>27</sup>
5. Keep Growing Detroit also generated \$52,405 through the sale of produce and plants, and \$6,482 through an annual bus and bike tour of their gardens.<sup>27</sup>

## Policies

1. *Urban Agriculture Ordinance, 2013*: In 2013 amendments were made to Detroit's zoning ordinances that permitted food production as a viable land use. It also permitted urban gardens, urban farms, greenhouses, and hoop houses in residential and business districts, the sale of produce grown on site, and aquaculture, aquaponics, and hydroponics.<sup>29</sup>
2. *Fresh Prescription*: Fresh Prescription is a fruit and vegetable prescription program that

brings together the healthcare system and the food system by enabling doctors at health clinics to write prescriptions for patients with health issues such as diabetes, obesity, or hypertension to visit a community garden for a weeks' worth of recommended vegetables.<sup>30</sup>

3. *Adopt-A-Lot/Garden Permit*: Detroit residents may request permission to use vacant land owned by the City through the Garden/Adopt-A-Lot permit. The permit allows limited use of land owned by the City of Detroit and places restrictions on how the lot can be used for food production purposes. For many gardens in Detroit, a written agreement between the property owner and the garden organizers or a Garden Permit from the City of Detroit is adequate protection for the land from development.<sup>31</sup>

## Inclusion in City-wide Plans

4. In 2012, the Detroit City Plan was updated to feature urban agriculture as a desirable activity due to its environmental, economic, and social benefits.
5. Urban agriculture is included in the 2013 Detroit Future City Strategic Framework which makes it a priority for all city stakeholders.

## Advocacy

1. In 2008, the City of Detroit adopted a food security policy drawn up by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network that featured urban agriculture as one of eight areas to focus on towards ensuring food security for Detroit residents.
2. *Detroit Food Policy Council*: The Detroit Food Policy Council has worked closely with

<sup>28</sup> [https://www.mlive.com/auto/2013/08/gm\\_expanding\\_urban\\_garden\\_prog.html](https://www.mlive.com/auto/2013/08/gm_expanding_urban_garden_prog.html)  
<sup>29</sup> [http://detroitagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2013\\_Sharable\\_UA-Ordinance.pdf](http://detroitagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2013_Sharable_UA-Ordinance.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.ecocenter.org/fresh-prescription>

<sup>31</sup> [https://detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/docs/Volunteer/Adopt\\_a\\_lot\\_Application.pdf](https://detroitmi.gov/Portals/0/docs/Volunteer/Adopt_a_lot_Application.pdf)

Keep Growing Detroit. The council is involved in monitoring, advising, and implementing decisions concerning food policy in Detroit. These actions include reviewing and updating food security policies, participating in the development of urban agriculture and land security policies, and publishing the Detroit food system report.

3. Detroit's 2013 Urban Agriculture Ordinance was the result of activist social entrepreneurs who approached a senior planner within the Detroit City Planning Commission who was personally involved in the food growing community who helped form the urban agriculture workgroup which drafted the ordinance.<sup>26</sup>
4. Keep Growing Detroit engages the City of Detroit through regularly meeting with City leadership and having staff serve on both the Detroit Urban Agriculture Workgroup and the Detroit Food Policy Council.

## The Case of Madison, Wisconsin

### Introduction

Madison, Wisconsin is home to over 60 community gardens and two urban farms that operate CSA programs. The majority of gardens in Madison are supported by the municipal government through the City's Committee on Community Gardens, the Community Gardens Partnership, and the Community Development Office. Community Garden Partnerships represents a collaboration of nonprofit, extension, and government consisting of Rooted, UW-Madison-Extension, and the City of Madison and receives \$35,000 in funding from the Mayor's budget annually. Rooted provides support for gardens throughout the city as well in its capacity as a nonprofit organization. The majority of community gardens in Madison operate as plot-based, with sliding-scale plot fees that range from \$10 - \$65 determined by the City based on gardeners' HUD income limits. The money generated from these plot fees are the main source of funding for garden operations, and any gardens that require additional funding beyond plot fee revenue receive additional funds from the City.<sup>33</sup> The majority of garden space in Madison is on City-owned land, Park land, or water utility land that the City rents / leases to Rooted which it pays to oversee and provide liability insurance for the gardens. Gardens are thus able to avoid development pressure because they are located on Park land or other land that has been set aside for long term preservation as greenspace by the City through zoning laws and greenspace / open space legislation.<sup>33</sup>

### Rooted

Rooted evolved from the merger of the Center for Resilient Cities and Community GroundWorks. One of their initiatives is Troy Community Gardens, a four-acre CSA farm. Troy Community Gardens consist of 327 community garden plots beginning at \$10 annually which are gardened on by 190 families per year. Community members can receive USDA Certified Organic produce grown at the

Troy Community Gardens throughout the growing season through Rooted's Farm Membership CSA program, which costs \$150 for individuals and \$450 for a family. As part of the collaborative Community Garden Partnership, Rooted connects residents with the land, education, and resources to create and sustain community gardens through leases and liability insurance. Additionally, the Partnership develops Master Gardeners and coordinates an Annual Garden Summit and other outreach initiatives. In 2018, Rooted received \$51,838 from program service revenue, \$30,000 from plot fees, and \$545,149 in total revenue. They had total expenses of \$921,769 and \$12,813,530 in total assets.

### Equity

Income eligible members of Rooted's Farm Membership Program can receive up to a 75% discount on farm membership. Rooted also accepts SNAP benefits for payment.

The City of Madison utilizes a sliding-scale plot fee that charges community gardeners reduced fees if they qualify as low-income according to HUD Income limits.

### Funding

1. \$35,000 within the Mayor's budget is allocated towards the City's Community Gardens Partnership.
2. *Community Development Block Grants:* Based upon its Five-Year Consolidated Plan, the Madison Department of Planning and Development's CDBG program has established objectives relating to the creation or enhancement of the operation of neighborhood centers and community gardens. CDBGs have been a key source of funding for gardens in Madison. In 1983, funding from this program was \$6,500, and

by 1998 the allocation had increased to \$44,910.<sup>32</sup>

3. The City of Madison uses Open Space Impact Fees to help fund Parks and Recreation, some of which goes towards community gardening initiatives.<sup>33</sup>
  4. Rooted receives around \$30,000 a year from community garden plot fees on just the 20 gardens they maintain on City-owned land.<sup>33</sup> The \$65 plot fee is calculated based on the average amount it costs Rooted to maintain the plots but can be reduced down to \$10 based on residents who qualify as below 80% of the median area income per HUD Income Limits.<sup>33</sup>
  5. For gardens that require additional funding above what is generated from plot fees on their site, the City provides an additional \$15,000 to Rooted for supplies and funding for these gardens. The City also provides additional funding support towards salaries, such as \$39,000 per year for Rooted's Garden Network Manager.<sup>33</sup>
  6. Grants for garden projects are available through the New Garden Fund and the Madison Food Policy's Council's SEED Program.
2. The Common Council adopted a resolution in 1980 calling for the establishment of permanent community gardens on City-owned land including parks. The resolution also called for changes in the zoning ordinance designed to encourage the inclusion of community gardens across the city.
  3. The City of Madison's Community Development Authority / Housing supports gardens at its locations.
  4. Gardens on City-owned lands qualify for five-year leases.

### Inclusion in City-wide Plans

5. Dane County 2012 – 2017 Parks and Open Space Plan accounted for community gardens.
6. The City's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code encourages and permits community gardens in residential districts and provides for urban agriculture districts.
7. Community gardens are routinely included in Neighborhood Development Plans as well as Neighborhood Plans.<sup>32</sup>
8. The City's Parks and Open Space Plan of 1991 set a goal of 2,000 new community gardening plots on public land.<sup>32</sup>

### Policies

1. *Zoning*: The City's zoning ordinance permits community gardens in all zoning districts and establishes market gardens as a conditional use in all residential zoning districts, mixed use and commercial districts, and employment districts; both uses are permitted in agricultural and urban agricultural districts. The zoning ordinance also establishes an urban agriculture district as a special district, with development standards provided (§28.093).<sup>34</sup>

### Advocacy

1. *City of Madison Advisory Committee on Community Gardens*: The Community Gardens Committee was created in 2005 to support the creation and expansion of community gardening in Madison. The committee developed a New Garden Fund supplemented by CDBG funds and contributions from garden plot fees that has since been transferred to Rooted. Further, it has provided feedback on the Parks and

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.cityofmadison.com/sites/default/files/city-of-madison/CommunityGardensReport2012-2016.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Leete, Nicholas. Rooted's Gardens Network Manager. 24 June 2020.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.planning.org/knowledgebase/resource/7002032/>

Open Space Plan passed in 2012 which led to the inclusion of community gardens in the 2012 – 2017 plan, provided input to the CDBG’s funding framework to support community gardens as a priority, and worked with Parks Division staff on the report “Timeline for Establishing Community Gardens in City of Madison Parks.”<sup>35</sup>

2. *Madison Food Policy Council:* The Madison Food Policy Council has working groups on issues of food access, and makes both policy changes and budget requests and includes representatives from the City’s Community Gardens Committee, the Dane County Food Council, and Dane County / UW Extension.
3. The City’s Food Policy Director serves as a liaison between City Departments and the Gardens Network program.

