



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Grow Pittsburgh's focus is to ensure that all people in our community have the resources, capacity, and knowledge to fully realize the benefits that food growing projects bring to our neighborhoods.



OUR VISION

We envision the day when everyone in our city and region grows and eats fresh, local, affordable and culturally relevant food.

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to teach people how to grow food and to promote the benefits gardens bring to our neighborhoods.

WHO WE ARE

Grow Pittsburgh was formed in 2005 as a nonprofit community outreach effort by the owner operators of two urban farms: Mildreds' Daughters Farm, a five-acre USDA certified organic farm in Stanton Heights, and Garden Dreams, a small-scale, intensive market garden in Wilkinsburg. What started as a small collaborative effort to promote urban gardening has developed steadily over the past 16 years to become the region's go-to resource for connecting people and communities to opportunities to grow food.

Grow Pittsburgh is staffed by energetic, knowledgeable and engaged educators and gardeners whose passion for their work is palpable. The organization's board cares deeply about food growing projects and plays a central role in guiding growth and strategy. The communities served by Grow Pittsburgh are vibrant, diverse, and share in the organization's vision.

Since the previous strategic plan was adopted in 2018, the organization has seen significant growth and interest in its programs and in urban agriculture in general. The School Garden program has grown from four to 44 gardens with an expanded focus towards ensuring that all students have access to edible education. The Community Projects team has worked to support over 100 community gardens and regularly receives dozens of applications for support from new and existing gardens. The Farm Education and Production team saw a particular rise in interest and engagement in programming during the pandemic as neighbors searched for safe and affordable ways to grow and access fresh produce in their neighborhoods. This department has doubled its food production for neighbors and has expanded to a new site in Wilkinsburg that will serve as an urban agriculture hub for growers across the region. As the organization shifts from its effort to expand and promote gardens as essential resources to supporting the strong network of growers towards a sustainable future, it is a perfect time to reflect and map out the next stage for the organization.

THE NEXT CHAPTER OF GROW PITTSBURGH

During the summer and fall of 2021, Grow Pittsburgh convened a Strategic Planning Committee to work alongside board and staff to create its next five-year strategic plan. This plan came at a unique time in American history with the growing momentum for Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI), the increased evidence and impact of the climate crisis, and the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A leadership transition in 2021 additionally marked a new chapter of Grow Pittsburgh's work—building on past successes and looking forward to its future. The work of this strategic planning process allowed for a dedicated period of reflection and deep dive into Grow Pittsburgh's future work, strategies, and vision for food growing projects both within and beyond its programs.

BUILDING UPON PAST SUCCESS AND SUSTAINING CURRENT MOMENTUM TOWARDS LONG TERM IMPACT

The strategic planning process allowed Grow Pittsburgh's board and staff to voice their vision for the future of the organization. As the momentum and interest in gardening and urban farming continues to grow, it is Grow Pittsburgh's role to ensure that new and experienced growers, teachers, and community members have the resources, tools and knowledge to fully realize the many benefits that gardens bring to our neighborhoods. Having worked for over 15 years to promote and encourage backyard, school and community gardens and urban farms, this effort has become embedded into the fabric of the region and Grow Pittsburgh must now focus on ensuring that these existing and future food growing projects thrive as essential regional assets for generations to come.



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THE STRATEGIC PLAN NAMES THESE THREE ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS TO REACH THIS VISION:

- 1. Prioritize internal efficiencies and capacity for organizational stability** By focusing on internal processes and communications, shared data and consistent evaluation, and cross-department staffing and collaboration, the organization can streamline efforts, reduce redundancies, and prepare for long term sustainability and impact.
- 2. Cultivate the future of urban agriculture in the region by building sector-wide capacity** By working to build sector-wide capacity through education and resource distribution, Grow Pittsburgh can increase financial sustainability, increase organizational efficiency, and build autonomy in communities that are served by existing programs, and elevate the quality and quantity of work in urban agriculture region-wide.
- 3. Deepen and operationalize Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) efforts across the organization and the greater community** Grounded in a history of racial and social justice work, Grow Pittsburgh will continue to learn, grow and lead with its effort to implement best practices in JEDI work across internal and external operations, program development and delivery.



BASED ON GROW PITTSBURGH'S STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES, THERE ARE FIVE STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS:

- **Expand fundraising capacity and channels**

Grow Pittsburgh will improve its fundraising toolkit by expanding its major donor program, launching a planned giving campaign, increasing program specific consulting and earned revenue opportunities, and tapping into new mission-aligned funding prospects.

- **Define, implement, and communicate Grow Pittsburgh's role in advancing urban agriculture throughout the region**

As the interest and need for food growing projects continues to increase, it is essential that Grow Pittsburgh identify and communicate its role in supporting and advancing this movement. Each Grow Pittsburgh department will develop work plans to identify the highest impact initiatives and clearly communicate its role in the greater urban farming landscape.

- **Hone internal processes and collaboration**

Growth has allowed for a wide programmatic reach. Now Grow Pittsburgh intends to monitor staffing models, design and operationalize internal committee and communication strategies, increase access to professional development opportunities, strengthen board engagement, and invest in internal organizational capacity to break down internal silos and cultivate leadership and effective communication.

- **Focus on education and training**

Grow Pittsburgh will have the greatest impact if it prioritizes education and training as it works to reach its vision where everyone is able to grow and eat fresh, local, affordable and culturally relevant food.

- **Strengthen existing program models through community engagement, partnerships, and evaluation**

Grow Pittsburgh's programs are relevant, useful, and thoughtfully designed; they will continue their important work. Strengthening and refining these existing programs through intentional opportunities for community participation and consistent evaluation ensures a grassroots and data driven grounding of the organization's program development and implementation.



OUR VALUES

A central focus of the strategic planning process was reviewing and evaluating the list of organizational values. Grow Pittsburgh reaffirmed its commitment to upholding these values, while designing processes to communicate and operationalize them into the daily work of the organization.

Community Participation

Prioritizing neighborhood voices to guide programs

Fiscal Integrity

Making responsible and effective use of available resources

Social Justice

Understanding systems of privilege, oppression, and racism, and using this knowledge to drive our work

Environmental Responsibility

Using, teaching, and advocating for restorative practices

Food Sovereignty

Supporting everyone's right to access, produce, and distribute healthy and culturally appropriate food

Transparency

Being accountable by using clear, direct, and inclusive communication

Equity

Working alongside communities to build access and power for all

Resourcefulness

Creating hands-on opportunities to build individual community self-sufficiency

