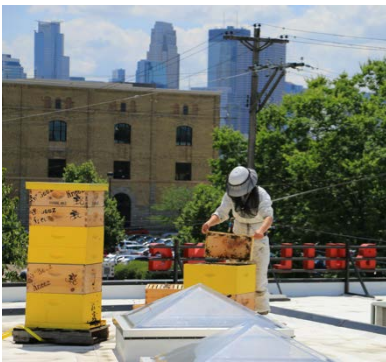


Urban Agriculture in Minnesota

A Report to the Minnesota Legislature



(Photo credits: The Beez Kneez/Tom Brossart-Food Building, Stone's Throw Urban Farm, Urban Organics)

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	4
Background	5
Definition.....	8
Why Urban Agriculture?	15
Examples of Urban Agriculture.....	21
Resource Inventory.....	23
Existing Policies that Address Urban Agriculture.....	31
Barriers	36
Policy Options	39
Conclusion.....	43
Appendix A. Survey Respondent Demographics and Instrument	44
Appendix B. Urban agriculture state legislation examples	47
Appendix C. Ten cities with urban agriculture policies	48
Bibliography	49

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Executive Summary

In 2015, the Minnesota State Legislature directed the Commissioner of Agriculture to convene interested stakeholders and develop a proposal to effectively and efficiently promote urban agriculture in Minnesota cities. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) sought public input through an online survey, public meetings, and stakeholder outreach to gather feedback on the definition, barriers and opportunities for urban agriculture in Minnesota. The results of this outreach are compiled in this report.

Urban agriculture is a popular and growing topic of conversation at the national and local levels. There is a long history of urban agriculture in the United States, but recent interest has likely developed:

- in response to a growing local food movement;
- as a way to address increased obesity and poor health;
- as a response to increased food costs; and
- as a way to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in urban areas.

Urban agriculture encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, from backyard and community gardening to high density production on vacant lots or in urban warehouses. Some models of urban agriculture have also demonstrated innovative ways to extend the short Minnesota growing season and utilize limited space in urban areas.

The relationship between urban, peri-urban¹ (urban outskirts), and rural agriculture is important to note as there are overlapping needs and challenges across these spheres. There are gray areas between those who grow commercially and those who grow for self-provisioning; those who grow on a small scale and those who have growing space both inside and outside of city limits. A few examples illustrate the wide array of models that fall under the umbrella of urban agriculture:

- A community garden that donates produce to a food shelf every week during the growing season except one week when they sell their produce to raise money to support the garden;
- Urban youth who learn how to grow, harvest, process and market food in an after-school and summer program, building leadership, job and entrepreneurial skills; and
- An indoor aquaculture and hydroponics operation that sells fish and produce to restaurants and grocery stores.

Additional examples illustrate how the definition of urban agriculture can affect growers, depending upon how it is defined:

- A beekeeper who once had his hives in a peri-urban area but has been forced to move his hives because of expanding city limits and changed zoning; and
- Farmers who live in the city but farm where land is more accessible (outside of city limits), and sell to an urban market.

Stakeholders identified the following key findings about urban agriculture in Minnesota through a public feedback process:

¹ The interface between town and country, the rural-urban transition zone.

- Definition (scope) of urban agriculture:
 - A wide variety of products and types of agriculture fall under the umbrella of urban agriculture.
 - The size of the urban area should not matter.
- Barriers facing urban agriculture:
 - Long-term access to land;
 - Soil contamination and lack of resources for proper remediation;
 - Regulatory barriers and inconsistencies; and
 - Economic, cultural, political, and environmental barriers along with a lack of access to resources and knowledge create a challenging environment for urban agriculture to succeed.

The MDA suggests that the following could be considered in establishing policy to promote urban agriculture:

1. The subject of urban agriculture spans the missions of a number of state agencies and institutions. For-profit urban agriculture is consistent with the mission of the MDA, while other forms of urban agriculture better fit the missions of other agencies and institutions: gardening and self-provisioning, the University of Minnesota Extension; initiatives to improve health, support community gardens, school based agriculture and food access, the Minnesota Department of Health; initiatives to serve disadvantaged groups or bolster economic development, the Minnesota Department of Human Services or the Department of Employment and Economic Development; and so on.
2. Urban agriculture is a broad term. Each separate law or rule relating to urban agriculture must include its own specific definition of the term in order to avoid confusion and exclusion.
3. Although strong support for urban agriculture exists among many members of the public, support is not universal. More importantly, as with most public policy, unintended adverse consequences can result and any policy to promote urban agriculture needs to be carefully considered and constructed to avoid such consequences.
4. Policy options to promote urban agriculture include:
 - a. Comprehensive Planning: Encourage local municipalities to include urban agriculture language in comprehensive planning and zoning revisions.
 - b. Funding: Explore the potential economic impact of urban agriculture. Create incentives for local governments to promote urban agriculture through tax incentives, funding for urban growers and organizations that support urban agriculture, and local food purchasing incentives for large institutions such as state departments, school districts, hospitals, etc.
 - c. Land Access: Explore opportunities to provide long-term land access by making publicly owned land available for urban agriculture, creating land banks or land trusts, and offering funding to remediate contaminated urban land.
 - d. Regulatory Barriers: Examine and modify existing policies that stand in the way of urban agriculture. Encourage local units of government to evaluate their zoning and planning policies to allow for urban agriculture.

Introduction

2015 Legislation: Special Session Ch. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 85

The Commissioner of Agriculture must convene interested stakeholders and develop a proposal to effectively and efficiently promote urban agriculture in Minnesota cities. For purposes of this section, “urban agriculture” means producing agricultural plants, poultry, or livestock on public or private property within city limits. No later than January 15, 2016, the Commissioner must report to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over agriculture policy and finance and submit proposed legislation that includes a new definition of urban agriculture if the commissioner and stakeholders determine that a different definition more accurately defines urban agriculture.

No funds were appropriated to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to implement this legislation. The \$9,000 estimated cost of preparing this report includes expenses associated with convening stakeholders, translating the survey into Spanish and Hmong, providing an interpreter at a public meeting, and staff time.

Background

There is a long history of urban agriculture in the United States and a widespread use of the term. Many people identify with urban agriculture and associate it with anything from backyard gardening to market production and everything in between.

History of Urban Agriculture

Urban food production has been in practice since at least the nineteenth century through backyard farms, large public gardens, educational and market gardens.²

- Federal, state, and city governments have played a role in supporting and promoting urban agriculture in the past.
- City governments in partnership with philanthropic organizations supported urban gardens as unemployment relief during economic depressions in the late 1800s and 1930s.
- The Department of Education promoted the School Gardens Movement around the turn of the twentieth century.
- The Food Administration, the Council of National Defense, and the Bureau of Education supported the War Garden movement during WWI.
- The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) facilitated the Victory Garden campaign of WWII, which grew up to 44% of the nation's vegetables during the war.³
- The USDA Urban Garden Program (UGP) started in 1976, employing Cooperative Extension agents to teach gardening skills and provide nutrition assistance to low income urban families. By the late 1980s, the UGP program grew to over 3,000 staff and volunteers serving 200,000 gardeners and producing \$22.8 million worth of produce in 23 cities across the country. Changes to the federal budget in 1994 brought this program to an end.²

Research at the end of the twentieth century explored the community and personal development aspects of urban agriculture to provide baseline data and help policymakers recognize the potential benefits for urban agriculture.² According to a 2004 report from the Community Food Security Coalition, "One third of the 2 million farms in the United States are located within metropolitan areas, and produce 35% of U.S. vegetables, fruit, livestock, poultry, and fish."⁴ Recent interest in urban agriculture has grown in response to economic challenges, growing awareness of climate change, rising fuel and food costs, and households' attempts to increase self-sufficiency.³

Growing Interest for Urban Agriculture in Minnesota

Minnesota is part of the growing urban agricultural movement as cities throughout the state adopt policies to address urban agriculture, entrepreneurs create urban farms, and interest in community, school, and home-grown gardens increases. Minnesota's urban areas expect continued population growth. With increased urban populations and a declining number of farmers in Minnesota, the majority of people are far removed from agricultural production. The development of the Minnesota Food Charter⁵ in 2014 drew attention to the need for improving food access throughout the state. Urban

² [Expanding technical assistance for urban agriculture: Best practices for extension services in California and beyond](#); *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, Reynolds, 2011

³ [The Planner in the Garden: A Historical View into the Relationship between Planning and Community Gardens](#), *Journal of Planning History* May 2004 3: pp. 151-176, Laura Lawson

⁴ [Health Benefits of Urban Agriculture](#). Community Food Security Coalition's North American Initiative on Urban Agriculture. Bellow, Brown and Smit, 2004

⁵ mnfoodcharter.com

agriculture is seen by many as a way to bring urban populations closer to food production, which can impact health, increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables, offer educational opportunities, change perceptions about how and where food is grown, and provide economic benefits for those who grow and sell.

Community gardens are a well-documented type of urban agriculture. According to a 2015 survey conducted by Gardening Matters, there were 652 community gardens in Minnesota in 2015, 547 of them located within the 7-county metro area. Ninety-one percent of those gardens are food producing and they come in all shapes and sizes. Gardening Matters, an independent organization dedicated to community gardeners across the Twin Cities and Minnesota, defines a community garden as “any space that is gardened by a group of people to meet the needs of that group of people.” They have reported a persistent demand for space in existing community gardens and for creating new community gardens.⁶

Other types of urban agriculture in Minnesota have not been documented nearly as well. The 2012 USDA Agricultural Census does not include data about urban agriculture. The USDA is conducting an Urban Agriculture Pilot Study in Baltimore, Maryland, and plans to include urban agriculture in the next Agricultural Census to ensure that all agricultural activities, including products grown in urban areas, are accounted for.⁷

Process

To gain a better understanding of the current state of urban agriculture in Minnesota, the MDA reached out to many organizations, farmers, and networks between July and December of 2015. Participants were asked how they identify with the definition of urban agriculture provided by the Legislature, and what they see as the greatest barriers and opportunities for promoting urban agriculture in the state.

We conducted in-person meetings with the following groups:

- Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage (CMAH), Rochester
- Homegrown Minneapolis, Minneapolis
- Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA), St. Paul

We shared information about the survey and report through the following channels:

- Food Access Summit, Duluth
- Urban Farms/Local Food Symposium, Minneapolis
- MDA press release with survey link
- Homegrown Minneapolis Open House, Minneapolis
- Emails to over 200 urban agricultural, food, community and gardening related organizations, networks, and individuals in Minnesota

We held three meetings in the metro area open to the public:

- December 7 with the St. Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission (14 attendees)
- December 9 at the East Side Enterprise Center, St. Paul (hosted by HAFA; 10 attendees)
- December 14 at Hope Community, Minneapolis (hosted by Homegrown Minneapolis, Land Stewardship Project and Hope Community; 30 attendees)

⁶ Community Gardening in MN: A Snapshot in 2015, www.gardeningmatters.org/sites/default/files/Snapshot_final.pdf

⁷ USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Urban_Ag

We gathered additional feedback through:

- Online surveys (390 responses) available from November 24-December 31, 2015
- Paper surveys (translated in Spanish and Hmong) (included in total number of responses above)
- Phone number and email to contact with comments

We also reviewed literature, research and examples of urban agriculture to help inform this report.

Summary

The feedback that we received demonstrates a widespread understanding of and participation in urban agriculture. The majority of respondents were supportive of urban agriculture in a broad sense and would like to see it expand. However, other comments expressed differing viewpoints. We have made an attempt to highlight some of those concerns as well, to provide more of a balanced perspective.

Many comments spoke to the importance of integrating urban agriculture into the larger agriculture and food system. A deeper understanding of the barriers and opportunities for urban agriculture will be important as interest continues to grow.

This report explores:

- the definition of urban agriculture;
- the connections that people make between urban agriculture and food access, health, economic, and community development;
- examples of what urban agriculture looks like in Minnesota;
- an overview of resources that currently exist to support urban agriculture;
- existing policies that address urban agriculture both in Minnesota and across the country;
- the main barriers facing urban agriculture;
- and policy options to consider for further promotion of urban agriculture in Minnesota.

Definition

Included in the charge from the Minnesota Legislature is the opportunity to propose a more accurate definition of urban agriculture. The definition of urban agriculture provided in the legislation is: “Producing agricultural plants, poultry, or livestock on public or private property within city limits.” Stakeholders had strong opinions about the definition of urban agriculture. Many felt that the current definition needed alteration, mostly to expand and broaden what is included in the term. There are many variations on the definition of urban agriculture, most suggesting a broad scope. The following examples from related literature broaden the scope of the definition.

Change Lab Solutions, a national policy institute, defines urban agriculture in three parts:

“Urban agriculture is an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of activities involving the raising, cultivation, processing, marketing, and distribution of food in urban areas.

- Home gardens are food-producing spaces on private, residential property (multifamily or single family) that are used primarily by the property’s residents or guests.
- Community gardens are smaller-scale urban agriculture sites (often serving a neighborhood) where individuals and families grow food primarily for personal consumption or donation.
- Urban farms are larger-scale, more intensive sites where food may be grown by an organization or private enterprise, and often include entrepreneurial opportunities such as growing food for sale.”⁸

The American Planning Association’s *Zoning Practice* issue on urban agriculture categorizes it by the extent and intensity of the activities involved:

“In zoning, urban agriculture can be treated either as a district or as a use category...It may be helpful for planners to think of agriculture in four categories based on two dimensions: the extent or dispersal of agricultural practices and the intensity of urban agricultural activities.