---

<sup>35</sup>

<https://www.cityofmadison.com/mayor/programs/food/community-gardens/committee-on-community-gardens>

## The Case of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

### Introduction

Milwaukee boasts over 177 community gardens spread throughout the City, 120 of which are included within a nonprofit land trust, Groundwork Milwaukee's Garden Network. The City supports community gardening through a variety of policies and initiatives, including a 2014 urban agriculture ordinance that adopted urban gardens as a permitted use in all zoning districts, allowing composting and the sale of compost and produce grown on site, the \$1 Vacant Side Lot program, and the community garden permit program to allow citizens, in collaboration with Groundwork Milwaukee, the ability to access vacant lots for the specific purpose of community gardening. In addition to Groundwork Milwaukee, the Milwaukee County UW Extension's supports gardening through their Garden Rental program, which rents annual or permanent plots for \$25 in eleven gardens throughout the city, and the Great Milwaukee Victory Garden BLITZ, the nation's largest garden-building event. This event offers subsidized rates as low as \$25 for individuals who cannot pay the full price of a \$175 garden bed. To date, they have installed over 4,500 gardens built across Milwaukee.

### Groundwork Milwaukee

Groundwork Milwaukee maintains a network of over 120 community gardens throughout Milwaukee through the MKE Grows program, along with several other initiatives including Young Farmers, a youth education program, and an urban farm site. As a land trust, Groundwork Milwaukee acquires land from the City of Milwaukee through a master lease, provides liability insurance up to \$1 million to protect gardeners, and is a member of the Land Trust Alliance. In 2018, Groundwork Milwaukee generated \$27,653 in

program service revenue, \$340,615 from contributions and grants, and \$479,426 in total revenue. They had \$476,253 in expenses and \$162,419 in assets.

### Equity

Walnut Way Conservation Corp is a predominantly African American community gardening effort located in Walnut Way, one of Milwaukee's historically deprived neighborhoods. One of the main goals of WWCC is to empower low income communities by giving them access to the land.<sup>36</sup>

Over 80% of Milwaukee's community gardens are located in low- to moderately low- income neighborhoods. Groundwork Milwaukee also partners with organizations such as Home GR/OWN Milwaukee and Milwaukee County Parks to ensure access and availability to people who may lack the financial resources to cover the costs of a community garden plot fee. They offer MUG Bucks, a Free Seed Transplants program that allows in-need populations to order a variety of free vegetable seeds and transplants to grow at home or in a community garden.

### Funding

1. The Mayor's Strong Neighborhoods Plan's (SNP) Vacant Lot Beautification program provides around \$4,000 to Groundwork Milwaukee.<sup>37</sup>
2. In 2018, Groundwork Milwaukee received about \$50,000 in Community Development Block Grant dollars.<sup>37</sup>
3. The Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation (NIDC) offers Community Improvement Project (CIP) funding on an annual basis. CIP funds are available to engaged residents with a plan to improve their neighborhood. CIP funds

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.walnutway.org/>

are available to spur new community gardens and other vacant lot/neighborhood projects. A CIP grant is a reimbursable grant that requires 1:1 matching.

4. Groundwork Milwaukee charges gardens in it's a network a \$40 - \$100 seasonal fee to provide coverage for liability insurance, and those that do not pay the fee do not receive coverage. These gardens are also usually the least engaged according to Deneine Powell, Groundwork Milwaukee's Executive Director. The majority of gardens do not charge individual plot fees.<sup>37</sup>

## Policies

1. *Urban Agriculture Ordinance, 2014:* The City of Milwaukee officially adopted urban gardens as a permitted use in all zoning districts as part of the comprehensive update of the Milwaukee Zoning Code. Accessory structures are also allowed including large agricultural buildings, hoop houses, sheds, and rain catchment systems. This update was in response to an Urban Agricultural audit conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 2012 on the City of Milwaukee that led the Department of City Development and the Department of Neighborhood Services to revise the zoning code. This resulted in the 2014 Common Council adoption of an ordinance establishing regulations for raising crops and livestock, definitions and regulations for community gardens, commercial farming enterprises, and increased the number of zoning districts in which agricultural activity is permitted either by right or by a special use. Currently, close to 90% of zoning permits community gardens and urban agriculture uses.
2. Composting is allowed on community garden sites however the size and placement of compost bins is restricted under current regulations. Compost bins must be no taller than five feet, covered and they cannot exceed 125 cubic feet. Compost produced on site can be sold.<sup>38</sup>
3. The City of Milwaukee offers seasonal, no-cost garden permits for residents to garden on vacant lots. A no-cost permit is required from the City of Milwaukee Community Development Center for a community garden and offered in partnership with Groundwork Milwaukee for residents who would like to garden on a vacant lot. The permit requires approval from an alderperson who has ten days from receiving the application to make a decision, which helps hold the City accountable and prevents community gardens from being forgotten.
4. *\$1 Vacant Side Lot Program:* The \$1 Vacant Side Lot program run by the Department of City Development allows residents to buy vacant sides lots that directly border their property for a \$1 lease with the approval of the local alderperson and a \$40 recording fee.<sup>39</sup>
5. Groundwork Milwaukee is currently working on obtaining property tax exemption for their gardens.<sup>37</sup>

## Inclusion in City-wide plans

6. *ReFresh Milwaukee, 2013: ReFresh Milwaukee is the City's first sustainability plan that included a food access map that identifies existing grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens, as well as indicating the neighborhoods that are farthest away from these food resources.* ReFresh Milwaukee also calls for expanding the City's long-term lease program for vacant lots, implementing a green overlay district in specific neighborhoods, promoting

<sup>37</sup> Powell, Deneine. Groundwork Milwaukee's Executive Director. 10 July 2020.

<sup>38</sup> City of Milwaukee Ordinance, Sec. 79-12.5

<sup>39</sup>

<https://city.milwaukee.gov/DCD/CityRealEstate/VacantLotHandbook/VacantLots#.U-KLgqPRYnk>

eco-tourism, and developing a green infrastructure policy plan. Since the adoption of ReFresh Milwaukee, several grocery stores and community gardens have been constructed, and other initiatives have been implemented to address food access, including eleven gardens with three-year leases.

7. HOME GR/OWN is an initiative of the City of Milwaukee to find creative, productive, and new uses for City-owned vacant lots. In 2014, HOME GR/OWN helped create and expand four community gardens, revise urban agriculture ordinances, and streamline City garden processes and permits.

### Advocacy

1. To highlight the work of gardeners and raise awareness around community gardening, Groundwork Milwaukee launched a Strong Roots awards program in 2015 that honors the accomplishments of gardens and their leaders.
2. Groundwork Milwaukee has played a crucial role in providing feedback and recommendations for policy level decisions. For instance, the City of Milwaukee officially adopted urban gardens as a permitted use in all zone districts as part of the comprehensive update of the Milwaukee Zoning Code. Groundwork Milwaukee has also provided input to Milwaukee Housing Authority redevelopment sites, serving as a member of the Milwaukee Food Council.
3. Through the advocacy of Milwaukee Urban Gardeners in 2009 for urban agriculture reform, a process for land acquisition was developed that begins when the City issues a Seasonal Garden Permit for one season to see if a gardening group can make it work. After several years of success, with a two-year minimum, the City may lease the land to the garden under a three-year lease.

## The Case of Minneapolis, Minnesota

### Introduction

Over 300 community gardens exist throughout the City of Minneapolis, including 60 gardens on vacant City-owned lots through the Minneapolis Garden Lease Program and more than 250 that produce food. The City of Minneapolis has flexible zoning for Urban Agriculture, offers specific vacant City-owned lots to lease for community or market gardens through the Minneapolis Garden Lease Program, and provides gardens with access to compost and water. These initiatives are part of Homegrown Minneapolis, a city-led initiative to improve access to healthy, locally grown foods. No prevailing nonprofit exists to protect community gardens in Minneapolis after Gardening Matters dissolved in 2019 from a lack of funding. However, Minnesota Green, a program funded by program administration fees run by the Minnesota State Horticultural Society, promotes community gardening through seed and supply distribution for a \$55 annual fee. Additionally their Garden-in-a-Box program, while the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) manages the majority of community gardens in Minnesota, with the goal of expanding gardens onto park land. Gardens operated by the MPRB do not charge fees for access and instead assign plots through an application process that includes a racial equity impact assessment. Other urban agriculture initiatives across the city include Giving Gardens, an organization that offers full garden bed kits completely free as long as the majority of food grown is donated to a local food shelf.

### Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board

The MPRB establishes community gardens in parks throughout the city. Plots in these gardens are assigned on a one-year basis, open to everyone following an application, and are managed by community members in coordination with MPRB staff. Plots are reviewed and assigned based upon a racial equity impact assessment. As many as 24 parks will eventually host community gardens

as part of MPRB's Community Garden Policy adopted in 2018 through the organization's Urban Agriculture Activity Plan. MPRB has already dedicated space in 13 of these parks for future community garden sites. The MPRB employs a full-time, racial equity trained MPRB staff member who manages the community garden program.

Community Gardens can be built in neighborhood parks whose master plans include a designated Urban Agriculture site. Master plans without Urban Agriculture sites can be amended to include a community garden site. Outside of park land, Hennepin County tax-forfeited parcels deemed too small to be buildable can be purchased by MPRB for the purpose of community gardening as long as there is long term, three to five-year, demonstrated interest in gardening and formally become park land. Existing community gardens threatened with elimination may be purchased by MPRB, as approved by the Board of Commissioners, or tax-forfeited land can be transferred free of charge to MPRB under a public use deed. Two community gardens on tax-forfeited land that sought a more permanent status have been transferred to the MPRB under a public use deed.

