



URBAN AGRICULTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

July 2024



City of Boston
GrowBoston

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- Mattapan Food & Fitness Coalition
- Nubian Square Farmers' Market
- Codman Square Farmers' Market
- NeighborHealth (formerly East Boston Neighborhood Health Center)
- The Food Project, Dudley Greenhouse
- Madison Park Development Corporation
- Eastie Farm

Special Thanks!

To all those who contributed expertise and perspectives, reviewed drafts, and facilitated community engagement, especially:

¹ Appendix 1

² Appendix 2

³ Appendix 3

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

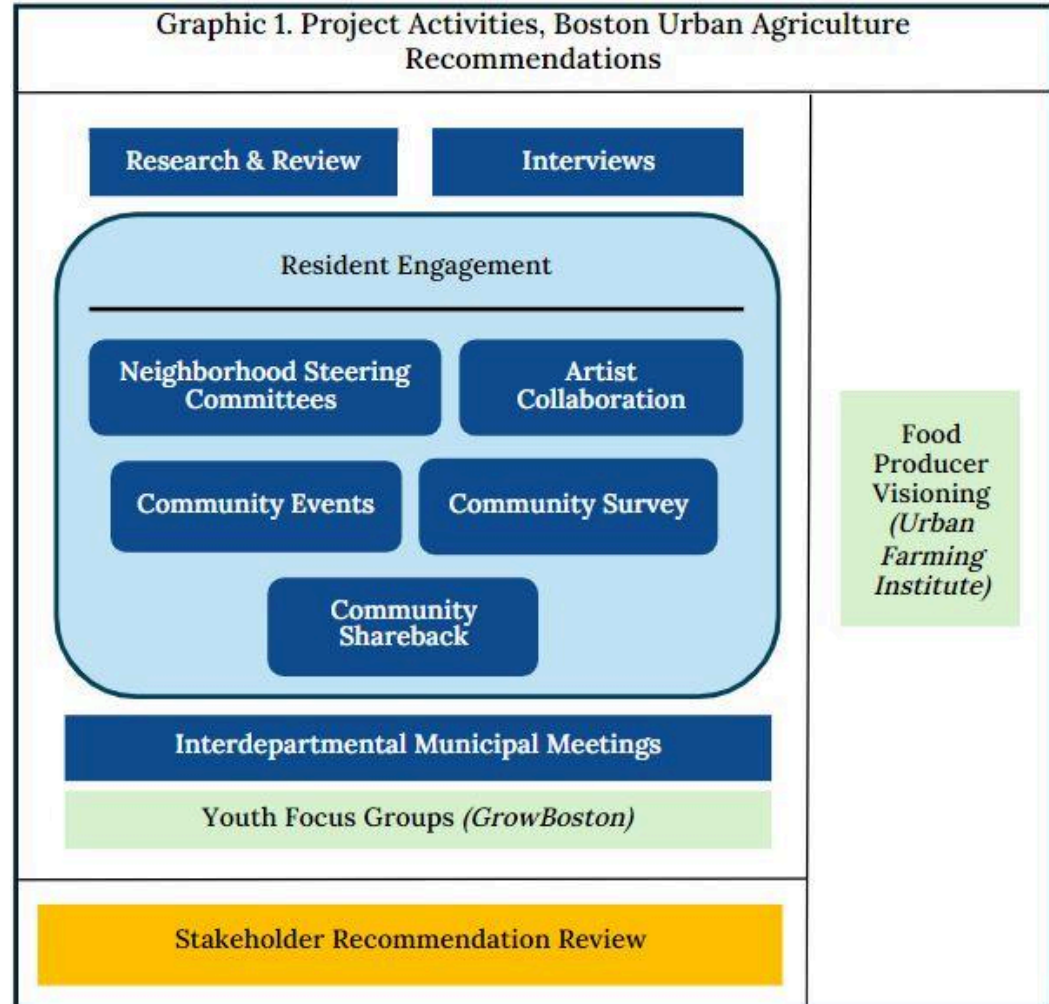
I. Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations

This is the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations Report (“The Report”). The Report makes recommendations for equitably advancing urban agriculture in Boston.

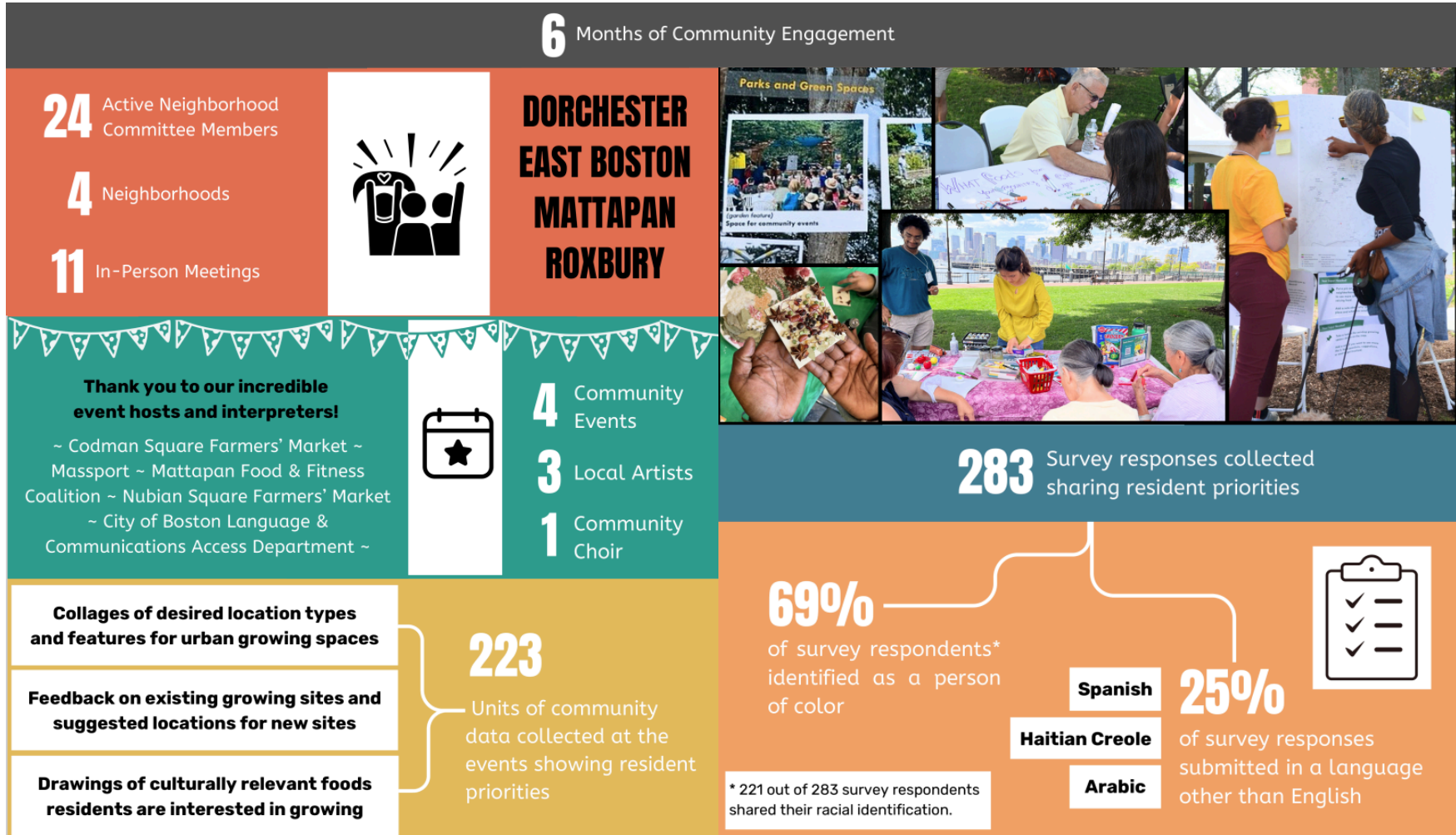
To create The Report, the GrowBoston-MAPC project team conducted a 16-month planning process. The planning process involved extensive research and engagement (see Graphics 1 & 2).

The Report’s recommendations suggest action city-wide and at the neighborhood level. Priority neighborhoods are Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston. Neighborhood and youth recommendations express *where* and *how* residents are interested in urban agriculture. Municipal recommendations express policy efforts, practices, and collaborations to enable urban agriculture city-wide.

The Report closes with an Implementation section. Here we suggest ideas and next steps for GrowBoston and its partners to act on The Report’s recommendations.



Graphic 2. Resident Engagement Journey, Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations



II. Summary Recommendations

- 1. Facilitate urban agriculture spaces, practices, and features for which there is strong interest by residents and youth in priority neighborhoods.**
- 2. Build Boston’s municipal capacity to support equitable urban agriculture development.**
 - a. Strengthen GrowBoston as the central office for urban agriculture.
 - b. Convene municipal entities involved with urban agriculture and food producers in an ongoing forum for shared coordination and learning.
 - c. Explore augmenting GrowBoston’s technical assistance through formal partnerships with experienced urban agriculture entities.
 - d. Establish regular communication and engagement with residents, particularly in priority neighborhoods, to promote equitable urban agriculture.
 - e. Align with state, regional, and national urban agriculture entities and efforts to mutually strengthen urban agriculture in Boston and in broader contexts.
- 3. Implement a municipal strategy that makes equitable, systemic improvements to urban agriculture.**
 - a. Integrate urban agriculture into City planning processes.
 - b. Develop and advance a policy agenda inclusive of City and State policy priorities.
 - c. Track progress to evaluate how urban agriculture is developing and advancing equity.
- 4. Advance solutions that resolve persistent obstacles to establishing and maintaining urban agriculture.**
 - a. Make it easier to obtain information about urban agriculture.
 - b. Streamline processes and shorten timelines for urban agriculture site establishment.
 - c. Make it easier and more affordable to supply urban agriculture sites with water.
 - d. Make it easier to acquire land for urban agriculture sites.
 - e. Make it easier and more affordable to have healthy soil on urban agriculture sites.
 - f. Make it easier to secure funding and reduce costs for urban agriculture.
 - g. Coordinate and strengthen stewardship and buy-in for urban agriculture across Boston.



2. ABOUT THE PROJECT

I. BACKGROUND

GrowBoston, the Office of Urban Agriculture of the City of Boston, undertook a planning process to equitably advance urban agriculture. With funding from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grant, GrowBoston contracted with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to conduct a 16-month planning process that included extensive engagement of priority neighborhoods, municipal entities, and community stakeholders in the urban agriculture field. The Report is the result of these efforts.

In parallel and as part of the USDA grant, GrowBoston contracted with the Urban Farming Institute to work with Boston urban agriculture practitioners in developing a vision for Boston's urban agriculture. The findings from that visioning effort are included as Appendix 7 of this report.

II. OVERVIEW

The Report presents a range of recommendations. These recommendations express resident-desired, neighborhood-level changes for urban agriculture in Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston; youth-desired change for urban agriculture in their neighborhood, schools, and government; and suggestions for municipal policy, practices, and collaborations to build on current efforts and introduce new approaches to equitably improve and expand urban agriculture across the City of Boston. The Implementation chapter of The Report includes ideas and next steps for GrowBoston and its partners to act on these recommendations.

III. EQUITY IN OUTCOMES & PROCESS

This project applied an equity lens in its long-term objectives, its implementation, and its design.



Strengthening and expanding the City’s urban agriculture landscape has the potential to yield positive long-term outcomes. The Report focuses on recommendations for urban agriculture in Boston that equitably promote food justice⁴, community economic development, and climate resilience⁵ at the neighborhood level.

We incorporated resident opinions by meeting people in their neighborhoods and invited participation using digital, creative, and in-person conversational formats (detailed below). We asked residents *where* and *how* they wanted to see urban agriculture to best serve their interests. These findings are presented in the neighborhood-specific and youth recommendations.

We were intentional about which resident voices we prioritized. Rather than taking a broad and light approach to community engagement, we focused on deep engagement in four priority neighborhoods to elicit the voices of residents less often reached by municipal planning processes. Our four priority neighborhoods were Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston. We identified these priority neighborhoods in partnership with the Office of Food Justice (formerly Office of Food Access) by assessing a variety of factors including food security, race and income community demographics, health outcomes and disparities, availability of green space, and neighborhoods shown to be under-invested in and under-engaged through previous planning efforts.

IV. APPROACH

To undertake this planning process, MAPC led desk research, interviews, resident engagement, and municipal engagement. MAPC also collaborated with GrowBoston to inform the design and analysis of youth focus groups. The Urban Farming Institute led a parallel process to engage urban food producers (see Appendix 7).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Report was guided by the following research questions:

⁴ Food justice critically analyzes and works to eradicate systemic food access disparities due to race and wealth. (Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (2011). “Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability.”)

