

URBAN AG VISIONING:

A CITY'S VISION FOR GROWING FOOD,
COMMUNITY AND THE ECONOMY

PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON, MA

NORTHBOUND VENTURES, LLC
SEPTEMBER 2015





“URBAN AGRICULTURE CREATES JOBS AND FOOD ACCESS POINTS IN BOSTON’S NEIGHBORHOODS. ALIGNING THE GOALS AND STRATEGIES OF ALL CONSTITUENTS ENGAGED IN URBAN GROWING WILL ALLOW US TO BETTER LEVERAGE RESOURCES, AND TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY TOWARD FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE IN THE CITY OF BOSTON.”

- MAYOR MARTIN J. WALSH, OCTOBER 2014

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Client

City of Boston Office of Food Initiatives

Consultant / Facilitator

Holly Fowler, Co-founder & CEO, Northbound Ventures

Urban Ag Visioning Steering Committee

Noah Wilson-Rich, *Best Bees*
Orion Kriegman, *Boston Food Forest Coalition*
Marie Mercurio, *Boston Redevelopment Authority*
Allison Rogers, *City of Boston Office of Food Initiatives*
Jordan Smith, *City of Boston Office of Food Initiatives*
Jason Boyd, *Codman Square Neighborhood Development*
Jennifer Faigel, *Commonwealth Kitchen (formerly CCK Pearl)*
Bayoan Rossello-Cornier, *Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*
Brad McNamara, *Freight Farms*
Jessie Banhazl, *Green City Growers*
Sayed Mohamed-Nour, *NUBIA Seed & Yield Program*
Shani Fletcher, *ReVision Urban Farm*
William Epperson, *The Department of Neighborhood Development*
Xaviera Strouble, *The Department of Neighborhood Development*
Sutton Kiplinger, *The Food Project*
Conrad Crawford, *The Trustees of Reservations*
Kevin Essington, *Trust for Public Land*
Jennifer Hashley, *Tufts New Entry Sustainable Farming Project*
Allison Bauer, *The Boston Foundation*
Pamela Hung, *The Boston Foundation*
Andy Kendall, *The Kendall Foundation*
Patricia Spence, *Urban Farming Institute*

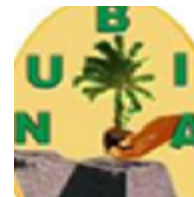
Stakeholder Insights

Rose Arruda, *MDAR*
Emily Broad-Leib, *Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic*
Jeremy Dick, *The Trustees of Reservations*
Ruth Goldman, *Merck Family Fund*
Courtney Hennessey, *Higher Ground Farm*
Barbara Knecht, *Urban Farming Institute*
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Edwin Medrano, *The Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center*
Jennifer Rushlow, *Conservation Law Foundation*
Darci Schofield, *The Trust for Public Land*
John Stoddard, *Higher Ground Farm*

Community Host Partners

The Boston Foundation
The Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center
Boston Public Library Central Location
Boston Public Library East Boston Branch
The Salvation Army Kroc Corps Community Center
Spontaneous Celebrations
Fenway Park Wheels Up Club
District Hall

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HENRY P. KENDALL FOUNDATION

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Contributors

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Adam Monroy | Caitlin Matthews | Eugene Florendo | Jessica Leete |
| Alex Freedman | Cara Snajczuk | Eva VanAken | Jessy Gill |
| Alix O'Connell | Carl Spector | Evan Kuras | Jill Eshelman |
| Alley Michel | Carole Biewener | Felix Arroyo | Jim Alicata |
| Alli Condra | Caroline Sluyter | Frida Bonaparte | Joan Perkins |
| Allison Houghton | Cathy Neal | Gabrielle Orbaek White | John Gravelin |
| Amanda Nee | Charlotte Mosinki | Garrett Hauck | Josh Altidor |
| Amory Parker | Chris Green | Gary Keough | Julie Brandlen |
| Andrew Cuocco | Christine Beling | George Mokray | Juliet Stone |
| Angela Winslow | Christine James | Gregory Caplan | Kara Verrochi |
| Anita Morson-Matra | Christine Poff | Gregory Murphy | Karolina Gombert |
| Anne McHugh | Christopher Muller | Hector Cruz | Katie Kritzalis |
| Augusta Nichols-Even | Damon Reaves | Hilary Burgin | Kayla Murgo |
| Barbara Lenes | Daniel Schenk | Hope Seggelink | Kelley McGill |
| Ben Barkan | Daniel Sullivan | Jaime Silverstein | Kelliann Blazek |
| Benjamin Goldstein | Deb Albenberg | James Bachez | Kelly Cannon |
| Bessie DiDomenica | Deborah Plunkett | James Billman | Kelly Riley |
| Bette Toney | Denise Whall-Strojwas | James Graham | Kelly Wiener |
| Bill Perkins | Doris Reisig | Jean Charles | Khrysti Smyth |
| Blonde Beauchamp | Edison Reyes | Jean Terranova | Kim Motylewski |
| Brian Watson | Edith Murnane | Jeanne Lin | Kim Szeto |
| Brianna Bowman | Elaine King | Jenaire Centeio | Kimi Ceridon |
| Brittany Peats | Elias Kolsun | Jenna Frank | Kristie Condra |
| Bruce Bickerstaff | Elissa Nabozny | Jennifer Evans | Kurt Tramosch |
| Bruce Fulford | Erika Rumbley | Jennifer Hauf | Laura Masulis |
| Caitlin Joseph | Erin Anderson | Jennifer Rugg | Laurel Valchuis |

