

GROWING FROM THE ROOT



DECEMBER 3, 2019
6:00 - 8:00 PM
PARKWAY CENTRAL LIBRARY
1901 VINE STREET

WHAT IS GROWING FROM THE ROOT ?

Growing from the Root is Philadelphia's first citywide plan to organize and respond to the needs of the urban agriculture community in Philadelphia. The Plan is rooted with input from community organizers, local growers, small business owners, non-profit organizations, and City officials interested in maintaining and enhancing Philadelphia's unique assembly of urban farms and gardens. From this input, the Plan will highlight the City's existing barriers to supporting urban agriculture and develop policy, program, and project recommendations for City agencies and partners. This Plan and its facilitated engagement events are managed by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department.

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY



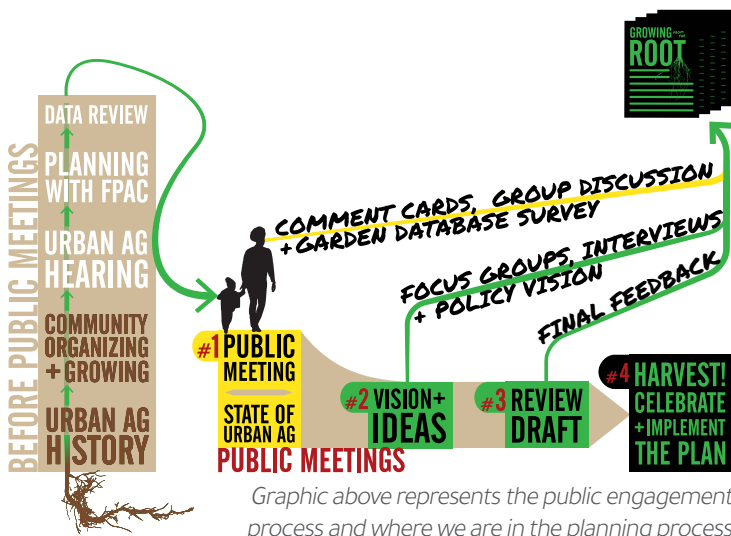
6:15 PM WELCOME + PRESENTATION

Community members received opening remarks outlining the Plan's objectives and preliminary analyses from the planning team



6:45 PM INDIVIDUAL THOUGHTS

Community members recorded their thoughts on comment cards, helping to develop a shared definition of urban agriculture



7:00 PM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group discussions focused on successes, issues, and goals for urban agriculture, organized by six themes that will frame the Plan

WHAT ACTIVITIES DID WE DO?

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

WELCOME + PRESENTATION

December 3, 2019 marked the Plan's first public meeting. This meeting focused on existing conditions, painting a picture of the state of urban agriculture in Philadelphia today. Participants had an opportunity to give their input on what the Plan should accomplish and what urban agriculture means to them.

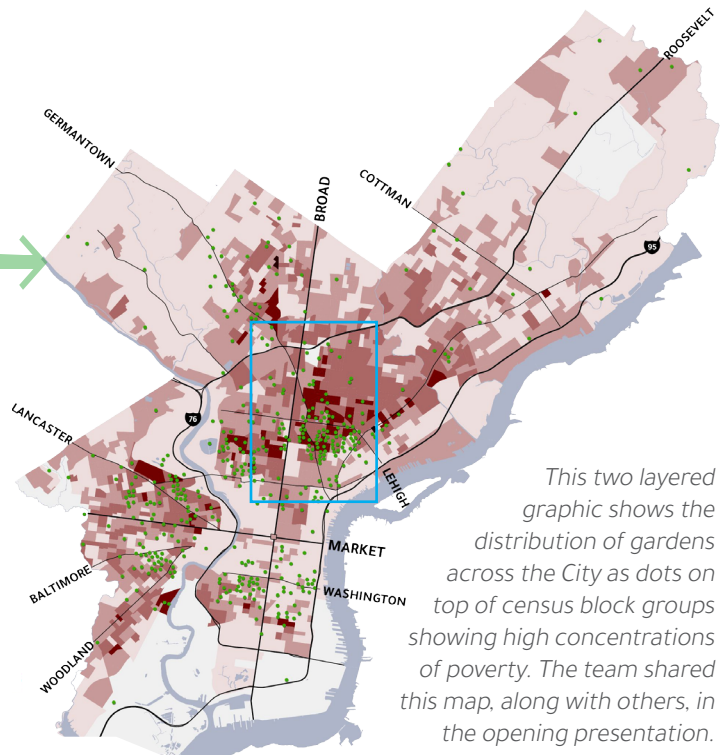
On behalf of the City, Dave Wilson, Deputy Managing Director for Community and Culture, welcomed a large crowd within the Central Library's Skyline Room. Ash Richards, Director of Urban Agriculture at Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, introduced the Plan and provided an overview of the agenda for the evening.

