

# Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC)

## The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

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September 3, 2019

Catherine R. McCabe, Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection  
P.O. Box 420  
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Dear Commissioner McCabe,

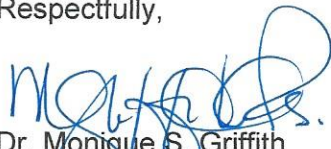
Thank you for your continued support for the Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC) and for continuing to provide a platform for the discussion of issues related to environmental and public health disparities.

As you are aware, within the first-year report, EJAC evaluated areas of interest and drafted recommendations that are believed to result in an approach to ensure that all individuals have access to resources despite where they reside. Though there were many, one of the identified high priority recommendations included the development of a strategy to transform underutilized open space into agricultural assets in an effort to reduce food insecurity within underserved communities. As revealed in the 2017 Urban Agriculture Symposium that was hosted by the Land Working Group of EJAC, urban agriculture practitioners have multiple concerns related to policy, access to land and/or land tenure, and the availability of technical assistance to complete this work within underserved areas. Therefore, for your review, we would like to present a white paper that addresses factors that may impact the development of urban agriculture within the State of New Jersey, perceived barriers and recommendations for addressing each barrier.

EJAC strives to provide support and guidance for your efforts to follow the mandate of Executive Order 23 and engaging 'all executive branch departments for the consideration of environmental justice in implementing their statutory and regulatory responsibilities'. As such, the Land Working Group of EJAC identified key recommendations within the Urban Agriculture in the Garden State white paper including the establishment of a state Urban Agriculture Task Force, the creation of a centralized online information hub to promote best practices in urban agriculture, and the allocation of resources for urban agriculture utilizing existing funds.

Once again, we appreciate your continued support and would appreciate if you would consider the contents of the paper and sharing it with Secretary Fisher of the Department of Agriculture and other agency leaders that may find the recommendations beneficial.

Respectfully,



Dr. Monique S. Griffith  
Chairman, EJAC

# Urban Agriculture in the Garden State



**New Jersey Department Of Environmental Protection  
Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC)  
September 2019**



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## NJDEP Environmental Justice Advisory Council

The Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC) to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is appointed by and serves as an advisory body to the Commissioner of the DEP and coordinates with the DEP's Office of Environmental Justice in providing advice and guidance to executive branch departments and agencies in accordance with Executive Order No. 23. The EJAC is committed to the basic tenet set forth by the environmental justice movement that communities, regardless of their racial, ethnic, or economic composition, are entitled to equal protection from the consequences of environmental hazards. The EJAC makes recommendations to ensure that the state departments and agencies develop effective communication programs, implement and enforce laws, regulations, and policies so that such actions do not unfairly burden any New Jersey population of people with a disproportionate share of environmental pollution. Further, the EJAC will strongly encourage the departments and agencies to provide mechanisms for outreach and direct community participation in decision making.

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# Environmental Justice Advisory Council's Urban Agriculture White Paper

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## Introduction

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New Jersey's increasing urbanization and population density place significant constraints on the natural resources available for all communities. Historically, urban communities across the state have been burdened by contamination resulting from concentrating industrial development in and around our central cities. Lack of open space, poor air quality, and water and soil contamination are of particular concern in many communities. In response, environmental justice advocates have focused attention on creative strategies for building local capacity and informing statewide policies to 'clean and green' New Jersey's urban footprint.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Justice Advisory Council (EJAC) is a multisector group of professionals charged to advise DEP's commissioner on policies and initiatives to protect New Jersey's environmentally fragile communities from further damage and injustice. The agency uses the United States Environmental Protection Agency's definition of environmental justice as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.<sup>1</sup> One of EJAC's four working groups focuses on land and open space issues. A growing statewide interest in urban agriculture demands a closer examination of the connections between land, food, and health in environmental justice communities. Urban agriculture is viewed by many as a viable strategy for achieving sustainable community-based food systems. The land working group has compiled a summary of notes and recommendations from participants of a symposium on urban agriculture.

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<sup>1</sup> Environmental Justice. (2018, December 13). Retrieved March 06, 2018, from <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

# Urban Agriculture in New Jersey & Symposium Overview

Given that New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the country, the overwhelming majority of the state's farms operate within the extremely large (sub)urban or peri-urban fringes of New York City to the north and Philadelphia in the south. Arguably, very little of the state's farmland would be considered



Indoor Mushrooms, Mill Creek Farm  
(Bridgeton, NJ)

rural. New Jersey's designation as the 'Garden State' dates back at least as far as the late 19th century when it was likened to an 'immense barrel filled with good things to eat at both ends' referencing the vast consumer markets of New York and Philadelphia in existence even a century ago.<sup>2</sup> Although urban agriculture in and around New Jersey's cities is not new, the current challenge is how to accommodate the diversity of approaches, from small-scale household production (backyard and community gardening) to larger commercial-scaled start-up ventures (indoor, vertical, and rooftop farming).

Many urban nonprofit and community-based organizations engaged in long-term urban agriculture initiatives have adapted their agricultural and 'greening' activities to accommodate shifting focus and priorities of the philanthropic funders supporting their work. Ornamental gardens that began in the 1970s and 80s to beautify neighborhoods and reverse blight have over time transitioned to focus on food production, becoming integral points of contact in reconnecting broken links of a food system chain in environmental justice communities (EJCs). As long as you were willing to put in the sweat equity (digging, planting, weeding and watering), you could receive a bounty of fresh nutritious produce that was otherwise unavailable or unaffordable in retail outlets within the community. Within the last five years, interest has increased in urban agriculture as an economic development strategy. The City of Newark has two indoor commercial urban farming companies, launched in 2014 and 2015 respectively, and in 2016, the New Jersey Urban Mayors Association hosted 'Urban Agriculture as an Economic Tool Conference.

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2 NETSTATE. (n.d.). The State of New Jersey. Retrieved December 10, 2018, from [http://www.netstate.com/states/intro/nj\\_intro.htm](http://www.netstate.com/states/intro/nj_intro.htm)

Still, commercial urban agriculture is a nascent industry in New Jersey. Many organizations are aggressively pursuing workforce development funds and generous opportunity zone tax credits in an effort to find a stable funding source to launch commercial urban farming businesses. There are no guilds, associations or bureaus to advance the practice of urban farming or protect the interests of its practitioners. New Jersey's Agricultural Census does not specifically track urban farming, so there is no method for estimating with any accuracy the total number, average size, location, or methods of production for urban farms across the state. New Jersey's Department of Agriculture has no governing document or policy that even recognizes 'urban farming' as a legitimate commercial activity.



Hydroponic Greens, Radicle Farms  
(Newark, NJ)

Within this context, EJAC hosted an urban agriculture symposium.<sup>3</sup> This event convened many of New Jersey's leading grassroots practitioners, academics, and government staff at local, state, and federal levels. The group discussed existing constraints, current and future opportunities, and strategies for strengthening and sustaining urban agriculture with the goal of building a fair and just food system for all NJ residents.

## Healthy Food Access and Environmental Justice

Urban agriculture in environmental justice communities (EJCs) is long recognized as a means of improving household food security. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as people's ability to access, at all times, enough food for an active, healthy life.<sup>4</sup> According to Feeding America, one in every ten people in New Jersey is food insecure and almost one third of all children live in low-income families. Data from 2016 indicates the number of New Jersey children living in families receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP –

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3 See Appendix A (check App #) for summary of discussion and more details from the Urban Agriculture Symposium.

