



A Growing City

REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO GROWING FOOD IN PITTSBURGH

SPRING 2014



Grow Pittsburgh is a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit whose mission is to teach people how to grow food and promote the benefits gardens bring to our neighborhoods. We believe access to locally-grown, chemical-free fruits and vegetables is a right, not a privilege. We envision the day when everyone in our city and region grows and eats fresh, local and healthy food.

Since its inception in 2005, Grow Pittsburgh has started many different food growing projects, including school gardens, community gardens, and production-oriented urban farms. In navigating the various processes for establishing food growing projects in our city, our organization has discovered first-hand what many other would-be food growers are discovering: municipal policies are limiting the burgeoning urban farm movement.

TAKING A STEP FORWARD

To take a more proactive approach to this issue, in 2013 Grow Pittsburgh adopted an organizational strategic plan that included advocacy and policy as a priority. We began to formally collect feedback from our fellow stakeholders in the city's urban growing scene. Our first step was distributing the *Urban Grower Survey*, a lengthy questionnaire that yielded 248 responses from people growing food throughout the region, and a wealth of data about their activities, motivations and frustrations. We also conducted follow-up focus groups with urban farmers and backyard gardeners.

WORKING TOGETHER

Our efforts to create a collective vision and a shared set of policy priorities culminated in hosting a *Symposium on Urban Agriculture and Public Policy*, held on December 9, 2013. The symposium brought together 80 practitioners, policy makers, and nonprofits from the Pittsburgh area to review pertinent issues in urban agriculture policy. The outcomes of the symposium and all the work leading up to it create the framework for the policy priorities outlined in the following pages.

It is Grow Pittsburgh's goal to work together with the new City administration and Pittsburgh's urban growers toward a large-scale effort to make it easier to grow food in our city.



WHY GROW FOOD IN THE CITY?

Self-sufficiency

Food gardens build pride in community spaces and provide secure, reliable access to healthy food.

Economic development

Growing food creates small business opportunities, provides jobs now and in the future, builds new markets, and helps revitalize neighborhoods.

Community connections

Growing food brings together diverse people and provides opportunities for cross-cultural sharing while preserving traditional knowledge.

Benefits to health

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables is healthy, and tending to gardens provides opportunities for exercise and stress relief.

Urban Agriculture Symposium
Photos by Renee Rosensteel

Where We're Headed RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES

Based on outcomes of the *Urban Grower Survey* and the collaborative work by participants at the *Urban Agriculture Policy Symposium*, what follows is a list of general policy statements and priorities regarding growing food in our City as well as specific focus areas for Grow Pittsburgh.

► GARDENS ARE COMMUNITY ASSETS

Often urban food production is considered a temporary use of a vacant lot until it can be built upon. However, even in dense and affluent neighborhoods, food growing projects positively impact the communities where they take place and are generally considered long-term investments. We believe these projects are community assets, and establishing new food gardens should be promoted by the City.

HOW GROW PITTSBURGH WILL HELP

Grow Pittsburgh will:

- Ensure growing food is considered a “highest and best use” of appropriate vacant lots
- Ensure growing food is included in all neighborhood master plans and new residential developments
- Strengthen efforts to measure and evaluate the potential and impact of growing food in our City
- Explore every available opportunity to permanently protect food growing projects

What if there was a community garden in every neighborhood, at every public housing development, at every food pantry?



► EVERYONE DESERVES ACCESS TO RESOURCES & INFORMATION

Growing food in an urban environment has its own challenges and opportunities. Grow Pittsburgh will take an active role in connecting gardeners with needed resources and provide useful, well-researched information to those who seek it.

HOW GROW PITTSBURGH WILL HELP

Grow Pittsburgh will:

- Create a central information space for finding growing information by topic
- Present information that is scaled appropriately to backyard through commercial growing
- Provide more hands-on educational opportunities through workshops and classes
- Use train-the-trainer models whenever possible to build a community of competent growers and leaders
- Continuing to develop opportunities for children & youth to experience food growing
- Be a trusted source on new information about urban growing and cutting-edge techniques
- Educate all growers on how and why to test garden soil for contamination

We will develop models around the following needs:

- Garden tool sharing
- A central location where gardeners can obtain materials such as mulch, compost, and straw
- Seed and seedling exchanges



What if all primary and secondary schools had gardens and garden-based curricula?