⁵ Climate resilience describes the ability to prepare for, bounce back from, and adjust to impacts of a rapidly changing climate. (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions. (2019). “What is Climate Resilience and Why Does it Matter?”)

- 1) What policies, strategies, and practices can the City of Boston and partner organizations use to support and encourage coordinated establishment, maintenance, funding, and programming for urban agriculture?
 - a. What is already being done, and what's happening now?
 - b. What more could be done, or done differently?

- 2) What interests do Boston residents and other stakeholders have in urban agriculture, specifically residents of the four priority neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston?
 - a. What has already been expressed?
 - b. What interests are being shared for the future of urban agriculture?

DESK RESEARCH

Review and synthesis of Boston documents related to urban food production

The objective of this task was to gain an understanding of the findings from efforts predating this planning process that characterize the issues, needs, opportunities, and solutions identified for food production in Boston. We captured the interests expressed by Boston residents and, as possible, residents of the priority neighborhoods of Dorchester, Mattapan, Roxbury, and East Boston. Forty-two documents were reviewed, a list of which can be found [here](#).

Research of national best practices and innovative strategies for urban food production

The objective of this task was to identify model municipal strategies and innovative food production techniques from across the US that facilitate urban food production. This included gathering information on municipal policies, systems of coordination and delegation across municipal departments, and mechanisms for funding. Examples of best practices and innovative strategies are included within The Report. Hyperlinks to external web pages describe the examples in greater detail.



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT

Resident engagement aimed to articulate residents' interests in *where* and *how* they desired to have urban agriculture in their neighborhoods. Our priority neighborhoods were Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston (rationale detailed in Section 2.III above).

To effectively engage community members in the priority neighborhoods, we convened neighborhood committees, organized community events, collaborated with local artists, and deployed a community survey. By providing multiple avenues and methods for engagement, The Report achieved more in-depth participation with a greater number of residents than a typical planning process.

Neighborhood Committees

We convened a committee of five to eight residents in each priority neighborhood. The neighborhood committees' primary role was to support the project team in designing and engaging neighborhood residents broadly, which we did through the community events and survey. The neighborhood committee members also supported the analysis of resident data through a conversation, which added local context to the interpretation of findings. The neighborhood committees met independently three times over the course of the project. A joint orientation meeting and a final community shareback event brought members from all neighborhood committees together at the beginning and end of the resident engagement.

Committee members were recruited using a broad outreach strategy relying on community-based organization networks and newsletters in the priority neighborhoods. Accepted applicants were residents who were particularly interested in urban agriculture. Most were also already involved with urban agriculture or community development initiatives in their neighborhood. Members reflected the racial, income, and language diversity of their neighborhood. We compensated members for their time and expertise with an honorarium payment.

Community Events

We gathered information on *where* and *how* residents were interested in urban agriculture through accessible and inclusive community events. The project team and neighborhood committee members met residents where they were in each priority neighborhood to host a public data gathering event. Events were held in parks or public spaces, with most events co-hosted by neighborhood farmers' markets.



Event attendees were invited to take part in three information-gathering activities. A map activity asked residents to mark physical locations to share feedback on existing or desired growing spaces. A magnet board activity invited residents to design ideal growing spaces offering specific and open-ended choices for methods to grow and raise food, as well as growing space features and settings. A collective drawing encouraged residents to express foods they were interested in growing or raising, with an emphasis on culturally affirming foods.

The community events were designed with local context and accessibility in mind. Event locations were selected in consultation with the respective neighborhood committee. Neighborhood committee members served as event co-facilitators. They invited neighbors to attend and helped attendees navigate the information gathering activities. Language interpreters for the top two or three languages in each neighborhood were present at the events. Activity instructions were translated into those languages as well.

Artist Engagement

The community events were augmented with creative engagement through a public call for art that enabled compensated partnership with four Boston-based artists. Because artists serve as unique stakeholders who process and redefine how communities see themselves, we incorporated artists with information-gathering activities at the community events to nurture a welcoming and festive space that sparked creativity, joy, and connection. Artist activations brought music, youth engagement activities, crafts, interactive conversations, and opportunities for reflection. See Appendix 3 for a full description of our collaborating artists and their activations at the community events.

Community Survey

At the recommendation of neighborhood committee members, we created a survey to complement the community events as an asynchronous method for gathering public input. The survey was translated into the top five languages spoken in the priority neighborhoods: Arabic, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The neighborhood committee members led survey distribution across their networks. The survey reached 283 respondents. Nearly 70% of respondents identified as people of color. Twenty-five percent (25%) of responses were submitted in a non-English language. See Appendix 5 for the survey questions.

MUNICIPAL ENGAGEMENT

The project team convened an interdepartmental team of municipal officials three times over the course of The Reports' development. Members represented key departments with roles supporting Boston's urban agriculture (see Appendix 2). These departments shared knowledge with one another about their urban agriculture-related roles and identified opportunities for better coordination. Group members also provided critical feedback on final recommendations.

INTERVIEWS

The project team engaged municipal, state, and community-based urban agriculture entities through interviews (see Appendix 4). Fifteen interviews were conducted with either individuals or small groups. Nine interviews were held with staff of key municipal departments and six interviews were with state entities or community-based organizations. Interviewees provided insights on urban agriculture issues and opportunities from municipal, food producer, state, and New England perspectives.

PARALLEL PROCESS: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

To ensure youth voices were represented in The Report, GrowBoston held two focus groups with high school youth (see Appendix 8). The first focus group included six students from the Mayor's Youth Council who served on the Streets, Housing, and Neighborhood Development committee. The second focus group included five youth employed in urban agriculture by The Food Project. The objective was to hear youth perspectives on how the City can expand urban agriculture initiatives in their neighborhoods, schools, and city-wide.

PARALLEL PROCESS: URBAN FARMING INSTITUTE

Under the USDA grant, GrowBoston also partnered with the Urban Farming Institute (UFI) to engage urban agriculture practitioners to better understand their perspectives for the future of urban agriculture. UFI engaged a consultant team that hosted a day-long visioning session with the objectives of developing a shared vision for Boston's food production system and supporting deeper



relationship development amongst retreat participants. Twenty-five attendees contributed their ideas. The results of this work are complementary to those of these Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations (see Appendix 7).

3. FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Report's findings were synthesized into recommendations for GrowBoston and the City as a whole.

The neighborhood and youth recommendations express *where* and *how* residents want to see urban agriculture. The general neighborhood recommendations synthesize resident findings across neighborhoods and overarching strategies suggested by reviewing stakeholders. The neighborhood-specific recommendation tables⁶ summarize key ideas and repeated interests expressed by residents throughout the engagement process. The youth recommendations pull exclusively from the youth focus group and are cross-referenced with neighborhood and municipal recommendations where possible.

The municipal recommendations express opportunities for policies, strategies, and practices that strengthen the City's ability to support urban agriculture and address persistent urban agriculture barriers. They are collectively informed by the engaged municipal entities, desk research, interviews, neighborhood committee ideas, and ongoing discussions and insights from GrowBoston.

Where possible, recommendations are presented with accompanying context, justification, and examples of similar efforts from across the US. They are written with either an explicit or implied goal to advance equity and with an interest in promoting urban agriculture for the many benefits it provides.

⁶ [Note on interpreting neighborhood-specific and youth recommendations tables:](#)

Recommendations in a single row are related to one another. For example, recommendation 1b.2 suggests installing drinking water fountains. This is aimed specifically at growing spaces located in parks and other open spaces, which is recommendation 1b.1 on the left side of the same row.



Recommendations include suggestions for continuing and expanding current efforts, or beginning new efforts. They name potential actions across municipal departments, within Boston neighborhoods, and at the state and regional levels. As such, The Report should be considered by all entities for which their work intersects with urban agriculture, with GrowBoston serving as the lead and coordinator for the implementation of recommendations overall.

I. Facilitate urban agriculture spaces, practices, and features for which there is strong interest by residents in priority neighborhoods and youth.

• 1A. General Neighborhood Recommendations

- **1a.1.** Prioritize investments for growing spaces located in or near the following settings: **parks and open spaces, libraries, schools, public housing developments, and vacant lots.**
 - For parks and open spaces:
 - **1a.1.1.** Match spaces identified by residents as high interest with spaces that have availability and suitability for urban agriculture activities.
 - **1a.1.2.** Integrate urban agriculture advocacy early in park redevelopment and design processes.
 - For libraries:
 - **1a.1.3.** Where there is capacity and interest by library stakeholders and staff, leverage libraries as key resources to support urban agriculture.
 - **1a.1.4.** Support identified libraries in hosting community seed libraries.
 - **1a.1.5.** Support identified libraries in offering accessible educational workshops on growing, harvesting, and seed saving.
 - For schools:
 - **1a.1.6.** Support schools in partnering with urban agriculture organizations to manage growing spaces.
 - **1a.1.7.** Support schools in enabling greater teacher and student involvement with growing spaces.
- **1a.2.** Prioritize investments for growing spaces that use the following methods: **ground-level farms, greenhouses, ground-level community gardens, and orchards.**



- For greenhouses: **1a.2.1.** Invest in and coordinate City-wide greenhouse infrastructure. Where greenhouses may not be possible, explore high tunnel infrastructure.
- **1a.3.** Focus on supporting the thriving of growing spaces beyond site planning and installation.

1B. Dorchester: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

WHERE	WHAT & HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.1. Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces on privately-owned vacant lots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.2. Seek to install garden plots for collective community use.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.3. Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces in parks or other green spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.4. Seek to install sitting areas, bike racks, and trash cans with municipal pickup.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.5. Support the installation and maintenance of intentional artwork and ADA-accessible raised beds.
	<p>Growing Methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.6. Seek to support ground-level community gardens, greenhouses, and orchards.
	<p>Types of Food:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1b.7. Support growing spaces that prioritize vegetable production, with herbs as a secondary focus. ● 1b.8. Top Vegetables: Tomatoes, Carrots, Cucumbers ● 1b.9. Top Herbs: Basil, Thyme, Rosemary

1C. Roxbury: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

WHERE	WHAT & HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.1. Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces at schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.2. Use gardens as demonstration garden spaces, as schools are often open to innovative growing methods and because yields will not necessarily be significant to fairly distribute among students. ● 1c.3. Make gardens into healing spaces, especially for youth experiencing gun violence, by emphasizing wellness and coping skills in garden programming.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.4. Explore opportunities to sustain and establish growing spaces at libraries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.5. Advocate and coordinate for new City staff roles in managing library growing spaces. ● 1c.6. Balance growing spaces at libraries with open spaces for play.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.7. Explore partnerships to establish growing spaces on public land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.8. Use the OSRP to identify City- and DCR-owned land in Roxbury.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.9. Explore opportunities to establish growing spaces on rooftops of public housing buildings. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1c.10. Consider using resources to encourage active stewardship of existing urban growing spaces in Roxbury before establishing new spaces. 	



1C. Roxbury: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture (continued)

Growing Methods:

- **1c.11.** Focus on supporting and establishing **ground-level community gardens** and **greenhouses**, and secondarily **ground-level farms** and **orchards**.

Types of Food:

- **1c.12.** Support growing spaces that prioritize **vegetable and herb production**, with **fruit** as a secondary priority.
- **1c.13.** Top Vegetables: Tomatoes, Peppers, Kale
- **1c.14.** Top Fruits: Strawberries, Blueberries
- **1c.15.** Top Herbs: Basil, Mint, Oregano



1D. Mattapan: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

WHERE	WHAT & HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.1. Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces at schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.2. Address challenges with garden maintenance during summer closure for school gardens managed by teacher champions. ● 1d.3. Recognize and support positive connections between growing spaces and play areas, like the garden at Kennedy Playground. ● 1d.4. Build small raised beds for kids.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.5. Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces on publicly owned vacant lots, particularly vacant lots located near housing developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Long-term vacant lot across from Cote Village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.6. Seek to install shared plots for community use at publicly owned vacant lots.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.7. Focus on supporting residents with growing at home, taking advantage of Mattapan’s relatively large yard sizes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1d.8. Engage residents to empower at home growing visioning and practices by providing resources and education.