4 Measurement. (n.d.). Retrieved October 04, 2017, from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement.aspx>

formerly known as Food Stamps) is 409,407. SNAP, which is supplemental in nature, is the state's first line of defense in fighting hunger. Individuals and families who are food insecure are turning to New Jersey's Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) which include food pantries and soup kitchens for additional food. Feeding America's 2014 study noted that 62% of feeding programs in New Jersey saw an increase in demand over the previous year.<sup>5</sup>

While the causes of food insecurity may vary among different family situations, the combined costs of housing, childcare and transportation leave lower-wage working families without enough money to meet their everyday needs.<sup>6</sup> Residents in EJs experience poor health and chronic disease as a consequence of a 'built environment' lacking in amenities that support healthy lifestyles. Communities without full-service grocery stores, supermarkets, parks, and playgrounds represent systemic barriers that limit choice and opportunity for people to adopt healthier lifestyles. Various New Jersey municipalities and nonprofit and community-based organizations have assisted families for decades by providing access to the land, seeds, plants, clean soil and compost, and other resources or support to grow fresh fruits and vegetables that would otherwise be inaccessible and/or unaffordable.

When integrated appropriately, urban agriculture fosters positive community engagement, preserves green open space that beautifies neighborhoods, and produces a bounty of fresh, nutritious and affordable food. While urban agriculture may not be the only solution for New Jersey's urban areas, it is a step in the right direction.

## Urban Farming Opportunity and Environmental Justice

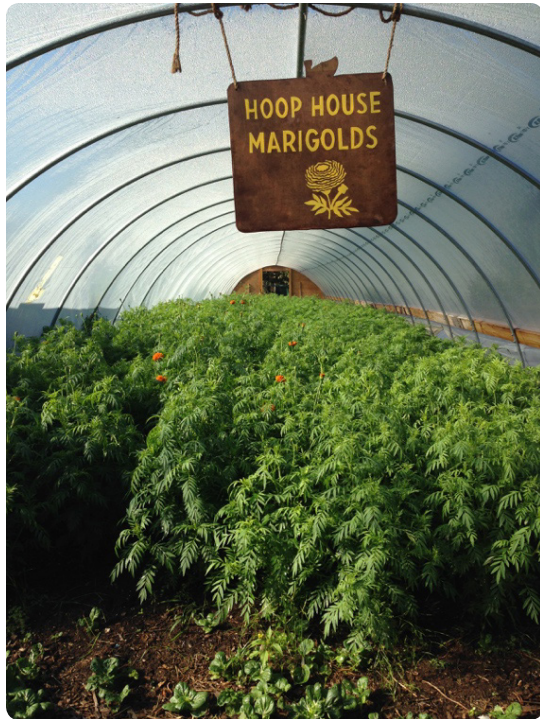
Group discussions revealed a number of common challenges experienced by urban farm operators. Most significant were access to land and land tenure, lack of a comprehensive statewide policy framework for urban agriculture, communication and technical assistance barriers, and funding. Many opportunities to develop larger urban agriculture sites in EJs exist on abandoned or underutilized industrial or commercial properties or "brownfields." These brownfield sites often contain contaminated soils and

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5 [https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/news/cps\\_july16.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dfd/news/cps_july16.pdf)

6 DiChiara, K., & Paillex, C. (2015). 2012 - 2015 Report to the Governor and Legislature (Working paper). New Jersey Hunger Prevention Advisory Committee

other media from previous operations, historic fill placement, and/or legacies of contamination from surrounding industrial activities that discourage or



Marigolds - Día de Muertos, TUFF Farms Cooperative, (New Brunswick, NJ)

complicate efforts to reuse these sites for urban agriculture operations. Especially as urban farming activities shift toward economic development, it's imperative that residents in EJs have equal access to opportunities to create, launch, and lead businesses, and find available resources to address past contamination at available brownfield sites in their communities.

EJAC's Land Working Group is tasked, in part, with community outreach to collect information about specific challenges and issues impacting the protection and appropriate stewardship of open space in communities that have experienced or are vulnerable to environmental degradation. As an advisory council, the collective work of EJAC's (4) working groups should inform DEP's environmental policies to yield positive solutions for

communities facing environmental pollution and help prevent future injustice. To the extent that barriers to urban agriculture straddle the policy domains of other departments, Executive Order No. 23 extends an environmental justice framework to all ALL Eexecutive branch departments and agencies.<sup>7</sup> EJAC is committed to outreach and engagement with other departments and agencies through an advisory process, pursuant to Executive Order 23.

## Systemic Barriers & Recommendations

**S**ymposium participants identified a number of barriers for urban farmers and offered various corrective recommendations. Some corrective measures only require action from within the Executive branch of government; other issues require outreach and engagement with other state institutions and agencies.

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<sup>7</sup> State of New Jersey, Office of the Governor. (2018, April 20). Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order to Address Environmental Justice Issues in New Jersey's Urban Communities[Press release]. Retrieved December 18, 2018, from [https://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/562018/approved/20180420d\\_eo.shtml](https://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/562018/approved/20180420d_eo.shtml)  
<https://www.nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-23.pdf>

## Policy Barriers

***Problem:*** Urban agriculture has no official legal definition at the state level, and urban farming is not recognized by either the New Jersey Department of Agriculture or any local municipality as a designated land use or legally recognized commercial activity. Existing state policies are explicitly structured to preserve and protect traditional commercial farming activity and do not extend to include urban agricultural endeavors.

**New Jersey Farmland Assessment Act:** The New Jersey Farmland Assessment Act of 1964 allows for specific agriculture productivity value to be determined.<sup>8</sup> However, this act may be very restrictive because of its eligibility requirements. Urban agriculture does not fall under the act due to its requirement of at least five contiguous acres dedicated to agriculture or horticultural use.

**Right to Farm Act (RTFA):** This act was developed to protect and assist commercial growers with problems regarding municipal land use, zoning laws, and nuisance/neighbors. This is particularly important in New Jersey. As a ‘home rule’ state, the 566 individual municipalities have primary power to regulate zoning and planning within their borders. RTFA works in conjunction with farmland assessment to shield commercial farm operations from many of the bureaucratic entanglements in local government that could be detrimental to a farm operator’s business.

These state laws enable County Agriculture Development Boards (CADB) and the State Agriculture Development Committee (SADC) to have primary jurisdiction over disputes between municipalities and commercial farms.<sup>9</sup> While both policies provide good support and protection for traditional farm operations, neither anticipate the need nor translate well to urban farming activities/operations.

**Vending Authorization - Senior/WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP):** Senior/WIC FMNP is a federal program through USDA that provides supplemental food aid assistance to income eligible seniors and families

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8 Farmland Assessment Overview (pp. 1-19). (2015). New Jersey Department of Agriculture. doi: <https://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/anr/pdf/farmlandassessmentoverview.pdf>

9 Farmland Assessment Overview (pp. 1-19). (2015). New Jersey Department of Agriculture. doi: <https://www.state.nj.us/agriculture/divisions/anr/pdf/farmlandassessmentoverview.pdf>

enrolled in the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC). Access into the program for consumers and farm vendors is strictly controlled. FMNP benefits can only be used to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables from authorized farm vendors. Although many urban farms operate in communities with a high percentage of customers receiving food aid assistance, until recently, New Jersey has prohibited urban farms from participating as vendors in the farmers market nutrition program. Drawing upon the Department of Agriculture's strict definition of a farm, the overwhelming majority of urban farms do not meet the acreage requirement and were therefore ineligible to become authorized vendors.