Where We're Headed RECOMMENDED POLICY PRIORITIES

► CITY POLICIES MUST SUPPORT FOOD GROWING

The City benefits greatly from food growing projects on some of the 24,000 vacant lots in Pittsburgh. Food gardens save the City money in vacant lot maintenance, while contributing to the health and vitality of neighborhoods. While the City of Pittsburgh does provide some support for community garden projects, other cities, such as Cleveland, have embraced food growing as a tool of economic and community revitalization. We believe Pittsburgh can follow in their footsteps and become a national leader in urban food production.

HOW GROW PITTSBURGH WILL HELP

Grow Pittsburgh is eager to work with the City to address the following issues:

LAND

- Provide long-term leases with opportunities for food growers to eventually own their land
- Clear titles on tax-delinquent vacant properties and make them available for urban food production
- Identify and reserve larger tracts of land for urban food production
- Create a database that makes it simple to locate vacant land for growing food

GARDEN AGREEMENTS

- Provide clear maintenance agreements for community and individual gardens
- Protect community gardens under the City's liability insurance policy
- Assist with construction and maintenance of community gardens

ZONING & REGULATIONS

- Create clear, realistic, and affordable zoning & permitting
- Allow for the sale of food grown on city & private property
- Allow for cottage industry-scale value-added food production
- Allow residential livestock
- Review policies relating to demolition practices, composting, and water fees for garden projects

COMMUNICATION

- Take a proactive approach to communicating city policy relating to urban growing
- Partner with local groups to provide education & support for growers

What if Pittsburgh had a community greenhouse, a co-op for supplies and a community kitchen?



► GROWING FOOD = ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Urban growing can be a pathway to economic empowerment, particularly for those with barriers to employment and in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods with low food access. Selling a crop can provide important supplemental income for an individual, while also increasing a person's health and the health of his or her community. In addition to the policy obstacles facing for-profit growers, there are few opportunities in Pittsburgh to develop the skills necessary to be a successful farm entrepreneur.

HOW GROW PITTSBURGH WILL HELP

Grow Pittsburgh will:

- Create career pathways for urban farmers through formal training and apprentice programs
- Provide opportunities for youth education and employment
- Develop more urban-rural farming connections
- Explore the idea of creating a farm incubator project in Pittsburgh

What if Pittsburgh residents could earn a living growing food in our City?



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▶ DID YOU KNOW?

- Community gardens in Allegheny County contribute a 27% increase in value to adjacent properties
- Urban farms in Pittsburgh range from 900 square feet to 1.45 acres
- A typical 3' x 12' bed can yield \$250 worth of produce
- Grow Pittsburgh-supported community gardens grow 1.5 lbs of produce per square foot
- Urban gardens cool the city, provide pollinator habitat, retain stormwater, and reduce noise pollution
- Garden-based elementary education results in increased nutrition and environmental awareness, higher learning achievements, and lower obesity rates later in life

WHO'S INVOLVED?

“All of us are eaters” which is why so many individuals and organizations have focussed on the success of local urban growing projects. Making strides in our urban agriculture priorities will take the collaborative work of many stakeholders:

- Foundations
- Community groups
- Mayor & City Council
- City government
- State government
- Federal government
- Health care providers & hospitals
- Non-profits
- K-12 schools
- Universities & colleges
- Tech schools
- Business community
- Residents
- Established urban farms
- Marginalized communities
- Food banks, pantries and soup kitchens
- Restaurants
- Housing developers
- Other cities
- CDCs/CBOs doing land work
- Libraries
- Faith-based groups, churches
- Local food policy council
- Professionals
- Banks and investment groups
- Real estate
- Business incubators
- Rural farms
- Land trusts
- Journalists, media

Grow Pittsburgh is excited to take the next steps towards making it easier to grow food in our City. We look forward to working with key partners in the coming months to take action on these shared priorities and supporting their important work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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