1D. Mattapan: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture (continued)

- **1d.9.** As aligned and legally allowable with the Conservation Commission, explore establishing growing spaces in Mattapan’s urban wilds:
 - Mattahunt Woods (currently with planned restoration and funding committed)
 - Woodhaven
 - Gladeside
- **1d.10.** Use **food forests** as a growing method.
- **1d.11.** Explore opportunities to make growing spaces accessible to older adults and disabled residents, especially at senior housing sites and Edgewater Food Forest.
- **1d.12.** Build **narrow, ADA-accessible raised garden beds.**
- **1d.13.** Supply and deliver garden bed **soil and compost.**
- **1d.14.** For vacant or underutilized lots with development potential, advocate for integrating growing spaces into planned housing developments, especially at these locations:
 - Evans St + Morton St⁷
 - Next to Mildred Ave School⁸
 - Near Foley Senior Residences⁹
- **1d.15. Integrate** growing spaces into planned housing developments.

⁷ Parcels #1702184000 and #1702190000

⁸ Parcel # 1800818000

⁹ Parcel #1800113400



1D. Mattapan: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture (continued)

- **1d.16.** Focus on supporting and establishing growing spaces at community centers.

- **1d.17.** Explore establishing community growing spaces at local firehouses.

- **1d.18.** Seek to incorporate **artwork, sitting areas,** and **spaces for community events** into growing spaces (like what is being done at Edgewater Food Forest) because Mattapan has little space for local live entertainment.

Growing Methods:

- **1d.19.** Focus on supporting **ground-level community gardens** and **ground-level farms** in Mattapan, especially farms for low-cost community produce distribution.
- **1d.20. Avoid** focusing resources on **beekeeping,** and secondarily **rooftop community gardens** and **hen keeping,** as most respondents expressed less or no interest in these methods for growing and raising food.

Types of Food:

- **1d.21.** Support growing spaces that prioritize **vegetable production,** with **herbs** and **fruit** as secondary priorities.
- **1d.22.** Top Vegetables: Tomatoes, Beans, Cucumbers
- **1d.23.** Top Fruits: Strawberries, Apples, Peaches
- **1d.24.** Top Herbs: Parsley, Thyme



1E. East Boston: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

WHERE

WHAT & HOW

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.1. Explore opportunities to introduce growing spaces at parks and other open spaces. Specifically, the resident-identified spaces of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ East Boston Greenway ○ Bremen Park, especially in front of the East Boston Library ○ Piers Park, integrating into current renovation plans ○ LoPresti Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.2. Seek to install and ensure maintenance of drinking water fountains in growing spaces. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.3. Explore opportunities to make growing spaces accessible to older adults by supporting and establishing growing at home and growing spaces near Shore Plaza East, a development with an older population. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.4. Provide resources to support container gardening at home and indoor public growing spaces, which may be more accessible for older adults. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.5. Explore opportunities to establish growing spaces in affordable housing developments. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.6. Explore opportunities to establish rooftop farms and rooftop community gardens. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.7. Continue to support schools with sustaining and establishing growing spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1e.8. Encourage play areas adjacent to growing spaces. ● 1e.9. Explore opportunities for outdoor vertical growing. |



1E. East Boston: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture (continued)

- **1e.10.** Support the expansion of the growing space at NeighborHealth in East Boston (formerly East Boston Neighborhood Health Center).
- **1e.11. Explore expansion into nearby vacant lots**, if needed as a potential use pending development.
- **1e.12. Build more raised beds** in response to strong demand for gardening in this location demonstrated by a long waitlist.
- **1e.13. Install a greenhouse** to allow extension of growing season, which was used well and was in high demand in previous garden space.
- **1e.14.** Explore opportunities to introduce growing spaces at Logan Airport in partnership with airport staff.
- **1e.15.** Being mindful of potential pollution, **identify levels of contamination risk** and **consider indoor growing spaces**.
- **1e.16.** Identify and explore opportunities to establish growing spaces on privately owned vacant lots.
- **1e.17.** Continue to support existing growing spaces and establish new growing spaces in the southwest / Meridian St area, as this area has the highest density of people with least yard space.



1E. East Boston: Resident-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture (continued)

Growing Methods:

- **1e.18.** Seek to support **ground-level community gardens** and **greenhouses**.
- **1e.19.** Avoid focusing resources on **beekeeping**, as this was the only method for growing or raising food with fewer than half respondents being interested or very interested.

Types of Food:

- **1e.20.** Support growing spaces that prioritize **vegetable production**, with **fruits** and **herbs** both being a secondary strong focus.
- **1e.21.** Top Vegetables: Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Onions
- **1e.22.** Top Fruits: Strawberries, Watermelons, Apples
- **1e.23.** Top Herbs: Cilantro, Mint, Basil



1F. Youth-Identified Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

- **1f.1.** Create structured green and growing spaces that have adult supervision.
 - **1f.1.1.** GrowBoston should focus on making existing green/growing spaces more utilized by creating an environment where people feel safe and welcomed.
 - **1f.1.2.** Growing spaces should ideally have structured programming and a full-time staff person to facilitate people's interaction with the space.
 - **1f.1.3.** Focus on creating comfortable public spaces for youth where they don't have to pay anything and can just relax and spend time with friends.
- **1f.2.** Increase the annual budget allocation to the Department of Parks & Recreation for maintenance and programming of existing green spaces, particularly those that include growing spaces.
 - **1f.2.1.** Educate people in the community on how to maintain existing green spaces.
 - **1f.2.2.** Hire people in the community to manage community farms to create more jobs (**4g.2**).
- **1f.3.** Provide support for schools to prioritize hands-on engagement with urban agriculture (**1a.1.7**). Advocate for and support schools in:
 - **1f.3.1.** Increasing the guaranteed annual Boston Public Schools budget to support urban agriculture.
 - **1f.3.2.** Providing incentives for youth engagement with school growing spaces, particularly class credit, volunteer hours, and pay.
 - **1f.3.3.** Avoiding after-school garden clubs (no one wants to stay after school).
 - **1f.3.4.** Hiring students to manage school gardens in the summer (as needed) and throughout the school year to work directly with a permanent grower.
 - **1f.3.5.** Incorporating agriculture, gardens, and greenhouses across class curriculum and outdoor classroom activities by identifying how agriculture connects to state and federal standards.



- **1f.3.6.** Creating appealing gardening spaces where people want to spend time, e.g. with benches in the school courtyard for people to relax.
- **1f.3.7.** Communicating about existing urban agriculture spaces and opportunities to engage young people.
- **1f.3.8.** Working with local non-profits and garden partners to coordinate parents and community members to manage school garden beds over the summer (as needed) and allow them to take home produce.
- **1f.3.9.** Facilitating low-commitment and high-value ways to engage students with growing food, such as taste tests. FoodCorps is a model of what this type of engagement would look like.
- **1f.4.** Develop a citywide PR strategy to change perceptions and communicate realities of urban agriculture (**2a.9**).
 - **1f.4.1.** There are racist ideas about people who work on farms (tied to slavery, racism toward undocumented farmworkers). To change this perception, the City should create more jobs in urban agriculture that pay a good wage, specifically for teenagers.
- **1f.5.** Communicate with young people about the field of agriculture and the variety of career paths. Create career pathways, starting with PowerCorps and SuccessLink.
 - **1f.5.1.** Organize speaker series' and field trips for green industry jobs (including City jobs) in classrooms.
 - **1f.5.2.** Find creative ways to make agriculture and farming careers enticing, especially using social media platforms.
 - **1f.5.3.** Communicate with youth in under-resourced neighborhoods so they understand that environmental issues matter to them and that farms and green spaces are for them - not just a by-product of gentrification.
 - **1f.5.4.** Share about agriculture careers in the classroom with children from a young age to build positive awareness of farming and agriculture-related jobs at a young age.
- **1f.6.** Advertise opportunities to get involved with urban agriculture to increase awareness. Do so through community events, pop-ups, and increased public hours for locked growing spaces.
- **1f.7.** Focus on increased food production as the priority for urban agriculture efforts.
- **1f.8.** Create a pipeline for gardeners & growers to sell produce at farmers markets. Do so by aggregating produce from and providing sales coordination to smaller growers, especially for producers who do not speak English or have the time.



1G. Youth-Identified Recommendations for Increased Growing & Green Spaces

WHERE	WHAT & HOW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.1. Public parks, particularly park space near Logan Airport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.2. Areas for playground, dog park, and a community garden • 1g.3. Berry bushes • 1g.4. Artwork incorporated into growing spaces • 1g.5. Vertical growing of non-invasive berries
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.6. Charlestown High School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.7. Establish a farm on the field or on the rooftop. Ensure the existing garden space is not locked.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.8. Allston: Ringer Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.9. Facilitate stewardship by providing structure for communities to maintain existing growing spaces.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.10. Cement parks in South Boston off Broadway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.11. Planters, raised beds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.12. Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1g.13. Greenhouses • 1g.14. Aquaculture - especially fish • 1g.15. Microgreens

1G. Youth-Identified Recommendations for Increased Growing & Green Spaces (continued)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.16. Boston Latin Academy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.17. Courtyard garden in the middle of the schoolyard; gardens need to be in spaces where people want to spend time, not out of the way next to the train tracks. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.18. East Boston | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.19. Hen coops - utilize a community garden model for chickens |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.20. Community garden spaces open to the public | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.21. Unlocked growing spaces.● 1g.22. Community gardens closer to neighborhoods where people live |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.23. Boston Public Library | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.24. The park next to the library could become a growing space. It would be ideal to have staff supervision here. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1g.25. Create more safe green spaces, particularly in Dorchester. | |



II. Build Boston's municipal capacity to support equitable urban agriculture development.

- **2A. Strengthen GrowBoston as the central office for urban agriculture.**

The City of Boston prioritized strengthening urban agriculture with the establishment in 2022 of GrowBoston, the City's first Office of Urban Agriculture. GrowBoston builds on the work of the City's Grassroots Program, which for more than 25 years, supported the development of food production spaces through land disposition and capital funding. In its expanded form, GrowBoston has greater capacity to impact urban agriculture in the City.

- **2a.1.** Continue to serve as the municipal leader of urban agriculture, coordinating with relevant municipal staff.
- **2a.2.** Continue to be supported by the City through sufficient operational funds to meet needs for sustaining current operations and expanding its work in alignment with strategic goals.
- **2a.3.** Lead implementation of the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations and the urban agriculture goal in the GrowBoston and Office of Food Justice 2023-2026 Strategic Goals.
- **2a.4.** Continue to be proactive in connecting urban agriculture efforts to aligned municipal goals and priorities, such as those in climate resilience, housing, open space, neighborhood, or other plans.
- **2a.5.** Determine principles by which urban agriculture happens in Boston, and work toward consistent application of these principles across municipal entities and in relevant municipal processes. Equity, resilience, sustainability, and fairness are four principles integrated into the GrowBoston and Office of Food Justice 2023-2026 Strategic Goals.
- **2a.6.** Provide resources to urban food producers and area residents.
- **2a.7.** Proactively collaborate with aligned entities and efforts in Massachusetts, New England and beyond.
- **2a.8.** As GrowBoston evolves, it should remain responsive to the needs and interests in Boston and should also look outside its borders to similar offices of urban agriculture and gardening from which to learn and adopt practices. The [District of Columbia](#) and [New York City](#) have two such municipal offices of urban agriculture.
- **2a.9.** Create and promote a brand logo and slogan for growing spaces and initiatives throughout the City to increase awareness and interest among residents and key community and municipal stakeholders.



- **2B. Convene municipal entities involved with urban agriculture and food producers in an ongoing forum for shared coordination and learning.**

During the planning process for the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations, staff from a variety of municipal departments met three times to serve as advisors to the project and to learn more about each other's work in relation to urban agriculture. Several of the staff were also interviewed. There was general agreement by participants on the value of the forum and interest in continuing to convene beyond the planning process.

- **2b.1.** GrowBoston should lead the establishment of and serve as the convener for a forum of municipal entities whose work includes urban agriculture issues and Boston food producers. The activities of the forum should be
 - determined among participants, but could include:
 - **2b.1.1.** Coordinate implementation of the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations and discuss progress or challenges of implementation.
 - **2b.1.2.** Review and discuss the ideas and issues raised in the “Urban Farming Institute and GrowBoston: Boston Food Systems Visioning Session” (2023) report.
 - **2b.1.2.** Increase awareness by forum participants of urban agriculture in the City, by learning about each department, learning about city urban agriculture processes, learning from food producers about challenges they face, learning from food producers about the range of urban agriculture taking place in Boston.
 - **2b.1.3.** Discuss farm applications that require compliance with the processes in Article 89, with the objective of streamlining the review processes. This could include reviewing the application, flagging issues, identifying necessary adjustments or fixes by the applicant, and preparing and coordinating for the processing of the application through the various steps.
 - **2b.1.4.** Develop and update resources.