The program continued with a Land Acknowledgment from Trinity Norwood of the Nanticoke Lenape Tribal Nation and Mabel Negrete of Indigenous 215. This land acknowledgment connected the area which is currently known as Philadelphia and the City's urban agriculture movement to the history of stolen Lenape land. It also included the indigenous community's ongoing struggle for land sovereignty, cultural preservation, and re-centering indigeneity.

Following the land acknowledgment, Khaliyah D. Pitts recited an original poem, "Sovereign" about the urgency of recognizing land as being alive and not owned, thus challenging the way in which land is controlled, dominated, and extracted from.

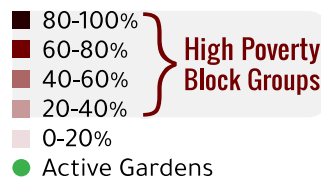
This intro was followed by a presentation by Soil Generation and Interface Studio (the planning team) about the state of urban agriculture and the goals of the Plan. The team spoke to the Plan Foundations, or guiding principles, which root the Plan in history, racial and economic equity, health, culture, and climate readiness.

Lastly the team shared some preliminary data and maps to highlight the importance of urban agriculture in Philadelphia.

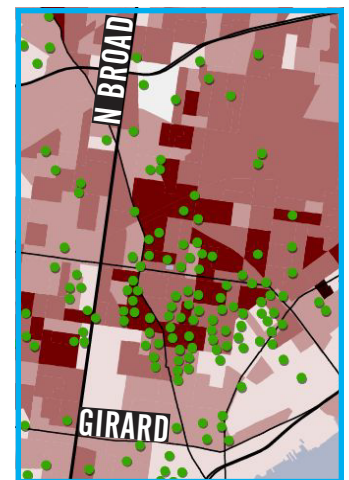


This two layered graphic shows the distribution of gardens across the City as dots on top of census block groups showing high concentrations of poverty. The team shared this map, along with others, in the opening presentation.

400,000
PHILADELPHIANS LIVE BELOW THE POVERTY LEVEL



70%
OF ACTIVE GARDENS OR FARMS ARE IN THESE HIGH POVERTY AREAS



With an American Sign Language translator, the planning team presented the Plan's historical context and data review

WHAT ACTIVITIES DID WE DO?

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

PEOPLE SHARED INFORMATION IN SEVERAL WAYS

- **Comment Cards:** 181 participants completed several cards, each with a specific purpose:
 - **I Define Urban Agriculture as:** participants shared their definitions of what is included in Urban Agriculture
 - **I Value Urban Agriculture because:** participants shared the importance Urban Agriculture in their individual lives and livelihood, as well as the community at large
 - **Lost and Threatened Gardens:** Participants shared stories and information on gardens that have been lost or are currently threatened by development
- **Garden Database Survey:** 129 people took the survey, providing information about where they garden, how their garden is managed, and who the garden serves. This new data will help us tell a more accurate story of gardening in the City
- **Table Discussions:** There were 19 facilitated tables where 8-10 participants spoke with each other about what they want for urban agriculture in the coming years. Facilitators took notes to document the discussions in order to inform the Plan's recommendations

TABLE DISCUSSION THEMES

These six themes framed the group discussions at the first public meeting and will continue to serve as organizing themes for the plan itself:



Accessing Nourishing Food: *Insuring all Philadelphians have access to the food they want and need, and greater food choices.*



Growing in Philly: *Preserving and expanding the footprint of urban agriculture, and ensuring that growers have access to needed resources.*



Community Building and Healing: *Supporting communities reconnecting to land and self-determination practices including preserving, and honoring their culture.*



Learning to Grow: *Sharing information about growing and gardening, and uplifting and valuing the knowledge of the people.*



Seeding Economic Opportunities: *Supporting workforce development and job creation through urban agriculture.*



Reducing Waste: *Reducing food that is wasted (including litter and trash), and creating a food system that is more efficient and sustainable.*



WHAT IS WORKING?
WHAT IS NOT WORKING?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RACIAL + ECONOMIC EQUITY
HEALTH
CULTURE
CLIMATE READINESS
HISTORY

PLAN FOUNDATIONS

This graphic depicts the posters used by facilitators to record each table's discussions. For each discussion theme, groups were asked to answer the three discussion questions, while keeping in mind the Plan's foundations

WHO PARTICIPATED + HOW WAS THE MEETING PROMOTED?