This restriction hurts urban farmers and their customers. After eight years of activism and collective engagement around this specific issue, the Departments of Health and Agriculture are working on a solution that allows urban farmers markets (instead of individual urban farmers) to become authorized vendors for Senior/WIC FMNP. This rule change may allow some urban growers vending at authorized urban markets to accept Senior/WIC FMNP benefits as payment. Departments are preparing to pilot-test this new framework for the 2019 growing season.

## Policy Recommendations

***Establish an Urban Agriculture Task Force:** New Jersey's various urban agricultural initiatives overlap the policy arenas of multiple state agencies, including but not limited to: New Jersey Department of Agriculture and the Departments of Human Services, Environmental Protection, and Community Affairs.*

An urban agriculture task force can lay the foundation for future legislation that would:

- ✦ **Create a legal definition of urban agriculture:** Stakeholders at the symposium expressed the need to develop a working definition for urban agriculture in New Jersey because the current criteria for what is considered a commercial farm will not be applicable to most urban farm sites.
- ✦ **Acknowledge and prioritize the legitimate social, environmental, public health, and economic benefits provided by urban agriculture, such as:** neighborhood beautification, reducing 'heat island' effect

and improving air quality, reducing impervious surfaces and improving storm water retention, and building cooperative economic enterprises that pay living wages and benefit workers in the community.

- ✦ **Develop a ‘Whole Systems’ framework for addressing food and its connection to public health, economic and environmental policies in EJ communities:** Urban agriculture practitioners must often consider issues of advocating for expansion of benefit programs to assist food insecure families, expanding fresh food access to emergency food providers, sourcing more local healthy foods for public hospitals, schools, child/adult day care, nursing homes, and correctional facilities

## Land Access / Land Tenure Barriers

**Problem:** *The high cost of land, limited open space, intense development pressure and the economic and environmental challenges of remediation combine to make land access extremely difficult in urban communities.*

**Short Term Lease Agreements:** A significant percentage of urban agriculture in New Jersey remains tethered to municipal ‘Adopt-A-Lot’ and other vacant lot stabilization programs. The challenge with this framework is that these municipal programs were initiated as a temporary land use and were never intended to grant permanent rights or tenure to gardens and farms. Community residents and organizations have occupied some lots for decades on year-to-year lease agreements. As land increases in value and development potential it becomes more difficult to retain it for urban agricultural endeavors. Typically, community-based organizations and local residents do not have economic resources to buy land at market value. Without outright ownership, or ownership held in trust, urban agriculture is vulnerable to displacement for other activities.

**Available Lands are Contaminated Brownfield Sites:** Most of the opportunities for scalable urban agriculture projects in EJs involve reclaiming abandoned or underutilized former industrial or commercial sites (brownfields) that often contaminated from previous operations, historic fill placement, and/or legacy contamination from surrounding industrial activities. Due to the suspected contamination, property ownership and access issue and the potential risk(s) to future workers and foods grown at the site, available brownfield sites within EJs are frequently difficult

to investigate, expensive to remediate, and complex undertakings that most urban agriculture interests are hesitant to undertake. The NJDEP has brownfield grants for environmental investigations and matching grants for remediation through the Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF) grant program that is managed by the Office of Brownfield Reuse. The USEPA also has Brownfield Assessment Grants and Brownfield Cleanup Grants to eligible entities that can be used for urban agriculture projects in EJs.

In addition to HDSRF grants to eligible entities, the NJDEP Office of Brownfield Reuse and the NJDEP Community Collaborative Initiative can work with urban agriculture interests and to provide technical input into these challenging sites. The NJDEP Office of Brownfield Reuse has supported several urban agriculture projects in the state, including assisting Delaware & Raritan Greenway and the city of Trenton on the Capital City Farms project. The NJDEP Community Collaborative Initiative (CCI) is actively working with Camden, Trenton, Perth Amboy and Bayonne on each cities' local priorities. In Camden, the NJDEP CCI is actively supporting the Get Healthy Camden/ Food Access Working Group and NJDEP CCI is also working with local urban agriculture partners as part of the Camden Urban Agriculture Collaborative. With the large inventory of brownfield sites in EJs and the strong interests for locally grown foods and jobs, urban agriculture operations on brownfield sites present an important opportunity for the revitalization of urban neighborhoods despite the significant barriers presented by these sites.

## Land Access/Land Tenure Recommendations

*New Jersey's urban communities should set aside land explicitly for the purpose of food production. Some national models protect urban land using non profit land trusts, while other examples develop and manage 'ag parks' through municipal parks and recreation departments.*

Advancing some of the recommendations made at the symposium may require legislation, other ideas will require more financial resources. Practitioners need stable sources of funding to support urban agriculture. A key challenge for urban communities will be finding adequate funds to purchase, protect, and remediate vacant lots and/or buildings to develop urban farm operations. Suggestions from the symposium included acquiring funds via:

- ★ Garden State Preservation Trust (Green Acres)

- ✦ Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credits
- ✦ NJDEP Hazardous Discharge Site Remediation Fund (HDSRF) grants
- ✦ USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grants and Brownfield Cleanup Grants
- ✦ Crowd source internet platforms
- ✦ Private donors

## Information / Training & Technical Assistance Barriers

**Problem:** *New Jersey lacks a centralized hub or online information resources and technical support for urban agriculture.*

Urban agriculture information and resources are diffusely dispersed across the state. Without any formalized coalition or collective to aggregate and share resources for maximum impact, the work of individual practitioners and organizations is ‘siloed.’ There are also no training or business planning resources designed for the specific needs of urban agriculture practitioners. Training and assistance programs currently in place through Rutgers Cooperative Extension services are mostly tailored to the needs of a traditional farm operator. If urban agriculture is to have any commercial viability, practitioners need many of the same planning, marketing, food safety and risk management services available to traditional farmers, but structured to address the circumstances of urban production, distribution, and marketing. This includes more vocational training and certification programs, different models for cooperative production and marketing, and greater emphasis on ethnic specialty crops, value-added production, ornamental plants and other niche markets.

## Communications Recommendations

*Coordinated and comprehensive online resources should be available for urban agriculturalists across the state. Several suggestions emerged from the Urban Agriculture Symposium to enhance communications:*

First, create a website with shared management between NJ Department

of Environmental Protection and NJ Department of Agriculture. This platform should be regularly updated with information for New Jersey's urban agriculture community including:

- ✦ Directory of urban agriculture practitioners across the state
- ✦ Upcoming events and activities
- ✦ Government resources (such as USDA's Conservation Innovation Grants and Natural Resource Conservation Service)
- ✦ Government Environmental Remediation Resources (such as NJDEP HDSRF grants and USEPA Brownfield Assessment Grants and Brownfield Cleanup Grants)

Second, establish an interactive platform where collaboration and dynamic communication can occur between local practitioners and government agencies to offer support, share events, promote best practices, and build camaraderie in this sector. Both of these projects should be advanced in partnership between the NJ Department of Environmental Protection and the NJ Department of Agriculture. One existing platform for sharing successes and locating like-minded partners is the NJDEP Office of Brownfield Reuse Success Story application, which provides examples of completed brownfield site reuses from around the state.