- **2C. Explore augmenting GrowBoston’s technical assistance through formal partnerships with experienced urban agriculture entities.**

Boston has many experienced and skilled organizations and entities that are actively and thoughtfully developing and improving urban agriculture in the City and region. Since the passage of Article 89 in 2013, some have become experts in the complex processes of establishing urban farms. Some are advancing the community land trust model, which ensures long-term land protection. Equitable development of urban agriculture and a focus on communities that have been disinvested in is a core shared value among these entities. Some entities also have deep experience with establishing, maintaining, and operating community gardens. All have experience with navigating City processes required to do this work. The collective skills and experience of Boston’s urban agriculture entities are invaluable assets.

In tandem, the City of Boston seeks to support urban agriculture efforts that will be both sustainable and successful. In practice, the City has a preference for urban agriculture efforts led by entities that have the capacity and experience to ensure such outcomes. Community members with a passion for farming or gardening are less likely to demonstrate their capacity to establish and sustain such efforts on their own. In response, the experienced urban agriculture entities have served in several instances as sponsors and supporters of community members’ desires for urban agriculture initiatives.

- **2c.1.** Towards expanding the technical assistance capacity in support of urban agriculture, GrowBoston and other City of Boston entities engaged in urban agriculture should explore formal partnerships with urban agriculture entities, contracting them to provide services that could include aiding those interested in establishing farms in navigating City processes, serving as formal sponsors for urban agriculture initiatives, developing informational materials and guides on urban agriculture, neighborhood outreach and engagement, and possibly a range of other technical assistance services.



- **2.D. Establish regular communication and engagement with residents, particularly in priority neighborhoods, to promote equitable urban agriculture.**

The process to create The Report directly engaged Boston residents – particularly those in the priority neighborhoods of Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston – in multiple ways. During the neighborhood committee meetings and the community events, residents shared appreciation and a desire for continued engagement. GrowBoston should continue directly engaging Boston residents to strengthen two-way communication, learning opportunities, and community relationship building.

- **2d.1.** Invest engagement efforts in priority neighborhoods to ensure urban agriculture processes and outcomes equitably benefit Boston residents experiencing the greatest challenges with food insecurity, climate impacts, economic opportunity, and civic infrastructure.
- **2d.2.** To the extent feasible and strategic, continue working with the network of neighborhood committee members in engagement efforts in Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston. Neighborhood committee members have demonstrated collective topical expertise and involvement with key community organizations, events, language needs, and existing urban agriculture spaces.
- **2d.3.** Facilitate seasonal, in-person tabling at growing spaces and related events across priority neighborhoods to engage active members and residents. At these engagements:
 - **2d.3.1.** Share information about GrowBoston resources and a map of growing spaces with residents to increase awareness of opportunities for support and the garden network across their neighborhood.
 - **2d.3.2.** Encourage discussion and feedback from residents about needs and visions for host growing space.
- **2d.4.** Pilot a participatory budgeting process with neighborhood committee members or others to share decision-making power and increase community buy-in.
- **2d.5.** Host site visits to places that demonstrate innovative growing practices to better enable resident visioning for growing spaces.
- **2d.6.** Ensure language accessibility through translated materials, interpreters (particularly those with whom we worked throughout the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations process), and bilingual community ambassadors.



- **2E. Align with state, regional, and national urban agriculture entities and efforts to mutually strengthen urban agriculture in Boston and in broader contexts.**

Boston is promoting urban agriculture within the context of broader state, regional, and national movements. The City should actively learn about and engage with aligned efforts where Boston stands to benefit or where the City's efforts can contribute to broader efforts. As starting points, GrowBoston could begin or continue participation with the following.

- **2e.1.** Massachusetts entities, including the [Massachusetts Food Policy Council](#), [Massachusetts Food System Caucus](#), [Massachusetts Food System Collaborative](#) and its [Urban Agriculture Coalition](#), [Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources](#), and [UMass Extension](#), are advancing aligned urban agriculture efforts, including advocating for and passing legislation, facilitating forums for information exchange, and providing grants.
- **2e.2.** The [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan](#) (December 2023) establishes goals for farmland preservation, access, and farm viability. While the plan focuses on farmland outside the urban context, it includes recommendations for urban agriculture, including:
 - Provide technical assistance to enable preferential zoning and ordinances that support urban agriculture land uses, including small-scale poultry and other protein-producing livestock in select areas.
 - Seek to prohibit local zoning regulations, nuisance bylaws, and other regulations from unnecessarily hampering the expansion of urban agriculture.
 - Provide public education, technical training, soil testing and remediation, small-parcel grant and support programs, and increased visibility of urban agriculture needs for financial and business service providers.
 - Include urban agriculture in a comprehensive plan to support and sustain the state's agricultural sector.
- **2e.3.** Regionally, the New England State Food System Planners Partnership is a collaboration among six state-level food system organizations and Food Solutions New England which is mobilizing its networks to impact local and regional food supply chains and strengthen and grow the New England regional food system. The Partnership spearheads the 10-year initiative to prepare the region for system shocks such as climate-related weather events and



public health emergencies. The Partnership's [New England Feeding New England](#) report (May 2023) informs their work, and covers issues related to food production capacity and local food consumption objectives.

- **2e.4.** The [Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production | USDA](#) advises the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach related to urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices, as well as identifying any barriers to urban agriculture. Its work includes issues of equity, climate resilience and nutrition access at the national level. The 12-member Committee meets at least three times annually.
- **2e.5.** [The Urban Agriculture Directors Network](#) is a monthly-meeting network of urban agriculture-related local government staff working to advance justice-focused, resilient, and sustainable local food systems, which includes members from the US and Canada.

III. Implement a municipal strategy that makes equitable, systemic improvements to urban agriculture

- **3A. Integrate urban agriculture into City planning processes.**

Urban agriculture themes are already integrated into some City planning processes, and there are opportunities for more deliberate integration in others. Thoughtful incorporation into a variety of aligned city planning efforts would promote goals for expanding urban agriculture and support achieving shared goals such as those for vibrant neighborhoods, equity, climate resilience, and open space and recreational access.

- **3a.1.** Recently completed food systems-focused plans most directly address current urban agriculture priorities, [The Mayor's Food Access Agenda](#) (2021-2023), [Food Access Recommendations of the American Rescue Plan](#) (2021), and the [Open Space Recreation Plan](#) (2023-2029). The [Food Justice Agenda for a Resilient Boston](#) (2020), a campaign document of then Councilor Wu, includes innovative ideas for urban agriculture as well. Reference these recommendations and ideas for guidance and further justification for the City's urban agriculture initiatives and efforts.
- **3a.2.** [Imagine Boston 2030](#) (2017) is the City's most recent master plan that lays out a broad strategy for Boston. It does not directly discuss urban agriculture but identifies aligned values and goals for investments in public realms and open space; community gathering spaces; and promoting healthy neighborhoods. City departments that have a stake in urban agriculture should engage in neighborhood planning efforts through the community engagement process to raise urban agriculture as a priority where there is resident interest.
- **3a.3.** [Climate Ready Boston](#) (2016), implemented in coordination with Imagine Boston 2030, similarly does not explicitly mention urban agriculture, but its goals for investing in green infrastructure for stormwater management and heat mitigation could link to aligned benefits of urban agriculture. Explore opportunities to integrate urban agriculture into City climate resilience efforts, for the environmental as well social resilience benefits it provides.



- **3a.4.** GrowBoston is interested in integrating urban agriculture with new housing developments, and as such it could proactively engage in future housing planning and implementation efforts.
 - **3a.4.1.** Urban agriculture could be included and incentivized in development Requests for Proposals. The Mayor’s Office of Housing in coordination with GrowBoston has done this in [Parker and Terrace](#) and [30-36 Mildred Avenue](#) development projects.
 - **3a.4.2.** Urban agriculture could be included in design development guidelines. The 2018 [Plan Dudley RFP](#) (now Plan Nubian) does this for open space and gardening elements, provisions that were informed by a resident survey.
 - **3a.4.3.** GrowBoston should continue to identify potential sites for urban agriculture using the [Public Land for Public Good: Citywide Land Audit](#) (2022), which inventoried all city-owned land and assessed its potential to address affordable housing and other priorities. Large Opportunity Sites identified could present an opportunity for urban agriculture integration, particularly the Boston Public Health Commission Mattapan Campus, which was also mentioned by Mattapan residents in this project’s efforts (Foley Senior Residences).
- **3a.6.** The [Boston Public School Long-Term Facilities Plan](#) (2023) identifies several schools that are planned for renovation or new construction. In collaboration with Boston Public Schools, seek opportunities to introduce gardens and food growing spaces in these current and planned school projects.

- **3B. Develop and advance a policy agenda inclusive of City and State policy priorities.**

City and State policy are important tools for enabling urban agriculture. In 2013, Boston passed Article 89, which established zoning regulations and standards for commercial farms and the related Soil Safety Protocol. This defined a pathway for commercial farms and urban agriculture activities that were previously not allowed or not mentioned in the zoning code.

Boston continues to advance and prioritize municipal policies that create conditions for urban agriculture to happen more easily and equitably. As part of its Urban Agriculture Recommendations, Boston should take a comprehensive approach to identifying and moving forward municipal and state policy that shape favorable conditions and remove obstacles to urban agriculture activities. The following should be considered in developing a policy agenda.

Municipal Policy:

- **3b.1.** The current zoning code (Article 89) includes a range of urban agriculture activities. Depending on the activity and zoning district, several of the activities are considered “Conditional,” meaning the applicant must appeal to the Zoning Board of Appeals and meet conditions to gain permission for said activity. This adds administrative and time burdens to urban agriculture activities. To streamline processes for urban agriculture and remove the need for an appeals process, advocate for a community process to revisit the Article 89 zoning code and, where possible, make urban agriculture activities “Allowed” rather than “Conditional”.
- **3b.2.** Article 89 previously allowed honey beekeeping in very few parts of the city. The approval of “An Ordinance with Respect to Honey Bees” made it easier to keep honey bees anywhere in the city. Consider advocating for a similar approach for other urban agriculture activities, like hen keeping.



- **3b.3.** The Planning Department’s Article 80 development review process requires developers to provide agreed-upon public and community benefits for large development proposals. The City of Boston is currently undergoing an Article 80 modernization process titled “Improving our Development Review Process” to increase transparency and community engagement processes. GrowBoston should engage with “Improving our Development Review Process” to identify how existing community interests in urban agriculture community benefits can be expressed and how urban agriculture options might be proposed for consideration by community members and Impact Advisory Groups. It should do so by providing feedback throughout the community and circulating education and advocacy materials to its community networks to enable greater resident participation.
- **3b.4.** Councilor Michelle Wu’s Food Justice Agenda for a Resilient Boston (2020) (“the Agenda”) references [DC Green Bonds](#) as a possible model for Boston’s urban agriculture projects. The DC Green Bonds program increases municipal funds available for major projects that have environmental and health benefits, most centrally the Clean Rivers Project which makes infrastructure improvements to the sewer system to reduce water pollution. In Boston, a similar bond program could finance projects that deliver environmental and health benefits and promote climate resilience. Urban agriculture initiatives could be funded as part of a larger bonds program for the environmental and social benefits it delivers. Commitment by the City to fund urban agriculture initiatives through such a program could substantially reduce financial barriers to urban agriculture and facilitate its proliferation and delivery of public benefits.
- **3b.5.** Councilor Michelle Wu’s [Food Justice Agenda for a Resilient Boston](#) (2020) encourages bringing more land into food production. Among other measures, it advocates for using tax incentives or vacant lot registry fees to encourage private landowners to transfer non-buildable vacant lots to aspiring food producers. It encourages the City to consider legislation that allows it to secure vacant or tax-delinquent land for urban agriculture and other uses, such as the municipal and state legislation passed in [Pittsburgh/Pennsylvania](#). The City may also consider policies like the Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones that extend tax exemptions for land used for urban agriculture (see [Washington D.C.](#), [Kansas City](#), [San Jose](#), and [San Francisco](#)).
- **3b.6.** In the case of vacant lots being transitioned into and then out from urban agriculture uses for development or other reasons, explore policies that enable monetary compensation to growing space stewards for sweat equity and capital invested. Promote this for both public- and privately-owned vacant lots as a model to incentivize and make urban agriculture a community asset in the face of shifting land uses.

State Policy:

Boston could support the following state bills that provide avenues for Boston urban farmers to receive real estate tax relief.