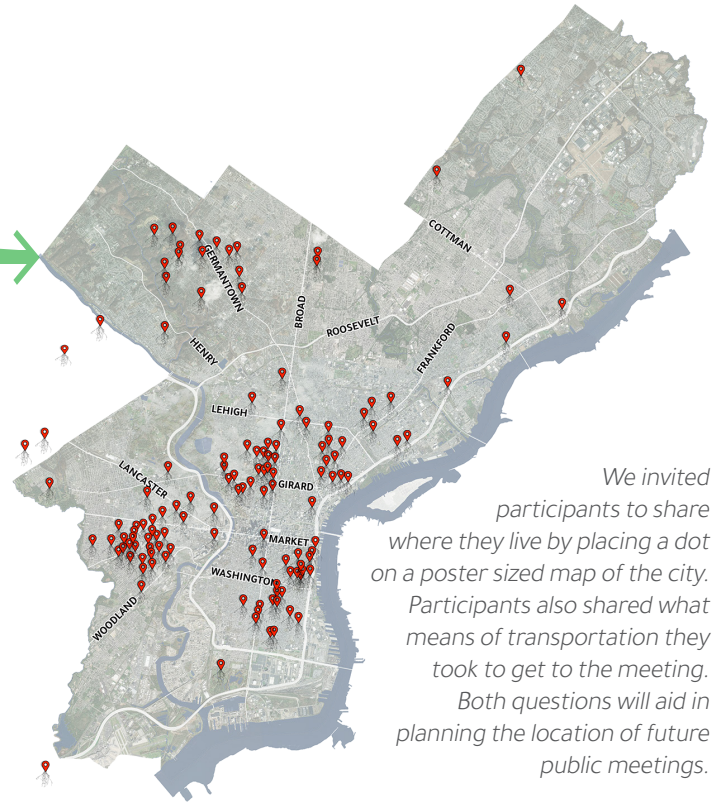
FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

WHO PARTICIPATED, FROM WHERE?

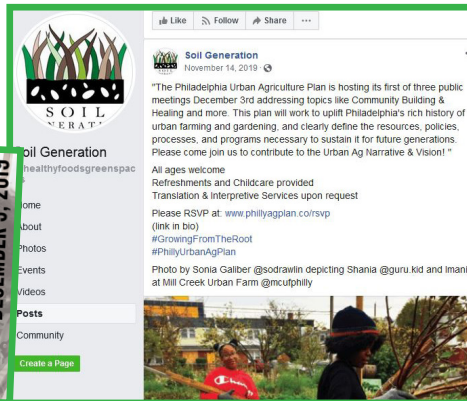
Growing from the Root's first public meeting drew nearly 300 people who are passionate about the future of urban agriculture in Philadelphia. Residents came from across the city, and notably, from the areas with the highest concentration of gardens and farms - West, North, South, and Northwest Philadelphia. Of all the attendees, 135 said they garden or farm in some capacity.

HOW WAS THE MEETING PROMOTED?

The planning team advertised the meeting through Philadelphia Parks and Recreation communication channels, and through Soil Generation's extensive network of gardeners and organizers. This also involved coordinating a Street Team made up of young people to help spread the word at community events and gatherings. The meeting included a variety of accommodations to ensure an inclusive environment, including wheelchair accessibility, bi-lingual American Sign Language interpretation, childcare, translation services, free parking, refreshments and more.



We invited participants to share where they live by placing a dot on a poster sized map of the city. Participants also shared what means of transportation they took to get to the meeting. Both questions will aid in planning the location of future public meetings.



Extensive social media posts like the images on the left were shared on a weekly basis beginning one month before the meeting. This aided in the meeting having such a high number of participants as seen in the image below.



WHAT LESSONS DID WE LEARN?

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

I value urban agriculture because...

"THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD/ PLANTS IS CRITICAL TO HEALTH, RESILIENCE, AND SURVIVAL."