### Equity

The MPRB assigns free plots within its park's gardens based on annual applications after a group review using an annual racial equity impact assessment, as opposed to a first-come, first-serve basis. **The annual racial equity impact assessment examines potential effects of policy and the application process on different ethnic and racial groups by identifying disparities among residents' access to garden plots and devising solutions to close those gaps.** The program also implements yearly turnover in plot access to allow all community members to have access to gardens instead of those who have the resources to find out about open garden plots first.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, the MPRB employs a full-time, racial equity trained MPRB staff member who manages the community garden program.

## Funding

1. As a result of the Minneapolis Parks Community Garden Policy adopted in 2018, the 2019 MPRB budget includes a full-time staff position to manage the community garden program and a new annual implementation fund of around \$70,000 to help with construction of community gardens in designated urban agriculture areas, as outlined in the policy.
2. MPRB provides water service for community gardens in neighborhood parks where water utilities already exist. Where water utilities are out of reach of the designated urban agriculture area, MPRB works through its Capital Improvement Program to fund basic infrastructure improvements on parkland.
3. Minneapolis Solid Waste and Recycling offers low-cost or no-cost compost to qualifying community gardens. Compost is provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Once no-cost compost deliveries are exhausted, low-cost compost will be offered for gardens at 50% off the retail price.<sup>40</sup>

## Policies

1. *Minneapolis Garden Lease Program*: City-owned vacant lots are available to lease for community or market gardens to community groups who meet the requirement of sponsorship by a nonprofit organization. Community gardens seeking land pay a one-time administrative fee of \$50 and an annual lease fee of \$1 per lot. Market gardens pay a one-time administrative fee of \$50 and an annual lease fee of \$150/ per lot. The Garden Lease Program has been the most significant policy in terms of contributing to the success of community gardens in Minneapolis.<sup>43</sup>
2. *Zoning for Urban Agriculture, 2012*: The Minneapolis City Council amended the

zoning code in 2012 to adopt community gardening as a permitted use in all zoning districts apart from B4-Downtown Business District and the I3-General Industrial district along with an official definition of community gardens (Ordinance 520.16). This ordinance also details that as long as a garden is a permitted use in its particular zoning the district, the duration (permanent or temporary use) is not regulated by the zoning code.<sup>41</sup>

3. *Water Access*: The Water Works Permit Office issues hydrant garden permits for \$50 plus a \$100 deposit for community gardens and urban farmers to access a specific fire hydrant for their garden/farm when there is no other water option available. Once a permit is approved, Public Works Water Treatment and Distribution Services Division delivers and installs the meter equipment to access water from a hydrant.
4. *City of Minneapolis Community Garden, Market Garden, and Urban Farm Policy, 2015*: The Minneapolis City Council adopted the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan to extend execution of leases of up to five years for gardens on parcels determined to be undevelopable, expand City-owned lots available for gardens and define garden lease standards a \$1 lease fee, \$50 administrative fee, and \$1 million in liability insurance coverage.
5. *Minnesota Brownfields*: Minnesota Brownfields received Environmental Response Fund funding in 2014 to provide small grants for environmental assessment and clean-up of contaminated at proposed redevelopment sites and community gardens. Eligible community gardens must be either owned or controlled by a public entity or a nonprofit organization.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/solid-waste/cleancity/community-garden-compost-program>

<sup>41</sup>

<http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-140395>

<sup>42</sup> <https://mnbrownfields.org/home/available-resources/brownfield-gap-financing-program/>

6. Minneapolis has a City Ordinance that requires there to be park within eight blocks of any residence. This promotes access to community gardens as well since community gardens are authorized on park land under the Park Board Code of Ordinances PB2-2.<sup>43</sup>

### Inclusion in City-wide Plans

7. *Urban Agriculture Activity Plan, 2014:* The MPRB created an Urban Agriculture Activity Plan in 2014 that recommended developing policies and procedures for establishing community gardens within neighborhood parks and tax-forfeited property free of charge through a garden plot application process to Minneapolis residents. This plan began the City's movement towards a policy focus on community gardening and resulted in an ordinance that allows community members to harvest fruits and nuts in parks and the MPRB's Community Gardening Policy.<sup>43</sup>
8. *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan, 2011:* In 2011, the Minneapolis City Council adopted the Urban Agriculture Policy Plan. As part of the plan, a consultant reviewed the City owned land inventory in order to make land well suited for urban agriculture available that was not desirable for development.<sup>44</sup>
9. *Comprehensive Plan:* Minneapolis' Comprehensive Plan calls for the creation and improvement of community gardens and food markets which sell locally and regionally grown foods, identifies community gardening as a principle use identified in the zoning code, and provides recommendations for the City to further support urban agriculture.
10. *Homegrown Minneapolis:* Homegrown Minneapolis is a City-community partnership started in 2008 by the City of Minneapolis to expand the community's ability to grow, process, distribute, eat, and compost more

healthy, sustainable, locally grown foods. It includes community gardens and garden lease programs as well as other urban agriculture programs, and includes a subcommittee on community, school, and backyard gardens as one of its four subcommittees. Since its inception, the program has leased 60 vacant City-owned lots for community and market gardens, distributed 3,000 seed packets to community, and partnered with Minneapolis Solid Waste and Recycling to distribute 477 cubic yards of free and low-cost compost to 55 community gardens.

### Advocacy

1. Homegrown Minneapolis Food Policy Council has led to a greater understanding of community needs in the City government.
2. Waite House, a neighborhood center in Minneapolis, has been actively engaged in policy change efforts to advance food justice and urban agriculture. Over several years the group's community engagement and advocacy efforts led to changes in the City of Minneapolis garden leasing program, including new Public Works lots being made available to lease for gardening and longer-term five-year leasing options. Waite House participates in Homegrown Minneapolis's Food Policy Council. Waite House has also worked with the MPRB on the development and implementation of the Urban Agriculture Activity Plan as well as drafting the language for a policy allowing community gardening on park land.

---

<sup>43</sup> Gross, Rebecca. MPRB Community Gardens Coordinator. 9 July 2020.

<sup>44</sup> [http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/cped/planning/cped\\_urban\\_ag\\_plan](http://www2.minneapolismn.gov/cped/planning/cped_urban_ag_plan)

## The Case of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Introduction

Philadelphia has struggled with many of the same challenges that have plagued the Rustbelt cities, yet it has a long tradition of community gardening and has become a national model in urban agriculture. **There are over 470 gardens on almost 568 parcels of land in the city, which produce over 2 million pounds of produce annually valued at \$4.9 million.** The city's tradition began with a wave of gardening during the 1970s driven by Penn State's Urban Gardening Program and the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society (PHS). However, a shift in thinking occurred in the early 2000s that led individuals to view community gardening as an individual hobby without documentation of the social and economic benefits and led philanthropic funding to shift out of the Horticulture Society's community gardening programs. Thus, an umbrella organization under the PHS broke off to become the Neighborhoods Gardens Trust (NGT), which now manages the majority of community gardens in Philadelphia as a land trust organization that has successfully preserved 49 gardens. PHS still supports gardening through its urban greening program, Philadelphia Green, which works with residents, community organizations, and public and private entities to create and restore open spaces in the city. Proceeds from PHS's Philadelphia Flower Show account for over 20% of the programs overall budget. Another initiative of PHS is the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI) that resulted from a collaboration with the City. The NTI is similar to the Neighborhood Departments of Seattle and Cleveland, although it is run directly out of the Mayor's office. Perhaps the best outcome of NTI lies in the expansion of the PHS's Philadelphia Green program, the nation's leading community gardening institution. It has successfully cleaned, greened and fenced thousands of vacant lots throughout the city.

NTI funded PHS to scale up vacant land management, further shifting its work away from vegetable gardening. The City supports community gardening through the Parks and Recreation Department's FarmPhilly Program that supports over 60 urban agriculture projects on parkland including community gardens<sup>45</sup> and through the Philadelphia Land Bank. The Land Bank commissioned a study with NGT in 2016 and found new ways to grant access to land for applicants who did not meet the criteria for disposition. The granting solution involved temporary access to land for use as side yards and gardens through Individual Garden License Agreements and Urban Garden Lease Agreements.

### Neighborhood Gardens Trust

NGT preserves and supports community gardens in the Philadelphia area including 49 community gardens in perpetuity and holds membership with the Land Trust Alliance. When NGT determines that a community garden is a good fit for preservation, they work with the gardeners to acquire or lease the land. Their preservation criteria are a minimum of three active growing seasons, garden ties to civic groups or institutions, and community and City Council support. The Philadelphia Land Bank (PLB) is an important partner to NGT. Over the past year, NGT acquired three garden parcels from PLB and PLB acquired six privately owned garden properties specifically so that NGT can permanently preserve them in the future. However, NGT often has to purchase land at market value through fundraising or grants. Occasionally they are able to get community members to rally for a council member's support to transfer land to the land trust for nominal fee below market value. NGT has also swapped land with the City. In one instance, land that had been promised by the City to NGT for a garden was acquired by a developer. Instead of breaking the promise, the City

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.phila.gov/programs/farmphilly/>

granted the developer a comparable piece of land on a different block to avoid development on land with an already established garden.<sup>48</sup>

NGT does not charge membership fees, and additionally, because NGT receives property tax exemption, they are prohibited from engaging in revenue generating activities in order to meet the criteria for the exemption. Thus, the majority of NGT's funding comes in-kind support from PHS. In 2017, NGT earned \$583,503 in non-government grants which accounted for their total revenue. Their expenses were \$301,468 and had \$922,700 in assets.