- Extensive/intensive: rural and peri-urban farming and associated activities;
- Less extensive/intensive: large markets, food processing, urban farms, and composting operations, grouped together because these uses can have large-scale impacts;
- Extensive/less intensive: backyard and community gardens, limited livestock, and farm stands; and
- Less extensive/less intensive: little urban agricultural activity – home gardening, community gardens that exist irregularly and often outside regulatory regimes.”⁹

Kristin Reynolds, professor of environmental studies and food studies at The New School, broadens the definition of urban agriculture by expanding where it takes place and referencing its role in larger systems:

Urban agriculture “can be defined as agricultural production located in and near urban centers, and that which is integrated in the urban economic, social, and ecological system.”¹⁰

⁸ [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), Change Lab Solutions, October 2011

⁹ [Zoning for Urban Agriculture. American Planning Association, Zoning Practice](#), Mukherji and Morales, 2010

¹⁰ [Expanding technical assistance for urban agriculture: Best practices for extension services in California and beyond](#); *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, Reynolds, 2011

Reynolds' conversations with Extension staff indicated a lack of clarity around the term, especially when trying to define the boundaries of the urban area:

There is a "lack of clarity about the term 'urban agriculture'. Urban is agriculture within the city boundaries; 'Peri' [is] just on the edges and outside the city. But where do you draw the line between rural and peri [urban]? I used to just call it all 'commercial farming on the urban-rural interface.'"¹¹

The United Nations Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development definition includes the urban edge:

Urban agriculture is "the production of food and nonfood plant and tree crops, and animal husbandry, both within and fringing urban areas."¹²

Bailkey and Nasr, authors of several urban agriculture reports, expand even further to include processing and distribution in their definition:

Urban agriculture is "the growing, processing, and distributing of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities."¹³

The Community Food Security Coalition provides a comprehensive definition which includes examples and indicates the complex web of activities that fall under the umbrella of the term "urban agriculture":

"Urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) refers to the production, distribution and marketing of food and other products within the cores of metropolitan areas (comprising community and school gardens; backyard and rooftop horticulture; and innovative food-production methods that maximize production in a small area), and at their edges (including farms supplying urban farmers markets, community supported agriculture, and family farms located in metropolitan greenbelts). Looked at broadly, UPA is a complex activity, addressing issues central to community food security, neighborhood development, environmental sustainability, land use planning, agricultural and food systems, farmland preservation, and other concerns."¹⁴

¹¹ [Expanding technical assistance for urban agriculture: Best practices for extension services in California and beyond](#); *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, Reynolds, 2011

¹² [Farming Inside Cities: Entrepreneurial Urban Agriculture in the United States](#). Working Paper, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Kaufman J and Bailkey M (2000) (p.3)

¹³ Bailkey and Nasr in [Disparity Despite Diversity: Social Injustice in New York City's Urban Agriculture System](#), *Antipode*, Reynolds, 2014

¹⁴ [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#), American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 563, Hodgson, Campbell and Bailkey, 2011 (p.14)

Elements of the definition

In order to discuss the definition of urban agriculture in depth at public meetings, it was broken into three parts, depicted in Figure 1:

- Place: Where does urban agriculture take place? Should the size of the urban area be specified in the definition?
- Products/Activities: What kinds of products would you include in the definition? What activities do you associate with the term?
- Scale/Type of production system: What is the end use of the products grown in urban agriculture? (e.g., community use, personal use, donation, market farm)

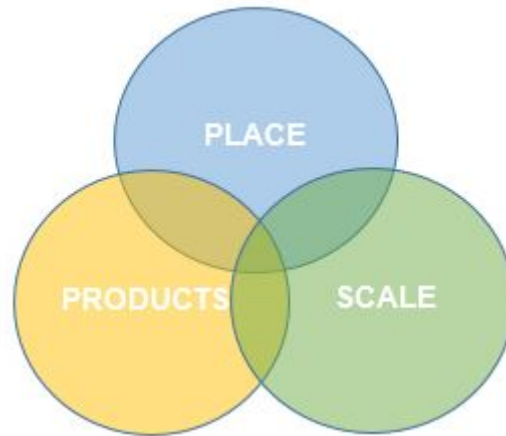


Figure 1

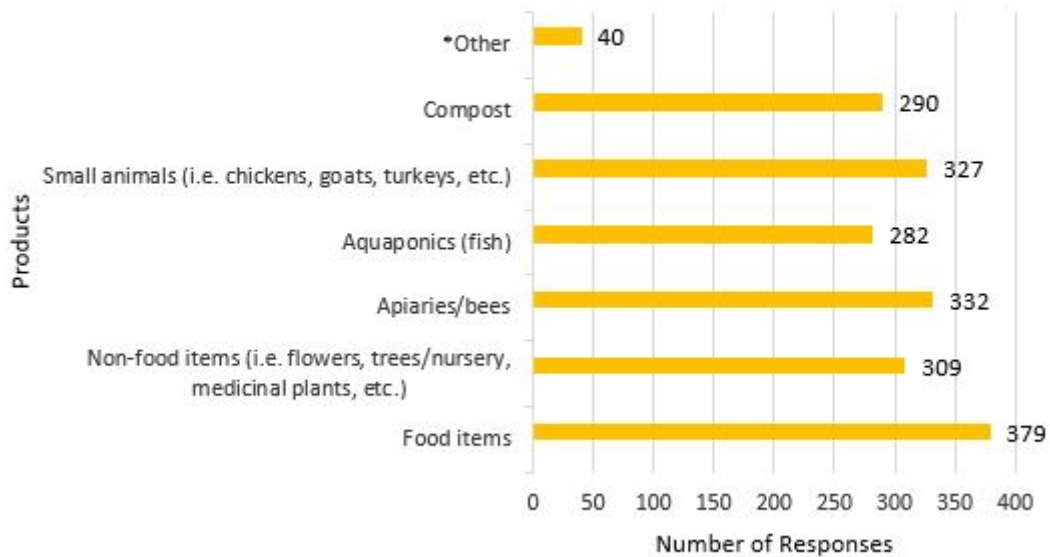
As depicted in Figure 1, the definition of urban agriculture can encompass some aspect of all three of these elements. Given the wide variety of responses received, a broad definition is necessary to include everything that people associate with the term.

Public Input

Public input from the survey provides a better idea of what respondents include in each of these areas. Most respondents included a vast array of products, places and scales in the definition urban agriculture and indicated that the size of the urban area should not matter. This broad understanding of and association with the term demonstrates the need for specific definitions or sub-categories within the term, which will be especially useful when linked to specific resources, funding or support that only apply to certain types of urban agriculture (i.e. market gardens, aquaculture, community gardens, etc.). What follows is a summary of the results of the urban agriculture public survey to which 390 people responded.

Figure 2 shows that respondents for the most part thought that all of the products listed in the survey question – food items, bees/apiaries, small animals, non-food items (flowers, trees, medicinal plants, etc.), compost, and aquaponics – should be included in the definition of urban agriculture.

Figure 2. What products would you include in the definition of urban agriculture?



Additional products were mentioned by those who responded to the survey, summarized below.

- Food items: fruit and nut trees, maple syrup, mushrooms, ginseng, hazelnuts, etc.
- Value added products, food processing
- Herbs and sacred medicines
- Foraged foods
- Agri-tourism activities such as corn mazes, teaching gardens, etc.
- Animal feed
- Education such as classes, recipes, health information, school curriculum, etc.
- Community gardening
- Crops to amend soil such as clover and other cover crops
- Aquaponics, hydroponics
- Livestock and large animals as permitted
- Pastures
- Structures including sheds, greenhouses, coops, solar green houses, vertical gardens, rooftop gardens, rain barrels, mobile slaughtering facilities, and hardware such as tools, raised beds, fencing, etc.
- Seeds, seed saving
- Earth friendly, organic, non-GMO, chemical-free, bio-dynamic, soil health, remediation, mycology
- Vermicomposting, insects, worms

Figure 3 shows a more or less equal preference for items grown for sale, to donate, for personal use, and for educational purposes in the definition of urban agriculture.

Figure 3. Which of the following would you include in the definition of urban agriculture?

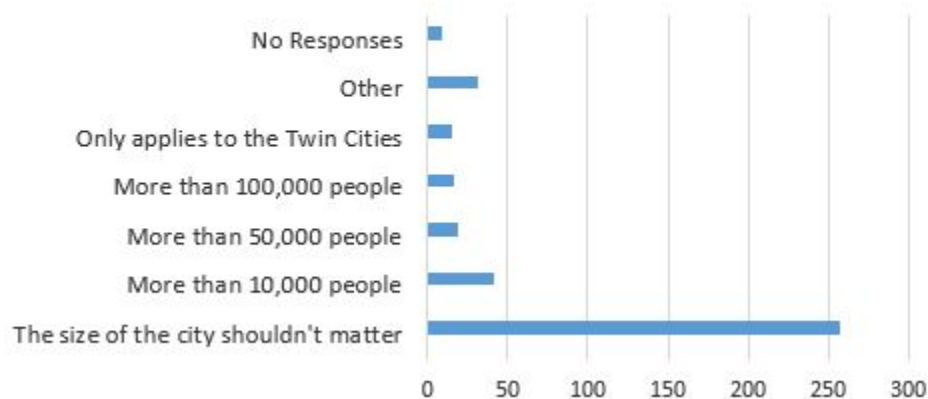


Responses in the category “other” included:

- Beautification including design, community and home gardens, improve sight and sound of environment
- Environmental improvement for habitat (bees, butterflies, wildlife, pollinators), rain garden, native flowers, improve soil health, water quality, improve erosion, air quality, storm water mitigation, pesticide/biocide limitations
- Community gardens, homeless resident gardens
- Food grown for processing, preservation, value added, wild-crafted
- Foraged foods
- Herbal, medicinal use
- Items grown for institutional and restaurant use
- Items grown to reduce the dominance/popularity of turf grass lawns

Figure 4 shows that the overwhelming majority of respondents thought that the size of the urban area shouldn't matter in the definition of urban agriculture.

Figure 4. Should the definition of urban agriculture specify the size of the urban area?



Unique comments listed in the category “other” included:

- Use density as a measure instead of population
- Cities with more than 5,000
- Cities where land to plant is relatively scarce
- It is urban if municipality is incorporated
- Use existing statutory, charter, legal, census city definitions
- Whatever we consider non-rural farmland
- The definition should be broad enough to include a wide range of products, types of producers, and places, including peri-urban

As mentioned in the example definitions at the beginning of this section, there are several activities that may not fall within every definition, but should certainly be considered when talking about urban agriculture. The broadest scope could include anything related to food access, production, distribution, and marketing that occurs within urban areas. This could include production outside of urban areas that is sold in an urban area (e.g., produce sold at urban farmers markets). Some may consider this part of urban agriculture while others may not.

One comment that came up multiple times was about farms outside of urban areas (immigrant farms in particular) that are farmed by urban residents who sell at urban markets. Members of the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA) explained that their farms are generally in the rural (peri-urban) area surrounding the Twin Cities, while they mostly live and market their products in the cities and suburbs. There are a number of reasons for this:

- They farm in the peri-urban area because land-parcel sizes in cities are insufficient for making a living from growing specialty crops (vegetables, fruits, flowers, and other agricultural products). They consider five acres a minimum size for a viable farm. Additionally, residents in cities are less tolerant of noise, dust, chemicals, structures such as trellises and hoop houses, and other activities common to farming operations.
- It is a typical pattern culturally and historically for the Hmong to live in town and farm outside of town. They generally wish to live in cities to be close to family members, within Hmong communities, and near grocery stores and other amenities.
- It is too expensive to live or own land in the peri-urban area.
- They have experienced exclusion and prejudice in the peri-urban area.

Because of this typical pattern of living and marketing in cities and farming outside of cities in the peri-urban area, there was concern that urban agriculture, if defined as agriculture within cities, could unintentionally exclude Hmong farmers from beneficial programs and resources.

Apart from issues of urban farming, a unique set of challenges are faced by Hmong farmers in Minnesota:

- Some eligibility requirements and criteria prevent access to government programs (mostly federal). Examples:
 - Many Hmong do not have leases to the land they farm due to language barriers and informal agreements, preventing access to Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs.
 - Because many Hmong farmers do not live where they farm, it is more difficult for their farms to qualify for USDA Rural Development assistance.

- The Corporate Farm Law (MS 500.24¹⁵) can be perceived as a barrier to larger parcels of land being owned by an organization and farmed by multiple families.
- Zoning and policies to protect agricultural land are a barrier to dividing land into parcel sizes (5-10 acres) conducive to fruit and vegetable growing.

Summary

Finding an all-encompassing definition for urban agriculture that satisfies everyone's idea of what should be included is a challenging task. It is not reasonable to develop an all-purpose definition. Because the common view of urban agriculture is very broad, we recommend that for use in law, the definition of urban agriculture should be tailored to each law's purpose and clearly outline what specific kind of urban agriculture is intended.

When considering policy options, the definition and scope should be broad. There is a fluid relationship between urban and peri-urban agriculture which should be taken into consideration. Several people at public meetings offered an alternative wording: "agriculture in urban areas" rather than "urban agriculture". The focus in the former places the emphasis on the agricultural activities rather than where they are taking place and perhaps mitigates the urban vs. rural divide that can put communities at odds over limited resources.

For the purpose of this report, the definition of urban agriculture will remain broad. The definition of urban agriculture may change according to local government policies or funding eligibility. In order to qualify for current Minnesota Department of Agriculture funding and support, growers must be producing agricultural products for sale. The Resource Inventory section of this report highlights organizations that support different kinds of urban agriculture.

¹⁵ www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes?id=500.24&year=2015&keyword_type=all&keyword=corporate+farm

Why Urban Agriculture?