- **3b.7.** Massachusetts agricultural laws that serve to reduce the tax burden for farmers and support farmland preservation apply in nearly all instances only to parcels of 5 acres or more. Generally, urban agriculture sites are less than five acres, and so many of the agricultural laws do not apply to or benefit them. In a [2021 publication](#), the Massachusetts Food System Collaborative discusses farmland loss trends and the need for farmland preservation to include small parcel farms. It advocates for the removal of the 5-acre minimum, which would require a major effort to change the state's constitution. This effort has been taken up by the current 193rd General Court of Massachusetts through S.13/H.41: "Proposal for a Legislative Amendment to the Constitution Relative to Agriculture and Horticultural Lands." This amendment would remove the acreage requirement from Article 99 of the Massachusetts Constitution, thus making farmland of any size eligible for tax relief. Boston could consider supporting this bill.
- **3b.8.** Massachusetts state law Chapter 59 Section 5 is the vehicle through which Boston's Assessing Department can extend property tax exemptions to land-owning for-profit entities. Urban farms that are for-profits are eligible for this tax exemption. In the current 193rd General Court of Massachusetts, the proposed bill "An Act to Promote Urban Agriculture and Horticulture" (S.1855, H.2825) would amend Chapter 59 Section 5 to add a property tax exemption of up to 100% of the assessed value of real estate in agricultural and/or horticultural use, so long as the real estate (or portion thereof) used for agricultural and/or horticultural is less than two acres in area. If passed, this bill would create a local option Boston could opt into to allow urban agriculture uses on parcels under 2 acres to be eligible for property tax relief, regardless of the landowning entity's status as a for-profit. This bill has been received favorably by the legislative process to date. Boston could consider supporting this bill.



- **3C. Track progress to evaluate how urban agriculture is developing and advancing equity.**

With the goal of advancing equitable urban agriculture, GrowBoston needs to understand how its efforts and those of partners are achieving this goal. GrowBoston should consider an evaluation effort that records historical urban agriculture activities and establishes an ongoing process for tracking activities and assessing outcomes and impact.

- **3c.1.** An urban agriculture evaluation should consider the following data:
 - **3c.1.1.** Community engagement of residents and other key stakeholders living in or representing priority geographies and populations.
 - **3c.1.1.** Historical urban agriculture data that characterizes current conditions, perhaps prior to establishing GrowBoston. This would establish a benchmark of urban agriculture conditions from which to measure changes.
 - **3c.1.2.** Information of urban agriculture efforts such as: funding disbursed; technical assistance provided; urban agriculture sites developed with GrowBoston support (e.g. raised beds, farms); convenings held and community engagement efforts. Summarize this on an annual basis.
 - **3c.1.3.** Information on beneficiaries of urban agriculture efforts, including characteristics of people or entities and geographies that received support from GrowBoston. This could be paired with engagement of recipients to understand the impact of the resources or support provided.
 - **3c.1.4.** Information on conditions and changes within Boston neighborhoods to assess highest priority neighborhoods and populations. This should include data such as BIPOC populations, food insecurity, and household income to understand demographic characteristics; food retailers (number, type, distribution); heat and flooding risk; and other climate impacts to understand environmental conditions. Assess periodically (e.g. every 4 years).
 - **3c.1.5.** Ecosystem services and health benefits provided by growing spaces.
- **3c.2.** Evaluation findings should both inform more equitable urban agriculture efforts and be made publicly available.
- **3c.3.** Follow an evaluation approach similar to the [Equitable Evaluation Framework](#).



- **3c.4.** Partner with area universities to accomplish evaluation efforts.
- **3c.6.** Support Boston Public Schools with funding, capacity, and technical assistance to support their interest in conducting an initial evaluation of school growing spaces.

IV. Advance solutions that resolve persistent obstacles to establishing and maintaining urban agriculture.

- **4A. Make it easier to obtain information about urban agriculture.**

Participants in the community engagement aspect of The Report described various aspects of urban agriculture site establishment as complex and somewhat opaque. They described a need for easy-to-find, publicly available information on Boston’s urban agriculture. They expressed interest in making information and educational resources more accessible for urban agriculture entities and for residents looking to engage in urban agriculture.

- **4a.1.** In the development of all resources, ensure multilingual access and prioritize visual graphic design and other accessibility and equity considerations.
- **4a.2.** In addition to providing digital or print resources, ensure that any individual could communicate in their preferred language with GrowBoston representatives. Where interpretation or other assistive communication services are available, post this information prominently alongside departmental phone numbers.
- **4a.3.** Make the GrowBoston website a one-stop site for those seeking information about urban agriculture. On the website, be clear about the resources and support provided by GrowBoston including land disposition, grants, and technical assistance. Specify resources provided by other City of Boston entities. Distinguish these resources from those provided by other non-municipal entities. Ensure the non-municipal resources include services provided by local urban agriculture entities. Consider ways to make the website more user-friendly. One example: on the home page, embed links to sub-web pages with titles such as, “How do I start my own farm or food production business?” and “Where in my community can I grow food?” Include clear instructions on relevant processes, resources, and information available.
- **4a.4.** On the GrowBoston website and media platforms, host an interactive digital map showing existing gardens, farms and other urban agriculture sites; invite feedback on urban agriculture site maintenance and expansion interests. Promote said map, including at urban agriculture sites, using a QR code, for example. [Boston’s Mayor’s Office of Housing](#), “Building Housing Map” serves as an example.
- **4a.5.** Not all sites are alike, and not all will have to comply with Article 89 procedures. Develop a resource that charts out the processes and requirements for establishment of several types and sizes of urban agriculture sites, whether commercial or non-commercial initiatives.



- **4a.6.** Adoption of innovative or less common food production methods, like hen keeping, beekeeping, rooftop food production, hydroponic methods, or seaweed cultivation could be encouraged through educational resources and inspiring examples. Develop publicly available educational resources for innovative growing methods. This should include step by step guidance on the processes for a variety of methods. It should also include opportunities to learn about examples of entities employing innovative production methods, such as site visits or case studies.
- **4a.7.** Develop a publicly available toolkit for community groups such as neighborhood associations or community gardening committees that supports communities to discuss urban agriculture in their communities. Include discussion prompts that explore uses of land for urban agriculture, housing development and affordable housing needs, parking, and other uses for which there are often tensions around the highest and best use of the land.
- **4a.8.** In collaboration with the Assessing Department, create a fact sheet on tax exemptions to encourage urban agriculture land ownership and use structures that take advantage of tax exemptions. Share this factsheet on GrowBoston's website.
- **4a.9.** Develop a resource for best practices in constructing ADA-accessible raised beds and options to purchase pre-made ADA-accessible raised beds. Disseminate this resource to growing space stewards and urban agriculture organizations across the city.



- **4B. Streamline processes and shorten timelines for urban agriculture site establishment.**

Participants of the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations process described long timeframes for urban farm and food forest establishment due to several required review processes. In reference to Comprehensive Farm Review, one participant noted that every municipally required review process presents an additional barrier and suggested that removal of review processes, where possible, would speed farm establishment. Another participant described the timing of required steps as out of sync with resident engagement efforts for urban agriculture initiatives.

- **4b.1.** Hold targeted meetings with department and office representatives to engage in strategic discussions. Chart out the existing processes for urban agriculture site establishment, then identify opportunities for reforms to existing or development of new policy that would streamline processes and shorten timelines. This should include consideration of grant funding processes and terms, land disposition process, permitting, and development review processes. Strategic discussions should be informed by urban agriculture entities with experience in the urban agriculture site establishment process.



- **4C. Make it easier and more affordable to supply urban agriculture sites with water.**

Water is essential to food production. Echoed by many participants, water infrastructure installation on farms and gardens is one of the largest expenses in site establishment, particularly water line connections from the growing site to the city water main. Reducing the costs for water infrastructure and service was a resoundingly high priority among these participants. The following recommendations would each address a component of this issue.

- **4c.1.** Where possible, publish a searchable map of potential urban agriculture sites that include information about the presence or absence of existing connection to the city water main. GrowBoston should work with the Boston Water & Sewer Commission to do this. Where these sites are owned by the Mayor’s Office of Housing, prioritize sites with connections for GrowBoston’s land disposition for urban agriculture.
- **4c.2.** Explore reducing, removing, or subsidizing the costs for installation of water line extensions to the city main line.
 - **4c.2.1.** Consider establishing grant programs to subsidize water infrastructure costs and spur workforce development opportunities for water professionals. A possible model to follow, KC Grow is a \$75,000 grant program sponsored by the [City of Kansas City, MO](#) and administered by Kansas City Community Gardens, with technical assistance from Kansas City Community Gardens and Cultivate Kansas City. This program assists community gardens and farms in Kansas City, MO. The grant program covers up to 90% of the costs for 1) rainwater and stormwater catchment systems, 2) municipal water line tap and hydrant installation, 3) spigot meter and PVC connection, 4) water pumping systems, and 5) drip irrigation systems. KC Grows will fund both water line connections to the city water main and on-site water infrastructure.
 - **4c.2.2.** Consider providing, promoting, or facilitating workforce development around alternative water service options serving City growing spaces, and develop and disseminate educational resources about them. Alternative water service options to consider include: a) Operate a mobile water truck to supply farms with water where service is absent. Boston Water & Sewer Commission already has a mobile drinking water trailer with a 330-gallon tank. A similar mobile trailer could supply several farms with water, and b) Encourage growers to connect to neighboring water supply, where parties agree about the water-sharing terms.

- **4c.2.3.** Promote supplemental watering mechanisms, such as installing rainwater harvesting for irrigation use, or installing drip irrigation lines that conserve water use. GrowBoston should meet with the Office of Green Infrastructure to explore this recommendation.
- **4c.2.4.** Consider water service subsidies that provide free water service up to a certain amount. [Pittsburgh](#) Water and Sewer Authority provides free water service to gardens and greening projects on public vacant lots. Water service is provided at no cost up to a \$500 limit, after which the garden leaders are charged a residential rate. (This practice does not include installation of water infrastructure.)
- **4c.2.5.** Explore partnerships with plumbers and other professionals enabling water access for community partners, individuals, and City departments establishing growing sites such as Boston Public Schools.



- **4D. Make it easier to acquire land for urban agriculture sites.**

GrowBoston's Grassroots Open Space Program manages the disposition of its land for food production and open space uses. The process makes land available for a nominal cost, charging, for example, \$1,400 for land appraised at over \$900,000. The program also awards capital funds up to \$150,000 to successful non-profit applicants. This process reduces financial and land access barriers, setting the conditions for urban agriculture to develop equitably. The following recommend improvements to the Grassroots Program's land disposition process and encourage alignment with other City of Boston land-owning entities.

- **4d.1.** Develop a combined inventory of municipal land suitable for urban agriculture; this should include land of the Mayor's Office of Housing (GrowBoston), Parks and Recreation Department, and the Planning Department.
- **4d.2.** Land disposition resource: Review, update, and publicly post the resource that describes the GrowBoston land disposition process. Ensure it is complete and inclusive of city requirements, timeline, steps and supports, as well as community engagement steps. This should also include information about types of entities eligible to apply for the land. Consider including other land disposition processes and timelines in this resource that may be applicable, such as for the Planning Department. The [Landbank Authority of Louisville KY](#) offers an example.
- **4d.3.** In collaboration with the Urban Agriculture Program at Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, and other relevant partners explore feasibility of land conservation easements that are connected with urban agriculture uses to preserve existing growing sites and open spaces.
- **4d.4.** In collaboration with Boston Public Schools and individual schools in priority neighborhoods, explore new opportunities to use school land for growing opportunities that serve the school community in ways that are aligned with the recent [Long-Term Facilities Plan](#).



- **4E. Make it easier and more affordable to have healthy soil on urban agriculture sites.**

Healthy soil is important for soil-based food production, both so that food grown is consumable and that growing food poses no exposure risks to the grower. Massachusetts' [Best Management Practice for Non-Commercial Gardening](#) and Boston's [Soil Safety Protocol for Commercial Urban Farming](#) seek to ensure safety when growing food in soil. Experienced participants of this process shared interests in reducing the costs for purchasing healthy non-native soil and compost for urban agriculture and support in ensuring that the non-native soil and compost used is safe. Their recommendations follow.

- a. 4e.1.** The cost of supplying growing spaces with clean, non-native soil and compost is substantial. Subsidize or offer other methods for reducing these costs where feasible.
- b. 4e.2.** The cost of soil testing in community gardens can be substantial. The City of Boston could provide free soil testing in coordination with UMass Extension, which provides soil testing services, and municipal stakeholders for soil health, such as the Boston Public Works Department and the Boston Public Health Commission.
- c. 4e.3.** Develop guidance for soil and compost testing for community gardeners to ensure accurate test results. UMass Extension, Boston Public Health Commission, and possibly other entities should coordinate on this.
- d. 4e.4.** Remediation of contaminated soil is costly. GrowBoston encourages using raised beds and clean, imported soil to avoid such costs and ensure healthy growing spaces. However, sometimes in-ground growing is preferred and therefore soil remediation is necessary. For these instances, explore reducing soil remediation costs.
- e. 4e.5.** [Recent research](#) out of Boston University on composting recommends that the City amend allowable inputs to municipal compost and require testing. The research includes sample language for inclusion in contracts with the composting companies it works with. GrowBoston could host a meeting with Boston University School of Public Health, the Trustees, the Department of Public Works, and the Boston Public Health Commission to further discuss the issues and to explore collaboration in implementing these recommendations.