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Contributors

Lauren Kaskey
Lauren Sabbath
Lawrence Barriner, II
Leigh Kalbacker
Liana Poston
Liat Racin
Lisa Evans
Lisa Meaders
Liz Krushnic
Lola Omolodun
M. Scott Knox
Mackenzie Sehlke
Marcy Ostberg
Maria Morales
Marie Macchiarolo
Marilyn Ray Smith
Mark Smith
Mary Harman
Matthew Goode
Maura Ackerman
Momoko Hirose
Monica Leitner-Laserna
Myosha Walker
Neeti Singhal
Neha Sharma
Nicole St. Louis
Nina Rogowsky

Nora Hussey
Patricia Grady
Patricia Moreno
Patrick Keaney
Patrick Likely
Patti Moreno
PE Kutcher
Peter Bowne
Peter Murphy
Phoebe Flemming
Prabhat Gautam
Rachel Corey
Rebecca Harnik
Rebecca Kreshak
Rebecca Rottapel
Richard Whitney
Robert Mickiewicz
Roz Freeman
Russell Wallack
Ruth Goldman
Sandra Fairbank
Sara Riegler
Sara Shostak
Sarah Chang
Sarah Howard
Scott Richardson
Sean Shortell

Selvin Chambers
Shane Ernest
Shawn Cooney
Sophie Soloway
Stacy Blondin
Steph Zabel
Stephen Bissonnette
Steve Holt
Steven Collicelli

Terrence Fradet
Thomas Plant
Tiara Jenkins
Tim Hines
Valerie Burns
Valerie Oorthuys
Vanessa Dunaway
Virginia Berman
Yolande Champagne



BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Background

The potential benefits of urban agriculture have been well-documented by various reports over the past several years, including those specific to Boston. Locally-based urban ag initiatives are frequently cited as success stories in realizing the positive impacts of growing food in the city, which has led to increased interest and demand for resources to continue these types of activities.

With an aim to accelerate efforts and to assist collaboration among Boston's urban ag community, in October 2014, Mayor Martin J. Walsh and the City of Boston's Office of Food Initiatives (OFI) announced the receipt of a \$25,000 planning grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP).

The funds provided by LFPP supported the hire of an independent facilitator to convene an Urban Agriculture Visioning Group to develop a vision for food production in Boston as a whole. This work was anticipated to build on efforts to align Boston's diverse urban growing sector, and to establish a common goal meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

In December 2014, the OFI established its visioning process objectives and engaged Northbound Ventures, LLC as the Urban Ag Visioning facilitator. An Urban Ag Visioning Steering Committee was formed based on community partners previously identified in the grant proposal phase and others nominated by Steering Committee members.

OFI Visioning Process Objectives

1. Establish a five-year vision for supporting urban agriculture in Boston
2. Determine goals, performance metrics, and milestones
3. Assign strategies to participating organizations, aligning skills, and expertise with interest



VISIONING PROCESS

Stakeholder Engagement

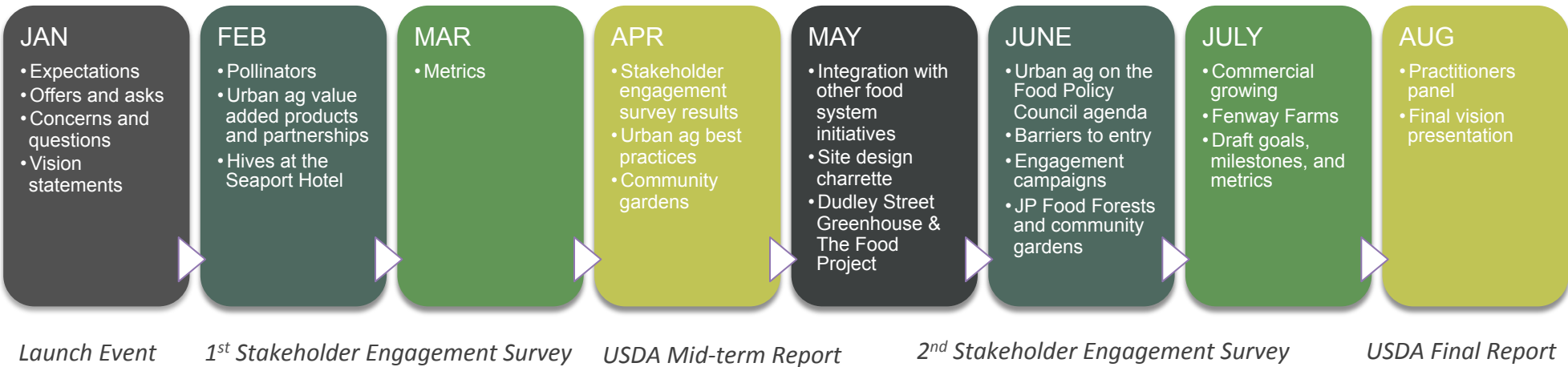
From January to August 2015, monthly public meetings were organized to raise awareness of the urban ag visioning process and to allow all stakeholders a chance to participate in its development. Meetings were held the third Wednesday of each month at varying times and locations around the city to encourage attendance by diverse and dispersed citizens. Stakeholder engagement was promoted directly to subscribers of Boston’s Urban Ag listserv and indirectly using a variety of online and social media platforms, municipal contact lists, and organizational networks.