At a local and national level, urban agriculture is on the rise. A wide variety of urban agricultural activities exist to grow food for sale, donation, health, and educational purposes. In Minnesota, urban agriculture advocates cite the many benefits that it provides – access to healthy food, job training, educational opportunities, community building, economic development, income and more.¹⁶ Stories from Detroit, Oakland, New York, and elsewhere illustrate the potential for growing food on vacant lots, in warehouses, on rooftops, and in other innovative ways where there is limited space. Increased recognition of urban agriculture in the media also indicates that interest is growing across the country.¹⁷ Some of the potential impacts and benefits of urban agriculture cited in the literature are outlined below:

Environmental benefits

- Improved air quality
- Re-use of organic waste through compost
- Increased biodiversity
- Increased carbon storage in soils
- Increased water filtration/decreased run off and erosion
- Preservation of urban green space

Personal health and well-being benefits

- Increases consumer access to healthy foods and nutritional health
- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables among participants in community and school garden programs
- Gardening/farming is a form of exercise
- Offers a retreat from urban environment, contact with nature
- Provides sense of self-worth, empowerment (e.g., for elderly immigrants with low English language skills and limited employment opportunities in the typical job market)
- Provides access to culturally important foods

Social/community benefits

- Provides education and training opportunities
- Builds bridging and bonding social capital
- Urban gardens contribute to engaged and active citizenry
- Active and cared for formerly-vacant lots make neighborhoods feel safer
- Opportunity to preserve culturally important agricultural practices

Economic benefits

- Employment and entrepreneurship opportunities
- Revenue from sales
- Increased property values

¹⁶ [Urban Agriculture: Programs and Policies in Minnesota](#), Dovetail Partners Publications, September 2013

¹⁷ [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#), American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 563, Hodgson, Campbell and Bailkey, 2011 (p.110)

- Household savings from producing some of own food^{18, 19}

Equity

Equity is one of the dominant themes recurring in urban agriculture research as well as in stakeholder input. In the 2014 Advancing Health Equity Legislative Report, the Minnesota Department of Health defines structural inequities as “structures or systems of society (such as finance, housing, transportation, education, social opportunities, etc.) that are structured in such a way that they benefit one population unfairly (whether intended or not).”²⁰ Public feedback indicated a strong desire for urban agriculture to build a new paradigm for the food system and warned against repeating historical inequities by supporting certain parts of urban agriculture over others or limiting the definition in a way that excludes certain populations. One of the reasons that people are interested in urban agriculture is that it provides opportunities for more diverse populations to participate in agricultural production. Minnesota’s farming population is not as diverse as the state’s population as a whole, as shown in Figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5. Principal farm operators in Minnesota by race

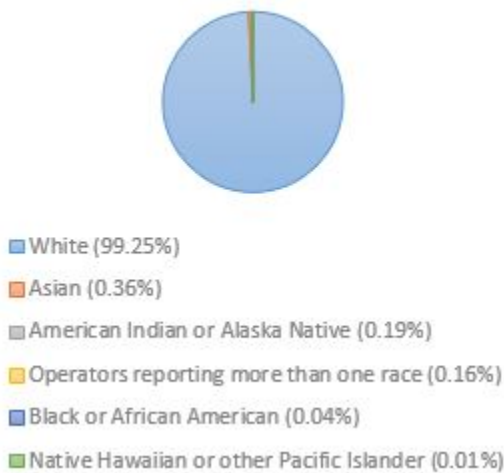


Figure 5. 2012 Census Profiles Minnesota Farmers and Agriculture
www.mda.state.mn.us/~media/Files/news/2014releases/nr20140502-census.pdf

Figure 6. Minnesota population by race



Figure 6. Minnesota Census Data 2014
 *Hispanics may be of any race, so are included in applicable race categories.
quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html

The face of urban agriculture, while not yet quantified in Minnesota, is likely far more diverse given the number of organizations and community groups representing a great diversity of people listed in the Resource Inventory section of this report. Some of the national literature highlights the diversity of the urban agriculture movement, noting the broad spectrum of racial, ethnic and cultural groups that have participated in urban growing. Urban agriculture can provide opportunities for communities to come together, and in particular, allow opportunities for immigrants to continue practicing agricultural aspects of their cultural heritage.²¹

¹⁸ [Health Benefits of Urban Agriculture](#). Community Food Security Coalition’s North American Initiative on Urban Agriculture. Bellow, Brown and Smit, 2004

¹⁹ [Multiple Benefits of Community Gardening](#), Gardening Matters, 2015

²⁰ www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/definitions.htm

²¹ [Disparity Despite Diversity: Social Injustice in New York City’s Urban Agriculture System](#), *Antipode*, Reynolds, 2014

Proponents of urban agriculture see the opportunity for skills and knowledge related to urban agriculture to bring about positive change in their communities. Reynolds' research in New York City focuses on the importance of creating equity in urban agriculture:

“Failure to critically examine urban agriculture’s role in either supporting or dismantling much broader social and political oppression may perpetuate an inequitable system that is legitimated through progressive narratives about the positive impact that urban farming and gardening can have on issues such as food access, education, job creation, and public health.”²²

There are many examples of urban agriculture both in Minnesota and across the country that are directly linked to building equity within the food and agricultural system. Advocates of urban agriculture believe that small scale farming close to home that provides a way to attain self-sufficiency, healthy food, education, job training, income or employment can vastly increase equity in a community.

Food Access

Food access in urban areas is another topic that is important to many of the stakeholders we heard from. They believe that urban agriculture creates greater access to healthy foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables. As urban populations in Minnesota continue to grow, food access is likely to become a greater issue.

The Minnesota Food Charter was developed in 2014 through the combined effort of hundreds of organizations, a number of state agencies, the University of Minnesota, Minnesota corporations and nonprofits, and thousands of Minnesotans. It is a “roadmap designed to guide policymakers and community leaders in providing Minnesotans with equal access to affordable, safe, and healthy food regardless of where they live.” The Food Charter outlines the need for increased food access with the following statistics

- More than twice the number of Minnesotans visited food shelves in 2013 than 13 years ago, resulting in 3.5 million visits to food shelves.
- 20% of families with children in Minnesota face hunger or food insecurity.
- Minnesota has \$2.8 billion in obesity-related healthcare costs per year.
- 60% of deaths in Minnesota are diet related.
- Two out of three Minnesotans are overweight or obese.
- Minnesota has fewer supermarkets per capita than most states, ranking in the bottom third of states nationwide.
- Nearly 900,000 Minnesota residents including over 200,000 children, live in lower-income communities with insufficient grocery store access.
- By increasing access to healthy food and economic opportunity for all, we can save up to \$11 billion in diet-related healthcare costs.
- Investing in healthy food infrastructure and agriculture could yield \$2.9 billion per year for a state like Minnesota.²³

While these numbers are statewide statistics, they become even more magnified in urban areas where health disparities are the greatest. According to the Minnesota Department of Health, “The groups that

²² [Disparity Despite Diversity: Social Injustice in New York City’s Urban Agriculture System](#), *Antipode*, Reynolds, 2014

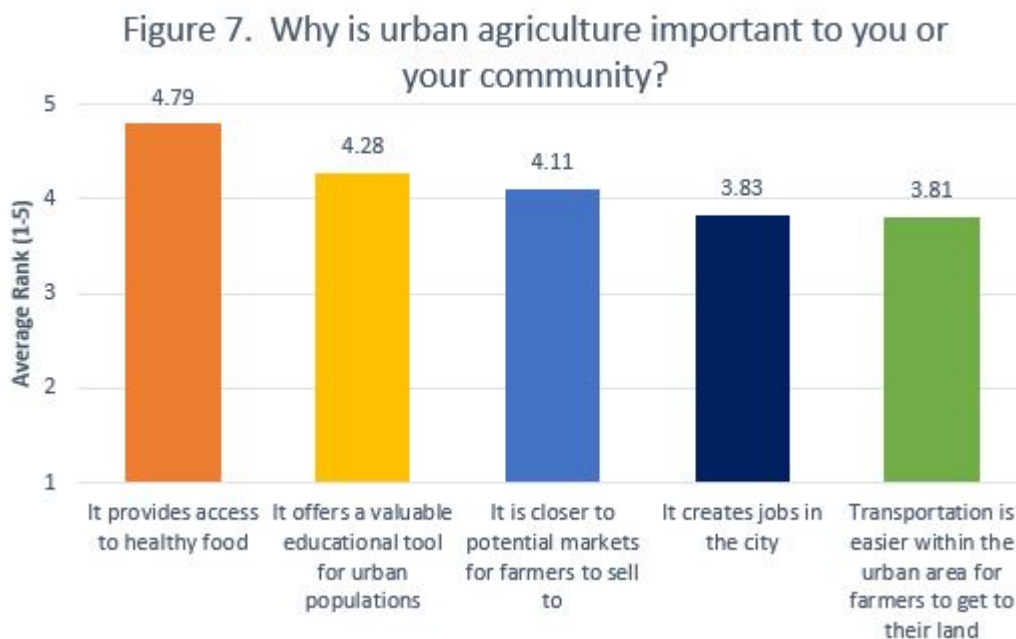
²³ mnfoodcharter.com

experience the greatest disparities in health outcomes also have experienced the greatest inequities in the social and economic conditions that are such strong predictors of health.”²⁴ The Food Charter includes 99 strategies to increase food access throughout the state, including support for urban agriculture.

Public Input

The following survey questions express the importance of urban agriculture to communities as well as concerns related to its expansion. The responses below were echoed in conversations we facilitated about barriers and opportunities facing urban agriculture. Public input was consistent with the themes from the literature we surveyed, outlined at the beginning of this section.

Figure 7 shows the importance of urban agriculture to survey respondents as it provides access to healthy food, educational opportunities, jobs, and is closer to potential markets and easier transportation.



As shown in Figure 7, comments from survey respondents about the importance of urban agriculture generally echoed findings from the national literature with additional thoughts listed below:

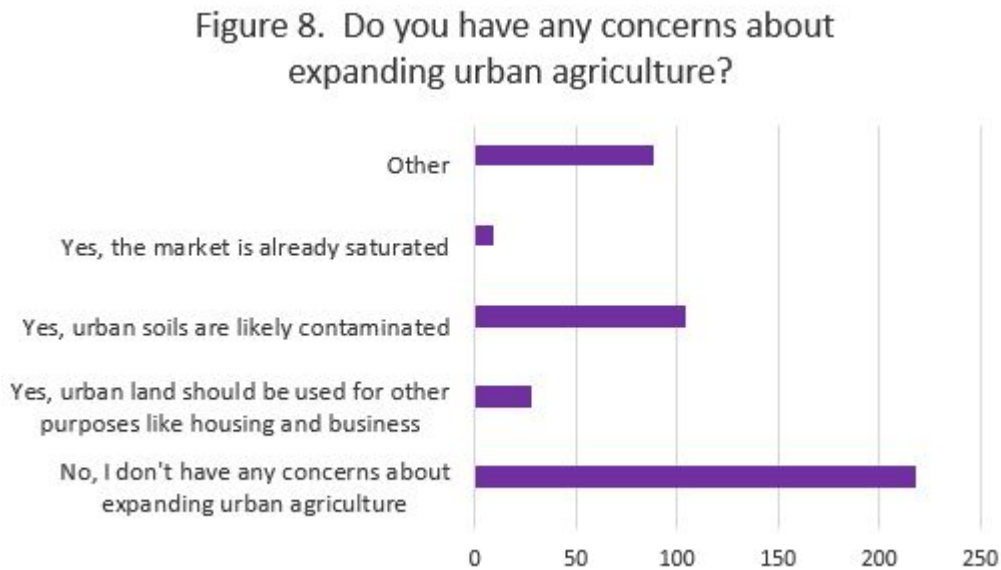
- It builds greater awareness/connection between people and food
- Strengthens the food system, improves food security/resiliency
- Can save cities money on maintenance costs by leasing vacant land to growers to maintain lots
- "We see urban agriculture as a social movement that has the potential to shift resource access."
- "Growing food needs to be a part of everyday life and part of the social fabric of our cities."
- "Not only is urban ag important in terms of access to healthy food and being close to the land, but cities that don't support this are starting to be left behind by this culture shift toward farm to fork."
- "It is vital to Food Sovereignty! ²⁵"

²⁴ Advancing Health Equity Report, Minnesota Department of Health, 2014, quoted in the Minnesota Food Charter

²⁵ "The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems." Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007.

Concerns

Figure 8 shows survey respondents' concerns about expanding urban agriculture, with most expressing no concern for its expansion, and some expressing concern about contaminated soil on urban land.



The following comments were listed by survey respondents under the category “other” (and have been summarized and grouped by theme):

- Other forms of pollution: air pollution, pesticide use, manure application
- Need to balance use of urban land depending on suitability of land, local needs/desires
- Equity concerns that it will become a tool for gentrification, that those with money will buy up land, consider historical concerns regarding labor and farming
- Concern about over-regulation, need for simple regulations by cities/local government
- Long-term or permanent access to land is unavailable
- Noise/odor/image and negative perceptions of urban agriculture, ugliness, mess, animal noise
- Not enough resources for urban ag to be done robustly, equitably, healthily
- Short growing season in Minnesota

While the majority of responses to the survey were in favor of urban agriculture (Figure 8), not all shared the same view. Responses that expressed concern and opposition to putting resources into urban agriculture included:

- “While urban ag can be beneficial to home owners and a small set of building and land owners, I do not feel it is appropriate to subsidize it beyond some education.”
- “Will urban ag make the same impact as ag in rural areas producing most of the food? I can safely say no. Use our resources to assist beginning farmers in rural areas where the impact is greater and feeds more people. Promote growing alternative crops on larger scales rather than normal corn and soybeans.”
- “Urban agriculture should not be promoted, funded or allowed in Minnesota.”

- “We should be protecting farmlands by preventing sprawl rather than bringing farming in to urban areas.”
- “Putting food security in the hands of the people is paramount. Simply opening a new domain for corporate farming is urban agriculture in name only. People producing food for themselves and neighbors should be at the forefront. After that's established we can start talking about food for sale. So laws should certainly support for-profit urban agriculture, but public lands should not be for private profit.”