- **4F. Make it easier to secure funding and reduce costs for urban agriculture.**

Urban agriculture delivers valuable social and health benefits, but it requires significant investments both in the establishment phases as well as in operations. Participants of this process described a need for dedicated funding for urban agriculture establishment and expansion and several ways that the costs of urban agriculture could be reduced.

- **4f.1.** Proactively address disagreements about tax exemption eligibility for urban agriculture entities.
 - **4f.1.1.** Property taxes can be a significant annual cost for urban agriculture entities. Governed by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 5, non-profit entities can apply for a property tax exemption. Boston's Assessing Department is responsible for determining exemptions, a process through which it evaluates both the application and several other pieces of information, including site visits. Where only the property-owning non-profit entity and its members are eligible for such an exemption, it does not extend to a subletter. On occasion, the Assessing Department has questioned the farmworkers' affiliation with the applicant non-profit entity, bringing into question its tax exemption eligibility. To proactively resolve such issues, GrowBoston should facilitate a forum for discussions between a group of non-profit urban agriculture entities and the Boston Assessing Department to identify the range of structures and operations of urban agriculture entities and the affiliation with its growers. Such a discussion, or several discussions could serve to clarify tax exemption eligibility, and proactively address disagreements.
- **4f.2.** Support Boston Public Schools in maintaining support that stemmed from the pandemic to secure long term, sustained funding commitments from City budget processes and external sources to support educational programming, curriculum integration, and growing space infrastructure as part of their sustainability and outdoor learning agendas, especially in priority neighborhoods.
- **4f.3.** Work with the Boston Inspectional Services Department to ensure that active urban agriculture sites are exempt from plant height restrictions and overgrown weed tickets.
- **4f.4.** Establish garden tool shares at libraries or community centers (particularly with equipment for tree planting and maintenance & beekeeping) to decrease financial burden on residents.



- **4G. Coordinate and strengthen stewardship and investment in urban agriculture across Boston.**
 - **4g.1.** To build a broader base of community support and interest in urban agriculture initiatives, and evolve Boston's urban agriculture initiatives into community building assets:
 - **4g.1.1.** Explore establishment of a neighbor harvest-sharing program for abutters of growing spaces, particularly public or collective growing spaces. This would allow growers (at home and in public spaces) to be aware of and connect with neighbors of their growing spaces who lack access to healthy food, in order to donate excess produce.
 - **4g.1.2.** Engage local artists in the planning for and activation of growing spaces and to nurture the connections between food, culture, and land stewardship with a broader community. Partnerships could build from existing connections with artists who contributed to the community events in Summer & Fall 2023.
 - **4g.2.** Collaborate with key partners to support human resource needs for public growing space maintenance, particularly for school gardens over the summer (as needed) and library gardens.
 - **4g.3.** Actively facilitate matching between residents interested in getting involved with urban agriculture and growing spaces. This could be accomplished by keeping public or access-by-invitation databases of growing spaces whose stewards have self-identified as needing additional capacity and interested residents reached through neighborhood events, a write-in box on GrowBoston's website, or other means.
 - **4g.4.** To build capacity for garden maintenance and provide economic opportunities for residents, facilitate a paid apprenticeship program for city gardeners. Consider youth, adult, and older adult opportunities.
 - **4g.5.** Coordinate an urban agriculture ambassador program.
 - Ambassadors could undertake the following activities:
 - **4g.5.1.** Use the digital map or other resources to raise awareness of existing and potential growing spaces in their neighborhood.
 - **4g.5.2.** Share information on the resources and programs GrowBoston has to support urban growers.

- **4g.5.3.** Engage and elicit feedback from gardeners and residents. Capture and communicate this feedback back to GrowBoston, potentially using the digital map.
- **4g.5.4.** Do the above activities at community events and through quarterly or bi-annual rounds at growing spaces in their neighborhood.
- **4g.5.5.** In times of overabundant harvest and gleaning, or in cases of harvest sharing agreements, coordinate food collection and distribution to neighborhood food aid sites.
- **4g.5.6.** Provide social media visibility for gardens and farms in their neighborhood.
- **4g.5.7.** Provide mentorship for urban gardeners and food producers by connecting them to knowledge and people stewarding thriving urban agriculture spaces in their neighborhood.
- **4g.5.8.** Provide supervision and activation of neighborhood growing spaces, particularly for youth.
 - **4g.5.9.** Seek to recruit and retain ambassadors from cultural communities in priority neighborhoods, especially those with language skills. Include neighborhood committee members as they are interested.
 - **4g.5.10.** Provide an honorarium to ambassadors or other compensation.
 - **4g.5.11.** Consider paralleling Boston Public Schools' Outdoor Teaching and Learning Champion model.
- **4g.6.** Support Boston Public Schools in creating and facilitating internal, interdepartmental collaborations that trigger a culture shift towards embracing growing spaces as pillars of sustainability in the school ecosystem.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations will be implemented through the coordination and engagement of a wide range of stakeholders who share interests in promoting equitable urban agriculture. GrowBoston will lead and coordinate implementation of the recommendations. We encourage all entities that engage with urban agriculture in Boston to review the recommendations and, where possible, collaborate with GrowBoston and one another for a multi-track approach to implementation. The planning process established new and strengthened existing relationships and engagement structures, and implementation should begin with and build from the connections with individuals and entities already made.

The following suggests some of the first steps GrowBoston may take in implementing the recommendations and ensuring The Report is embraced and acted upon through broad partnership.

- Disseminate the Boston Urban Agriculture final report and executive summary:
 - Share materials with internal GrowBoston team members, Mayor’s Office of Housing, municipal representatives engaged in the planning process, interviewees, neighborhood committee members, individuals at neighborhood events that offered their email addresses, and survey takers that offered their email addresses (see Airtable for contact information).
 - Post materials on GrowBoston website.
 - Encourage partner entities to post and disseminate materials.
- Discuss the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations:
 - Continue internal GrowBoston conversations on recommendation prioritization.
 - As appropriate and where pathways for exploration and action are identified, include relevant municipal, organizational, and resident stakeholders. Build on the relationships strengthened throughout the process of developing The Report (reference Section IV. Approach for details).
- Prioritize and track progress of the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations:

- Develop a workbook to consider short- and long-term actions (see workbook from the Cambridge Food Action Plan implementation here: [Workbook](#)).
 - Immediate Action:
 - Consider efforts already underway that align with urban agriculture goals which GrowBoston can support and engage with in furtherance of achieving those goals. Key opportunities include the USDA Urban Agriculture Innovation and Production Grant, the Article 80 Modernization Project – “Improving our Development Review Process”; Neighborhood Planning; Tax exemption fact sheet
 - Long-Term Strategizing and Action:
 - Prioritize recommendations that best support GrowBoston’s values.
 - Estimate the following factors relative to each recommendation in order to help form an implementation plan:
 - level of effort
 - level of impact
 - cost
 - timeline
 - feasibility of coordination
 - political will

5. APPENDICES

1. Neighborhood Committee Members
2. Members of the Interdepartmental Municipal Meetings
3. Interviewed Stakeholders
4. Local Artist Collaborations
5. Boston Urban Agriculture Strategy Survey
6. Youth Focus Groups Key Themes & Quotes
7. UFI Food Systems Visioning Group Memory

Appendix 1. Neighborhood Committee Members

Dorchester:

- Talia McCray
- Mukaji Ambila
- Jamison Cloud
- Jacynnda Espenshade
- Anny Thach
- Aaron Devine

Roxbury:

- Jay Vilar
- Hortencia Da Rosario
- Fatima Seck
- Evan O'Neal
- Danielle Sommer Kieta
- Carolyn Lewenberg
- Andrea Jaramillo
- Aly Madan

Mattapan:

- Vivien Morris
- Vickey Siggers
- Simba Davis
- Ruth Georges
- Robyn Gibson
- Rachel Nagin
- Lendsey Thicklin
- Andrea Wells

East Boston:

- Ryan Montoni
- Roberto Gomez
- Kelsey Briggs
- Joel Seidner
- Evelyn Gomez



Appendix 2. Members of the Interdepartmental Municipal Meetings

- GrowBoston
- Office of Food Justice
- Inspectional Services
- Parks & Recreation Department
- Boston Water & Sewer Commission
- Boston Public Schools
- Assessing
- Planning Department
- Boston Public Health Commission
- Department of Public Works
- Department of Youth Engagement and Employment



Appendix 3. Local Artist Collaborations

Voices of Hope Choir, Choral performance, Mattapan & East Boston events

Voices of Hope is a community choir supporting people and families in recovery from Substance Abuse Disorder. They performed a selection of inspirational songs, reflecting that spiritual, inspirational and work songs have accompanied planting and harvest for centuries in many cultures. Their goal was to help create connections in growing spaces through conversation and uplifting “call and response” song.

Fatima Seck, Communal Mosaic-making, Roxbury & Dorchester events

Fatima’s project engaged attendees to create neighborhood mosaics made out of mirror fragments and seeds. Community members received seeds based on their answers to related prompts (e.g. “what I love most about my neighborhood is...”). Fatima worked with teen artist-researchers to help and direct attendees during the event and to craft the related prompts and questions. These teens were paid from the project budget, creating a paid opportunity for local youth to engage with their communities and create art.

Jasmine Griffin, DIY planter boxes, Roxbury and Dorchester events

Jasmine’s project engaged participants with wooden planters that also served as acoustic cell phone audio amplifiers. These planters were adorned with pyrographed designs that encourage and celebrate urban agriculture. Attendees received planters with soil and seeds to take home.

Tran Vu, Visual storytelling “Second Lives”, East Boston, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury events

Tran’s activation, “Second Lives,” was centered on the narratives of local residents. “Second Lives” explored the lived experiences and strategies of immigrants and refugees in growing their own food as a form of resiliency and environmental adaptation infused with cultural creativity. As part of the activation, Tran facilitated artmaking and conversations for residents to share their experiences through drawing and multilingual conversations using guided prompts. The activity engaged intergenerational residents to bring awareness to shared daily practices around food and growing and spotlight this knowledge with one another.



Appendix 4. Interviewed Stakeholders

Municipal Entities Interviewed for the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations:

- GrowBoston
- Office of Food Justice
- Inspectional Services
- Department of Parks & Recreation
- Boston Water & Sewer Commission
- Boston Public Schools
- Assessing
- Planning Department
- Policy Office of Mayor Wu

Community-Based & State Organizations Interviewed for the Boston Urban Agriculture Recommendations:

- Massachusetts Food System Collaborative
- MA Department of Agricultural Resources
- MA Urban Agriculture Coalition
- The Trustees of the Reservation
- Boston Farms Community Land Trust
- Urban Farming Institute
- Boston Food Forest Coalition



Boston Urban Agriculture Strategy Survey

Thanks for taking our survey!

GrowBoston is the City of Boston’s office for urban agriculture. We want to hear your ideas and hopes for growing and raising food in your neighborhood. GrowBoston especially wants to hear ideas and hopes for Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and East Boston, key neighborhoods in Boston’s effort to address food insecurity.

This is part of a bigger project to equitably increase opportunities to grow and raise food in Boston and in these neighborhoods in particular. We will integrate your feedback into a public report, which will help GrowBoston and partners respond to needs and interests. The public report will be done in Spring 2024.

Learn more about that project here: <https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/boston-urban-ag-strategy/>

Which neighborhood do you live or work in?

- Dorchester
- Roxbury
- Mattapan
- East Boston
- Other neighborhood: _____

How many years have you lived or worked in this neighborhood? _____

Are you interested in growing or raising food?