Meetings Dates & Locations

- January 21, 2015: The Boston Foundation
- February 18, 2015: The Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center
- March 18, 2015: Boston Public Library Central Location
- April 15, 2015: Boston Public Library East Boston Branch
- May 20, 2015: Kroc Corps Community Center
- June 17, 2015: Spontaneous Celebrations
- July 15, 2015: Fenway Park Wheels Up Club
- August 19, 2015: District Hall

The following pages provide a brief recap of each public meeting.

FIG. 1 URBAN AG VISIONING TIMELINE



PUBLIC MEETINGS REVIEW

January

The Urban Ag Visioning public meeting series launched at The Boston Foundation with 90 participants. Background for the visioning process was presented along with the objectives and anticipated deliverables of the project. Attendees were introduced to Steering Committee members and asked to share their expectations, questions, concerns, and offers of support to the process.

February

The Seaport Hotel & World Trade Center was the venue for the February meeting, selected for its contribution to the city's urban ag landscape with its myriad of bee hives.

Noah Wilson-Rich, Founder of Best Bees, shared the history of bees in the city, information about different types of bees, current populations in Boston, and resources available for responsible installation and operation of apiaries. Edwin Medrano, the Seaport's Chief Beekeeper, described his institution's adoption and management of hives over the past several years, which has resulted in many positive impacts, including public education and engagement and commercial partnerships. Their tag team presentation generated many questions and inspired reflection on pollinator prejudice. Steering committee members provided answers to questions about current urban ag policies and initiatives.

March

At the March meeting at the Boston Public Library's Main Location, participants were presented with a list of initial indicators drawn from research and observation of other urban ag activities around the state and country. The group used these indicators, grouped by health, social, economic, and ecological impact, to consider how they might prioritize metrics to arrive at a manageable number to ultimately track progress. Attendees could suggest alternative indicators not included on the initial list and expressed interest in metrics related to the following:

- *Soil improvement and growth*
- *Increased integration of growing spaces with the built environment*
- *Opportunities for intergenerational engagement created by gardens*
- *Investment and funding in urban ag projects*
- *Cultural change resulting from urban ag development*

Steering Committee members and stakeholders also considered the following questions:

- *What is measured currently? How? By whom?*
- *What might be very challenging to measure, but is none-the-less critical to track?*
- *How might annual information collection/data management happen? Which organizations / partners might assist?*

PUBLIC MEETINGS REVIEW

April

Participants gathered in East Boston for the fourth monthly meeting of the Urban Ag Visioning process. The view from the meeting room at the East Branch of the public library was an extensive, revitalized green space, featuring a shared community garden and recreational area robustly utilized by diverse neighborhood residents.

During the meeting, those gathered reviewed and discussed the results of the metrics exercise in March and results of the first stakeholder engagement survey.

The second part of the meeting focused on the identification and sharing of urban ag best practices, including, but not limited to the following:

- *Green or Solar Rooftop Requirement, Paris, France*
- *The People's Grocery, Oakland CA*
- *Recover Green Roofs, Somerville, MA*
- *Best Bees, Boston, MA*
- *Freight Farms, Boston, MA*
- *Beacon Hill Food Forest, Seattle, WA*
- *Gardening the Community, Springfield, MA*
- *Green City Growers, Somerville, MA*
- *Higher Ground Farm, Boston, MA*
- *Somerville Mobile Farmers Market, Somerville, MA*
- *Korean Natural Farming Workshop, NOFA*

May

Hosted at the Kroc Center in Dorchester, the May meeting focused on how Boston's urban ag path relates to other local, state, regional, national, and international initiatives.

Participants had a chance to work in small groups on an urban ag project charrette, presented with the following context:

Given a near one acre lot of land with a vacant building on it in the city – what approach would you take to develop it into a thriving urban ag site?

Insights from the exercise reinforced the challenges urban ag projects face to secure funding, to obtain permits and licenses, to access utilities, to clear a site of debris or hazardous materials, to renovate adjacent buildings, and to operate sustainably. Among the concepts generated were non-profit and commercial operations alike featuring creative partnerships, diverse financing options, multi-use spaces, and promising outcomes for farmers, residents, and communities.

Attendees also had the option to tour nearby urban ag initiatives including The Dudley Greenhouse, a 10,000-square-foot operational greenhouse located on Brook Avenue that functions as a community space and year-round learning center for local residents and gardeners. Owned by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and operated by The Food Project (TFP), the greenhouse serves as an example of how partnerships can improve the health and community life of neighborhoods.

PUBLIC MEETINGS REVIEW

June

Participants gathered in the creative spaces of Spontaneous Celebrations in Jamaica Plain to consider key outstanding elements of the urban ag visioning process. The venue, specifically selected for its significance as a community-visioned space itself, provided the inspirational environment to consider the following:

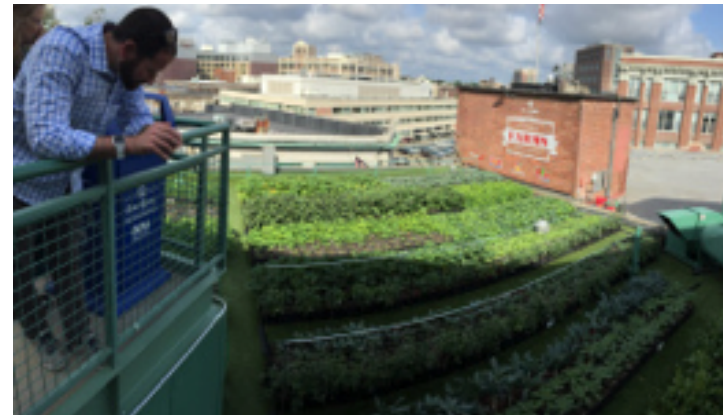
- *Given the simultaneous process to establish the future structure and priorities of the Boston Food Policy Council, who might represent the interests of urban ag on the council? What urban ag related policies should be prioritized for the next year, two years, three years, etc.?*
- *What are some possible solutions to mitigate or to eliminate barriers to growing existing urban ag enterprises or starting new ones? For example, how can the cost for a water hookup be reduced? How can people learn about available urban ag land and potential resources or partners to submit a proposal for its use?*
- *What are creative marketing and/or engagement campaign ideas to increase participation and to generate support for urban ag from a larger, more diverse group of Boston citizens?*

For the last part of the meeting, attendees had the option to visit nearby urban ag landmarks including community gardens and a food forest.

July

July's meeting was hosted at Fenway Park's Wheels Up Club. There has been significant media attention paid to the new Fenway Farms and Jessie Banhazi of Green City Growers presented to the group and then toured everyone through the site. The operation demonstrates how transformative agriculture can be, as the farm has exceeded production predictions and quickly become as much of a highlight of the iconic venue as the ball field itself.

Participants also had the chance to preview and to discuss together a set of ten draft goals, milestones, and metrics.



PUBLIC MEETINGS REVIEW

August

The final public meeting of the urban ag visioning process was held August 19th at District Hall. To incorporate one final learning opportunity for all stakeholders, the majority of the agenda was dedicated to hearing from a panel of subject matter experts from Boston's own urban ag community:

- *Shani Fletcher, Farm Manager, ReVision Urban Farm*
- *Sayed Mohamed-Nour, President, Nubian United Benevolent International Association (NUBIA)*
- *Darci Schofield, Urban Program Director, Trust for the Public Land*
- *Barbara Knecht, Project Leader Farm Site Development, Urban Farming Institute (UFI)*

The panelists' comments addressed their diverse experiences acquiring access to land to farm, property tenure, operational costs, staffing models, partnerships, funding, and more. Each left participants with the invitation to remain engaged in the urban ag movement through acts such as volunteering, community organizing, and creating demand for local products with consumer purchasing power.

The second part of the meeting was dedicated to a preview of the forthcoming final report on the urban ag visioning process. Stakeholders were invited to review the vision goals and to provide additional comment.

Regarding the next phase of the vision, Allison Rogers, Interim Director of the City of Boston's Office of Food Initiatives (OFI), let attendees know that the OFI will would remain fully staffed, including personnel dedicated to urban ag to lead implementation of the vision.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Overview

In March and April, a broad stakeholder engagement survey was circulated to collect information about the current state of urban ag in the city as well as opinion about the priorities of the visioning process. The survey was made available electronically and in paper-based form.

A total of 186 responses were received and of those, 41% had not previously been engaged in the visioning process.

Almost every neighborhood of Boston was represented with Jamaica Plain having the highest participation rate (25%) of neighborhoods. None of the participants selected Beacon Hill, West End, or Mid Dorchester as his/her neighborhood.

Nineteen percent of respondents hailed from nearby cities, showing that the interest in Boston’s vision extends beyond municipal borders.

Responses to key survey questions are presented here and on the following pages.

STAKEHOLDER SURVEY PARTICIPATION PROFILE

Gender

Female – 68%
Male – 24%
Not answered – 4%

Race

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>White</i> | <i>85%</i> |
| <i>Black or African American</i> | <i>3%</i> |
| <i>Latino or Hispanic American</i> | <i>4%</i> |
| <i>East Asian</i> | <i>2%</i> |
| <i>Middle Eastern/West Asian</i> | <i>2%</i> |
| <i>Indian-Asian</i> | <i>1%</i> |
| <i>Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander</i> | <i>1%</i> |
| <i>Other</i> | <i>3%</i> |

Primary Role in Urban Ag Community

| | |
|---|------------|
| <i>Hobbyist gardener</i> | <i>23%</i> |
| <i>Resident / Neighbor</i> | <i>18%</i> |
| <i>Active or aspiring urban farmer</i> | <i>18%</i> |
| <i>Coordinator/enabler urban ag development</i> | <i>17%</i> |
| <i>Food production of processing entity</i> | <i>3%</i> |
| <i>Funder of urban agricultural development</i> | <i>2%</i> |
| <i>Food distribution enterprise</i> | <i>2%</i> |
| <i>Market Outlet / space</i> | <i>1%</i> |
| <i>General interest</i> | <i>16%</i> |

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Questions for Current Producers

Respondents (18%) that identified as an *active or aspiring farmer* were asked additional questions related to existing or planned business operations and outcomes.