Summary

Increased costs of fresh fruits and vegetables, a growing local food movement, and greater awareness about food access have fueled increased interest in urban agriculture in Minnesota. The environmental, health, economic, and community benefits outlined at the beginning of this section show that urban agriculture can have a positive impact on urban communities. A growing voice of community food security advocates, like those behind the creation of the Minnesota Food Charter, call attention to the benefits of urban agriculture to help address these issues. Urban agriculture has also been used to promote and achieve greater equity within the food system. There is a need to gain a better understanding of urban agriculture’s potential to positively impact the economy, which is currently the least-documented aspect of research on urban agriculture.²⁶

The major share of input we received was in support of urban agriculture citing the widespread activities involved and the many benefits it can provide. Comments opposed to urban agriculture focused on not wanting limited resources to be taken away from rural agriculture in order to support urban agriculture. Those comments also take a broader look at how urban agriculture fits into the larger agricultural system in terms of economic impact and scale. Referring back to the definition section, the points above emphasize the need for specificity about what kind of urban agriculture is referred to if any funding or resources are going to support it.

²⁶ [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#), American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 563, Hodgson, Campbell and Bailkey, 2011 (p.84)

Examples of Urban Agriculture

The examples below are included to show the breadth of urban agriculture that exists in Minnesota. This is not an all-encompassing list.

Bemidji Community Food Shelf and Urban Farm

The Bemidji Community Food Shelf and Urban Farm is a center for sustainable agriculture within Bemidji, enhancing the organization's ability to be a resource for safe, healthy, local food. They developed the urban farm to produce food for the food shelf and act as an educational center for urban agriculture. The farm includes wheelchair accessible raised beds, an orchard, compost, and rain water collection. Photo Credit: Bemidji Community Food Shelf and Urban Farm.



The Beez Kneez

The Beez Kneez partners with restaurants, food co-ops, schools, and urban farms to bring honey bee hives to the city. They have eight Minneapolis host sites which have an interest in bees and the connections they bring to education, the food system, and the environment. The honey they produce is sold at their Honey House, farmers markets, and local retail stores. Photo credit: The Beez Kneez/Tom Brossart, Food Building.



Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)

The HAFA Farm is a 155-acre research and incubator farm located in Vermillion Township in Dakota County, just 15 minutes south of St. Paul. HAFA sub-leases the land to their members who are experienced farming families that live in the urban core. HAFA also maintains multiple research and demonstration plots to provide continuing education in sustainable agricultural practices to their farmers. According to a recent study funded by the USDA, Hmong American farmers make up over half of all producers at farmers markets in the Twin Cities' metro area. Photo credit: HAFA/Mike Hazard.



Mashkiikii Gitigan/24th Street Urban Farm Coalition

Mashkiikii Gitigan (Ojibwe for Medicine Garden) was created by the 24th Street Urban Farm Coalition – a group of neighborhood residents and community organizations – as a way to address the food access needs of people living in the Phillips area of South Minneapolis. They grow over 80 varieties of fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers, including heritage and Native American medicinal plants. Food from the farm is served at community events; given to volunteers, neighbors, and organizations; and dispersed through their Karma Market. Photo credit: Mashkiikii Gitigan/24th Street Urban Farm Coalition.



Probstfield Organic Community Garden

The Probstfield Organic Community Garden in Moorhead has about 100 plots available for rent each year. Garden members rent 20 x 30 foot spaces to garden in each season and also volunteer a minimum of four hours towards upkeep of the common and shared areas of the garden. A portion of the land is also used to grow food that is donated to the food shelf. Photo credit: Probstfield Organic Community Garden.



Project S.U.P.E.R.M.A.N./Fresh Starts Farm

Fresh Starts Farm and Project S.U.P.E.R.M.A.N. farm six urban lots in North Minneapolis and a five-acre rural site in Mora to support a sustainable food system by providing healthy, organic, non-GMO food while connecting at-risk men with employment opportunities. Some of the produce grown at the farm is handed out to workers or given to local food shelves and meal programs, while another portion is sold to local restaurants to help make the program financially viable. Photo credit: Project S.U.P.E.R.M.A.N.



Seeds of Success/Community Action Duluth

Seeds of Success helps unemployed people attain economic stability by providing them with transitional employment growing vegetables in vacant lots. They use this produce to meet food access needs by selling it at the Duluth Farmers Market. Photo credit: Seeds of Success/Community Action Duluth.



Stone's Throw Urban Farm

Stone's Throw Urban Farm turns vacant lots into productive agricultural plots throughout the Twin Cities. They grow food for a multi-farm cooperative Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, the Mill City Farmers Market, many restaurants, and they sell food from their farming plots throughout the growing season. They grow a diverse array of seasonal vegetables using organic practices. Photo credit: Stone's Throw Urban Farm.



Urban Organics

Urban Organics farms with aquaponics, where fish and plants help each other grow in St. Paul at the former Hamm's Brewery. Urban Organics produce is available in select Lunds and Byerlys locations. All of the produce is 100% USDA certified organic. Photo credit: Urban Organics.



Resource Inventory

This section highlights many of the existing resources that support urban growers in Minnesota. The public had the opportunity to suggest additional resources through the urban agriculture survey and their responses have been categorized below.

This list is not exhaustive, but demonstrates the many resources that currently exist to support urban agriculture including state, regional, and national resources. Organizations may fit under multiple categories, but are only listed once. Links are provided in the footnotes for things that may not be found easily via search engine.

Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Resources

The MDA has several programs available to urban farmers and processors. These programs provide assistance to commercial ventures involving agricultural products grown or raised for sale. Urban agriculture projects related to non-commercial ventures such as community gardens, residential gardens designed to feed the producer or for donation are not eligible for MDA assistance.

[Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation Program \(AGRI\)](#)²⁷

The Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Program was established in Minn. Stat. 41A.12 to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries. Urban farmers are eligible to apply to several specific programs within AGRI and several urban agriculture projects have already been funded.

- **Value Added Grants.** These grants are available to assist in the purchase of equipment to create, upgrade, or modernize value added businesses. Examples of urban agriculture projects that have received a value added grant include:
 - Mississippi Mushrooms, LLC (Minneapolis): Equipment to meet requirements of GAP food safety plan and a retort-boiler to reduce crop loss and contamination
 - Garden Fresh Farms (Maplewood): Updated equipment to allow expansion of indoor lettuce production
 - Bare Honey, LLC (St. Paul): Bottling automation equipment to expand their markets for local honey
- **Livestock Investment Grants.** These grants are available to initiate or expand livestock production and processing. Although this program has not yet received an application for livestock facilities from an urban farmer, poultry and aquaponics production facilities within city limits would be eligible.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program.** These grants enhance the environmental, economic, and social sustainability of Minnesota farms through farmer-led on-farm research. Examples of urban agriculture projects that have received a Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant include:
 - Stone's Throw Urban Farm (Minneapolis and St. Paul locations): Comparing the production and profitability of heat-loving crops in high tunnel and quick hoop systems
 - Victoria Ranua (Minneapolis and St. Paul locations): Potential enterprise and sustainable disease management tool for honey beehives

²⁷ www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/agri.aspx

- **GAP Cost Share.** This program provides reimbursement of 75% of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) certification costs. All farms, including those within city limits, are eligible for this program.
- **Organic Certification Cost Share.** This program provides rebates of up to 75% of the cost of organic certification. All certified organic farms, including those within city limits, are eligible for this program. Examples of urban farms that have received this cost share include:
 - Stone's Throw Urban Farm (Minneapolis and St. Paul locations)
 - Mhonpaj's Garden (White Bear Lake)

[Minnesota Grown Program](#)

This program publishes an annual directory of farmers who sell directly to consumers. It includes farmers markets, CSA farms, apiaries and other urban agriculture operations. The program also maintains an online directory of farms that market to schools, restaurants, grocers, distributors, and other wholesale markets. Many members of the statewide Minnesota Grown Program are located within city limits.

Pesticide/Pest Management training

- Farm Chemical Safety workshops teach participants how to read, understand and follow pesticide label directions.
- Vegetable integrated pest management training topics taught:
 - Comparing conventional pest management to integrated pest management
 - General knowledge of insect, weed, and plant disease characteristics and how these pests are influenced by the climate
 - Identification of common insect pests of Minnesota grown vegetables
 - Identification of beneficial insects and how to attract them to gardens
 - How to scout for vegetable pests
 - How to recognize insect and plant disease injury on vegetable crops
 - Providing non-chemical methods of pest management: using insect row covers, organic weed mats, trap crops, crop rotation, companion crops for vegetables, date of planting to avoid pests
 - Pesticide safety, including correct personal protective equipment (PPE) to wear, how to launder clothes worn when applying pesticides, and where to purchase PPE locally.

Urban Farming Resources

[Farmers' Legal Action Group \(FLAG\)](#)

- A nonprofit law center dedicated to providing legal services and support to family farmers and their communities in order to help keep family farmers on the land

[The Food Group](#)

- Fruits of the City/Garden Gleaning program harvests surplus produce that would otherwise go to waste and shares it with food shelves
- Harvest for the Hungry program purchases produce from MN and WI farmers

[Frogtown Farm](#)

- A hub for a healthy food system that fills gaps in food production, storage, manufacturing, and distribution

[Hmong American Farmers Association](#)

- A nonprofit organization to serve, support and advocate for Hmong American farmers and their families.
- Economic development, capacity building, advocacy, and research

“Resources [for urban agriculture] are limited when you are looking for resources and information specific to rural areas of the state. Outside the Twin Cities, the access really takes a nose dive.” – Survey Respondent

[Land Stewardship Project \(LSP\)](#)

- Fosters an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promoting sustainable agriculture and developing healthy communities.
- Farm Beginnings – training for new farmers
- Focus on urban agriculture policy and programming

[Latino Economic Development Center](#)

- Works to establish, stabilize, and expand businesses through orientations, classes, development consulting, technical assistance, and access to capital for new, and existing entrepreneurs.
- Revitalize or develop community "public markets" and commercial corridors in the Twin Cities and rural Minnesota that allow for Latino businesses to fully participate in the business community.
- Create a process, and structure with which the Latino business community may access other institutions (such as banks, foundations, and elected officials)

[Minnesota Food Association \(MFA\)](#)

- MFA is working to build a more sustainable food system based on social, economic and environmental justice through education, training and partnerships.
- Farmer Training Program, primarily for immigrant and minority farmers
- Host annual Immigrant and Minority Farmers’ Conference

[Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture \(MISA\)](#)

- MISA brings together the diverse interests of the agricultural community with interests from across the University community in a cooperative effort to develop and promote sustainable agriculture in Minnesota and beyond.
- Publications, including resources on business planning, wholesale success, marketing, food handling, urban gardens, and soil contaminants

[Permaculture Research Institute \(PRI\)](#)

- Urban farming certification program, workshops and classes
- Education and resources for urban farmers

[Sustainable Farming Association](#)

- The Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota supports the development and enhancement of sustainable farming systems through farmer-to-farmer networking, innovation, demonstration, and education.

[Twin Cities Urban Ag Connection](#)

- List of resources, organizations and farms involved in urban agriculture (no longer updated)

Twin Cities Agricultural Land Trust

- Advocating for permanent access to quality land for food producers in the Twin Cities Metro

Ugly Food of the North

- An organization committed to making continuous improvements toward a more sustainable Fargo-Moorhead food system.
- Provide education on urban agriculture and food waste reduction, work with local farmers to promote local food, host policy discussions and community events.

University of Minnesota

- [Local Extension agents](#)²⁸ (in most counties in Minnesota) support agriculture with trainings and resources for business management, livestock and horticultural care
- [Healthy Food, Healthy Lives](#)²⁹ builds the University's capacity for research, learning and community engagement related to agriculture, food, and health
- [Master Gardeners](#)³⁰ provide growing expertise, garden education and troubleshooting advice
- [University of Minnesota - Soil Testing Laboratory](#)³¹
- [4-H program](#)³² provides hands on learning via short and long-term projects and activities, many related to agriculture, food, nutrition, and gardening
- [Bee Squad](#)³³ helps beekeepers and the community in the Twin Cities area foster healthy bee populations and pollinator landscapes through education and hands-on mentorship.
- [Minnesota Landscape Arboretum](#)³⁴ is a growing resource for horticultural information, plant conservation, research, and education

White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP)

- Host annual Indigenous Farming Conference
- Promote food sovereignty with Farm to School Curriculum and Indigenous Seed Library

Women's Environmental Institute

- Education and Networking: Growing Power Regional Outreach Training Center, Organic Farm School and Organic Farming 101
- Farm and food justice advocacy and research: Community Food Justice Council, Minnesota Women, Food and Agriculture Network, East Metro Environmental Justice Education and Action Collaborative

Community Gardening Resources

Gardening Matters

- Community garden resources and map
- Local Food Resources Hubs: offers community networking, skill-sharing, bulk seed and plant buying, and tool lending libraries for the metro area

²⁸ www.extension.umn.edu

²⁹ www.hfhl.umn.edu

³⁰ www.extension.umn.edu/garden/master-gardener

³¹ soiltest.cfans.umn.edu

³² www.extension.umn.edu/youth/mn4-h

³³ www.beelab.umn.edu/bee-squad

³⁴ www.arboretum.umn.edu

Yards to Gardens

- An online tool to find/share gardening space in neighbors' yards

Duluth Community Garden Program

- Offers support, classes and workshops for community gardens
- Provides support for school and youth garden programs, farm to school

Nonprofit Youth, Education and Support Programs

- [24th Street Urban Farm Coalition/Mashkiikii Gitigan](#)
- [Appetite for Change](#)
- [Bemidji Food Shelf and Urban Farm](#)
- [City Kid Farm/Urban Ventures](#)
- [Cornercopia Student Organic Farm](#)
- [Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota](#)
- [Hmong American Partnership](#)
- [Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy](#)
- [Midwest Food Connection](#)
- [Pollinate Minnesota](#)
- [Project Sweetie Pie](#)
- [Spark-Y](#)
- [Urban Farm and Garden Alliance](#)
- [Urban Oasis](#)
- [Urban Roots](#)
- [Youth Farm](#)

School Garden Resources

- [University of Minnesota Extension Farm to School³⁵](#)
- [Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom School Garden Guide³⁶](#)
- [Minnesota School Garden and Farm to Cafeteria Safety: A Food Safety Operations Manual³⁷](#)
- [Minnesota Schoolyard Garden Coalition³⁸](#)
- [Minnesota Schoolyard Garden Conference³⁹](#)
- [Minnesota Department of Health - SHIP⁴⁰](#)
- [Jeffers Foundation - school garden grants⁴¹](#)
- [Minneapolis School Garden Resource Page⁴²](#)

Other Resources

³⁵ www.extension.umn.edu/food/farm-to-school

³⁶ www.mda.state.mn.us/kids/gardenguide.aspx

³⁷ www.co.olmsted.mn.us/OCPHS/reports/Documents/SchoolGardenFoodSafetyLowRez_.pdf

³⁸ www.facebook.com/mnsgc

³⁹ www.arboretum.umn.edu/schoolyards2015.aspx

⁴⁰ www.health.state.mn.us/ship

⁴¹ www.jeffersfoundation.org/school-gardens-grants.php

⁴² www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-140356

[Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention](#)

- Developing a Food Access Planning Guide, expected Spring 2016

[Cass Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission](#)

- A joint effort of Fargo Cass Public Health, Clay County Public Health, and the extension services of Cass and Clay counties
- Tasked with examining the local food system and identifying ways to improve access to healthy, local, and affordable food for all residents.

[Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)

- [Urban Farm Business Plan Worksheet](#)⁴³
- [Brownfields and Urban Agriculture](#)⁴⁴
- [Reusing Potentially Contaminated Landscapes: Growing Gardens in Urban Soils](#)⁴⁵
- [Soil Health](#)⁴⁶

[Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative](#)

- An initiative aimed at dismantling racism and empowering low-income and communities of color through sustainable and local agriculture.

[Homegrown Minneapolis](#)

- A citywide initiative expanding the Minneapolis community's ability to grow, process, distribute, eat, and compost more healthy, sustainable, locally grown foods.
- Provides connective resources, inventory of opportunities for urban agriculture, and policy/advocacy at the local and state level

[Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture](#)

- Research and education center on the campus of Iowa State University created to identify and reduce negative environmental and social impacts of farming and develop new ways to farm profitably while conserving natural resources.
- Conducts research on ecological systems, marketing and food systems, policy, and cross-cutting issues that bridges all areas (water, energy, soil, alternative farming systems).

[Metro Food Access Network](#)

- Leverages collective capacity of partners to advance equitable access to healthy food for all Twin Cities metro residents.

[Minnesota Department of Health – Statewide Health Improvement Program \(SHIP\)](#)

- Funds community gardens, school based agriculture, farmers markets, healthy eating and physical activity projects
- Gardening in Urban Soil⁴⁷

⁴³ www.epa.gov/brownfields/urban-farm-business-plan-worksheets

⁴⁴ www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/bf_urban_ag.pdf

⁴⁵ www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-03/documents/urban_gardening_fina_fact_sheet.pdf

⁴⁶ www.epa.gov/brownfields/success/local_ag.pdf

⁴⁷ www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/hazardous/topics/gardurbsoil.html

Minnesota Food Charter

- Creating a Statewide Food Charter Network to support statewide data collection and implementation of the 99 Food Charter strategies
- Published a Healthy Equity Toolkit and other toolkits for specific stakeholders to address food access

Northside Fresh

- A collaboration of 30-35 community organizations and individuals committed to increasing healthy eating in North Minneapolis by improving access to fresh produce, programming, community change, and advocacy.

St. Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission

- A forum for public and private stakeholders to assess how local food systems are operating and suggest policies, share information and plan for increased access to safe, affordable and nutritious foods.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- Urban Agriculture [Resource list](#)⁴⁸
- [Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program \(CFPCGP\)](#)⁴⁹ provides grant dollars for projects that fight food insecurity and help promote the self-sufficiency of low-income communities. Food Project funds have supported food production projects, including urban agriculture.

Urban Guide to Farming in New York⁵⁰, Cornell University

- The guide is designed to inform urban farmers about advocating for urban agriculture, accessing and reclaiming land, producing food and farm products in city centers, marketing, financing, and other information they need to know to launch, continue, or expand their farm businesses.

Resources Suggested in Survey Responses

Survey respondents listed many of the resources included in this list, as well as entities that fall under the categories below:

- **Businesses:** Farm/garden stores/suppliers, food business incubation programs, landscape design firms, cooperative models, urban farms
- **Community organizations/groups:** Churches, community gardens, libraries, local garden clubs, indigenous groups, neighborhood organizations
- **Distribution and marketing channels:** grocers, farm to table restaurants, farmers markets, food hubs, food shelves/banks
- **Education:** Higher Education programs, Ag Ed programs, FFA, K-12 Farm to School programs
- **Funders:** public, private, and foundation financial supporters
- **Government:** Local government/municipalities (Council members, environmental/composting programs, League of Minnesota Cities, public health departments), urban/regional planners (American Planning Association - MN Chapter)

⁴⁸ afsic.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-community/urban-agriculture

⁴⁹ nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program

⁵⁰ www.nebeginningfarmers.org/resources/guides/urban-farming

- **Hospitals and health care organizations**
- **Listserves:** Twin Cities Chickens listserv, Twin Cities Urban Farmer Google Group, Urban Farmers Listserv, Bee Keepers Group, ComGar, Sustag
- **Member/Professional Associations:** Minnesota State Horticultural Society, Minnesota Farmers Union, American Society of Landscape Architects – MN, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association, Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota School Nutrition Association, professional organizations
- **Networks:** Homegrown South, Master Water Stewards, Metro Food Access Network, Northside Healthy Eating Project, Transition Town, Green Lands Blue Waters
- **Research:** Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

Existing Policies that Address Urban Agriculture

Much of the research on urban agriculture highlights policies and planning guidelines to help municipalities support urban agriculture. Local governments play a big role in promoting or prohibiting urban agriculture. Some states have policies that promote urban agriculture, but the details regarding zoning and regulation happen largely within local municipalities. This can create difficulty when there are conflicting policies in adjoining areas or when planning isn't regionally coordinated. The American Planning Association's feature on urban agriculture offers the following as cities' role in promoting urban agriculture:

- “1) To address urban agriculture as a component of land-use and food policy in planning processes;
- 2) To create, enable, or fund community garden programs and urban agriculture organizations; and
- 3) To create zoning and permitting processes that are friendly to urban agriculture.”⁵¹

Minneapolis, St. Paul, Dakota County, and Cass/Clay Counties recently conducted urban agriculture policy discussions and developed policies based on public input. Urban agriculture is also addressed in the Thrive MSP 2040 Metropolitan Council Strategic Plan. This section provides an overview of policies that currently exist in Minnesota as well as examples of city and state policies outside of Minnesota developed to promote urban agriculture. This is not an exhaustive list, but provides a sampling of existing policies that address urban agriculture in a variety of ways.

Minnesota Policies

Bemidji

- **Community gardens:** Garden(s) or on-site food production: Permanent and viable growing space and/or facilities such as a greenhouse or a garden conservatory at a minimum of 60 square feet per dwelling unit to a maximum required area of 5,000 square feet, which provide fencing, watering systems, soil, secured storage space for tools, solar access, and pedestrian access as applicable. The facility shall be designed to be architecturally compatible with the development and to minimize the visibility of mechanical equipment.
- **Small animals:** Domestic farm animals allowed without a permit if the parcel contains a minimum of 3 contiguous acres with adequate fencing, covered shelter. Allowed with permit on less than 3 acres if all animals are maintained in healthy and sanitary condition, animals may not exceed 25 pounds with less than 1.5-acre total parcel size, and 50 pounds on parcels 1.5-2.9-acre total parcel size.⁵²

Cass Clay Food Systems Advisory Commission Blue Print Topics⁵³

- [Community Gardens](#)
- [Bees](#)
- [Chickens](#)

⁵¹ [Zoning for Urban Agriculture. American Planning Association, *Zoning Practice*, Mukherji and Morales, 2010](#)

⁵² [Greater Bemidji Area Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance](#), Revised May 8, 2013

⁵³ www.cityoffargo.com/CityInfo/Departments/Health/Resources/CassClayFoodSystemsInitiative/CCFSABlueprints.aspx

Dakota County

- [Dakota County Food Systems Policy Analysis Summary](#)⁵⁴

Denmark Township, Washington County

- Development Code Chapter 2, Part 3, Section 4: Open Space Design **permits demonstration farms, community gardens, and composting** as permitted open-space uses within conservation subdivisions.⁵⁵

Duluth

- The Unified Development Chapter of the City of Duluth Legislative Code **defines urban agriculture** as “the raising of crops and small livestock primarily for local sustenance, rather than commercial purposes, for sale and consumption within the immediate Duluth/Superior area.”
- **Small livestock** includes rabbits, chickens (not roosters), bees, fish and similar creatures at a scale that do not impact the surrounding residential uses and after having obtained any required State or City permits. This definition does not include hooved creatures of any size.⁵⁶

Minneapolis

- [Minneapolis Urban Agriculture Ordinance and Zoning](#)⁵⁷
- [City of Minneapolis Community Garden, Market Garden and Urban Farm Policy](#)⁵⁸
- [Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board Urban Agriculture Activity Plan](#)⁵⁹

Rochester

- **Community gardens** are available for rent through [Rochester Parks and Recreation](#)⁶⁰
- **Chickens**: Allows for backyard chickens with common restrictions (must have a permit, no more than three hens, no roosters, coop requirements, sanitation requirements, etc.)

St. Paul

- [Saint Paul Urban Agriculture Ordinance](#)⁶¹
- **Hoop houses** are considered accessory buildings, regulated under section 63.501 of the city code.
- Frogtown Farm and Park was purchased by the City of St. Paul with assistance from the Trust for Public Land in 2013. A new public park comprises 12.7 acres of the land and 5 acres is leased to Frogtown Farm for urban agriculture use.⁶²

⁵⁴ homegrowsouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Summary-Guide-October-20-2015-Final-2.pdf

⁵⁵ [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#), American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 563, Hodgson, Campbell and Bailkey, 2011 (p.126)

⁵⁶ www.duluthmn.gov/media/389988/UDC-Interpretation-15-01-small-livestock-in-urban-agriculture.pdf

⁵⁷ www.minneapolismn.gov/sustainability/homegrown/WCMS1P-140395

⁵⁸ www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@citycoordinator/documents/webcontent/wcms1p-152131.pdf

⁵⁹ www.minneapolisparcs.org/asset/15kfy0/urban_ag_activity_plan.pdf

⁶⁰ www.rochestermn.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/rentals-reservations/garden-plots

⁶¹ www.stpaul.gov/departments/safety-inspections/city-information-complaints/resident-handbook/zoning/urban-farms

⁶² frogtownfarm.org/plan/

Thrive MSP 2040 - Metropolitan Council Strategic Plan⁶³

- Enhancing Livability: Promoting healthy communities and active living through land use, planning, and investments, “Recognize opportunities for urban agriculture and small-scale food production.” (p.55)
- Land Use Policies by Community Designation/Urban Area/ Community Role: “Recognize opportunities for urban agriculture and small-scale food production.” (p.144)

Examples from Other States

Zoning/Ordinances

- Chicago and Milwaukee are in the process of creating **overlay districts** with language to encourage urban agriculture incubator businesses as a tool for urban revitalization.⁶⁴
- Seattle, WA: Urban farms in residential zones must apply for a **conditional use permit**. The applicant must provide a proposed farm management plan that includes a site plan, the type and intended use of equipment, the type and use of pesticides or other agricultural chemicals to be used, whether the farm will require drainage approval, a proposed sediment and soil erosion plan, and any required mitigation measures.⁶⁵
- Boston, MA: Enacted an **ordinance to create community garden open space sub districts**, allowing community gardens to receive the same protections as other open space uses.⁶⁵
- Chicago, IL: Recently adopted changes to the **Chicago Zoning Ordinance** allowing agricultural uses like community gardens and urban farms in many parts of the city.⁶⁶
- Detroit, MI: Urban agriculture amendments to Detroit’s zoning ordinance in April 2013 allow for greater use of vacant land for urban agriculture.⁶⁷
- New York City is leading the way in **rooftop growing** thanks to the Zone Green text amendment which passed in 2012.⁶⁸

Tax incentives

- [Texas House Bill 2998](#) (2011): Provides ad valorem **tax relief for urban farms and green roofs**.⁶⁹
- California: legislation passed several years ago to give **tax breaks to landlords committing to urban agriculture** on their land⁷⁰

Land banks/trusts

- Cuyahoga County, OH: In January 2009, the Ohio legislature authorized a **county-wide land bank** to acquire tax-delinquent properties in Cuyahoga County, which includes Cleveland and adjacent suburbs. Cleveland hopes to acquire the vacant land and put some of it to use for agricultural purposes. Columbus is also developing community gardens on land bank properties it has acquired. A land bank is a governmental entity that takes titles to tax-delinquent property,

⁶³ www.metrocouncil.org/METC/files/63/6347e827-e9ce-4c44-adff-a6afd8b48106.pdf

⁶⁴ [Zoning for Urban Agriculture. American Planning Association, Zoning Practice](#), Mukherji and Morales, 2010

⁶⁵ [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), Change Lab Solutions, October 2011

⁶⁶ www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/urban_agriculturefaq.html

⁶⁷ www.law.msu.edu/clinics/food/busdickerfact.pdf

⁶⁸ www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/greenbuildings/index.shtml

⁶⁹ www.farmlandinfo.org/texas-house-bill-2998-2011

⁷⁰ ucanr.edu/sites/UrbanAg/Laws_Zoning_and_Regulations/The_Urban_Agriculture_Incentive_Zones_Act_AB551/

secures the property, and transfers it back to private ownership with a clear title, so that the property can be put to productive (and tax-paying) use.⁷¹

- Madison, WI: Troy Gardens is an example of a **conservation easement** established over property owned by the Madison Area Community Land Trust to protect land for use as a community garden. **Land trusts** are nonprofit entities that work to conserve land by assisting in land or conservation easement acquisition or by managing the land or easements.⁷¹
- Flint, MI: The **Genesee County Land Bank's** mission is to restore value to the community by acquiring, developing and selling vacant and abandoned properties in cooperation with stakeholders who value responsible land ownership. Whether you are looking to beautify your neighborhood, mow the lot down the street, or need more room to grow your own food, the Land Bank is dedicated to making its lots available for greening and gardening desires.⁷²