## Equity

Philadelphia is home to Soil Generation, a coalition of Brown and Black gardeners that helps to ensure people of color regain control of land through advocacy, activism and community partnerships.<sup>46</sup>

## Funding

1. NGT receives in-kind support from the PHS. Office space is shared and PHS helps the organization with the overhead from payroll and benefits administration. NGT is currently working on growing their base of foundation funders and individual donors.
2. During the 1990s, the Office of Housing and Community Development spent some of Philadelphia's federal Community Development Block Grant dollars on community gardens supported by PHS and community-based partner organizations.
3. The City's FarmPhilly operates a CSA program through the Carousel House Farm, where consumers will pay a fee upfront in exchange for a weekly supply of fresh produce. In 2019, Philly's CSA sold 16 vegetable shares (\$370 - 635 each) and six flower shares (\$140 each), generating an approximate revenue of \$9,000.<sup>45</sup>

## Policies

1. *Zoning Reform, 2012*: In 2012, the City Council passed a new Zoning Code that recognizes urban agriculture as a new land use category in the zoning code. It includes gardens, farms, and orchards that involve raising and harvesting of food and non-food crops and the raising of farm animals. It defines four subcategories: animal husbandry, community gardens, market or community-supported farm and horticulture nurseries or greenhouses. As a result, community gardens and market farms are now allowed in most areas. Urban agriculture being recognized category has strengthened support for community gardening.
2. *Stormwater Management Fee Exemption*: Councilwoman Maria Quiñones Sánchez introduced legislation to exempt community gardens from Water Revenue charges related to the management and disposal of stormwater. The Mayor later signed a City Council Ordinance that allows for a discount of up to 100% of the stormwater fee for properties operated by a community group for the primary purpose of growing plants, if stormwater is managed on at least 80% of the property.<sup>48</sup>
3. The City of Philadelphia appointed its first-ever urban agriculture director in 2019, who will create and implement Philadelphia's urban agriculture plan. This new role will be based in the Parks and Recreation Department and linked to its urban agriculture program FarmPhilly, and will begin with a \$125,000 grant from the William Penn Foundation to the nonprofit Mayor's Fund.<sup>47</sup>
4. In April 2016, Councilman Taubenberger introduced a City Council resolution to hold public hearings on urban agriculture. More than 100 urban farmers and food justice

<sup>46</sup> <https://soilgeneration.org/about-us>

<sup>47</sup> <https://why.org/articles/philly-names-first-ever-farm-czar/>

advocates attended the first Philadelphia City Council hearing completely devoted to urban agriculture.

5. In order to better protect and acquire land, NGT is looking into the conservatorship law in Pennsylvania to allow a judge to appoint the organization a legal conservator of the land. This tool has been used in Philadelphia for organizations to gain access to vacant housing for renovation, however it has the potential to be applied to community gardens on vacant lots as well.<sup>48</sup>

### Inclusion in City-wide Plans

6. *GreenPlan Philadelphia*: GreenPlan Philadelphia provides a framework for the provision of parks, open space, and trails within the City of Philadelphia. Considered one the most progressive plans in the nation, the plan calls for 30% tree coverage, ensuring all residents live within a half-mile from a major trail, and establishing 10 acres of parkland for every 1,000 citizens. The Mayor also developed Greenworks Philadelphia, a city-wide sustainability strategy, of which GreenPlan Philadelphia forms a key part of its food production actionable goal.

### Advocacy

1. *Public Interest Law Center's Garden Justice Legal Initiative (GJLI)*: Provides pro bono legal support, policy research and advocacy, and community education and organizing to community gardeners and market farmers. The director of GJLI serves as one of the co-chairs of Philadelphia's Food Policy Advisory Council, which connects local stakeholders and City government agencies. GJLI has produced a guide to transforming vacant land in Philadelphia, the Vacant Land 215 toolkit and an online resource ecosystem, Grounded in Philly. GJLI also works with

and serves as fiscal sponsor for Soil Generation, a coalition of Brown and Black gardeners.<sup>49</sup>

2. *Grounded In Philly*: Grounded In Philly, a project of GJLI, provides legal assistance, usable data, and informative guides. Grounded In Philly came into existence as a civic project in 2013 in order to help Philadelphians find information about vacant land. They have since had over 140 vacant lots transformed, with over 300 participating community leaders and volunteers.<sup>50</sup>
3. Philadelphia has benefited from an active urban agriculture advocacy community, especially from the grassroots organizing of Soil Generation, that has put a lot of pressure on the City. One such win, allowing PLB to include community gardens in its strategic plan, was the result of several public meetings, where community members voiced their desire for community gardens to be included in the plan.<sup>48</sup>
4. The increase in staff and acquisition of 20 properties in 2019 by PLB was the successful result of individuals and entities in Philadelphia putting pressure on the City Council to be more supportive of community gardens.
5. Philadelphia Food Policy Council Urban Agriculture Subcommittee, Office of Sustainability.
6. PHS's "Farm for the City" installation, supported by the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, showcases the role gardeners play in strengthening neighborhoods and cultivates support for the community garden network in Philadelphia.
7. NGT capitalized on an active urban agriculture community as well as an ally

<sup>48</sup> Greenberg, Jenny. Neighborhood Gardens Trust Executive Director. June 2020.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.pubintlaw.org/cases-and-projects/garden-justice-legal-initiative-gjli/>

<sup>50</sup> <https://groundedinphilly.org/>

within the City's Water Department to gauge information on how community gardens help the City meet EPA environmental goals. NGT provided concrete, quantified examples of how many dollars community gardens contribute to stormwater management in order to successfully obtain the Stormwater Management Fee Exemption policy from the City.<sup>48</sup>

## The Case of Providence, Rhode Island

### Introduction

Providence is home to roughly 58 community gardens that engage more than 1,200 people in growing food. Community gardens in Rhode Island are supported by the Southside Community Land Trust (SCLT), a land trust organization founded in 1981 that owns 21 gardens and partners with organizations across Providence to support an additional 37 gardens. SCLT also manages multiple urban farms and eight CSAs. **Stemming from SCLT's activism, the local government has supported community gardening through supportive zoning and inclusion in comprehensive plans including founding of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council and involvement in the Urban Agriculture Task Force.**

### Southside Community Land Trust

SCLT has transformed nearly eight-acres of urban land into 58 community gardens since 1981, owns or directly manages 21 community gardens in Providence, and partners with schools, affordable housing organizations, and community groups to manage an additional 37 gardens as part of their Providence Community Garden Network. SCLT also owns or manages land used by 25 farmers to supply fresh produce to farmers markets, business, restaurants, and eight CSAs. They accomplish this through their  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre City Farm and Urban Edge farm, a 50-acre farm on land owned by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management that SCLT maintains and leases to farmers. SCLT has actively promoted programs and policies to build a more just and sustainable food system. The organization was a founding member of the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, which creates partnerships, develops policies, and advocates for improvements to the local food system. Advocacy efforts include formation of a Comprehensive Plan that included aggressive goals for community

gardens and urban farms in Providence, passage of a Providence City Ordinance allowing backyard chickens, and leadership of Providence's Urban Agriculture Task Force. The Task Force is a 50-member citywide coalition working to expand community gardens and strengthen local food system through the following means: modifying the City's comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances; developing city-wide composting; adopting zoning regulations that remove special use permit requirements for community gardens in residential neighborhoods; requiring new commercial and residential construction to incorporate community gardens; and declaring community gardens as a legitimate use of public resources. The explosion of interest in growing food in and around Providence has been fueled in large part by SCLT's Rare and Unusual Plant Sale. Every May it brings more than 2,000 people to City Farm over one weekend, sells as many as 20,000 plants, and raises money used to fund SCLT's operations.<sup>51</sup>

Plots in SCLT gardens are available to rent for the planting season for \$35, which includes free water access, and are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Returning gardeners have the option of using the same garden plot year after year. In 2018, SCLT generated \$36,581 in revenue from these membership fees, \$10,842 from fundraising, and \$268,643 from program service revenue, which includes their urban farms and CSAs, and a total income of \$1,516,785. Since 2016, SCLT has focused their efforts on contributions, increasing their contributions from around \$293,000 to \$766,000, with government grants increasing slightly from \$378,000 to \$482,000 and earned income remaining relatively similar around \$270,000.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.southsideclt.org/community-gardens/>

<sup>52</sup> 990 (2018)

## Equity

Although SCLT practices inequitable plot assignment strategies through granting plots on a first-come, first-serve basis and allowing for returning gardeners, 85% of SCLT gardeners live below the poverty line and over 2,000 packets of free seeds were distributed to low-income farmers and gardeners just in 2018.<sup>53</sup>

## Funding

1. SCLT receives \$100,000+ from the United Way of Rhode Island and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, \$25,000 - \$99,999 from the City of Providence, \$10,000 - \$24,999 from Citizens Bank and the Pawtucket Housing Authority as well as funds from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement, and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.<sup>53</sup>

## Policies

1. The Providence Redevelopment Agency (PRA) allows nonprofits to purchase public property owned by the PRA for 50% the assessed value.
2. Community gardening and urban agriculture is included in Providence's Comprehensive Plan, which established a policy of promoting and supporting community gardens in parks.