### Training & Technical Assistance Recommendations

*Establish an urban farm school to help new growers learn and master the skills needed to develop sustainable, productive and diverse urban farms.*

Land grant institutions in New York, Connecticut, Maryland, Michigan, Colorado, and California are transitioning urban extension services to offer workshops, training, and technical farming assistance to urban gardeners and farmers.

- ✦ Maryland's urban extension office in Baltimore City runs a 'Field School' for urban farmers, offering workshops and seminars on topics ranging from integrated pest management, managing farm finances, soil and water testing, and even self-care and continuing education opportunities for farmers. Maryland Extension also publishes a monthly urban agriculture newsletter.

- ✦ University of Connecticut, working with community partners, offers a one-year urban agriculture course in English and Spanish. Prospective urban farmers receive training in botany, soils, entomology, integrated pest management, and various organic production methods.
- ✦ California's Cooperative Extension Services offers a wide variety of online resources for urban agriculture practitioners. Some counties also have dedicated staff positions to support urban agriculture and community food systems work.

Similar to growers in these states, urban farmers in New Jersey would benefit significantly from coordinated services that include more online content and staff resources provided through Rutgers' Office of Urban Extension and Engagement.

## 2018 Farm Bill

**I**n December 2018, Congress passed new Farm Bill legislation providing greater recognition and more resources for urban agriculture <sup>10</sup>. Specifically, the Bill:



Aeroponics, AeroFarms (Newark)

- ✦ Creates a new "Urban, Indoor, and Other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative" competitive grants program with \$10 million in mandatory funding in the form of a lump sum to be available until expended.
- ✦ Instructs USDA to create a new "Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Forms of Production" with a 15-member advisory committee and competitive grants authority. The new office is also instructed to create a 10-pilot Urban and Suburban County Committee as well as a community compost and reducing food waste pilot. The bill provides the authority for Congress to appropriate up to \$25 million per year for these efforts.

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<sup>10</sup> from: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/2018-farm-bill-drilldown-local-rural/>

These new federal initiatives fit well within the context of urban farming in New Jersey, and make imperative EJAC's recommendation for the establishment of an Urban Agriculture Task Force within the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. The task force can make meaningful progress in assessing:

- ✦ Where our sub(urban) communities are on the spectrum of urban agriculture,
- ✦ What kinds of urban and indoor agriculture work best within New Jersey's complicated policy mosaic of land use and zoning restrictions, and
- ✦ How (with participation from EJAC) to ensure these new 'innovation' opportunities are totally inclusive of residents in EJC's.

As America's most 'urbanized', and fourth-smallest state in land area, New Jersey's achievements in farmland protection and specialty crop production are impressive by any objective measure. When federal funding is eventually appropriated for these urban agriculture initiatives, New Jersey should be poised to aggressively compete and receive its fair share of funding to support and advance urban agriculture in the Garden State.

## Conclusion and Summary of Recommendations

**M**oving forward, EJAC's Land Working Group will encourage greater coordination between multiple-state agencies with overlapping administrative authority that impacts various aspects of urban agriculture. The Departments of Environmental Protection, Agriculture, Health, and Community Affairs, all have critical roles to play in helping to stabilize grassroots urban agriculture across the state. The viability of urban farming also requires greater cooperation between local practitioners, other stakeholder groups, and possibly strategic partnerships with larger traditional farms. Overcoming urban agriculture's inherent challenges requires specific policies that not only recognize its legitimacy, but also provide material support for expansion throughout EJC's.

The following recommendations were identified as high priority issues by urban agriculture practitioners, advocates and other community stakeholders who attended the symposium:

1. Establish an Urban Agriculture Task Force set within the NJ Department of Agriculture.
2. Allocate resources for urban agriculture via existing open space, remediation, redevelopment, or restoration funds.
3. Provide more training and technical assistance opportunities for urban agriculture practitioners.
4. Incorporate urban agriculture into local and state master planning documents.
5. Encourage greater cooperation and coalition building among the different stakeholder groups.

# — Urban Agriculture Symposium Contact —

## Invitees and Attendees

Abby Gallo	Grow It Green Morristown
Albert Ayeni	Rutgers University
Alexis Trujillo	Ironbound Community Corporation
Amy Rowe	Agriculture Experiment Station
Andrew Schelsinger	Elijah's Promise
Barbara G. Johnson	Elizabeth Housing Authority
Barbara George Johnson	John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy
Beth Feehan	NJ Farm to School, NJ Department of Agriculture
Bradley Harrington	NJ Department of Community Affairs
Brian Schilling	Rutgers University
Carla Green	Rutgers Cooperative Extension
Carrie Lindig	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Cathy Hart	Elizabeth Housing Authority
Christa Fontecchino	New Jersey Department of Health
Christina Viguers	Lewis Consulting Group
Craig Livermore	Project U.S.E
David Rosenberg	AreoFarms, LLC
David Specca	Rutgers EcoComplex - Clean Energy Innovation Center
Dean Nelson	Dean's Natural Food Market
Elena Vaouli	CDC, U.S. Public Health Service, ATSDR Region 2
Emillo Panasci	Planting Seeds of Hope
Gerard Scharfenberger	Department of State planning
Henri Ann Olsen	Farm Service Agency NJ State Office
Jackie Park Albaum	Groundwork Elizabeth
James Horne	United Way of Union County

Jan Zientek	Agricultural Experiment Station
Jennifer Papa	City Green
Jennifer Shukaitis	Food Corps
Jeremiah Bergstrom	NJ Agricultural Experiment Station Water Resources Program
Jessica Dreyer	Dreyer Farms
Jim Simon	Isles, Inc.
Joe Marmora	Interfaith Neighbors, Inc.
John Evangelista	Happy Harvest Hydroponic Farms
John S. Watson Jr	D&R Greenway Land Trust
Jonathan Phillips	Groundwork Elizabeth
Justin Allen	Isles, Inc.
Kevin Moore	CityFood Resources
Kim Fortunato	Campbell Soup Foundation
Krista Heinlen	The Davey Institute/USDA Forest Service
Laura Englemann	AtlantiCare Foundation
Laura Lawson, PhD	Rutgers University
Leah Graziano	EPA, Region 2
Margaret Waldock	Geraldine R Dodge Foundation
Mark Cheatam	City of East Orange
Mary Celis	United Way of Passaic County
Meredith Taylor	Rutgers Office of Urban Extension and Engagement
Michele Byers	NJ Conservation Foundation
Michelle Bakacs	Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Middlesex County
Michelle Infante-Casella	Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County
Monique Purcell	Department of Agriculture
Naeema Campbell	Geraldine R Dodge Foundation
Nick Polanin	Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Somerset
Paul L. McEvily	Interfaith Neighbors, Inc.
Pete Furey	NJ Farm Bureau
Randall Solomon	Sustainable Jersey
Rev Eric Dobson	Planting Seeds of Hope
Robin Dougherty	Greater Newark Conservancy