EMPLOYMENT & ENGAGEMENT STATS

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Jobs | 25 |
| Volunteers/Youth Training | 130 |

PROFILE OF URBAN AG OPERATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Grow vegetables | 93% |
| Outdoor | 93% |
| Ground level | 71% |
| Soil-based | 68% |
| Grow fruits | 36% |
| Rooftop | 21% |
| Indoor | 21% |
| Raise hens | 18% |
| Keep Bees | 7% |
| Aquaponics | 4% |
| Hydroponics | 4% |

OPERATIONAL MODEL

| | |
|---|-----|
| Commercial (\$45-100K in annual revenues) | 25% |
| Not-for-profit | 29% |
| Grow for self/single organization | 43% |
| Manage a farm on behalf of a client | 3% |

TOP MARKETS FOR FOOD PRODUCED BY RESPONDENTS (~53,000 LBS GROWN)

| | |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| Donation | 54% |
| Farmers market | 46% |
| Restaurant | 42% |
| Boston Public Market | 17% |
| Independent grocer | 17% |
| Food distributor | 13% |
| Grocery store chain | 13% |
| Institutional food operations | 13% |
| Personal consumption | 67% |

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

General Questions for all Survey Participants

Do you have a food production/growing space within walking distance of where you live?

Yes – 64%

No – 17%

Unsure – 19%

Do you use a food production/growing space within walking distance of where you live?

Yes – 48%

No – 52%

Would technical assistance or access to a growing space increase the likelihood of growing food, raising animals, or tending bees for oneself?

Highly likely: 59%

Somewhat likely: 28%

Would technical assistance and/or access to a growing space increase the likelihood of growing food for sale or purchase by others or to donate?

Highly likely: 34%

Somewhat likely: 17%

What would best help to support urban agricultural development in the city?

- 1. Access to land to grow*
- 2. Funding to support farmers and related organizations*
- 3. More information about where urban agriculture is happening in the city*
- 4. More information about how to get involved*
- 5. Positive community engagement*

What are the most important urban ag issues?

- 1. Affordability of local, fresh food*
- 2. Availability of local, fresh produce, where I regularly shop*
- 3. Land use/conservation for growing food versus other uses (eg. residential/commercial development)*
- 4. Funding for farmers/business/projects*
- 5. Training and education for communities*

URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION APPROACH & FRAMEWORK

Approach

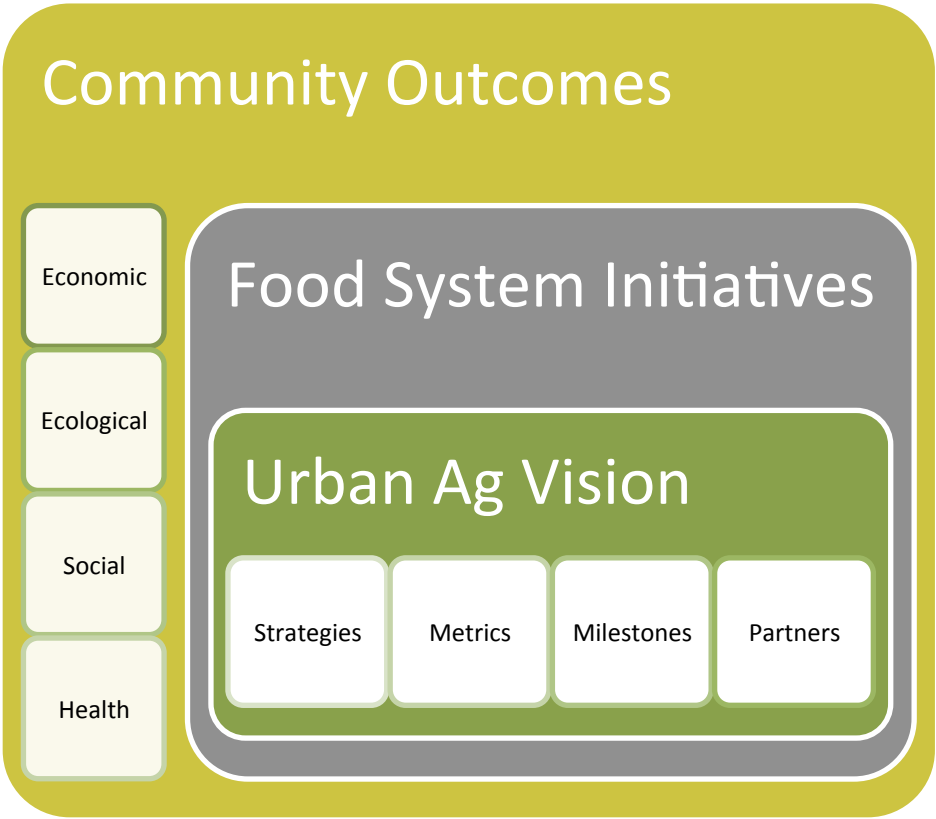
There is ample evidence that urban agriculture is changing our cityscapes. It is one of many components that form our complex food system and is foundational to growing a sustainable community.

The vision of urban agriculture for the City of Boston is therefore designed as an integral part of fulfilling the municipality’s overarching economic, ecological, social, and public health objectives.

Boston’s urban agriculture goals have been developed based on extensive input from stakeholders and with mindfulness of their interdependence on other local, state, regional, and national food initiatives. These include, but are not limited to the MA Food Plan, MDAR’s Urban Ag Program, A New England Food Vision, and the individual strategies of organizations currently engaged in urban agricultural activity in the city.

In order for a vision to be both compelling and executable, the desired outcomes must be simple to understand and broadly shared by diverse stakeholder groups. The metrics must indicate not just progress, but impact. Where actual impact is difficult to measure or to attribute solely to urban agriculture, extensive qualitative or anecdotal evidence may serve as a proxy to communicate success and to inform decision-making.

FIG. 2 URBAN AG VISION FRAMEWORK



URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION GOALS OVERVIEW

About the Goals

The following goals have emerged from an iterative process that began with stakeholder visioning statements and consideration of ninety potential metrics.