## Advocacy

1. As mentioned, City Farm is a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre demonstration farm and site of the annual rare and unusual plant sale. City Farm was created to demonstrate SCLT's vision to City officials, potential funders, neighborhood leaders, and other community-based organizations. City Farm has shown to the City of Providence that it is possible to produce tons of food within a city block. Further, it enabled SCLT to

develop farmers' markets, gave the SCLT a public face that was attractive to foundations, and taught thousands of local residents better ways to grow good food.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Southside Community Land Trust 2018 Annual Report

## The Case of Seattle, Washington

### Introduction

Seattle is home to the acclaimed “P-Patch” program, a municipally run program and joint partnership between the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods and the nonprofit GROW (formerly P-Patch Trust). The name P-Patch originates from the creation of Seattle’s first community garden, which occurred in 1973 when the City purchased and took title of the Picardo farm to preserve in perpetuity community gardening.<sup>54</sup> Since then, the number of gardens in Seattle has exploded to 90 P-Patches currently managed by the City’s joint public-private venture throughout the City of Seattle on around 3,055 plots of land for a total of 33.7-acres tended to by 3,125 gardeners. The P-Patch program also includes four community gardens for tenants and two market gardens located on Seattle Housing Authority property where gardeners can sell organic produce through the City of Seattle’s CSA program. The P-Patch program is funded by a nominal \$38 - \$74 annual fee and contributions to the nonprofit GROW. Anyone is allowed to visit a P-Patch, however, only those P-Patch gardeners who pay a small annual fee in exchange for the City providing a plot of land, soil, tools, compost, and organic fertilizer are allowed to pick flowers, fruits or vegetables for their own use. The formation of the P-Patch Advisory Council (pre-cursor to the P-Patch Trust) was instrumental to the success of community gardens in Seattle, both for their lobbying efforts and work with the City Council during the 1983 economic downturn to reinstate funding and services for community gardens through block grant money. **In 1994, the City’s Comprehensive Plan “Towards a Sustainable Seattle” shifted planning goals to the neighborhood level and formally included metrics for community gardens by calling for one community garden for every 2,000 households.** With this momentum, the P-Patch Trust launched its “Five Year Strategic Plan” in 2000, which was adopted by Council Resolution 30194. It called for the development

of four new gardens each year and encouraged hiring one new staff for every twelve gardens developed. The Trust also helped approve Resolution 20194 which called for City support of community gardens including the location of gardens on City property and led to two voter-passed Parks Bond funds for the acquisition of five gardens. The biggest boost to the program came with its move into the City’s Department of Neighborhoods, home to the Neighborhood Matching Fund, a nationally respected small grant program that encourages neighborhoods to use their own resources and receive dollars in return.

### GROW

GROW serves as fiscal sponsor of 57 community gardens. GROW provides liability insurance to the City-wide network of gardens, advocates for adequate funding for and preservation of community gardens, partners with organizations to provide gardens at low-income housing sites, acts as fiscal agent for the CSA program, and serves as a member of the Food Resource Network Federation<sup>55</sup>. GROW also manages Cultivating Communities, a program developed with support of the Kellogg Foundation to incubate community gardens on public housing in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority, and Cultivating Youth, a program that teaches gardening to low-income youth. In 2018, GROW had a total revenue of \$268,405.<sup>56</sup>

### Equity

Cultivating Communities, a collaboration between the P-Patch program, the P-Patch Trust, and the Seattle Housing Authority was created in 1990 to promote gardening among residents in low-income housing. Seattle now has 17 community gardens in four Seattle Housing Authority Sites as a means for low-income and immigrant communities to develop

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.grownorthwest.org/>

<sup>56</sup> 990 (2018)

ties outside of their community while earning a little extra income.

GROW maintains a Gardenship fund to help low-income gardeners afford plot fees, and around 15% of their gardeners have incomes below the federal poverty level.

## Funding

1. *Parks Bond Funds*: Two voter-passed Parks Bond funds led to acquisition of five gardens.
2. *Neighborhood Matching Fund*: An arm of the Department of Neighborhoods and a match grant that encourages residents to invest in their own neighborhood supplemented by grant assistance.
3. In 2008, City support culminated in a \$500,000 appropriation for a P-Patch acquisition and development reserve fund.
4. *Parks Levy Funds*: Voters passed a parks levy ordinance that lifted limits on property taxes in order to collect funds for Seattle parks and green spaces including \$2 million for the acquisition and development of P-patches and community gardens.<sup>57</sup>
5. *Conservation Futures Tax Levy (CFT) Program funding*: The CFT program uses funding from the Conservation Futures tax levy, which sometimes uses matching funds from parks levy proceeds to conserve open space lands through a public application process.
6. Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.
7. *CSA*: Two market gardens are located on Seattle Housing Authority property where gardeners can work communally and sell their organic produce through the City of Seattle's CSA program.
8. GROW generates \$14,972 from fiscal sponsor membership fees, \$17,340 from fundraising events, and \$107,329 from government grants.

## Policies

1. *Urban Agriculture Zoning Ordinance 2010*: Community gardening is allowed as a primary use in all zones.
2. *Resolution 31019*: All public municipal departments and agencies keep an inventory of available vacant or underutilized land that could possibly be sites for future P-Patch Gardens.
3. *Parks and Green Space Levy Ordinance*: Lifted limits on property taxes to collect funds for Seattle parks and green spaces.<sup>58</sup>
4. *Resolution 30194*: Called for the development of four new gardens each year and encouraged hiring one new staff for every twelve gardens developed.
5. *Resolution 20194*: Called for city support of community gardens including co-location on other city property.

## Inclusion in Local Plans

1. *City Comprehensive Plan, 1994*: Called for one community garden for each 2,000 households in urban villages and connected community gardens to more ambitious environmental goals.
2. *P-Patch Trust Five Year Strategic Plan, 2000*: Predecessor to Resolution 30194 which called for the development of four new gardens each year and encouraged hiring one new staff for every twelve gardens developed.

<sup>57</sup> <http://growingfoodconnections.org/gfc-policy/parks-and-green-spaces-property-tax-levy-ordinance-no-122749/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://growingfoodconnections.org/gfc-policy/parks-and-green-spaces-property-tax-levy-ordinance-no-122749/>

## Advocacy

1. The P-Patch program's shift into the Department of Neighborhoods eliminated competition with Parks and Recreation Department.
2. Advocacy by community members allowed the Parks Department to realize that P-Patches can work to their interests. Now several parks have been developed by community members that include a P-Patch within them.
3. The Mayor knew very little about P-Patches when he first came in. Gardeners from P-Patch met with him and built up a friendly relationship instead of a business one, which has led the Mayor to develop a very positive attitude around gardens.
4. The City of Seattle was going to sell Bradner Park in the early 2000s to develop the land into condominiums. P-Patch Trust, along with community activists, went to Parks Commission meetings and were covered in the press and on TV. Their activism saved Bradner Park from redevelopment (now Bradner Gardens Park) and a voter initiative resulted in a City Ordinance that mandated that the City could not sell park land without exchanging it for another property of equal value in the neighborhood.

## The Case of St Louis, Missouri

### Introduction

St. Louis is home to over 200 community gardens throughout the city. Since 1984, community gardens have been managed by the Gateway Greening Land Trust, a nonprofit organization that works to educate and empower the community through gardening and urban agriculture. Gateway Greening currently engages over 4,000 volunteers with over 140 community gardens in its network, 80 school and youth gardens, 17 preserved gardens within its land trust, and a 2.5-acre farm in downtown St. Louis on land owned by the Missouri Department of Transportation that provides therapeutic horticulture and a jobs training program. Gateway Greening also provides programs supporting more than 220 community and school gardens across the St. Louis area. The organization does not manage any of the projects in its garden network and charges no membership fees, instead requiring gardens to undergo their development process. The Gateway Greening Land Trust works with the Land Reutilization Authority to preserve gardens and, in partnership with the Missouri Botanical Garden, promotes the value of community gardening. The City of St. Louis supports community gardening through its 2007 Urban Agriculture Ordinance which developed a comprehensive urban agriculture plan manifesting in the Garden Lease Program. The program allows residents to lease Land Reutilization Authority lots for \$1 per year and, through the volunteer run Master Gardener program, offers classes and certification with the Missouri Botanical Garden and the University of Missouri Extension Program.

### Gateway Greening

Gateway Greening is a nonprofit organization that supports nearly volunteers, community gardens, and greening projects in the St. Louis area. It does not charge members any kind of fee. The land trust has currently preserved 17 of the 140 community gardens within its

network, maintained three Community Resource Gardens as neighborhood hubs for garden resources and supplies, and managed a 2.5-acre urban farm in downtown St. Louis, the result of a Community Food Project Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 2005. Gateway Greening hosts four specific programs: (1) Civic Greening Project, an annual beautification project in partnership with Master Gardeners to plant flowers in downtown St. Louis, (2) Library Gardens, a 2010 partnership with the St. Louis Library District to establish community gardens in public libraries, (3) Dig It! Teen Employment program, and (4) the Gateway Greening online store.<sup>59</sup> Although Gateway Greening provides services for all community gardens in the St. Louis area, gardens within its network are eligible for many services that non-network projects are not eligible for including additional supplies for garden and orchard expansions, vegetable seedlings for \$0.25 a packet, tool loans, the ability to receive volunteer groups through Gateway Greening, a shared insurance policy at an annual cost of \$100, reduced rates for educator led classes, and an assigned staff liaison to help with questions. To enter the network, produce from the garden cannot be sold for financial gain and at least ten people must agree to tend the garden. To enter the land trust, gardens must have completed Gateway Greenings development process, have been in operation successfully for at least five years, and ten or more individuals must be involved with the project.