- Yes - I already grow or raise food

- Yes - I do not grow or raise food, but I am interested.
- No

What foods would you like to grow or raise? Please share:

- Vegetables
- Fruit
- Herbs
- Honey
- Eggs from hens
- Fish or shellfish
- Other food: _____

If you selected vegetables, please share what kinds of vegetables you would like to grow, including those from your culture or country:

If you selected fruit, please share what kinds of fruit you would like to grow, including those from your culture or country:

If you selected herbs, please share what kinds of herbs you would like to grow, including those from your culture or country:

If you selected fish or shellfish, please share what kinds of fish or shellfish would you like to raise, including those from your culture or country:

We want to learn about your interest in methods commonly used for growing or raising food. These methods could be used at various locations (e.g., schools, libraries, private gardens) and there could be more than one method used in a single space. **Which methods of growing and raising food are you interested in for your neighborhood?**

	Not Interested	Slightly Interested	Interest	Very Interested
○ Rooftop community gardens (a rooftop that is used by residents to grow or raise food)	○	○	○	○
○ Rooftop farms (rooftops on which farmers grow or raise food for sale or donation)	○	○	○	○
○ Orchards (land planted with fruit trees, such as apple trees, pear trees, hazelnut trees, etc.)	○	○	○	○
○ Keeping hens (for eggs)	○	○	○	○
○ Keeping honeybees	○	○	○	○
○ Ground-level community gardens (for residents to grow or raise food)	○	○	○	○
○ Ground-level farm (land on which farmers grow or raise food for sale or donation)	○	○	○	○
○ Greenhouses (a permanent structure made of glass, plastic, or fiberglass in which plants are	○	○	○	○

grown year-round under controlled temperature and humidity settings)

○ **Other methods:**

○ ○ ○ ○

My racial identity is (Select all that apply)

- Black
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Asian
- White
- Another identity (please list): _____
- I prefer not to say

What is your age? _____

What is your household income?

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 to \$34,999
- \$35,000 to \$49,999
- \$50,000 to \$74,999
- \$75,000 to \$99,999
- \$100,000 to \$149,999
- \$150,000 or more

What is your housing situation?

- I live in a home that I rent.

- o I am unhoused.
- o I live in a home that I own.

Appendix 6. Youth Focus Groups Key Themes & Quotes

Theme	Quotes		
<p>Lack of Safe Green Spaces (particularly in Dorchester); Lack of Growing Spaces</p>	<p>My neighborhood is right next to Franklin Park, but the thing is that it's turned into a dangerous area, so I feel like because of this lack of safe green spaces, a lot of youth aren't finding productive ways to spend their time, which leads to them ending up in gangs and not having a good use of their time. -Sefina</p>	<p>I live less than a mile from Franklin Park and do my sports there and there was a shooting outside White Stadium and we had to duck and hide. It just doesn't feel that safe to be outside anymore, even in better neighborhoods. -Jax</p>	<p>There's one green space near my house but I don't really see people managing it. The park there—none of the people who live in my neighborhood actually go there because people die there so it's not really a safe place. -Tyrik</p>
<p>Lack of Public Spaces for Youth</p>	<p>There's not much space to be without being a consumer and we're not rich up there, so you can't really go anywhere without spending money and there's no money to spend, so we can't really go anywhere. -Sefina</p>	<p>I'd love to see an actual growing space that's not in a parking lot next to the train where I can hang out with my friends and do stuff. -Reuben</p>	<p>The focus should be on making spaces for youth. -Sefina</p>
<p>Open School Gardens to Community in Summer</p>	<p>At The Food Project greenhouse, community members have one bed to take care of. That's doable. So if you rented out beds to community members, it would encourage them to take care of them all summer long. -Jax</p>	<p>But if their parents who aren't working all the time want to come and use the plot. The families are young and hip and would kill for a plot. -Reuben</p>	



Lack of Maintenance of Existing Green Spaces; Engage Community in Urban Agriculture Decision Making	<p>But I feel like they were like “look what we gave you guys, bye,” and there’s no follow through. Now the park–there’s a big padlock on it now, there’s rats, drug paraphernalia. We got Franklin Park, but there’s no effort being put into the maintenance of the park. -Sefina</p>	<p>But my community–when you are not given nice things, you don’t know how to keep those things nice. It’s up to say Mayor Marty Walsh–who came down and cut the ribbon and gave us the park, but he didn’t come back and take care of the park. It is our community, but people don’t know how to maintain things like that. It’s important to have someone come and help us out a little bit. -Sefina</p>	<p>And you know, they do take care of the park: the golf course. The rest of the park, they forget about it. -Alden</p>
	<p>I live in Dorchester near Franklin Park. I never really went there until I worked there last summer, and we went to clean it up. There’s needles and invasive species. -Tyrik</p>		
Perceptions of Urban Agriculture	<p>Low key racist perceptions. -Alden</p>	<p>It’s not a really positive perception among people our age. -Alden</p>	<p>And then my friends from around my neighborhood are like “girl, we was free in 1863, why are you still on the farm?” -Sefina</p>

<p>Need for Supervision and Structure in Urban Growing Spaces; Community Invitation</p>	<p>So when you walk in the library, there's a librarian who welcomes you, there's staff who ask if you need help with anything. So I think it could be like that when you walk on the farm. Like instead of walking in like "oooh what do I do here?" Someone to say "hey how are you guys doing, are you interested in growing, or here just to relax"? And not too pushy—but "are you guys interested in contributing?"-Sefina</p>	<p>Near my library, the Boston Public Library, there is a big vacant lot, if they made that a green space or playground connected to the library. The problem with a lot of green spaces is there's no supervision. So if they were connected to the library you'd feel safer going there. You're on library property, people aren't gonna start shooting. -Sefina</p>	<p>But if there's a program or person that could commit to it, it would be great to hang out with my friends there. -Jax</p>
	<p>People who actually want to be there and can invite other people in that community to take part, so everyone could feel part of it, so it's not that it's just there. -Tyrik</p>	<p>I feel like if we had more welcoming areas, it would be more positive, including farms. We need places where residents can spend time productively—young residents. Because older residents are always working—parents, grandparents. So for younger residents, we need productive ways to use our time. I have a lot of friends who just don't and it doesn't end up great. Urban ag should focus on engaging the community. -Alden</p>	<p>Food, then PR, then the space issue are top priorities. Boston is very packed and old. There needs to be some way to create or change these spaces so they can be ag spaces. It needs to be careful and conscious decisions made by people who live there. Because if you put them in spaces that feel dangerous, nobody is gonna want to go there. -Reuben</p>

<p>Locations for Growing Spaces</p>	<p>Brookline High School: Not sure if it's realistic, but our school is massive and the main building has a quadrangle in the middle and if we could grow something there it would be amazing—all the classrooms look into it, there's good lighting, it's outside. -Reuben</p>	<p>Boston Latin Academy: same with my school, we have a courtyard in the middle, but nobody wants to be in it because it's all broken tiles and there's two benches, random broken chairs and all the classrooms can see it. And we have a greenhouse and so much that could be there, but either our school can't afford it or no one wants to take care of it. But if there's a program or person that could commit to it, it would be great to hang out with my friends there. -Jax</p>	
<p>School Engagement around Urban Agriculture</p>	<p>If there was actually a program for it, I think a lot of students would be interested. (Boston Latin Academy) -Jax</p>	<p>Vocational schools. -Sefina</p>	<p>Instead of making it a club or a required class, something you could do in your free time but also get credit for, or volunteer hours. -Sefina</p>
	<p>NOT an after-school club. -Jax</p>	<p>Brookline has the finances to have a permanent grower and hire students to come in on the weekends (2-3 students) who work directly with a grower. And I think that to encourage students to - I think it's almost impossible to encourage students to grow without incentive. But if it has benches or seating areas, students will go. -Reuben</p>	<p>School to hire students to care for gardens over summer. -all</p>

<p>Communicating Broadly with Youth to Encourage Urban Agriculture Involvement</p>	<p>It would be cool if one of you (GrowBoston staff) came to my school to my class and told us about what you did and reach out to other kids who seem already interested in the environment in general. -Tyrik</p>	<p>Kids in my community are made to feel like - we are kinda left behind. Nobody cares about the kids in Grove Hall. They see these farms and they're like whatever, you guys are adding more stuff, you're gentrifying, but it's not gonna do anything. So I feel like it's important to make kids in underprivileged communities - let them know that they matter. When we talk about the environment, it applies to us too. We're not just these backwoods hoodlums, we can be involved and make a change. -Sefina</p>	<p>Incentive comes first and perception comes after that. I think when people get class credit or money for doing the work, they'll tell their friends, "it doesn't sound that cool, but I'm getting paid" and their friends will be like "oh, can I get this job?" I think jobs for teenagers are really hard to get. -Reuben</p>
	<p>If we emphasize there are more jobs, people would probably be more interested in participating in urban farming and things like that. -Sefina</p>	<p>And needs to be a spin on how we look at farming because people see farming as "yeehaw, I work on a farm raw raw." We need to advertise farming as an actual career. Farming is not just the fields—there are the laboratories, the chemicals, the pesticides, engineering plants. It's not a one-size fits all cowboy type job, it's a career that you can focus on and it's a high-tech science-y field if you get into it. -Sefina</p>	<p>Start at kindergarten. -Sefina</p>

	HUGE PR effort. You have to totally flip the way people are thinking about it. -Alden	You have to get to kids in places where they're gonna see it. Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat. If they're seeing it on their feeds, you have to make it feel empowering, but not in a condescending way. -Alden	Insta posts, Tik Tok made by people who are doing the work or are somehow involved in the work is really really important to get other people to want to come out. -Reuben
Focus on Food Production	Bro I appreciate the community involvement, but we hungry. The primary focus of any agricultural operation should always be agriculture. -Alden		
General Recommendations	To encourage farming in general...if I started growing, I would have no idea how to sell my own produce. I'd want to produce more than just for me. Creating a pipeline for independent growers to farmers markets because it would give people a chance. -Alden	Hiring community members to manage the farm just to allow for more jobs in the area. So people get comfortable with farming in general while also food is the main goal. -Tyrik	

**Urban Farming Institute and GrowBoston
Boston Food Systems Visioning Session
December 6, 2023
9:00-3:00
Boston Nature Center**

Group Memory

Maureen White
Consultant/Facilitator

Lawrence Barriner
Consultant/Facilitator

Maria Latimore
Content Manager

I. Session Overview



CITY OF BOSTON

Produced for GrowBoston by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

July 2024

A. *Session Purpose and Desired Outcomes*

The following purpose and desired outcomes were shared at the start of the session:

- **Session Purpose:** To connect with each other and articulate our vision for the future of food production in Boston.
- **Desired Outcomes:** By the end of this session, we hope to have:
 - A shared vision for Boston’s food production system
 - Deeper relationships amongst retreat participants

B. *Agenda Overview*

The following agenda was presented at the start of the session, with adjustments made during the session as needed:

Time	What
30 min	Light refreshments
35 min	Welcome and start-ups
40 min	Story sharing
15 min	BREAK
60 min	Visioning: Guided visualization and image making
45 min	Light refreshments
10 min	Visioning: Gallery walk
85 min	Small group conversations: Reflecting on the vision
15 min	What’s next on the path towards this vision?
20 min	Closing

II. Participants

Hazel Kiefer, The Food Project

Sara Rostampour, Green City Growers

Apolo J Catala, Oasis on Ballou - Codman Square NDC

Katherine Walsh, Boston Public Schools

Emily Reckard-Mota, GrowBoston

Ashley Huff, UFI

Matthew Ellison, UFI

Tristram Keefe, UFI

Chris Greer

Annabel Rabiyah, The Trustees

Alex Alvanos, Boston Food Forest

Joy Gary, Boston Farms CLT

Caitie Dwyer-Huppert, Green City Growers

Jay Vilar, Haley House

Pat Spence, UFI

Michelle Martinat, Boston Public Schools

John Stoddard, Higher Ground Farm

Jessica Parsons, City Sprouts

Bill Perkins, Agricultural Hall

Greg Basile, UFI

Rose Shuker-Haines, UFI

Katie Irelan, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

Freddy Soza, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

Emily Polston

III. Agenda Items

A. Welcome and Start-Ups

UFI and the City of Boston welcomed participants and thanked them for attending. They stated that this visioning retreat is the culmination of a 6-8 month planning process that engaged many food producers, including farmers, beekeepers, and others, to weigh in on urban agriculture in their communities and how to make it easier to produce food around Boston. They shared that the day is about opening our eyes and our hearts to what's possible in Boston. The goal is to create a collaborative vision for the future of food systems.

Participants introduced themselves by stating their name, organization and role. Within their table groups, they checked in further with each other.

The facilitators and content manager were introduced and shared a little about themselves.

The facilitators thanked the Urban Farming Institute (UFI) for organizing the retreat. They then reviewed the desired outcomes and the agenda for the day. Facilitators also extended the following invitations to participants:

Take space, make space

Resist the temptation to multi-task

Expect unfinished business

Give your body what it needs

B. Story Sharing

Participants had received the following invitation as pre-work:

As a way to advance our relationship-building work together, we request that all participants bring a special object to the session. The object should represent for you some element of your work or why you have chosen to do this kind of work. You will be invited to share your object and tell a brief 2-3 minute story about its significance. The object can be anything—an item from your

personal life, a picture of an important place or event, or whatever artifact represents physical or symbolic manifestations of the issues you work on. Creativity is encouraged!