Robin Waddell  
Roystan Allman  
Shoshana Akins  
Stefan Oberman  
Stephanie Greenwood  
Susan E. Payne  
Tobias A. Fox  
Teresa Niedda  
Val Galarza  
Valerie Frick  
Veronique Lambert  
Vivian Cox Fraser

Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Camden County  
City of East Orange  
DVRPC  
AreoFarms, LLC  
Victoria Foundation  
State Agriculture Development Committee  
Newark Science and Sustainability, Inc. (SAS)  
Camden Center for Environmental Transformation  
Cooper's Ferry Partnership  
Camden Children's Garden/4-H  
Sustainable Jersey for Schools  
Urban League of Essex County

## EJAC Attendees

Colandus Kelly Francis  
James Horne (former member)  
Lloyd Abdul-Raheem  
Monique Griffith  
Olivia Glenn (former member)  
Steve Chranowski (former member)  
Yvonne Blake  
Zachary Lewis

Camden NAACP  
Union County United Way  
City of East Orange  
Irvington Township Health Department  
New Jersey Conservation Foundation  
Sims Metal Management  
Kaleidoscope Health Care, Inc. Jersey City  
Lewis Consulting Group

## NJDEP Attendees

Alan Miller  
Brian McDonald  
Frank McLaughlin  
Jennifer Feltis  
Joseph Donald  
Kristen Palma  
Laura Scatena  
Michael Gordon  
Riché Outlaw  
Ryan Wall  
Steven Anen  
Tanya Oznowich

Division of Water Quality  
Natural and Historic Resources  
Office of Brownfield Reuse  
Division of Water Quality  
Office of Environmental Justice  
Office of Environmental Justice  
Division of Water Quality  
Senior Policy Advisor  
Office of Environmental Justice  
Office of Local Government Assistance  
Division of Water Quality  
Office of Communication

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## Appendix A:

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### Symposium Discussion Questions and Topics

#### Discussion Topic # 1:

**What does urban agriculture in New Jersey look like to you?**

**1. How do you define urban agriculture (UA)?**

- Garden vs farm
- Edible vs non-Edible
- Food forests
- Urban vs peri-urban
- Rain gardens
- Livestock
- Apiary

**2. What are the different forms/ types of UA?**

- Hydroponic greenhouse
- Aquaponic greenhouse
- In-ground
- Raised beds
- Vertical farming

**3. Share some replicable successful UA initiatives.**

**4. Share some systemic barriers to UA.**

**5. Share some outcomes generated by UA.**

- Food access in food deserts
- Food production
- Community benefits
- Job creation
- Economic/commercial

## 6. Where are some locations for UA?

- School yards
- Reclaimed vacant lots
- Other areas

## Discussion Topic # 2:

### What does land tenure for UA in NJ mean to you?

#### 1. What can the state do to advance UA in NJ?

##### A. What Policy, Regulations, and or legislation would you propose?

- Inclusions and exemptions
- Review of existing WIC program
- Establish guidelines for UA in terms of size, amount of product-generated
- and amount of money generated

##### B. State Funding for \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank)

##### C. How can the State aid with land tenure?

- Gaining and maintaining land – short and long-term access

##### D. What are some resources and communication infrastructure that the state can put in place to be useful to stakeholders and practitioners?

- Resource clearinghouse
- Listserv
- Website
- Listening sessions
- Stakeholder meetings

##### E. Are there additional stakeholders or practitioners that should be included in this discussion?

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## Appendix B:

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### EJAC's Urban Agriculture Symposium - Discussion Notes Yellow Group Flip Chart Notes

Ryan Wall, Facilitator

#### Discussion Topic #1:

*What does urban agriculture in New Jersey look like to you?*

#### Definition of Urban Agriculture

- Farming is gardening – reasons include income, enjoyment, community benefit
- Intended use of farm/garden
- Connecting people and place
- Focus on food as a priority
  - ◊ Branding and distribution
  - ◊ Values
- Include food + flowers + bees
- Biodiverse and balanced
  - ◊ Herbs
  - ◊ Food ecosystem and service
- In an urban environment
- Pest management
  - ◊ Mix food and horticulture
  - ◊ Example - marigolds
- Rain gardens
  - ◊ Education
  - ◊ Environmental secondary benefit
  - ◊ Ecosystem only, not agriculture

## Different Types of Urban Agriculture

- Year round
- Suitable uses
  - ◊ Hydroponics
  - ◊ Aquaponics
  - ◊ In ground
  - ◊ Raised Beds
  - ◊ Vertical Farming

## Replicable Successful Initiatives

- Hydroponics
  - ◊ Sustainable 2-3 people
- Partnerships for sustaining
- Work with 200 volunteers – middle school to college
- Elizabeth – 100 raised-bed gardens
  - ◊ Tough to start
  - ◊ Community and housing authority together
  - ◊ Great experience overall – waiting list at both locations
- Rutgers/Vet Programs
- Putting in green infrastructure in urban environment. Volunteers sharing landscaping as a career.
- Kids growing food, tasting it, eating food (fruits and vegetables) more regularly
- Camden has a great structure of partners, info and resources including EPA, DEP, county, municipal governments, NPOs, and NGOs
- Educational practices in nutrition as well as gardening
- New Brunswick Community Coalition
  - ◊ Meeting/alliance vs Competing
  - ◊ Nature Conservancy – cisterns
    - Shared resources
    - Worked collaboratively
- Intergenerational benefits
  - ◊ Irvington
    - Educate youth

- Therapeutic for seniors
- Identified abandoned lots
  - ◊ Having land for 5 years with potential to own
  - ◊ Irvington – Incorporated law school students for negotiations with municipality
- Newark urban agriculture
  - ◊ Community conversation
  - ◊ No fence
  - ◊ Trust/humanity
  - ◊ Community ownership
- Fencing
  - ◊ Prevent illegal activity
  - ◊ Not as a deterrent to involvement

## Systemic Barriers

- Policies
  - ◊ Local
  - ◊ Municipalities
- Regulations
- Proper soil/mulch – cost
- Resources
  - ◊ Immediate answers
  - ◊ Infrastructure - education
  - ◊ Education
    - Community
    - Local Officials
  - ◊ Land use
- Farmland preservation does not support urban agriculture (State Agriculture Development Committee -SADC)
- Land tenure/ own land

## Other Locations/Examples for Urban Agriculture

- Rutgers Adaptation Program – Annie’s Urban Outreach and Education for business, marketing and more

## Discussion Topic #2:

*What does land tenure for UA in NJ mean to you?*

### Policy Regulations and/or Legislation

- Commercial vs Community
- Urban Agriculture for reporting
- Culture of Health as part of Urban Agriculture
- Rules and regulations on composting are too stringent due to waste rules

### Land Tenure

- Structure/Outline for one set of rules vs municipality rule
- Newark – restrict to one year land use for urban agriculture
- Department of Agriculture on bee keeping is moving back to state level
- Zoning and permitted uses for urban agriculture are variable within Newark itself (and maybe that way in other places too)
- Focus in open space in urban agriculture

### What can the State Do

- State of NJ focus on –
  - ◊ Land tenure for urban agriculture
  - ◊ Utilization
  - ◊ Liability
- State develop a model ordinance for urban agriculture to share with municipalities
- Need to obtain and permanently dedicate for urban agriculture with purchase – deed restrictions
- Use of public schools for urban agriculture purposes
- Lottery funding for urban agriculture
- ‘No areas considered rural for USDA funding.’ Is there a way to change this?