Education, training and other support

- The Baltimore City Urban Agriculture department of University of Maryland Extension provides **educational resources, conducts trainings, and helps city residents with technical assistance** in urban farming, community gardens/greening, school gardens/farms, home gardening, and environmental stewardship.⁷³
- Missouri established the **Joint Committee on Urban Farming** to study (1) Trends in urban farming, including vertical farming, urban farm cooperatives, and sustainable living communities; (2) Existing services, resources, and capacity for such urban farming; (3) The impact on communities and populations affected; and (4) Any needed state legislation, policies, or regulations.⁷⁴
- Los Angeles, CA: **The Good Food Purchasing Program** (GFPP) provides clear standards and strategic support to empower major institutions to procure local, sustainable, fair, and humanely produced foods, while improving access to healthy, high-quality food for all communities. GFPP was developed by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council in 2012, and the City of Los Angeles became the first institution to adopt it on October 24, 2012. Just weeks later, the Los Angeles Unified School District—which serves 650,000 meals each day and is the largest food purchaser in Los Angeles—became the second institution to sign on.⁷⁵
- [U.S. House Bill 4971](#): The **Greening Food Deserts Act** (2010) creates a Department of Urban Agriculture, expands the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, provides infrastructure funding for farmers' markets and provides technical assistance for backyard conservation and community garden programs. The bill also requires further evaluation of farmers' markets in the Census of Agriculture.⁷⁶
- [Urban Agriculture State Legislation examples](#) (National Conference of State Legislatures, February 2014): Highlights fourteen states that have created statewide legislation to support urban agriculture (i.e. urban agriculture zones, local food advisory councils, incentives for urban gardening programs, tax credits for urban agricultural property, urban farm microenterprise support program)⁷⁷ (See appendix for summary)

⁷¹ [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), Change Lab Solutions, October 2011

⁷² www.thelandbank.org/

⁷³ extension.umd.edu/baltimore-city/urban-agriculture

⁷⁴ www.farmlandinfo.org/missouri-joint-committee-urban-farming-statute

⁷⁵ lacity.cityofla.acsitefactory.com/sites/g/files/wph281/f/mayorvillaraigosa331283141_10242012.pdf

⁷⁶ www.farmlandinfo.org/sites/default/files/US_House_4971_1.pdf

⁷⁷ www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-and-rural-development/urban-agriculture-state-legislation.aspx

- [Ten cities with urban agriculture policies](#): e.g., zoning code/ordinance, food council, policy, urban agriculture plan⁷⁸ (See appendix for summary)
- [Models highlighted by the Council of State Governments](#)⁷⁹
 - **Land Banks**: enacting new state laws that let local jurisdictions create entities that can accept titles to vacant properties and help find a new use for them (Ohio and Michigan).
 - **Cottage food laws**: free small-scale producers from some health and food-safety rules. One result of these laws is that urban gardeners are able to directly sell their produce and/or products containing ingredients from their gardens (for example, the Minnesota Cottage Food Law⁸⁰).
 - **Statewide food-policy council**: recommends policy language on ordinances related to beekeeping and backyard chickens, for example, or identifies outdated land-use regulations or restrictive zoning codes (Illinois and Michigan).

Policy/Planning Research and Best Practices

- [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), includes model Comprehensive Plan language for urban agriculture⁸¹
- [Municipal Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa: A Guidebook for Reducing Local Regulatory Barriers to Local Foods](#)⁸²
- [Farmland Information Center list of Urban Agriculture laws](#)⁸³
- [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#)⁸⁴

Summary

The examples and resources in this section provide an overview of local and state policies that support urban agriculture. There is a wealth of research on best practices for policy and zoning to support urban agriculture. The resources above offer guidance and sample wording for how to incorporate and address urban agriculture in policy.

⁷⁸ seedstock.com/2014/05/27/10-american-cities-lead-the-way-with-urban-agriculture-ordinances/

⁷⁹ www.csgmidwest.org/policyresearch/1112qom.aspx

⁸⁰ www.mda.state.mn.us/cottagefood

⁸¹ [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), Change Lab Solutions, October 2011 (p.17-39)

⁸² blogs.extension.iastate.edu/planningBLUZ/files/2012/01/MUNICIPAL-ZONING-FOR-LOCAL-FOODS-in-IA.pdf

⁸³ www.farmlandinfo.org/law?field_law_category_tid=All&field_topic_tid=272&field_state_tid=All

⁸⁴ www.planning.org/store/product/?ProductCode=BOOK_P563

Barriers

Introduction

Before discussing policy options, a better understanding of the key barriers that face urban agriculture in Minnesota is necessary. We tried to separate out the barriers unique to urban agriculture, but many of the challenges remain consistent between urban and rural agriculture. This section illustrates the biggest challenges facing urban growers according to multiple sources.

National Literature

Researchers Jerry Kaufman (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Martin Bailkey (Community & Regional Food Systems Project) organize the obstacles facing urban agriculture into four broad categories:

- 1) Site-related
 - Contaminated soils
 - Vandalism
 - Lack of long-term land access
- 2) Government-related
 - Policy, practicality, and perception – where agriculture is not seen as the “highest and best use” of urban land. Agriculture is still viewed as a rural, not an urban, activity by many government agencies.
 - Lack of investment, acceptance or even prohibition of urban agriculture activities.
- 3) Procedure-related
 - Financing, staffing, partnerships, time, site coordination, business planning– the many things that make small-scale entrepreneurial projects challenging to succeed.
- 4) Perception-related
 - Many of the obstacles listed above are linked back to negative perceptions of urban agriculture among government entities as well as the public.⁸⁵

Funding remains a large barrier to the success of urban agriculture. Research on the economic returns of for-profit urban agriculture show that most models produce modest revenues.⁸⁶ While there are many examples of urban agriculture that have had economic success across the country, it remains true that it is difficult to make a living on farming alone, whether it takes place in an urban or rural environment. A lack of available funding for urban growers has been an obstacle to realizing the potential for urban agriculture in community development – with missed opportunities at public housing, schools, and in other public spaces (p.34).⁸⁶

As stated in the background section, urban agriculture has been promoted and funded by local, state, and federal government in the past, but programs ended when funding ended. USDA’s plan to include urban agriculture in the next Agriculture Census may again create more support and validation for urban agriculture. As interest in urban agriculture continues to grow, policymakers and planners will need to gain a better understanding of its economic potential, which is currently the least-documented aspect of urban agriculture (p.84).⁸⁶

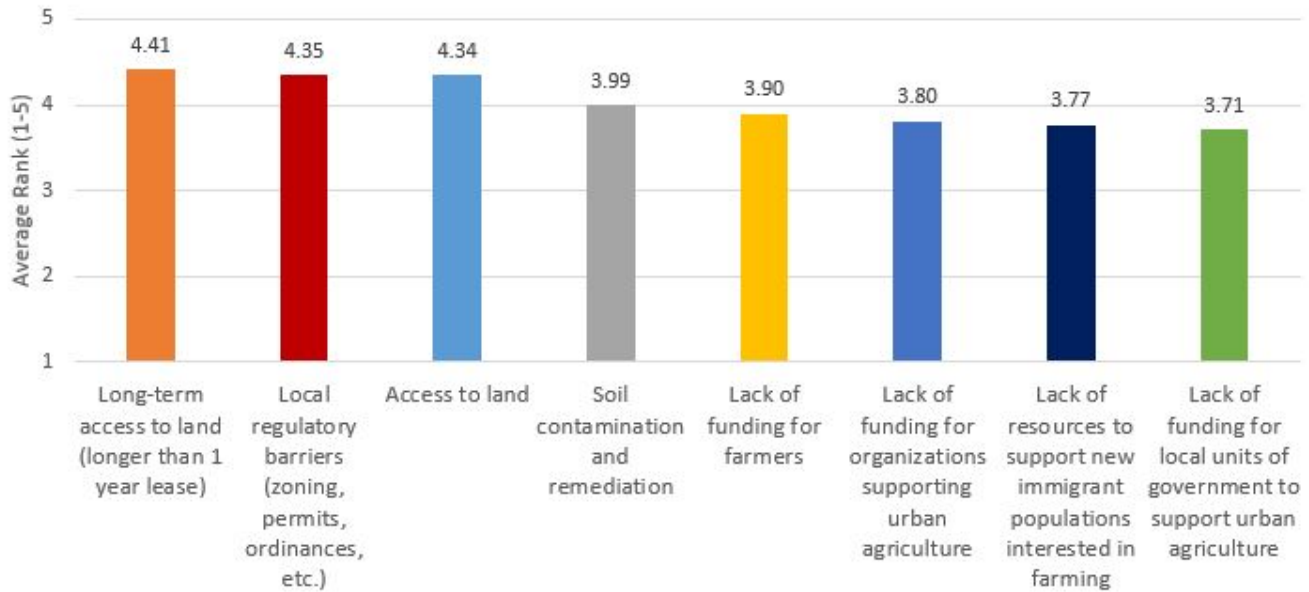
⁸⁵ “Farming Inside Cities: Entrepreneurial Urban Agriculture in the United States.” Working Paper, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Kaufman J and Bailkey M (2000) (p.54-65)

⁸⁶ [Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places](#), American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service Report Number 563, Hodgson, Campbell and Bailkey, 2011

Public Input

The survey responses in Figure 9 describe the biggest barriers to urban agriculture identified by Minnesota stakeholders. Land access, regulatory barriers, soil contamination and a lack of funding for urban farmers and support organizations were the biggest challenges named. It is important to note that many of the organizations currently involved in urban agriculture are nonprofit or community groups, and are thus competing for limited public funds and/or relying on grant funding. Of the 390 survey responses, more than 360 people selected land access (especially long-term land access) and local regulatory barriers as the largest barriers facing urban agriculture.

Figure 9. What are the biggest barriers unique to urban agriculture?



Generally, comments from survey respondents reflected what was presented in the national literature. Some of their unique comments listed under the category “other” included:

- Financial system doesn’t prioritize local food; lack of incentives to get involved from profitability and government support;
- Inadequate access to infrastructure, equipment (water, produce storage, food hubs, transportation of materials, etc.), and a successful model for sustained production/resource management;
- Lack of agricultural knowledge in urban areas;
- Un-level playing field – urban agriculture doesn’t receive subsidies received by other forms of agriculture or land;
- Lack of outreach/support for certain communities: Indigenous Native American farmers, formerly incarcerated, people with physical disabilities;
- Lack of organized data collection throughout entire food system;
- “Lack of vision in converting vacant lots in low income areas to job-producing, food providing farming trusts.”

Comments from the public meetings further elaborate on these barriers:

- Perceptions
 - Poor understanding of urban agriculture and related issues among the general public
 - Difficult to communicate the economic impact of urban agriculture – framing it as a public benefit
 - Perceived safety concerns by the public (bees, food safety, aquaculture)
 - Urban/rural divide - create a local food system where they complement one another
- Regulations
 - Regulations are too big for the scale of urban agriculture – they need to be right-sized
 - Local government can't regulate agriculture
 - Composting regulations – the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) categorizes it as solid waste, not as a fertility resource
 - City limits are expanding
 - Ag land preservation laws discourage small parcels
 - Existence of corporate farm law is a challenge for smaller, cooperative, nonprofit models
 - Cooperative purchase of land is not currently allowed
 - Ability to understand/get through all the hoops of local regulations
 - Regulations limit amount and kind of production possible (hoophouse size and status as temporary structure, small animal limitations, etc.)
- Access to capital
 - No targeted funding for urban agriculture
 - High insurance costs
 - Fiscal disparities among different communities
 - Lack of subsidies and measure of externalities (e.g., impact of rural ag on environment)
 - Difficult to transition from no money for urban ag to creating jobs
 - Differences in economic development between cities based on tax base that doesn't support regionally
- Infrastructure
 - Bureaucratic silos (e.g., MDA, MDH, MPCA)
 - Access to transportation for growers
 - Inadequate technical assistance/resources: lack of expertise to develop lease arrangements, lack of agreed upon best management practices and integrated pest management
 - Comparatively difficult to market fruits and vegetables compared to row-crop commodities
- Growers are not engaged in economic development conversations
- Short growing season
- History of land foreclosures – right historical wrongs

*“Instead of looking at ‘urban’ agriculture, just focus on local agriculture in communities of all sizes”
-Survey respondent*

Summary

The main barriers to urban agriculture remained consistent across the literature and the survey responses, public meetings and conversations that we had. Economic, cultural, political, regulatory, and environmental barriers along with a lack of access to land, resources, and knowledge create a challenging environment for urban agriculture to succeed.

Policy Options

In this section, we present a number of policy options to consider. They were identified in the national literature and through public input as best practices for promoting urban agriculture.