In 2018, Gateway Greening earned a total of \$825,134 in revenue, including \$702,126 from foundations and corporate grants, \$35,000 from the City of St. Louis' Community Development Administration, \$32,986 from fundraising events, \$8,220 from planter sales, and \$48,268 in other revenue including their CSA. Gateway Greening spent \$48,462 on advertising and

<sup>59</sup> <https://gateway-greening-inc.square.site/shop/organic-garden-supplies/7>

promotion and had total expenses of \$876,766.<sup>60</sup>

## Equity

Gateway Greening manages the Dig It! Teen Employment Program which provides St. Louis teens from low-income backgrounds an opportunity to work part-time for ten weeks on the Gateway Greening Urban Farm and earn above minimum wage.

## Funding

1. *Community Food Project Grant*: The Gateway Greening Urban Farm came about through collaboration between several St. Louis organizations and the awarding of a Community Food Project Grant in 2005 from the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.<sup>61</sup>
2. Gateway Greening partnered with Wells Fargo Advisors in 2017 for \$100,000 to build new gardens and expand existing ones.

## Policies

1. Community members are allowed to garden in St. Louis County Parks. Volunteer gardeners meet on weekday mornings to work alongside Master Gardeners and County Parks Horticulture Staff at several sites throughout the county.
2. Wood chips and compost is available at no cost to city residents through the St. Louis City's Forestry Division.
3. *Urban Agriculture Ordinance, 2017*: Calls for developing a comprehensive urban agriculture plan through the Department of Planning and Urban Design in collaboration

with food policy educators and representatives from community gardens in order to catalogue existing and potential urban agriculture spaces, analyze zoning laws, and integrate urban agriculture into the City's conservation and resiliency plans.<sup>62</sup>

4. *Garden Lease Program*: The Garden Lease Program, a part of the St. Louis Development Corporation, allows residents to lease Land Reutilization Authority lots for \$1 per year.<sup>63</sup>

## Advocacy

1. The Master Gardener program offers classes and certification through the Missouri Botanical Garden and the University of Missouri Extension Program. To earn their title, Master Gardeners must attend 50 hours of these classes and complete 50 hours of garden related community service within a year.

---

<sup>60</sup> 990 (2018)

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.gatewaygreening.org/2016-ten-years-gateway-greening-urban-farm/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/city-laws/board-bills/boardbill.cfm?bbDetail=true&BBId=10934>

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/sldc/news/garden-lease-story.cfm>

## Cities for Future Research

1. Austin, Texas
2. Denver, Colorado
3. Des Moines, Iowa
4. Los Angeles, California
5. New York, New York
6. Portland, Oregon
7. San Francisco, California

# Policy Considerations and Recommendations

## Overview

A majority of Buffalo's peer cities have adopted specific legislation pertaining to community gardens, through zoning codes, comprehensive plans, or ordinances. Most successful cities surveyed provide municipal support for community gardening and supporting community organizations through City agencies and Departments. The advocacy of **food policy councils, task forces, or community garden committees** has been integral to the success and preservation of community gardening across the majority of cities. Municipal governments can help support community gardening beyond legislation through providing tools, materials, or labor from City departments and dedicating funding from government or federal programs to urban agriculture.

Some cities have pushed the boundaries of community garden legislation, with Cleveland, Ohio's Urban Garden District; Baltimore, Maryland's use of Urban Agriculture Tax Credits for community gardening and creation of a Garden Irrigation Fund; Chicago, Illinois' use of Open Space Impact Fees to fund land acquisition for gardens; and Madison, Wisconsin's use of a sliding-scale membership fee. Buffalo should look to these cities for inspiration and conduct further research into how these strategies can be implemented in the Buffalo-Niagara region as well.

Cities like Seattle and Chicago have demonstrated the benefit city-wide open space plans and local government support provide to the preservation of gardens; however Buffalo cannot wait for the local municipalities to eventually realize the social and economic benefits community gardening provides. Instead, the **Buffalo community must politically organize and demand that local planners and government officials include community gardens in the City's planning and development processes.**

The single most critical action Buffalo can take to increase the financial sustainability of community gardens is to:

**Craft and adopt a comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance that detail and codify community garden as a permanent, accepted, and prioritized use of land.**

Additionally, throughout the policymaking and advocacy process, community gardening organizations and Buffalo citizens must ensure that low-income communities and communities of color are involved in policy development and advocacy.

# Land Access, Preservation, and Zoning

## Zoning

**Challenge:** *Buffalo's zoning code does not allow for community gardens as a permitted use of land. This increases development pressure, provides little formal protection for gardens, and further perpetuates the idea of community gardens as an interim use of land.*

**The Buffalo Common Council should adopt a resolution in support of community gardens as a legitimate land use.** Local governments use local zoning ordinances to regulate land use through Zoning Districts, which determine what can be built in a specific zone, and Zoning Uses, which addresses how something should look, measure, or be used in a specific zone. Community members should work with the Buffalo's Food Policy Council and the City of Buffalo to incorporate community gardening into municipal plans, ordinances, and zoning codes. This will legitimize gardening as a practical land use and eliminate the perception of community gardens as an interim use of land. A zoning amendment will also help reduce development pressure on existing gardens since land would be protected by a zoning ordinance, which is difficult and lengthy to change once it has been established, and would require community input when development or changes to the zoning code are desired. Community gardening as a permitted use would also allow local governments to dedicate land for community gardens in comprehensive or other general plans. 11 out of the 12 case studies have supportive zoning for community gardens.

**Actions:**

1. Advocate for the revision of local zoning codes to allow community gardens as a permitted land use in all zoning districts in the City of Buffalo.
2. Ensure local zoning codes allow semi-permanent and permanent gardening structures such as raised beds,

greenhouses, and hoop houses in community gardens.

3. Develop a zoning designation for community gardens and urban agriculture.
4. Review municipal codes to identify barriers to local gardening and develop policies that encourage and support community gardens.



**Case Study: Cleveland, Ohio**

Cleveland established an Urban Garden District as part of its zoning code to designate areas where agriculture practices are permitted by right and all other uses of a property are prohibited. This ordinance gives the City the ability to reserve land for garden use through zoning. The ordinance also allows accessory structures on gardens such as sheds, greenhouses, coops, cages, beehives, hoop houses, rain barrels, composting, and farm stands. Cleveland's zoning code was created in direct response to loss of gardens to development under the strong leadership of the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition and is one of the most protective agriculture zoning regimes in the U.S.

5. Advocate for established community gardens on public and private property to be considered as open space to protect from commercial development. Advocate for the inclusion of community gardens towards the Park and Open Space allocations required by the local Quimby Act ordinances for new subdivisions and multifamily developments for stronger protection beyond zoning laws. This strategy protects community gardens established on public property which creates a separate subcategory or

subdistrict of open space designated for use as community gardens, giving community gardens the same protections as other types of open space uses. Some cities preserve undeveloped property or recreation space by designating those areas as “protection districts” or “overlay protection zones.” Open space districts enhance the protection of land as open or green space, because once the district is established, a change of use requires a vote by the local legislative body or by the citizens. Boston, Portland, and Seattle all protect community gardens from development through their “Open Space” goals.

preserve open space. Residential Cluster Development, or open space development, is a planning technique that could preserve open space to be used for community gardens and urban agriculture through strategic positioning of buildings and other structures. Minneapolis recognizes cluster development as a unified development of not less than three dwelling units in which one or more principal buildings are grouped together in order to preserve common or open space for the benefit of the residents of the development.<sup>64</sup>

**Note:** Zoning code should allow urban growing and community gardening by right and not as a condition use. Cleveland’s ordinance provides both land security and flexibility. Similar language should be incorporated into the City of Buffalo zoning ordinance.



### Case Study: Boston, Massachusetts

Boston allows community gardens, including those on vacant public land, to be zoned as an “open space sub-district,” creating a community garden subdistrict and recognizing that community gardens can provide similar social and economic benefits as other open spaces, which allows community gardens to receive the same protections as other open space uses (Section 33-8).

6. Explore Baltimore’s “Qualified Community Managed Open Space” that prohibits the City from actively marketing land with community gardens on it and strategies for the implementation of a similar system in Buffalo.
7. Amend zoning ordinances to allow community gardeners to keep bees in a manner that prevents nuisance/unsanitary conditions.
8. Raise awareness for zoning techniques such as residential cluster developments to minimize development impacts and

<sup>64</sup> Minneapolis, Minnesota, Zoning Code tit. 20, § 520.160 (2016)

## Public Land

**Challenge:** *The majority of Buffalo's community gardens are located on vacant lots and face constant development pressure as vacant lots are not protected from development for the long-term.*

**Buffalo residents should advocate for incorporating gardening onto public land, where development pressure is often significantly less or prohibited.** Public land, such as parkland, public housing sites, right-of-ways, and tax-forfeited properties are often used for community gardening efforts and should be considered for use in Buffalo as well.

1. Advocate for the use of public land for community gardens by designating city-owned land, public park space, right-of-ways, and vacant lots not designated for development for community gardens. Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and Des Moines allow for the use of gardens on Parks and Recreation land, Water Department land, and even Transportation authority land.



### Case Study: Des Moines, Iowa

Des Moines allows the establishment of community gardens on city right-of-ways and real property.<sup>65</sup>

2. Advocate for the expansion of the Urban Homestead Program to allow citizens to purchase vacant lots for the purpose of community gardening, through which community members can purchase vacant lots adjacent to their homes for a nominal fee, usually \$1 via an online application process. Buffalo's community gardening organizations would apply for garden space

and engage with individual gardeners to use the space. Baltimore, Chicago, and Detroit offer vacant land to lease for a \$1 fee through Adopt-A-Lot programs. Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and St Louis operate Garden Lease Programs where land can be rented for the specific purpose of community gardening.