## State Funding

- There is a need for state funding for urban agriculture
  - ◊ Establish legislation
  - ◊ Direct program to address concerns and coordinate with other state agencies
- Tax exemption (retables for municipalities) vs value to community
- Review/address funding for urban agriculture in relation to NJ requirements by size (five acres) ownership/non-contiguous.
- Baltimore model
  - ◊ No cost lease for community gardens
- Partners for planning money for urban agriculture
- Information and education funding resources for urban agriculture
- Remediation Costs vs assessment on urban agriculture
  - ◊ Health impact
  - ◊ Risk exposure from historic fill – is it really an issue?
  - ◊ SoilSHOP – CDC
  - ◊ Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – XRF analysis
  - ◊ City of Toronto guidelines on testing

## Resources/Infrastructure Ideas

- Create a website dedicated to urban agriculture
- Access to water
- Guidance to address contamination
- Workshops on sustainability
- Town hall meetings
  - ◊ Bring it to the community
- Start an office of urban agriculture at DEP or Dept. of Agriculture
- Develop campaign called “Community garden State”
- Develop campaign within the school system for urban agriculture
- Send blasts through social media, listserv, etc. to the public regarding urban agriculture

## Additional Stakeholders to be included in discussion on Urban Agriculture

- School boards
- Urban mayors
- Regulators/legislators

# EJAC's Urban Agriculture Symposium - Discussion Notes

## Green Group Flip Chart Notes

Tanya Oznowich, Facilitator

### Discussion Topic #1:

*What does urban agriculture in New Jersey look like to you?*

### Definition of Urban Agriculture

- Social Ties
- Education
- Stewardship (Land)
- Food and Ornamentals Production
- Health and Nutrition
- Connecting people and production
- Affordability and Access
- Sustainability and Resilience
- Self Sufficiency/Democratization of Access
- Reconnecting with historical and cultural traditions
- More informed consumer
- Personal Inspirations
- Positive environmental benefit

### Different Types of Urban Agriculture

- Backyard Garden (13 people)
- Aquaponics (0)
- Hydroponics (5)
- Micro Farms (12)
- Community Gardens (18)
- Intuitions (schools, hospital, etc.) (16)

- Large Farms – 2+ acres (4)
- Rooftop (5)
- Organic (13)
- Gorilla garden (3)
- Green Stormwater management (10)
- Pollinators/Bee Gardens (10)
- Vertical Farms (1)
- Community Compost Sites (4)
- Container Garden (10)
- Urban Food Forests (3)
- Orchards (7)
- Classroom/growing Labs (11)

## Replicable Successful Initiatives

- Offer community service hours with middle school/high school students to offset cost of labor – Power Corps
- City Green - paid summer employment for youth development
- Isles - supportive elected officials/administration and support staff
- YMCA – developed land tenure partnerships
- Grow it Green – non-profit/Township 3 year agreement for land tenure; support from Passaic County for community gardens
- Soil Shop
  - ◊ free soil screening for lead;
  - ◊ CDC through ATSDR promotes health education and outreach events called ‘soilSHOPS to help people learn if their soil is contaminated with lead and how to reduce the exposures to contaminated soil and produce.
- Elijah’s Promise – cooking Education from harvested produce in gardens
- Camden City – funding from the William Penn Foundation, created safe spaces for families
- Union County – used County funds for community garden and school garden
- Pedal Farmers – youth with bicycles taking produce to market

## Systemic Barriers

- Water Access
- Farm inputs
  - ◊ Mulch
  - ◊ Straw
  - ◊ Supplies
  - ◊ Equipment
- Land access / Lease
- 5 Acre Rule
- Right to Farm Law – advantage for larger areas
- Farmer's Market Logistics
  - ◊ Staff
  - ◊ Transportation
  - ◊ Economics
  - ◊ Marketing
- Conflicting Regulations between Governmental agencies
- Zoning codes (Livestock, Greenhouse)
- Broken Partnerships

## Outcomes produced in Urban Agriculture

- Access to sustainably grown food
- Provide education
- Pay it forward mentality
- People taking responsibility/commitment
- Health promotion and disease prevention
- Connecting people to nature
- Spiritual Uplifting
- Community Engagement / Advocacy
- Youth ownership – spark interest
- Empowering people to provide for themselves
- Community improvement/greening

## Other Locations for Urban Agriculture

- Vacant Lots
- Church/Institutional property (school)
- Housing Authority
- Public ROWs – Green Acre sites
- Senior Centers
- Municipals/government property
- Rooftop
- Indoor warehouse
- Backyard collective
- Blacktop – raised beds
- Tree Well

### Discussion Topic #2:

*What does land tenure for UA in NJ mean to you?*

## Regulations/Policy/Legislation

- Change 5 Acre Rule to allow smaller farms to accept nutritional benefits / WIC
  - ◇ Consider population in size limit
  - ◇ Exemption for Non-profits with agriculture mission
- Right to know Farm Act discriminates against small farms
  - ◇ Redefine what urban farming means
  - ◇ Equality between large and small properties
- FMNP – availability of markets (to spend)/consumers (can't accept) discounts
  - ◇ Health Department shift to Ag Dept
  - ◇ Distribution of Senior Vouchers/WIC
    - How/where/when – whole process
    - Should be standardized though out State
    - Consider seasonality
- Green Acres regulations move friendly to Agriculture

- Farmland Preservation – re-examine the size rule
- NJ Food Systems Vision
  - ◊ Massachusetts and Vermont as examples
  - ◊ Compost regulations
  - ◊ Risk management / Disaster Preparedness
  - ◊ Resilient systems

## State Funding

- Specialty Corp Block Grant
  - ◊ Availability for small scale farms/gardens
  - ◊ Urban set aside money for this group
- Inst Purchasing from urban producers
  - ◊ Regulations – mass compost
- Start-up Funds
  - ◊ Soil
  - ◊ New sites
  - ◊ Resources
- Streamline Grant writing/reporting process
  - ◊ Gleaning Grant – NJ Ag
  - ◊ NRCS USDA Grants – aren't criteria issues, awareness, qualifications

## Resources – Other items

- State/Federal Tax Code
  - ◊ Successional planning for beginning farmer
  - ◊ Urban area to non-profit with Ag mission or young farmer tax requirements for growing
- Liability issues with land contamination
- Brownfield Program
  - ◊ Cleanup areas with state resources
  - ◊ Streamline the process
- Food Safety education and Training
- Training in general
- Education in general