National Literature

Local governments play one of the most important roles in promoting or inhibiting urban agriculture through planning policy. The first task should be to reexamine existing policies that act as barriers to urban agriculture.⁸⁷ To create new and effective urban agriculture policies, experts suggest that local governments should consider where and what forms of urban agriculture should be allowed, whether it will be allowed as “permitted” or “conditional” use, and what operating standards and conditions should be placed on urban agriculture activities.⁸⁸

The Community Food Security Coalition outlines the following policy options for supporting urban agriculture:

- “Support infrastructure for increased urban food production, processing, and marketing;
- Extend appropriate farm-related services and opportunities to urban growers;
- Support initiatives that convert idle and under-used urban lands and other resources for raising food, and preserve farms on the urban fringe;
- Promote and develop urban food growing training activities; and,
- Sponsor and publicize research on the horticultural, social, and economic factors that contribute to successful urban agriculture projects.”⁸⁹

State-level policy options from the Community Food Security Coalition, Policy Link, and other urban agriculture researchers include:

- Enact legislation and provide funds for programs to promote urban agriculture that support the local and regional food systems;
- Promote policy initiatives and vision statements to guide development, investments, and legislation,⁹⁰ building off of the Minnesota Food Charter’s comprehensive vision which includes strategies for addressing multiple aspects of the food system in Minnesota, including urban agriculture;
- Review and/or modify state regulations that complicate small-scale production, such as agriculture in urban areas, to better accommodate entrepreneurship and access to healthy foods in low-income areas;
- Promote extension services that support urban agriculture.⁹¹ The University of Minnesota has a strong extension program with educators in almost every county in the state. Equipping these

⁸⁷ [Zoning for Urban Agriculture. American Planning Association, Zoning Practice](#), Mukherji and Morales, 2010

⁸⁸ [Seeding the City: Land Use Policies to Promote Urban Agriculture](#), Change Lab Solutions, October 2011

⁸⁹ [Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center To the Urban Fringe](#), Urban Agriculture Committee of the Community Food Security Coalition, Katherine H. Brown, 2002

⁹⁰ [Growing Urban Agriculture: Equitable Strategies and Policies for Improving Access to Healthy Food and Revitalizing Communities](#). Hagey, Rice and Flourney, PolicyLink, 2012

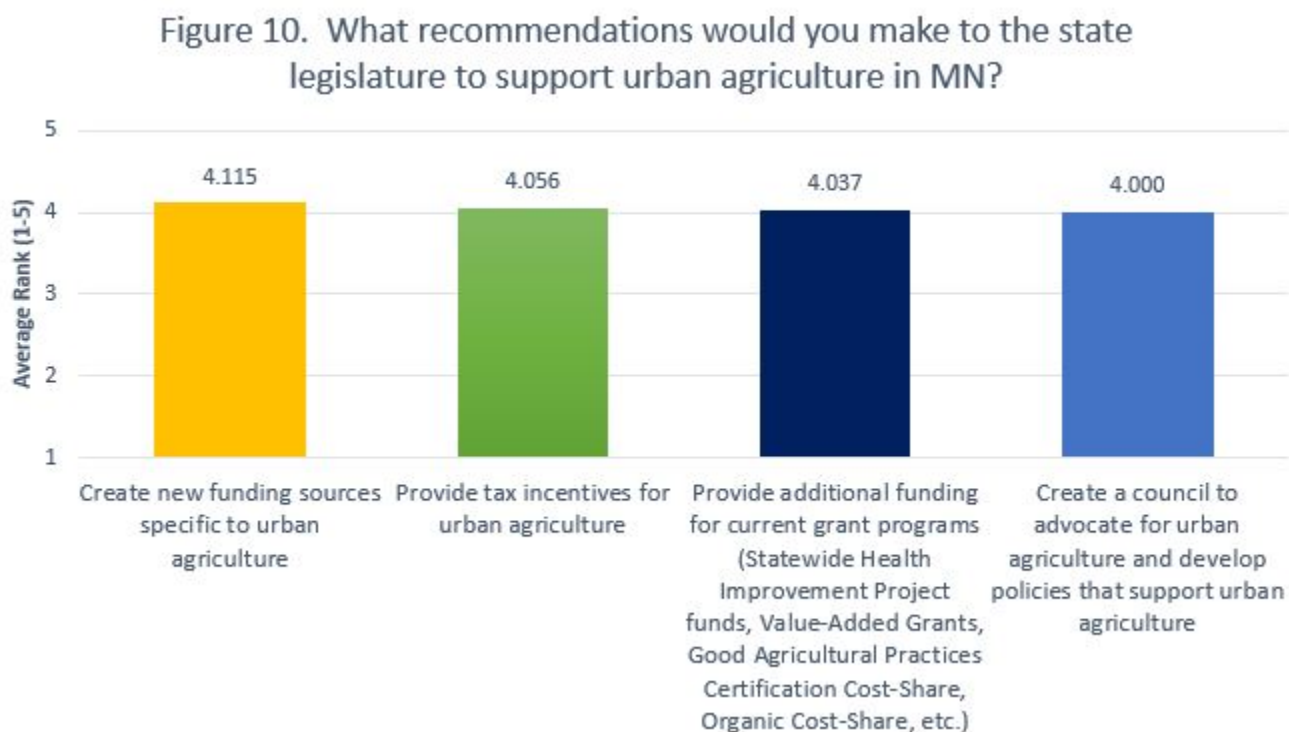
⁹¹ “Farming Inside Cities: Entrepreneurial Urban Agriculture in the United States.” Working Paper, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Kaufman J and Bailkey M (2000) (p.81)

extension offices with training and expertise on urban agriculture could support the growth of urban agriculture activities throughout the state.

- Create stronger and more direct linkages between farmers and urban consumers.⁸³

Public Input

Figure 10 summarizes survey responses addressing opportunities to support and promote urban agriculture. Options included creating new funding sources for urban agriculture, providing tax incentives, increasing current grant funding, and creating a statewide advocacy council. Respondents also had the opportunity to add other options. There was not one option that stood out over the others in response to the following questions.



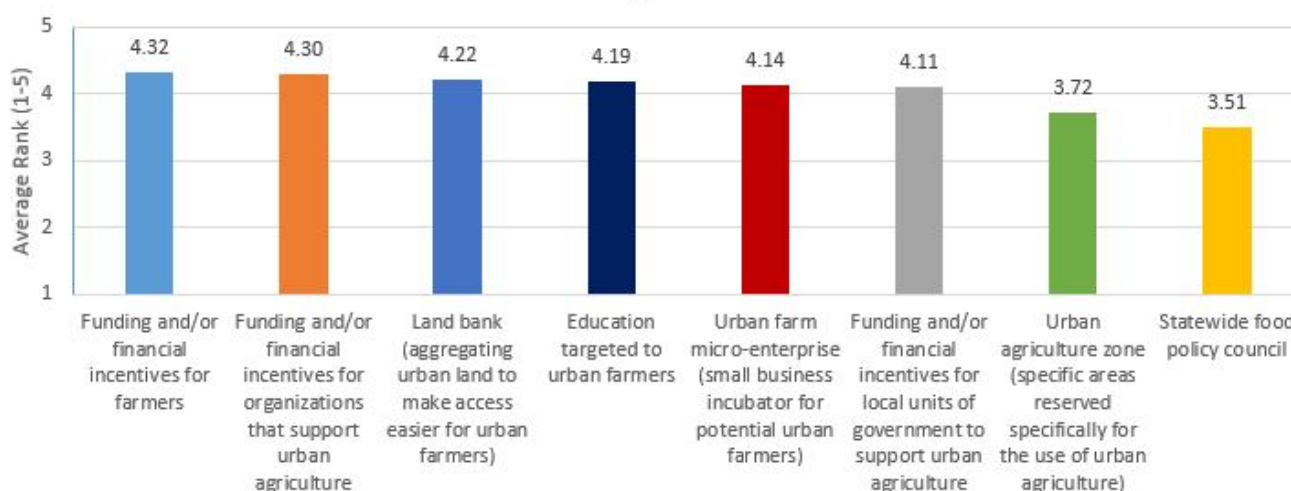
Comments listed under the field “other” included similar policy options that were identified in the national literature. Unique comments included:

- Continued and new stable sources of funding for urban agriculture and food systems, including funding to address contaminated soils, tax incentives for farmers and local governments that encourage urban agriculture, and incentives for improving local markets;
- Use other options to make land available, including securing easements and encouraging use of rooftops and open land on corporate campuses, creating land trusts, make vacant public land available;
- Develop and share the story of potential impact;
- Develop infrastructure, shared facilities, technical assistance and training;
- Level the playing field between urban and rural farmers;
- Prioritize sustainable and organic growing;
- Use the Minnesota Food Charter Network and public health policy to support and guide urban agriculture;
- Balance metro area with out-state representation if a council or funding is created;

- “Support initiatives for rural communities, regardless of population, to improve food security”; and
- “Expand the food sampling exemption for food shelves and other entities providing locally-sourced food to low-income populations.”

Figure 11 provides more detailed options for promoting urban agriculture, including funding for farmers, support organizations and government, providing education, and creating a land bank, micro-enterprise, urban agriculture zone, and statewide food policy council. The responses showed a slight priority for funding going directly to farmers or support organizations, aggregating and making land more accessible, and providing education over other options.

Figure 11. Which of the following would be most beneficial to promote urban agriculture?



Comments listed in response to the category “other” elaborated on the categories above and offered some alternative options:

- Clearinghouse for information and resources, agricultural mapping projects;
- Include urban agriculture in comprehensive planning, use consistent language statewide;
- Education on business skills, financial planning, marketing, food safety, mentorship, school gardens, gardens for education and health, open school kitchens for food businesses/community meal programs, normalize urban agriculture, promote backyard gardens;
- Financial incentives for diverse farmers, access to small loans, land taxed based on basis of use, price supports/crop insurance at a small scale – level playing field between urban ag and commodity crops;
- Find ways to use land in highest and best use – vertical/rooftop/warehouse growing, aquaculture;
- Land access including long-term, ownership, protection from speculation, land trust, urban ag zone without limiting urban ag elsewhere, land banks on edge of urban areas, temporary urban ag on land being held for development, urban soil remediation;
- Markets including food hubs, food sampling exemptions, incentives for businesses/institutions to purchase local foods, investment in farmers markets;
- Changes in zoning to allow for infrastructure such as hoop houses, farm stands, pop-up markets, publicly run compost site, access to water, alternative energy greenhouses;

- Collaboration and programming that links urban and rural farmers;
- Keep government out of the way; and
- Urban ag zones were not favored by some, thinking that they would be limiting to more widespread urban agriculture.

Additional recommendations unique to public meeting feedback include:

- Funding
 - Improve financing mechanisms to make land purchasing more feasible
 - Provide funding for research and development on growing methods and best practices
- Communications/Collaboration
 - Collect data quantifying the benefits of urban ag (economic impact, health impact, etc.) to inform policy
 - Mobilize political support
 - Recognize shared interests among government agencies and educational institutions and work collaboratively
- Regulation
 - Encourage incorporation of urban agriculture and food-system policies in comprehensive plans
 - Encourage and provide guidance for updating of land-use and building regulations to allow and promote urban agriculture
 - Allow cities to assume regulation of agriculture within their borders, allow local ordinances to govern
- Support
 - Support initiatives within tribal communities
 - Incorporate agriculture/urban agriculture into public education

Concerns

The feedback we received through this process brought out many supporters of urban agriculture. It is important to note however that urban agriculture is not universally supported. Several responders agreed that funding for urban agriculture should not come at the expense of rural agriculture programs. This supports other comments that expressed an interest in finding ways to support urban agriculture that complement rural agriculture without further dividing resources between urban and rural communities.

Summary

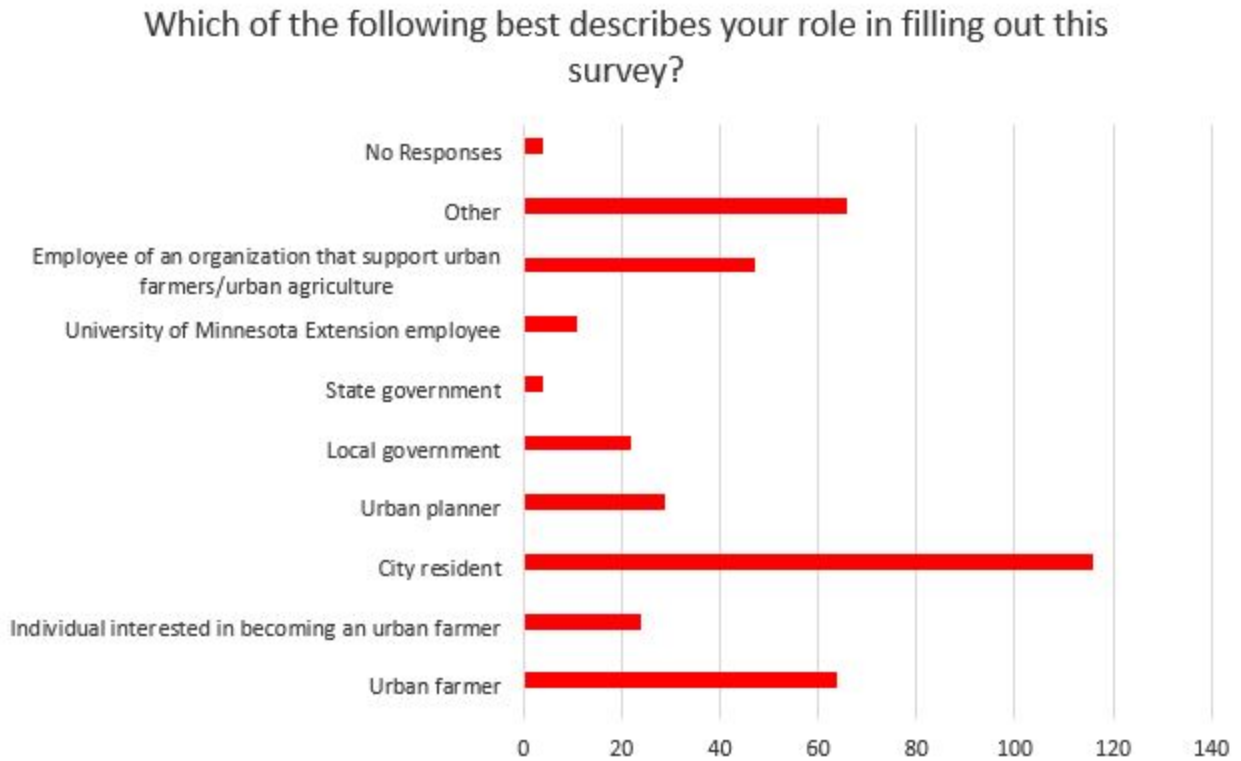
Stakeholders named several policy options to support and promote urban agriculture throughout the state. Regulatory barriers could be addressed by clarifying, streamlining or eliminating outdated policies that restrict urban agriculture activities. Dedicated funding for urban agriculture could come in the form of tax incentives for urban farmers or landowners making their land available for urban agriculture. Funding could also go to organizations or government to support urban agriculture. Responders named a need for more resources, information, support, access to land, and regulations that allow for a diverse range of urban agriculture to be practiced. Given the timing of updating comprehensive plans in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, policy changes could be included to improve access for urban agriculture. Opportunities also exist to build collaboration across the urban/rural divide, and to find a place for urban agriculture in the broader food system.