Ten goals were drafted based on the aggregate learnings of the public meetings, interviews with key subject matter experts, and the first stakeholder engagement survey. The draft goals were presented at the July public meeting for initial attendee feedback. A public survey based on the ten draft goals followed and resulted in responses from 44 individuals that were then reviewed and discussed by the Urban Ag Visioning Steering Committee.

The four main goals of the visioning process are:

1. Increase land dedicated to food production
2. Improve food production opportunities for all
3. Increase food system resiliency and food security of all citizens
4. Promote community health and engagement

The strategies, metrics, milestones, and target collaborators to achieve each goal are presented in the pages that follow. While focused on Boston-based entities, it is worth noting that state and federal agencies also play an important role in supporting urban ag with policy, regulation, resources, and funding.

Implementing the Vision

A vision requires dedicated resources and leadership to become a reality. The City of Boston's Office of Food Initiatives will manage the implementation phase of this urban ag vision.

FIG. 3 URBAN AG VISION GOALS



URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION

Goal 1: Increase land dedicated to food production

Strategies

- Continue identification of available municipal lots available for conversion to productive agricultural plots, prioritizing neighborhoods currently underserved by urban ag
- Incentivize private land owners to transition non-productive landscapes to productive agricultural spaces
- Continue review of regulation to increase total potential productive space for agricultural activities (e.g. expand composting, hens, hives)

Metrics

- % of land converted from non-productive space to urban ag use
- % of infrastructure development footprint dedicated to productive space
- Total area dedicated to food production
- # of hives and # of hens
- Contributions to storm water management, carbon sequestration, and soil growth

Milestones

- Year 1: Conduct baseline assessment of land currently in food production, available for production, and potentially convertible to agricultural use; review strategic plan/criteria for disposition of land
- Year 2: >0% conversion
- Year 3: >5% conversion
- Year 4: >10% conversion from baseline
- Year 5: >20% conversion from baseline

City of Boston (OFI, DND, BRA, and others)

Land trusts / conservation orgs

Neighborhood associations

Land owners and developers

Funders

Partners

BOSTON URBAN AGRICULTURE

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URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION

Goal 2: Improve food production opportunities for all

Strategies

- Engage all city agencies touching urban agriculture in vision implementation planning
- Add social and environmental criteria to DND process for “selling” buildings and lan
- Establish additional applicant qualifications beyond current financial benchmarks
- Invest in citywide marketing of urban ag development opportunities to all citizens
- Provide technical assistance grants to existing growers and farmers in training

Metrics

- Value of grants awarded to support acquisition for both city-owned and privately owned land
- Average \$ spent per acre from pre-development to operational readiness
- # of unique DND RFP applicants and recipients
- % of DND RFPs awarded to minority individuals/organizations yearly
- Total population / % population engaged in growing food
- # / area of community ag plots located within walking distance (10 min. or 1/2 mile) of every resident

Milestones

- Year 1: Conduct baseline assessment of costs and engagement; establish multi-agency task force to consider ways to reduce permitting and site development costs
- Year 2: Organize citywide campaign promoting urban ag
- Year 3: Permitting and site development cost decreased >30%
- Year 5: Engagement increased >30% across demographic and geographic lines

City of Boston (OFI, ISD, BPHC, BPWS, and others)

Land trusts / Conservation orgs

Farmer training programs

Neighborhood organizations

Funders

Partners

BOSTON URBAN AGRICULTURE

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URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION

Goal 3: Increase food system resiliency and food security of all citizens

Strategies

- Address zoning, business licensing, and regulatory barriers through continued food policy reform to create additional market outlets for farmers and to bring access points for local food into proportion with neighborhood demand
- Increase public and private subsidies to ensure fair market prices for farmers and affordable local produce for low income local residents

Metrics

- Total \$/#/% of food grown and purchased locally
- % of demand / sales comprised of locally produced product
- Delta between price of locally grown vs. externally grown food
- # of food access programs offering locally grown foods
- Participation rate in food access and emergency food assistance programs
- Continuous improvement of self-sustaining farm operations based on operational income versus external funding

Milestones

- Year 1: Conduct baseline assessment of local food production and distribution
- Year 2: Maintain public list of local food access points by neighborhood and develop an incentive plan for additional outlets
- Year 3: >10% increase in local food production/purchasing from baseline opportunity
- Year 4: >20% increase in local food production/purchasing from baseline opportunity
- Year 5: Trend of decreasing demand for emergency food assistance

City of Boston (OFI, DND, BRA, and others)

Farmers

Community health advocates

Neighborhood associations

Hunger agencies

Funders

Partners

BOSTON URBAN AGRICULTURE

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URBAN AGRICULTURE VISION

Goal 4: Promote community health and engagement

Strategies

- Establish communication strategy and materials to educate citizens about local urban ag
- Develop a research agenda to inform continuous improvements and communicate progress on urban ag engagement
- Incentivize community partners to promote the urban ag agenda to the general public

Metrics

- # of unique and repeat residents interacting with urban ag yearly by neighborhood/demographic
- % of residents reporting health related behavior change or improvement related to urban ag
- % of residents reporting improved satisfaction with local, healthy, affordable food options
- % of residents reporting increased community interaction facilitated by urban ag

Milestones

- Year 1: Baseline assessment of resident engagement and satisfaction
- Years 2-5: Continuous improvement of all metrics