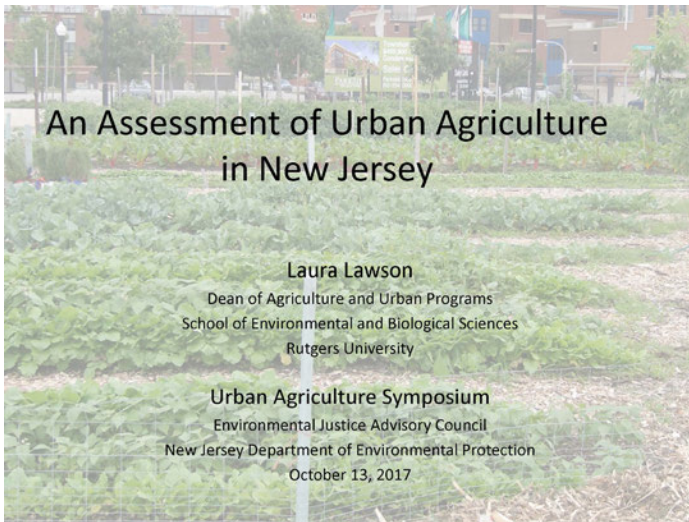
- Listserv to focus on Urban Agriculture
- Working network within State Agencies
  - ◊ DEP
  - ◊ Dept of health
  - ◊ Dept of Ag
  - ◊ DCA
  - ◊ EDA
- State partner with Stakeholders
  - ◊ League of Municipalities
  - ◊ Land Conservancy / Trust
  - ◊ Corporate / for profit
- Technical assistance
- Website
- Funding Collaborative – Network

### Additional Stakeholders

- County Freeholders
- Head Gardeners at large properties
- Department of Corrections for job training
- Land use Lawyers
- Urban and Sustainability Directors
- Funders

# Appendix C:

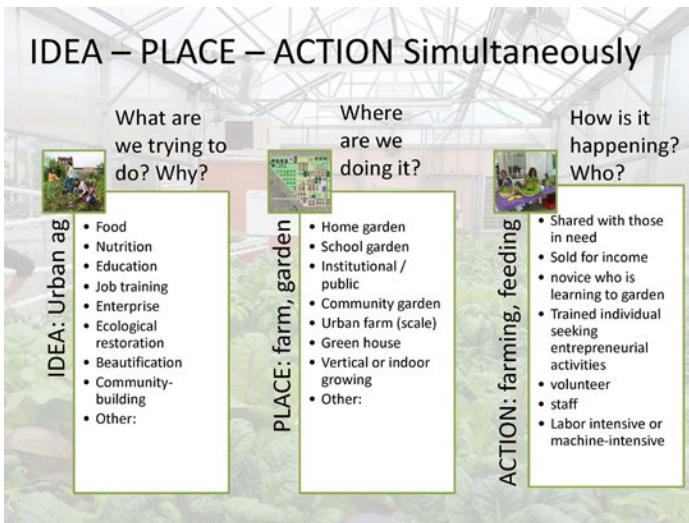
## Laura Lawson's Presentation: An Assessment of Urban Agriculture in New Jersey



1

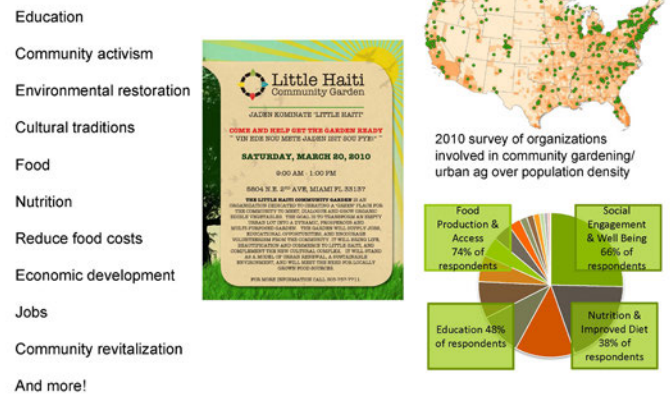


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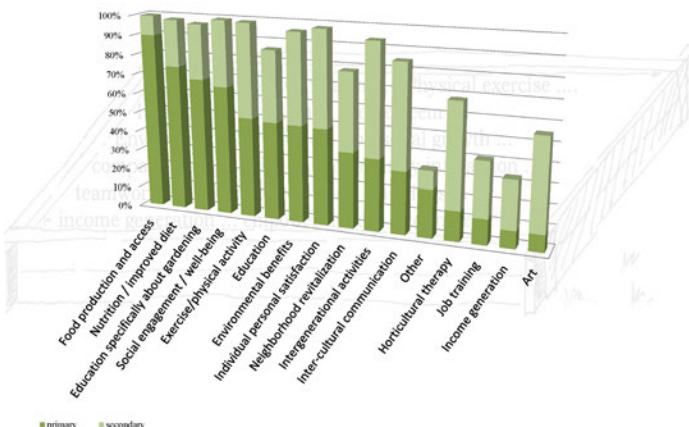
3

### IDEA: Why urban agriculture? What do we want to accomplish?

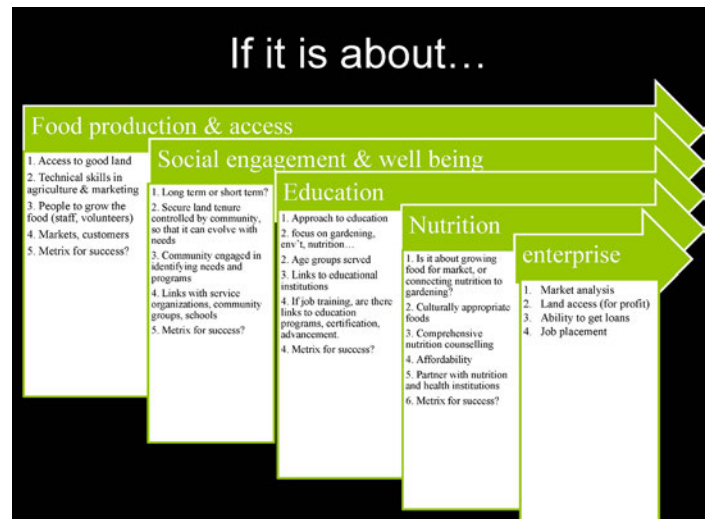


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### List of Benefits considered primary benefits or secondary benefits



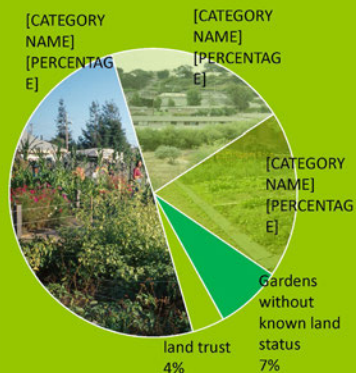
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## PLACE: Where? Land for Gardens

### National trends



Temporary v. permanent use as urban agriculture (investment in site, soil, location)

Desirability of land (location, quality, contamination)

Competition with other land uses

Integration with community commercial development?