The facilitator asked each participant to share with their tablemates a brief story about the significance of their object, and why they do the work they do. They stated that the Story Object Circle is to anchor us in the power of our own stories as well as to build relationships.

Participants were invited to share some of the themes they heard in their group's stories:

- Many people were inspired by family members and how they connected them to their heritage and culture.
- Common love of food and what food meant for people and influenced their work.
- People had backgrounds in natural science and that highlighted the importance of introducing kids to science early.
- “My beginnings and first job at UFI remind me of this prickly seed pod. Everything that we did was new, but as we carefully opened the seed pod we found that the seeds could be planted to grow and become something good.”
- Family and immigration and the roots of food.

C. *Guided Visualization and Image-making*

The facilitator stated that the heart of today is about vision. She asked participants to take 3 deep breaths, to get comfortable and to close their eyes or soften their gaze. She led them through a guided visualization inspired by work she did with community organizer Linda Stout during the Occupy movement in Boston.

She asked them to imagine the future world of food that they want to live in; that they want children to grow up in. They were asked to put aside their fears, doubts and reality; to dream about what the ideal future looks like and feels like. What images and information do they see? What seed of hope from this current time would they like to see grow into fruition in the future?

Guided Visualization

Imagine stepping into a time machine and turning the dial to the year 2048. As you speed through time, you know you are headed to a place that is the future of your greatest and most hopeful dreams for the food system. As you step out of the



time machine, you are aware that we have made tremendous changes and that the seeds you helped plant years ago have now become a reality.

Imagine stepping out into your community and beginning to walk around. What do you notice about the food system here?

Notice the quality of the air and water and soil. How is food grown? You know the earth is well cared for. What does it feel like? Smell like? What made a healthy environment possible?

Imagine every person has abundant access to delicious and nutritious food. What do you see people eating? How are they getting it? How are everyone's needs provided for?

How have human interactions within the food system changed? What values are expressed? What do you notice that is different as you walk around, into the food market, restaurants, schools?

Now you strike up a conversation with a local food producer. Ask them to describe what they like best about their work.

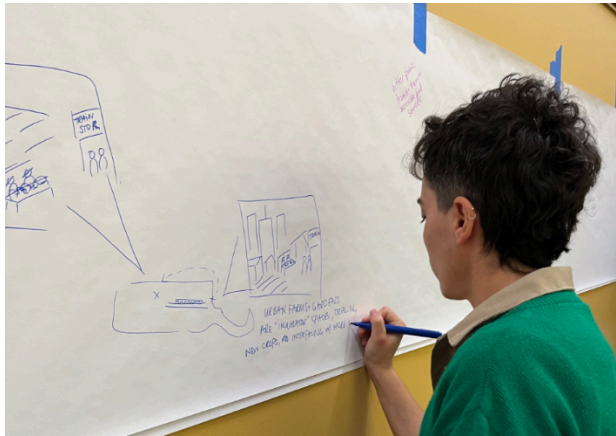
Before returning to the present, look around and find one gift, symbol or memory that you can bring back to 2023. Sit in silence for a few minutes to complete your visit to the future. (Pay attention to when several people start getting restless and move to the next prompt.)

As people who have witnessed the future, you return now as ambassadors from that time. You know what the future can look like, and it is your job to help communicate that possibility. make that positive future a reality.

As you step back into the time machine, turning the dial back to 2023, think about your experience and what you want to tell people on your return.

After the guided visualization, participants took 5 minutes to silently reflect on what they saw. Then they went into the hallway and drew images or words to describe some aspect of what came up for them that was compelling, surprising, exciting, visionary. They also drew/wrote what they saw, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt (touch or emotion).





D. Gallery Walk



Participants walked through the gallery of images created from the guided visualization. They then explained their portion of the image in 1-3 sentences.

- I visualize the role of institutions giving land back to people. It was about the anchor institutions providing land to people so they can grow food and provide resources to themselves and their communities.
- About family and immigration, and the roots of food.

- How rural and urban farms can work together. Urban farms are more public facing and provide important crops to people. I want to see more transportation for people to get to rural farms. And for the US military to divest in the military industrial complex.
- I see smaller local spaces that are easily accessible via public transportation that are connected with each other. Also, I see farmers making more money so that more people would be drawn into farming.
- We need to look back to go forward. Bring wisdom from the past into the future.
- Farming with more of a family orientation. I see kids leaving school. Farming is becoming a viable option that kids experience at a young age. The importance of community; my grandfather and his brother were dairy farmers.
- Have green space anywhere. Producing food is very intensive, and we need to have habitats that allow animals to flourish, with or without food being grown. Put green spaces everywhere we can fit them.
- Minimizing processed foods, organic foods become normal. Deconstruct how we approach food consumption. Producing healthy food.
- I'm a fundraiser, so I focused on public investment in growing food. Collaboration of the public sectors (schools, public health, etc.) to think about how to help people to grow local food. Undocumented people grow a lot of the food that's trucked all over the place; we need to value them as human beings.
- Integrated lifestyle systems design. Every element of the space is a growing space. Using the city as a model for how things can be done in suburban and rural areas.
- Boston Public Schools having outdoor teaching and learning. In the future, I saw an abundance of outdoor gardens, spaces for children to play in, fruit trees, wildlife (pollinators, etc.)
- Envisioning Boston as a resilient and abundant city of food production. For that to happen resources and attention must be paid to it.
- Farmers are revered and compensated for what they do in our communities. There are farms everywhere. Intergenerational food production; our seniors are teaching and every single child knows how to grow food and to cook. Schools should teach this (back to home economics.)
- A food system that moves beyond capitalism. Focused on the climate with major positive changes.
- Regional food systems leveraging our capital. Prioritizing planning and making space for agriculture to happen. Producers have authority to grow. People in the urban centers have relationships with rural people to create regional systems. Distribute food non-commercially.
- Greater inter-connectedness between farms. Less being alone to survive. An attitude of "Better Together."



- Farms where people can explore more than food, but also things like water catchment, how to use farms on a small scale, and sharing knowledge so that things can be replicated. What it looks like to heal the land; develop practices for this. Create intergenerational spaces (elders, children, and everyone in between are involved and integrated into it).
- Through school, help young people to deal with their climate anxiety. Help students to connect to their insecurities around climate and the food they're served.
- Create a community manifesto to enable a culture of growing food, not lawns. Encourage people to grow and share food.
- Healthy large scale farming practices that create healthy ecosystems and wildlife. Wild blueberry bushes represent that. People have time, access, and community to make the things they eat. One person collects the blueberries, others eat them!

Images of the collective vision can be seen [here](#).

E. Reflecting on the Vision

After light refreshments, participants reflected in small groups on the collective vision they had articulated. They were asked to respond to the four questions below. They discussed the questions and took notes on the large papers on their tables. After each discussion round, three of the four participants at each table rotated to other tables, in order to cross-pollinate the discussions.

Question 1: What are the similarities, connections, and themes that arise in our collective vision?

- Intergenerational growing. Elders → Youth
- Maximizing space. Greening every space
- Not replicating what already exists.
- Local and small-scale farming.
- Redirecting existing extractive processes.



- Accessibility and intersectionality in all ways: language, culture, physical, mental, etc.
- Early education for children to develop skills in growing and food production. Food and fun. Create incubators to build a consciousness within kids and educational systems.
- Reverence for, and nurturing, farming and farmers.
- Create systems that continuously create new visions.
- More than food. It's not just about growing food, but growing community.
- Anti-colonialism, anti-capitalism, anti-establishment model.
- Easier access to resources.
- Regulatory change. Governmental policies related to families and institutions - 1 push at a time.
- Commitment to sustainable and ecological food production.
- Engage with other organizations inside and outside of the work we do to gain their insights that could help us to do our work.
- Diversify what is grown; don't just grow vegetables.
- Good food as medicine.
- Interconnectedness via public transportation.
- Use urban agriculture as a model for what's possible.
- Designed communities with local food production at home and in schools.

Question 2: Are there any divergent ideas represented in the vision?

- Maintaining our capacity and sanity for our scope and goals.
- Obstacles to food access. Anxiety about food insecurity.
- Political access?
- Urban scale is not equal to rural agriculture.
- The impact of climate change in and around Boston.
- Capitalism vs. \$\$ → support a communal system.
- Inadequate resources; high costs.
- Individualism: Getting agreement can be challenging.
- How do we envision what we want and need given the systems that exist now?



- Move away from doom and gloom, but know that by 2048 Boston will have climate impacts. Will the city even exist? Can we grow the same crops?
- Assess what we need to build resiliency. To still produce food even while the climate is changing.
- Educate young people about growing for the future, not the current system.
- Perspectives from a trip to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria.
- Two goals that could be at odds with each other are community organizing and productivity.
- Two way rural farm urban farm partnership and relationship. Urban farms are the ones that take the produce to market.
- Shared cooperatively run food infrastructure; storage to keep surplus crops.

Question 3: How would we describe our collective vision to someone who isn't here?

- Farmer training programs abound throughout the city.
- Intergenerational growth; people of all ages play different roles. All youth know how food is grown because it's in their curriculum. Children are tested on their growing knowledge. Every school has an outdoor classroom. Farmers visit classrooms.
- Bee hives are everywhere - youth learn about bees and their importance.
- Every vacant lot is turned into a farm or urban garden. Multiple lawns have been converted into growing spaces. Every street has a growing captain and at least one raised bed.
- Cooking classes are abundant.
- Every corner store has fresh foods.
- Farmers get excellent pay. Farmers are respected and revered for their work.
- Revolutionary mindset.
- Collaborative, interwoven and interconnected.
- Community orientations in garden spaces.
- Intersectional vision.
- A thriving regenerative future.
- Value entrepreneurial voices.
- Advocate for legislature support for urban farming.
- Streamlined access to resources.
- Farms as community healing spaces.



Question 4: What key insight are you taking away from this exercise?

Participants discussed this for 10 minutes back at their original tables. Then each person wrote one key insight on a post-it note, and added it to the collective. Some of the insights included:

- People must work together to create the ideal food system - no one person can do it.
- Change is needed. We have a network of people willing to meet the future challenge. We must work together to figure out what's next for us.
- There's power in collaboration. There's so much brain power in this room. If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. To have a sustainable impact we need to work together.
- How do we collaborate? Our communications must focus on building shared goals and collective power and resources.
- Build more partnerships between urban and rural farms so that they can share resources and help each other build capacity. Urban farmers can act as a hub to help rural farmers distribute their food.
- Who's missing from the conversation?
- The city government must work with us; for example, we need to change grant applications.
- What are the farming communities' needs?
- What does wealth transfer look like?
- How do we change governmental structures at the city, state and federal levels to achieve our visions?
- How sustainable are food access programs; is there tension between food access and farm sustainability?
- Permanence and longevity can only be achieved if the ideals of sustainability, renewal and invention are instilled in the next generation inheriting our visions.
- As people are stuck between then and now, we must avoid resigning ourselves to the present. We must take direct action and create community partnerships to be the change we want to see.

Images of the table notes and insights can be seen [here](#).



F. What's Next?

The facilitators invited participants to consider the question, “What’s next for you (or your organization) on the path of bringing this vision into reality?” Participants had a few minutes of solo reflection time, and then shared their ideas with a partner. A few participants were invited to share with the whole group.

- We need to create models and test cases for the vision we want.
- Review and revise farming laws.
- Examine the role of philanthropy and money.
- Build connections with rural farms.
- Collaborate and build relationships to hear different visions and points of view. Leverage community gathering and collective wisdom.
- RRF: Working to change policy within MDAR around APR restrictions.

VI. Close

Pat Spence of UFI thanked the group for attending, reminded them that a stipend for participation was available, and shared the following remarks: *Doing this today was a bit of a dream (a vision!) We see each other in passing, and I wanted us to get to know each other better so that we could do collective visioning. This gathering was important for us to get to know each other. We are the future and need to continue to gather. We're planning something else to continue the process and the conversation and will ensure that you're all invited.*



Appendix 8. Youth Focus Participants

The Food Project:

- Saphina Ede-Girault
- Alden Hurtado
- Reuben Pomerantz
- Jackson Andrews
- Tyrek Couturier

Mayor's Youth Council:

- Ezra Wolfgang
- Caroline Ladendorf
- Fenner Dreyfus-Wells
- Alex Cruz
- Nathan Nozea