### Case Study: Minneapolis, Minnesota

Minneapolis' Garden Lease Program allows use of tax-forfeited land as garden sites without charge.<sup>66</sup> City-owned

vacant lots are available to lease for community or market gardens for a one-time administrative fee of \$50 and an annual lease fee of \$1 with sponsorship by a community organization. The Garden Lease Program has been the most significant policy in terms of contributing to the success of community gardens in Minneapolis.<sup>42</sup>

3. Create an inventory of open, public lots, private lots, tax-forfeited properties, and public parks that are available and suitable for community gardens to support longer term planning. This inventory can work in conjunction with a garden rental program and will inform land use decisions by the City or land banks to make sure community gardens are accounted for. Minneapolis, Chicago, New York City, Cleveland, Portland, and Seattle maintain an inventory of public and vacant land suitable for gardens. Portland's Diggable City project should serve as a guide.
4. Develop community gardens on city parkland. A greater diversity of users in the open space use will raise the popularity of

<sup>65</sup> Des Moines, Iowa, Municipal Code § 74-201, 74-202 (2004).

<sup>66</sup> Hennepin County Resolution 85-5-374

the park space; community gardening on parkland will also increase community ownership and responsibility towards parkland. Including community gardens in parks will also reduce costs to operate and maintain for the City than traditional parks and will provide new kinds of recreation. The City should encourage community gardens in City parks as an additional way to aid in accomplishing open space, neighborhood revitalization, or sustainability goals. The Parks Division should consider crediting land or easements dedicated to the public or to a community land trust toward the developer's public parkland dedication requirement. The Mayor should advocate for an amendment to the County Park and Open Space Plan so that the plan sets community gardens as a county priority so gardens can receive conservation funding.

5. Develop and advocate for an open process of available public land designated as open space to allow community groups to propose projects such as community gardens. Boston's Grassroots and Open Space Development Program issues Requests for Proposals that offer land and funding to community groups and community-based organizations to assist in the creation of community garden space by and for economically marginalized residents. A similar process should be implemented in Buffalo

## Collaboration

**Challenge:** *Buffalo’s community members suffer from a lack of resources and awareness around community gardening organizations in their city and ways to engage in gardening.*

**Local businesses and government agencies should collaborate and explore partnerships with gardening organizations including Grassroots Gardens of Western New York.**

1. Public housing agencies, local health departments, and local non-profits should start community gardens at public housing or low-income sites. This will help change the urban development thought pattern from housing *or* community gardens to housing *and* community gardens, and may open up additional sources of revenue such as City housing funds. Minneapolis and Seattle have both partnered with local Housing Authorities to offer community gardens, market gardens, and CSAs at housing facilities with a high concentration of affordable housing units.
2. Local nonprofit or businesses can provide land for a community garden.
3. Encourage tax incentives for community gardens by waiving or reducing property taxes for community gardens owned or operated by nonprofits. Buffalo citizens should advocate to make tax foreclosed vacant land available at reduced sale prices or under attractive leasing arrangements for use as community gardens. Community members should highlight to the local government how community gardens are not an obstacle to increasing a county’s tax bases, but instead drive residents to an area as a positive amenity, like a park or museum, and should be actively supported

by government officials to attract the business and residential development they desire. The reduction in social program costs community gardens also provide helps to make-up for a loss in property tax revenue that garden plots would have otherwise generated. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania’s Neighborhood Gardens Trust receives a property tax exemption on all their gardens<sup>48</sup> while San Francisco allows land use for community gardening to be taxed at the current tax rate for the state’s irrigated farmland.<sup>67</sup> Buffalo should advocate for both of these policies to be implemented.



### Case Study: Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore offers an Urban Agriculture Tax Credit that gives farmers 90% off of their property taxes, as long as the parcel is used for urban agriculture for five years, produces a minimum threshold of value, and is not used for any other purpose,<sup>5</sup> utilizes “qualified community-managed open spaces” that the City will not actively market to developers as long as the Adopt-A-Lot sites have been in existence for 2.5 years, have an identified site manager, and an existing Adopt-A-Lot license,<sup>3</sup> and per state law, only assesses land used for agriculture at \$500 per acre, resulting a very low tax burden.<sup>9</sup>



### Case Study: Boston, Massachusetts

Boston created a Community Preservation Fund through the Community Preservation Act of 2016 to help support gardens through a 1% property tax-based surcharge on residential and business property tax bills<sup>14</sup> and implemented the Community

<sup>67</sup>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/09/09/347141038/tax-breaks-may-turn-san-franciscos-vacant-lots-into-urban-farms>

Investment Tax Credit in 2012 that provides donors a 50% state tax credit on donations of over \$1,000 to groups such as community garden organizations.<sup>13</sup>



### Case Study: Seattle, Washington

Seattle voters passed a parks levy ordinance that lifted limits on property taxes to collect funds for Seattle parks, green spaces, and P-Patches<sup>58</sup> and implemented the Conservation Futures tax levy to match funds from parks levy proceeds to conserve open space land. In addition, in 1994 the community garden program received a one time, \$650,000 grant from the City's real estate excise tax fund to be used to purchase land for garden plots.



### Case Study: Washington, D.C.

Private land in Washington, D.C. qualifies for a 90% property tax abatement if used for urban agriculture to be leased to a third party for a community garden or urban farm for a minimum of three years.

- 
4. Create or advocate for a fund that gardens can use to support on-site water access and infrastructure. The City of Baltimore offers unlimited water access to community gardens for \$120 per year and provides up to \$3,000 in support for the installation of direct lines into garden sites through the Garden Irrigation Fund. Buffalo should implement a similar policy.

# Inclusion in Plans and City Documents

**Challenge:** *The lack of community gardening hardcoded into Buffalo’s comprehensive and sustainability plans allows the government to overlook gardening and continue to view the practice as an interim use of land that should not be prioritized or supported. Without inclusion in plans, the local government cannot truly be held accountable for failing to support community gardening.*

**Buffalo community members should advocate for the inclusion of community gardening and success metrics within city planning documents.** Community gardens are often lost because gardening is seen as an interim use of land that is ultimately used for other purposes. Starting new and secure gardens is a challenge unless gardens are established as a priority land use. One way to do this is to include community gardens in neighborhood and other plans. For instance, the City of Seattle approved a resolution that clearly identifies community gardens as part of the comprehensive plan of the City. In Madison, a community garden can become eligible for certain grants if the site for that garden is identified in a master plan.

1. Create an Urban Agriculture Plan. Cities across the nation have begun recognizing urban agriculture’s importance to residents and the economy, and to ensure ongoing support for these initiatives, have create an urban agriculture plan within their comprehensive plan or as a standalone document. This report will provide policy and programmatic recommendations for the City and will help Buffalo explore the full range of potential opportunities with urban agriculture within the City.
2. Update comprehensive plans to incorporate community gardening and urban agriculture and allow planning for gardens to be incorporated into the City’s planning department. Having clear language about community gardens in a city’s comprehensive plan legitimizes community

gardening as a use of land, overcomes the major obstacle of the perception of community gardens as an interim use, and may also qualify gardens for Community Development Block Grant Funding. Most communities have what is known as a “comprehensive” or “general” plan, which sets guidelines for the types of land uses allowed in different areas within the community. The comprehensive plan describes how the locality is currently using land and makes recommendations for the future, addressing factors such as transportation, traffic circulation, housing, park and recreation areas, and public facilities. Local governments can support community gardens by including a policy in the City’s comprehensive plan to create and sustain community gardens.



## Case Study: Seattle, Washington

Seattle established community gardening as a desired use within the City’s comprehensive plan by establishing the goal of creating “one dedicated community garden for each 2,000 households.” It further recommends “that any appropriate ordinances be strengthened to encourage, preserve and protect community gardening.” These recommendations recognize community gardens as long-term uses within the City of Seattle. Long-term continuation of the P-Patch Program also is evidence that community gardens are viewed as more than interim uses, but as integral places within neighborhoods. Seattle also includes community gardens in evaluation of priority use of city surplus property, calling for the co-location of community gardens with other City priority projects. Similar detailed language should be included in Buffalos plan.

3. Either through the Comprehensive plan or elsewhere, advocate for and encourage the creation and operation of one community garden for every 2000 of households. Identify neighborhoods that do not meet this standard and prioritize the establishment of gardens in neighborhoods that are underserved by healthy eating opportunities and food apartheid. Different metrics may be used and can be modeled after the National Recreation Park Association's best practices standards for neighborhoods: ½-acre of park land for every 2500 households or one-acre for every 5000 households. Seattle calls for one community garden for every 2,000 households in its Comprehensive Plan and Madison calls for one community garden for every 2,000 households as part of their Comprehensive Plan.
4. Hold the City of Buffalo accountable for the inclusion of community gardens as an actionable goal for the City's sustainability plans through the City's inclusion of a community garden definition and addressing the need to provide access to healthy food for the first time in the Buffalo Green Code Unified Development Ordinance and through Growing Together (One Region Forward)'s recommendations for strengthening Buffalo's food system through long-term leases for community gardens.
5. Encourage the City to create an information website for community gardens in Buffalo. A public website sponsored by the City government helps provide awareness of community gardens, serves as a resource for community members to learn about the rules and regulations governing gardening in Buffalo, and can thus increase community engagement.