City of Boston
(OFI, DND, BRA,
and others)

Farmers/farmer
training programs

Community
health advocates

Neighborhood
associations

Funders

Institutions (e.g.
schools, churches,
hospitals, work
places)

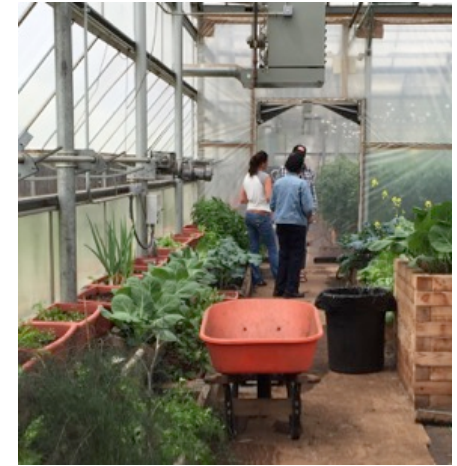
SMEs (e.g.
researchers,
MARCOM
specialists)

Public assistance
agencies

Partners



RESOURCES FOR ADVANCING THE CITY'S URBAN AG VISION



CITY OF BOSTON URBAN AG RESOURCES

Office of Food Initiatives

The City of Boston maintains a dedicated staff in its Office of Food Initiatives (OFI). The OFI has recently updated its website presence to make resources and information more easily available to the public.

What you will find on the new OFI site related to urban agriculture:

- Contact Information for OFI, BRA, DND, and ISD
- Permitting Regulations
 - *Article 89 & Article 89 Made Easy*
 - *The Harvard Food Law & Policy Clinic Guide to How to Start a Ground-level Farm on Less than an Acre of Land*
 - Urban Farming Soil Safety Compliance Certificate Application
 - Urban Ag Rezoning Initiative
- Farmer Support
 - Grants
 - Microloans
 - Land acquisition
 - Farmland matching programs
 - Training and support
 - Business planning assistance
 - Landscape architects
- Community Projects and Initiatives
 - Community gardens
 - School gardens
 - Urban orchards
 - Public access fishing
 - Media profiling community projects



Office of Food Initiatives

The Mayor's Office of Food Initiatives was established in June 2010 to engage the Boston Food Council, partners, and City departments to address directives set forward by the mayor's office.



Urban Agriculture

Urban Farming has created easier access for residents to buy and sell produce that is produced locally.

Source: City of Boston Office of Food Initiatives

UNDERSTANDING HOW THE CITY “SELLS” BUILDINGS AND LAND

Department of Neighborhood Development (DND)

The City of Boston “sells” property through an open, competitive process called a Request for Proposals (RFP) managed by the Department of Neighborhood Development. An RFP has clear specifications for selecting a buyer, which include price, experience with development, and evidence of financing. By law, DND must choose a buyer using only the criteria outlined in the RFP. DND is prohibited by State law from listing real estate with a broker and taking offers.

For those properties that may be suitable for private development, DND generally has two key criteria for determining what properties it will make available:

- Whether the current real estate market would support the privately-financed development of a parcel
- Whether the local community has expressed interest in seeing the property developed.

If the criteria for sale have been met, DND may formally engage the community, and will notify all parties who have filed a Notification Request online. This community engagement generally happens through public meetings and on-line participation in the coUrbanize platform on DND’s website. This community process informs the creation of the Requests for Proposals. Once DND has reviewed the requests for proposals that have been submitted, qualified developers are invited back to present to the community, where they will receive additional input on their proposals.

Upon proposal award, the selected organization(s) or individual(s) can begin the permitting process for development of the land.

Source: City of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development



UNDERSTANDING HOW THE CITY ZONES AND PERMITS LAND FOR USE

Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) is the urban planning and economic development agency for the City of Boston. The BRA was an integral partner of the Office of Food Initiatives in the crafting of

Among its services, the BRA maintains maps that provide detail about future development.

Visit the BRA's website for more urban agriculture zoning information and to read *Article 89*.

The BRA has also written an Article 89 User's Guide that breaks down the language in Article 89. This document *Article 89 Made Easy* can be found on the City's website under the Office of Food Initiatives' Permitting Regulations link.



Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority

THE ROLE OF BOSTON'S FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

About the Council and an Urban Ag Agenda

The Boston Food Council was formed in 2009. Meeting quarterly, this group has provided information sharing and educational opportunities for people who work on all aspects of Boston's food system. The Boston Food Policy Council meetings are open to the public and meetings are held quarterly at City Hall. The goal of this Council is to bring organizations together to work toward common policy objectives. This council also encourages cooperation and understanding between organizations and seeks to reduce duplicative efforts.

In 2015, The Boston Food Policy Council began a re-visioning process, bringing together representatives from city departments, research organizations, institutions, businesses, funders, non-profits, citizens and students joined the discussion.