Conclusion

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture offers the following for consideration in establishing policy to promote urban agriculture:

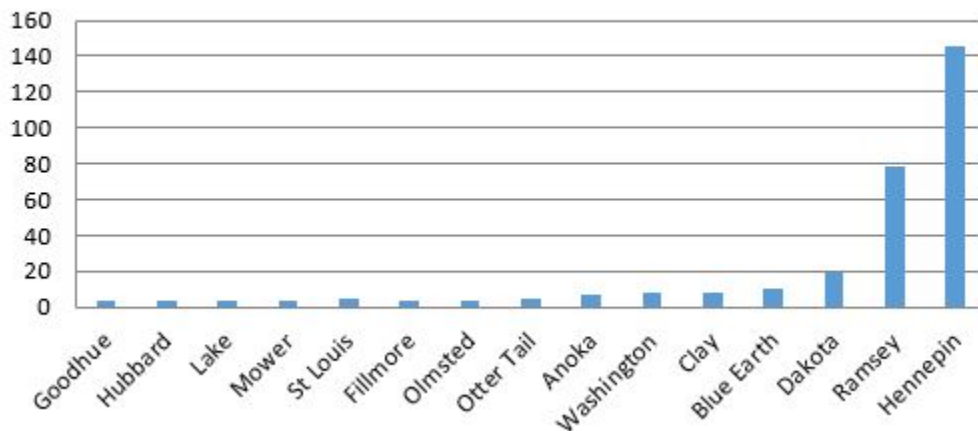
1. The subject of urban agriculture spans the missions of a number of state agencies and institutions. For-profit urban agriculture is consistent with the mission of the MDA, while other forms of urban agriculture better fit the missions of other agencies and institutions: gardening and self-provisioning, University of Minnesota Extension; initiatives to improve health, support community gardens, school based agriculture, and food access, the Minnesota Department of Health; initiatives to serve disadvantaged groups or bolster economic development, the Minnesota Department of Human Services or the Department of Employment and Economic Development; and so on.
2. Urban agriculture is a broad term. Each separate law or rule relating to urban agriculture must include its own specific definition of the term in order to avoid confusion and exclusion.
3. Although strong support for urban agriculture exists among many members of the public, support is not universal. More importantly, as with most public policy, unintended adverse consequences can result and any policy to promote urban agriculture needs to be carefully considered and constructed to avoid such consequences.
4. Policy options to promote urban agriculture include:
 - a. **Comprehensive Planning:** Encourage local municipalities to include urban agriculture language in comprehensive planning and zoning revisions. Local governments in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area are required to review, and amend where necessary, their comprehensive plans, fiscal devices, and official controls (land-use regulations), and submit updates to the Metropolitan Council for Council review (MS 473.851-473.871) by December 31, 2018. The comprehensive planning requirement presents an opportunity to include and address urban agriculture and food systems in local comprehensive plans in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area.
 - b. **Funding:** As interest in urban agriculture continues to grow, policymakers and planners will need to gain a better understanding of its potential economic impact. There are opportunities to create incentives for local governments to promote urban agriculture through tax incentives, funding for urban growers and organizations that support urban agriculture, and local food purchasing incentives for large institutions such as state departments, school districts, hospitals, etc.
 - c. **Land Access:** Explore opportunities to provide long-term land access by making publicly owned land available for urban agriculture, creating land banks or land trusts, and/or offering funding to remediate contaminated urban land.
 - d. **Regulatory Barriers:** Address regulatory barriers by examining and modifying existing policies that stand in the way of urban agriculture. Encourage local units of government to evaluate their zoning and planning policies to allow for urban agriculture.

Appendix A. Survey Respondent Demographics and Instrument



Other: rural farmer, backyard farmer, educator, volunteer, master gardener, gardener, board member of nonprofit, community gardener, student, researcher, agribusiness representative

County of Survey Respondents



One or two responses from: Becker, Cass, Chisago, Crow Wing, Douglas, Granite Falls, Marshall, Meeker, Norman, Rice, Scott, Stearns, Swift, Wabasha, Wadena, Winona

Minnesota Urban Agriculture Survey

Please fill out this survey to help the Minnesota Department of Agriculture better understand the key issues currently facing urban agriculture in the state. Online survey available at bit.ly/mnurbanag

Background: In 2015, the Minnesota State Legislature passed the Omnibus Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Finance Bill – SF5 – Special Session Chapter 4, Art. 2, Sec. 85, urban agriculture proposal which states the following: “The Commissioner of Agriculture must convene interested stakeholders and develop a proposal to effectively and efficiently promote urban agriculture in Minnesota cities. For purposes of this section, “urban agriculture” means producing agricultural plants, poultry, or livestock on public or private property within city limits. No later than January 15, 2016, the Commissioner must report to the legislative committees with jurisdiction over agriculture policy and finance and submit proposed legislation that includes a new definition of urban agriculture if the commissioner and stakeholders determine that a different definition more accurately defines urban agriculture.”

1. What products would you include in the definition of urban agriculture? (Check all that apply)

- Food items
- Non-food items (i.e. flowers, trees/nursery, medicinal plants, etc.)
- Apiaries/bees
- Aquaponics (fish)
- Small animals (chickens, goats, turkeys, etc.)
- Compost
- Other: _____

2. Which of the following would you include in the definition of urban agriculture? (Check all that apply)

- Items grown for sale
- Items grown for educational purposes
- Items grown for personal use
- Items grown to donate
- Other: _____

3. Should the definition of urban agriculture specify the size of the urban area? (Choose one)

- No, the size of the city shouldn't matter
- Yes, urban agriculture applies to cities with more than 10,000 people
- Yes, urban agriculture applies to cities with more than 50,000 people
- Yes, urban agriculture applies to cities with more than 100,000 people
- Yes, urban agriculture only applies to the Twin Cities
- Other: _____

4. Why is urban agriculture important to you or your community? (Rank order of importance, 1=most important, 6=not at all important)

- ___ It provides access to healthy food
- ___ It creates jobs in the city
- ___ It offers a valuable educational tool for urban populations
- ___ It is closer to potential markets for farmers to sell to
- ___ Transportation is easier within the urban area for farmers to get to their land
- ___ Other: _____

5. Do you have any concerns about expanding urban agriculture? (Check all that apply)

- No, I don't have any concerns about expanding urban agriculture
- Yes, urban land should be used for other purposes like housing and business
- Yes, urban soils are likely contaminated
- Yes, the market is already saturated
- Other: _____

6. What resources and/or organizations exist that support urban agriculture in Minnesota?
7. What successful state or local policies/legislation exist (within or outside of Minnesota) to support urban agriculture?
8. Which of the following would be most beneficial to promote urban agriculture? (*Rank, 1=most beneficial, 9=not at all beneficial*)
- Funding and/or financial incentives for farmers
 - Funding and/or financial incentives for organizations that support urban agriculture
 - Funding and/or financial incentives for local units of government to support urban agriculture
 - Statewide food policy council
 - Land bank (aggregating urban land to make access easier for urban farmers)
 - Urban agriculture zone (specific areas reserved specifically for the use of urban agriculture)
 - Urban farm micro-enterprise (small business incubator for potential urban farmers)
 - Education targeted to urban farmers
 - Other: _____
9. What are the biggest barriers unique to urban agriculture? (*Rank, 1=biggest barrier, 9=not a barrier at all*)
- Access to land
 - Long-term access to land (longer than 1 year lease)
 - Soil contamination and remediation
 - Lack of funding for farmers
 - Lack of funding for organizations supporting urban agriculture
 - Lack of funding for local units of government to support urban agriculture
 - Local regulatory barriers (zoning, permits, ordinances, etc.)
 - Lack of resources to support new immigrant populations interested in farming
 - Other: _____
10. What recommendations would you make to the state legislature to support urban agriculture in Minnesota? (*Rank order of priority, 1= top priority, 5=not a priority at all*)
- Provide additional funding for current grant programs (SHIP, Value-Added Grants, Cost-Share, etc.)
 - Create new funding sources specific to urban agriculture
 - Create a council to advocate for and develop policies that support urban agriculture
 - Provide tax incentives for urban agriculture
 - Other: _____
11. Which of the following best describes your role in filling out this survey? (*Check one*)
- Urban farmer
 - Individual interested in becoming an urban farmer
 - City resident
 - Urban planner
 - Local government
 - State government
 - University of Minnesota Extension employee
 - Employee of an organization that supports urban farmers/urban agriculture
 - Other: _____
12. Comments/suggestions related to urban agriculture:
13. If you would like to receive a copy of the final Urban Agriculture Report developed from this survey, please include your e-mail address. We will not use your e-mail address for any other purpose.

Appendix B. Urban agriculture state legislation examples

National Conference of State Legislatures, February 2014

www.ncsl.org/research/agriculture-and-rural-development/urban-agriculture-state-legislation.aspx

- **California** [AB 551](#) (2013): Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone (UAIZ) - restricting the use of land for a minimum of five years for small-scale agricultural production.
- **Colorado** [SB 106](#) (2010): Created a Food Systems Advisory Council to develop recommendations that promote local food economies.
- **District of Columbia** [B 967](#) (2011): increased healthy food access in underserved areas and established a working group to develop a plan for establishing a commercial distribution system for fresh produce and healthy foods to corner stores.
- **Hawaii** [HB 560](#) (2013): Authorizes the Hawaii housing finance and development corporation to provide incentives for the development of housing projects that incorporate urban gardening programs.
- **Illinois** [HB 1300](#) (2007): Established the Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force. [HB 3990](#) (2009): Set a goal that 20% of all food products purchased by state agencies and state-owned facilities be local farm or food products by 2020. Created the Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Council.
- **Louisiana** [HB 840](#) (2010): Created the Louisiana Sustainable Local Food Policy Council
- **Maryland** [HB 1062](#) (2010): Grant tax credits against county or municipal corporation property tax imposed on specified urban agricultural property.
- **Missouri** [HB 542](#) (2013): Establishment of urban agriculture zones (UAZ), “that contain an organization or person who grows produce or other agricultural products, raises or processes livestock or poultry, or sells at a minimum 75% locally grown or raised food.” Real property taxes may not be assessed on any UAZ for 25 years once the application requirements have been met. Local sales tax revenues are deposited into the Urban Agricultural Zone Fund. School districts may apply for money to develop curriculum on urban farming practices. [HB 1848](#) (2010) Established the Joint Committee on Urban Agriculture.
- **New Jersey** [AB 2859](#) (2011): Authorized the sale and lease of unneeded public property to nonprofits for gardening and urban farming. Exempted such urban farms from property taxation and authorized such nonprofits to sell fresh fruits and vegetables on the leased land, off the leased land, or both under certain conditions. [AB 3688](#) (2011): Created the New Jersey Fresh Mobiles Initiative Pilot Program to increase access to nutritious foods through supermarkets, grocery stores, and farmers’ markets.
- **New York** [SB 614/AB 1389](#) (2011): Added the financing of the transportation and distribution of New York state farm grown products to foodservice markets, including restaurants, schools, colleges, and others, especially in underserved urban and other communities, as an eligible activity for grants and loans.
- **North Carolina** [SB 1067](#) (2009): Created a Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council to help build a local food economy.
- **Oklahoma** [HB 2833](#) (2008): Established the Oklahoma Food Security Committee to increase food access and food security. [HB 2774](#) (2010): Established the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Communities Act and the creation of the Oklahoma Certified Healthy Community Advisory Committee.
- **Texas** [Texas Agriculture Code Ann. §44A.001 through .005 \(HB 2994\)](#) (2011): Established an urban farm microenterprise support program.
- **Utah** [SB 122](#) (2012): Allowed parcels in Salt Lake County between two and five acres to be assessed at lower property rates if the land is used to grow crops for sale at a profit (excluding livestock) as long as production is greater than 50% of average production for similar land.

Appendix C. Ten cities with urban agriculture policies

Seedstock, May 2014

seedstock.com/2014/05/27/10-american-cities-lead-the-way-with-urban-agriculture-ordinances/

- Detroit, Michigan: Created a Food Policy Council in 2009 to study how to implement local food systems and urban agriculture in the city. Adopted a comprehensive urban agriculture ordinance in 2013.
- Portland, Oregon: adopted an urban growth boundary in 1981, a community gardening program in 1975 and passed an Urban Food Zoning Code in June of 2012.
- Austin, Texas: Sustainable Food Policy Board created in 2009. Adopted the Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Garden Program (SUACG) in 2009 providing a framework of guidelines for an established local food system.
- Boston, Massachusetts: In 2013, adopted Article 89 into their zoning code focused on providing structure for developing urban agriculture while also helping to promote its growth.
- Cleveland, Ohio: Created garden and farmers market policies and established a Food Policy Council in 2007. In 2009 came the chickens and the bees and finally, in 2010, they provided guidelines for urban agriculture.
- Chicago, Illinois: In 2011, revised zoning code to allow urban agriculture as a permitted use within the city limits.
- Seattle, Washington: Revised zoning code in 2010 to clarify land use requirements and limits of urban agriculture.
- Baltimore, Maryland: In 2013, Baltimore created an urban agriculture plan. Created Homegrown Baltimore and a Food Policy Initiative to encourage urban agriculture and promote the use of vacant city lots for green space and food production.
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin: In 2012, a zoning code audit for the city supported the idea of promoting urban agriculture to build a new economy. HOME GR/OWN program transforms vacant lots into green spaces, urban farms, community gardens, and city orchards.
- Minneapolis, Minnesota: 2012 Urban Agriculture Ordinance to improve conditions for urban growers and gardeners. Homegrown Minneapolis Food Council makes urban agriculture policy recommendations to the city.

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