- meeting participant

THE PHILLY URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY IS BROAD, DIVERSE, AND VERY PASSIONATE:

- **It includes Philadelphians from across the city** who grow plants for food, beauty, commerce, and medicine; raise animals such as bees, chickens, goats, and fish; and do so to educate and feed themselves and their communities, repair the environment, or to make a living. They are backyard gardeners and large-scale farmers.
- **They are deeply rooted in Philadelphia**, its land and history, its neighborhoods, and its people. Participants were aware of and spoke to the city's history of farming and agriculture, which is linked to their own cultural, communal, and ancestral practices.
- **The room was energetic with a clear sense of connection** and compassion amongst all the different types of gardeners and farmers. There is a deep passion for urban agriculture and a sense of community.

Stories of Lost Gardens

"I REMEMBER THE JOY OF EATING FRESH SNOW PEAS OFF THE VINE, SNACKING ON FRESH RASPBERRIES, AND MAKING MY FREEZER FULL OF FRESH PESTO TO LAST ALL WINTER. MY TODDLER LOVED WATERING THE GARDEN. I MISS IT SO MUCH.

... A DEVELOPER FROM NYC BOUGHT [THE LAND]."

- meeting participant

URBAN AGRICULTURE IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN THE PRODUCE YOU SEE AT A GARDEN OR FARM:

- **Losing a garden or farm to development can be a traumatic experience** for communities that have seen much taken from them over the years, and the inability to achieve land security can feel like the perpetuation of past discriminatory policies.
- **The social and cultural value our city's gardens and farms provide is immense, as we heard over and over.** Participants expressed a belief that land use decisions are too often made based on the economic value of proposed uses, but the value our gardens and farms provide often extends beyond their financial value. There must be a way, we heard, for decision-making to better account for the intangible benefits these spaces provide.
- **Gardening and farming is inextricably linked to issues of self-reliance, ownership, and identity.** Many participants spoke of the symbolic power of gardening and farming - an act of reclaiming and connecting to the land, asserting autonomy, and building identity.

I value urban agriculture because...

"IT WILL CARRY US INTO A MORE JUST, SUSTAINABLE FUTURE, SHOULD WE CHOOSE TO INVEST IN IT."

- meeting participant

Lost and Threatened Gardens cards like this on the right were made available during the meeting. Each card allows the planning team to understand current threats, what was lost and why, and to track and quantify these lost and threatened resources

KNOW A LOST GARDEN?

We hope to map your entry to better understand how this closure or removal fits within the context of wider changes across Philadelphia

GARDEN NAME _____
ADDRESS or INTERSECTION _____

...TELL US MORE MARK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING

COMMUNITY GARDEN (INDIVIDUALLY MANAGED PLOTS)
 COMMUNITY FARM (COLLECTIVELY MANAGED PLOTS)
 COMMUNITY SPACE (FOR SOCIAL USE)
 INDIVIDUAL GARDEN (PRIVATE)
 OTHER/UNSURE

TELL US WHAT HAPPENED, HOW WAS THIS GARDEN LOST?

DATE OPENED - CLOSED _____

WAS THIS GARDEN DEMOLISHED? YES NO
 HAS THE SITE BEEN DEVELOPED? YES NO

WHAT LESSONS DID WE LEARN?

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

THE VALUE OF URBAN AGRICULTURE IS DEEPLY CONNECTED TO OUR INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE:

- **The act of gardening and farming connects us to our ancestors.** For many, the act of growing establishes a connection between them and their history - with the knowledge that our ancestors, too, engaged in these practices. The ability to carry these traditions forward into the future is also powerful for many, ensuring that the next generation will carry on this connection to their history and identity.
- **Urban agriculture confronts some of the big challenges our city faces today.** Participants understand urban agriculture as an effort to get nourishing food into systematically disadvantaged communities, to reduce the amount of food waste that is sent to landfills, to confront gentrification, and to build stronger communities.
- **These practices can help to create a better future for ourselves and the next generation.** Raising issues such as climate change, pollution, food insecurity, and sustainability, many expressed a belief that growing and raising more food locally can help heal the environment and prepare for the future.

I value urban agriculture because...

"IT ROOTS US IN OUR PAST AND THE LIVED EXPERIENCE THAT MANY OF US HAVE HAD AND WANT TO KEEP WITH US IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS."

- meeting participant



Young children prepare a garden box for planting under the care of an elder at 5 Loaves 2 Fishes garden in West Philly. Source: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

FARMERS WANT MORE WAYS TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCES:

- **Farmers and gardeners expressed a hunger for more and better ways to learn, share, connect, and collaborate.**
- **There are some notable positive examples of knowledge-sharing organizations and platforms,** such as Soil Generation and the Philadelphia Urban Farm Network online forum; however, many people said they need better ways to connect to technical knowledge, resources, and opportunities to share, learn, and work together.