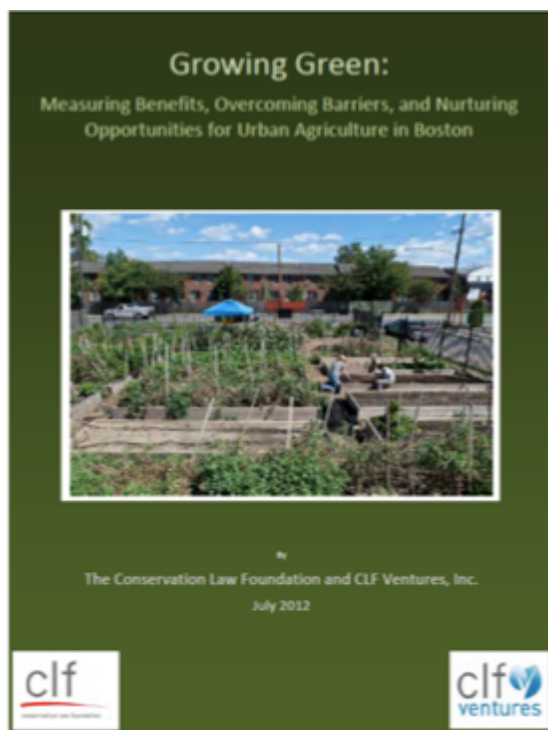
At the March 2015 quarterly meeting, staff from the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic presented an overview of food policy and examples of topics for a future Council agenda. Attendees discussed the challenges facing Boston's food system and their goals for the Boston food system. Key themes were synthesized and shared at the Food Policy Council meeting in June 2015.

Urban agriculture was one of the potential topics identified by stakeholders to be addressed by the Food Policy Council. Below is a summary of the recommendations by the Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic, which is assisting the Food Policy Council re-visioning process.

Advocacy Options to Increase Urban Ag Sites and Production

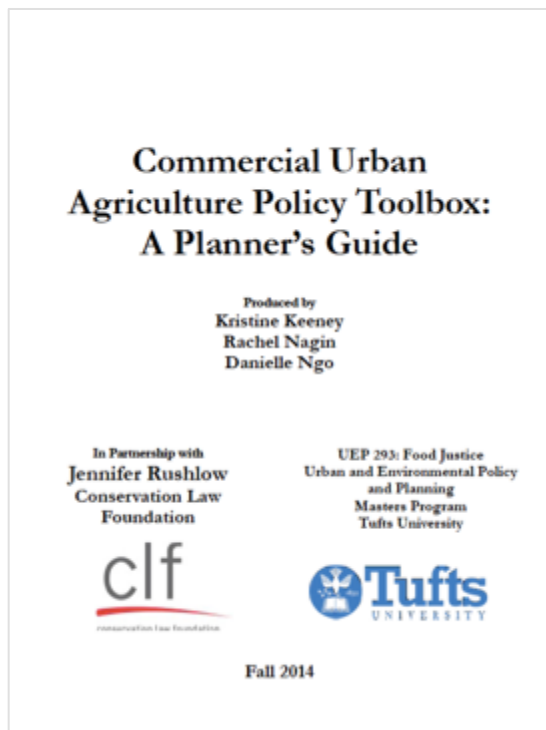
- *Advocating for incentives for new developments to include green roofs, and encouraging existing developments to be adapted to include green roofs.*
- *Advocating for Boston agencies to incentivize or convene urban farming training programs to help ensure greater success for these operations.*
- *Advocating for a state statute that extends property tax credits to urban agriculture programs for qualifying parcels.*
- *Advocating for state-level legislation that provides tax breaks to property owners who lend land to urban farmers and restrict it for such use, which would incentivize property owners with underdeveloped parcels, relatively larger amounts of land, or poorly performing property investments, to consider agricultural uses.*

OTHER REPORTS ON URBAN AGRICULTURE IN BOSTON



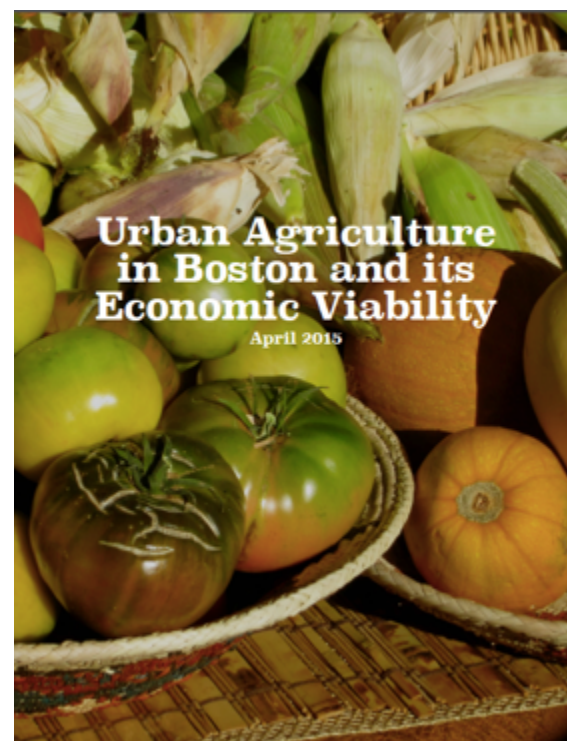
Growing Green: Measuring Benefits, Overcoming Barriers, and Nurturing Opportunities for Urban Agriculture in Boston

Conservation Law Foundation and CLF Ventures, 2012



Commercial Urban Agriculture Policy Toolbox: A Planner's Guide

Tufts University and Conservation Law Foundation, 2014



Urban Agriculture in Boston and its Economic Viability

Northeastern University and the Trust for Public Land, 2015

CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Boston

Allison Rogers

Interim Director, Office of Food Initiatives

Allison.Rogers@boston.gov

617-635-1456

www.cityofboston.gov/food/

Northbound Ventures, LLC

Holly Fowler

Co-founder & CEO

holly@northboundventures.com

617-899-9690

www.northboundventures.com