# Financial Sustainability

**The City of Buffalo must recognize the importance of gardens for the local economy and food access and invest in them accordingly by creating a funding program within the City's Community and Economic Development Department.** The majority of community gardening organizations across the country either allow for the sale of produce grown on gardens, manage an urban farm to offer residents community-supported-agriculture (CSA) programs to generate up front monies, or through value added products such as organized garden tours. By implementing strategies such as the sale of produce, community gardens in Buffalo would be able to expand their reach and impact in the Buffalo-Niagara region which would benefit organizations who are seeking support or policy change from local municipalities. Local residents should also donate and encourage others to donate to local community gardening organizations such as Grassroots Gardens.

4. Advocate for the use of a Community Investment (or Preservation) Fund for community gardening. Community Preservation Funds (CPF) are tax programs implemented by states and municipalities to fund their open space protection and enhancement. While CPFs likely have more applicability for parks and recreation and natural area uses, CPFs have been used to support agriculture and community gardening in Boston.
5. Advocate for the use of New York State's Urban Agriculture Tax Credit for community gardening in Buffalo to give organizations 90% off of their property taxes, as long as the parcel is used for urban agriculture for five years, produces a minimum threshold of value, and is not used for any other purpose.

## Policy

**Challenge:** *Current policies in Buffalo prevent gardeners from engaging in many revenue generating activities.*

1. Tell local government to allow the sale of community garden produce at local farmers markets or to expand market garden operations to allow the increased sale of garden produce.
2. Allow for the production and sale of compost produced on site. Milwaukee, Wisconsin allows composting on community garden sites and for the sale of compost produced on site.<sup>38</sup>
3. Advocate for the implementation of participatory budgeting to allow the Buffalo community to allocate funds to community gardens.

## Funding

**Challenge:** *Community gardening organizations in Buffalo receive very little money from the federal government despite the thousands of dollars the organization saves them on maintenance costs of vacant lots.*

**Advocate and encourage local municipalities to provide support for community gardens as an investment in social and economic benefits.** Gardens advantage the City by reducing crime, beautifying neighborhoods, increasing food access which decreases social program costs, and raising property values.

1. Encourage the local government to provide financial support, dedicated funds, or targeted federal or state resources through grant programs, Neighborhood Revitalization Programs (Minneapolis), dedicated funds in the budget of local parks and recreation departments (Chicago), economic development, or other city departments.

*Revenue Potential: High*



### Case Study: Madison, Wisconsin

Madison uses Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to fund their community gardens. 7 out of the 12 case studies also use or have used CDBG funding for community gardens.



### Case Study: Seattle, Washington

Seattle has provided significant funding and resources to support community gardening in the City, by providing parks with bond funds, public housing funds, and neighborhood matching grants to purchase land and maintain lots.



### Case Study: Vallejo, California

Vallejo, California began a participatory budgeting process to annually allocate a portion of sales tax revenue to projects voted on by citizens. In 2013, the Participatory Budgeting Cycle allocated \$146,500 in funding for community garden projects.

2. Encourage municipal support or intersectional collaborations. Advocate for the creation of a Community Garden Coordinator at the City-level to direct and organize gardens in Buffalo and help start new ones, and organize a Community Gardens Council comprising members of all local groups involved in community gardening. The City of Buffalo should appoint a staff housed within the Department of Planning (with budgeting support from the NY State Department of Agriculture) responsible for planning community gardens, who would be responsible for creating and maintaining databases to identify land for gardening and to provide assistance to the Food Policy Council. The Mayor's office should create an ongoing position of Coordinator for community gardening. This staff member should serve as a liaison between existing community gardens and organizations and City departments. The coordinator will also develop a streamlined process to apply for and access public land for community gardening. Minneapolis, Minnesota employs a full-time, racial equity trained community garden coordinator through the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board funded through the Department of Parks and Recreation's budget. Grassroots Gardens should advocate for a similar role to be created in Buffalo.

*Revenue Potential: Moderate*

**3. Explore Public-Private Partnerships.**

*Revenue Potential: High*

- 4.** Advocate for increased funding for programs that provide urban farmers and community gardeners with training and technical assistance such as through the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture University of Milwaukee County Cooperative Extension provides a rent-a-garden program and Ohio State University Extension has community gardening programs and a market garden training program Gardening for Greenbacks that provides up to \$3000 grant to establish market gardens

*Revenue Potential: Low*

- 5.** Increase corporate support. Buffalo's Grassroots Gardens received only 3.5% of its income from corporate support in 2019. St Louis receives \$100,000 from Wells Fargo, Baltimore receives \$300,000 from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the Wells Fargo Company Community WINS Grant Program, and Boston's Community Grown Program receives funding through TD Bank's \$225,000 commitment.

*Revenue Potential: High*

## Revenue Generating Initiatives

**Challenge:** *Grant and government-based funding can be inconsistent and place the sustainability of a community gardening organization in the hands of government officials who have no hesitation to cut funding during budget crisis or economic downturns.*

**Support the adoption of revenue generating activities and value-added products for sustainable funding of gardens.**

1. Petition local government to allow the sale of produce and implement a community-supported-agriculture (CSA) program to provide upfront monies to support community gardening maintenance and operations by allowing community members to purchase “shares” that, after payment, ensure consumers receive a portion of the garden’s harvested crops throughout the growing season. Philadelphia and Detroit are top models for CSA implementation.

*Revenue Potential: Moderate*



### Case Study: Detroit, Michigan

Keep Growing Detroit operates a CSA and helps farmers sell produce at local farmers markets, which

generated \$51,190 in revenue in 2018.<sup>26</sup>

2. Support additional revenue generating activities such as the sale of plants, resources, or monetized garden tours. Detroit’s Keep Growing Detroit earned \$88,196 through the sale of seeds and resources to community gardens across the City, \$52,405 through the sale of plants, and \$6,482 through an annual organized bus and bike tour of their gardens.<sup>26</sup>

*Revenue Potential: High*

3. Buy from Urban Farms which gardens can collaborate with. Depending on the specific crop type, an urban farm can generate anywhere from \$4,700 to \$10,000 per acre each year. In terms of an investment period, with a successful business plan and hard work, revenue to repay start-up costs could reasonably occur within a three- to five-year period. In order to increase revenue potential, specialty or niche market products could be integrated to provide supply for specialty items that are more difficult to find.

*Revenue Potential: Moderate*

4. Advocate to local health agencies to implement a Fresh Prescription program that enables doctors to write prescriptions for patients to visit community gardens to receive a recommended serving of fresh produce and vegetables. Detroit, Michigan can serve as a model for this program.<sup>30</sup>

*Revenue Potential: Low*

## In-kind Support

1. Engage municipal waste management services or the City’s Parks and Recreation Department to provide low- or no-cost compost for community gardens. Minneapolis provides registered community gardens with low- or no-cost compost.<sup>40</sup> St Louis, Missouri provides wood chips and compost at no cost to city residents through the City’s Forestry Division.
2. Encourage local governments to use public water supplies for community gardens or receive support for water access. Cleveland, Ohio’s water department allows urban farmers to use fire hydrants for urban farms based on a predetermined rate based on the size of the parcel. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania signed a city council ordinance that allows for a discount of up to 100% of the stormwater fee for properties operated by a community group for the

primary purpose of growing plants, if stormwater is managed on at 80% of the property.<sup>48</sup> Both of these policies should be advocated for by Grassroots Gardens.

3. Encourage local business and community organizations to donate supplies, materials, or funding. Consider adding community gardens to the list of volunteer locations for business that allow or require employees to volunteer and allow for employees to assist with initial construction and offset labor/maintenance costs. Chicago, Illinois' NeighborSpace partners with Lake Street Landscape Supplies to offer discounted soil and compost delivery.

## Advocacy and Awareness

**Challenge:** *Community gardening in Buffalo is often seen as an interim use of land, a last resort when the City cannot sell land to a developer, and an acceptance of the City as depopulating by government officials. Although this is far from the truth, community engagement and advocacy is necessary to successfully engage local municipalities to support community gardening with funding and policy in the Buffalo-Niagara region.*

1. Form a community urban food steering committee or policy initiative to advocate for and manage permanent community gardens, presumably out of members of each respective stakeholder group. A Community Garden Policy Initiative / Taskforce, modeled after Philadelphia's Garden Justice Legal Initiative, could be created through local garden stakeholders partnering with community law centers.

4. Improve and maintain the appearance of community gardens. Community gardens should contribute to neighborhood beautification; If they are not maintained, residents, municipal staff, and elected officials will view community gardens as a blighting influence.
5. Spread awareness for community gardening with friends, family, and neighbors throughout Buffalo. For community gardening to be expanded, it must be viewed as a more mainstream activity.
6. Implement a similar volunteer-led, advocacy campaign to the Milwaukee BLITZ to generate additional volunteer labor and support for gardens while raising awareness among the local Buffalo community of community gardening.



### Case Study: San Francisco, California

San Francisco has a community gardens policy committee that works to implement the community garden objectives established in the City's general plan. The committee's recommendations are taken to the Recreation and Park Commission for consideration at a public meeting.

2. Lobby municipal and county elected officials and staff about the importance of community gardens within Buffalo and the need for their protection.
3. Engage the City of Buffalo by regularly meeting with city leadership, and involving any urban agriculture task forces and the Buffalo Food Policy Council.



[www.grassrootsgardens.org](http://www.grassrootsgardens.org)

**Ashton O'Connor**

High Road Fellow

July 2020