"THERE IS A LACK OF CONNECTIONS BETWEEN GARDEN GROUPS AND EXPERTS FOR SKILL-BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING."

- discussion group note

WHAT LESSONS DID WE LEARN?

FIELD REPORT: PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, PARTICULARLY FOR YOUTH, CAME UP AGAIN AND AGAIN:

- Youth can derive great benefits from engaging in gardening and farming, we heard; and young people are essential to the future of urban agriculture.
- Participants expressed a desire to see more school gardens, more agricultural curriculum in schools, more opportunities to get youth into existing gardens through volunteering and programming, and ways to get nourishing fresh food into schools and recreation centers.
- The value of intergenerational programming and the essential role that elders play in passing knowledge on to youth came up repeatedly.
- Many mentioned the importance of adult educational opportunities - whether for entrepreneurs or curious individuals - to learn how to grow, cook, and preserve their own food.

"THE CHILDREN NEED TO HAVE THEIR FINGERS IN THE GROUND DURING PRE-SCHOOL - AND THEREAFTER!"

- discussion group note

"THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE EDUCATION IN CITIES SURROUNDING AGRICULTURE AND HOW HAVING A STRONG URBAN AGRICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT CAN HELP NEIGHBORHOODS GET FRESH FOOD."

- meeting participant

FARMERS WANT TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW URBAN AGRICULTURE CAN BE MADE INTO A CAREER:

- Farmers should be able to make a living in Philadelphia, but currently, many barriers exist. There are many obstacles to doing so, we heard.
- Some said they would benefit from shared resources for crafting a business model, technical assistance, financing, and for selling their products.
- People spoke about the burden of taxes and bills on small agricultural operations in the city and a desire for programs to provide assistance or to reduce those costs.
- Moreover, some discussed a desire for connections to help them process their agricultural goods into new products, including connections to community kitchens.

"WE NEED TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND FUNDS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING FOR TRANSITIONING COMMUNITY GARDENS INTO URBAN FARMS."

- discussion group note

"NO FARM CAN AFFORD TO PAY \$10K ANNUALLY IN PROPERTY TAXES, NO MATTER HOW GREAT ACCESS IS TO MARKET OPPORTUNITIES."

- meeting participant

WHAT LESSONS DID WE LEARN? + WHAT IS NEXT?

FIELD
REPORT

PUBLIC MEETING #1
SUMMARY

URBAN AGRICULTURE SHOULD SUPPORT CITYWIDE COMMITMENTS TO REDUCING WASTE AND OUR ECOLOGICAL FOOTPRINT:

- **Participants noted that there are untapped opportunities to gather and redistribute food from restaurants and grocery stores**, redirecting would-be food waste to increase access to nourishing food in neighborhoods that need it.
- **Many local farmers and gardeners are advocates for composting as a method to eliminate a substantial volume of the waste Philadelphia sends to landfills.** A sustained educational campaign about how to compost and why it matters, coupled with programs and services that make composting easy, will be required to shift habits.
- **The opportunity is bigger than curbside composting along with trash and recycling pickup for all Philadelphia households.** There are opportunities to involve restaurants, grocery stores, universities and other large institutions - the City among them - to adopt new waste management practices.
- **Beyond composting, growers identified urban agriculture's ability to reduce packaging waste, recycle stormwater, and increase local food production**, thereby reducing distribution costs and emissions.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR THE PLAN?

- **Update Data Analysis:** The planning team has integrated the community input into the garden database built by The Philadelphia Garden Data Collaborative.
- **Focus Groups + Interviews:** Comments from group discussions and the comment cards have helped the planning team determine questions to ask growers, City and organizational leaders, organizers, etc. These upcoming conversations are intended to test ideas and lay the groundwork for implementing the Plan.
- **Prepare for the second Public Meeting:** The second public meeting will be held near the Spring Equinox, a milestone for farmers and growers. This meeting will be held in two separate locations - one in North Philly and one in West Philly - and will be designed in an open house format (so participants can come and go at their convenience) to ensure greater participation.

THANK YOU FOR READING
WATCH THE PLAN GROW,
CHECK FOR UPDATES:
www.PhillyAgPlan.co/roots



Image above shows hands of farmer Stanley Morgan tending to a row of sprouting plants at Life Do Grow Farm