7

## ACTION: How and who is involved

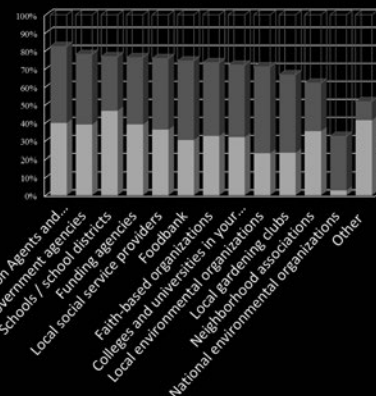
### Organization size

- small: serving 1 garden
- medium: serving 2-3 gardens
- large: serving 4-10 gardens
- Very large: 31+ gardens

### Respondents represented:

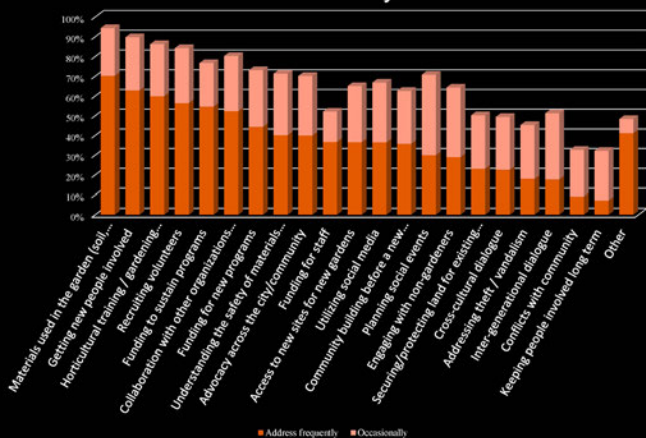
- Ad hoc groups
- Non-profit organizations
- City agencies
- USDA extension

Partnerships essential!



8

## Issues facing organizations, frequently and occasionally



9

## What are top 3 challenges your organization faces?

Getting new people involved 15%

Funding to sustain programs 11%

Keeping people involved in the long term 10.6%

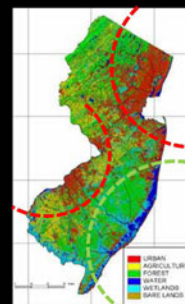
Funding for new programs 13%

Materials used in garden 8.8%

10

## New Jersey... the Garden State?

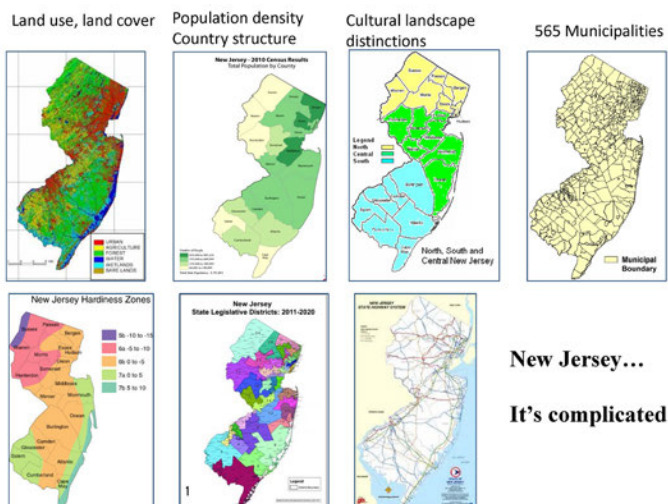
- New Jersey is most densely populated state in nation but 5<sup>th</sup> smallest state in size
- 92.2 % of population lives in an urbanized area; most densely populated state in nation
- New Jersey lost greater share of agricultural land to development than any state – more than 25% between 1982-2007
- 12.4% of population in NJ is food insecure
- Largest preservation program in the nation – farmland, open space, historical sites
- Statewide advocacy for Jersey Fresh
- Approximately 10,300 farms covering 733,450 acres in state, with average size of 71 acres
- Market value of agricultural products in 2012 was \$1.14 billion



12



11

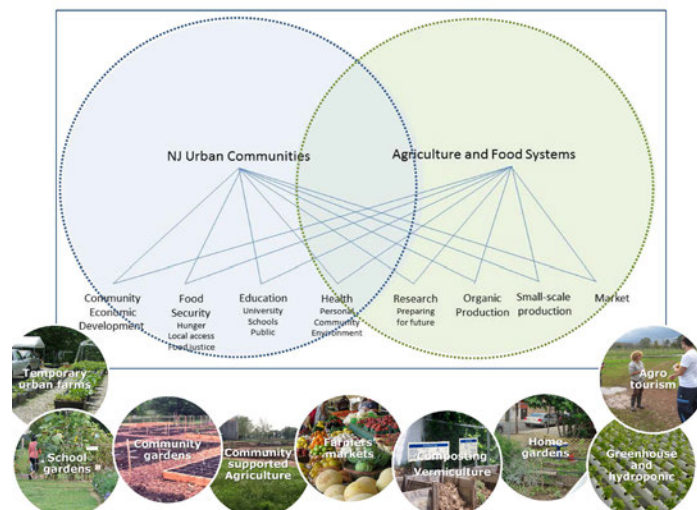


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Urban agriculture taking advantage of the NJ mix -  
Our cities, suburbs, and rural areas



15



14

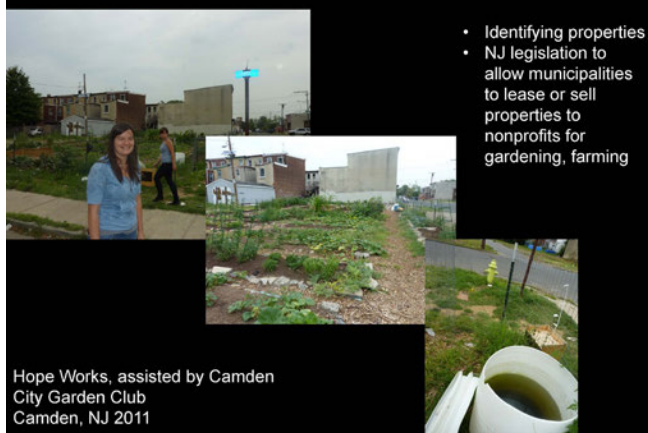
## Some urban agriculture trends in the Garden State

- The transformed urban lot
  - Permanent
  - temporary
- Suburban and large-scale projects
- School gardens
- Institutions with land and allied missions
  - Hospitals
  - universities
- Hydroponics, aquaponics
- Focus on connecting urban agriculture to markets
- Networking – Ag in the City



16

## The transformed urban lot becomes a garden



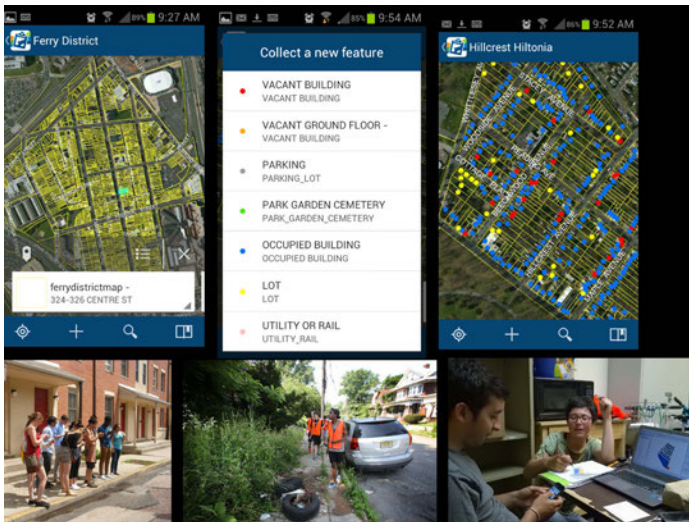
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## Re-use of Abandoned Properties / Food access: Isles + Rutgers Collaborative Study

- Trenton, NJ
- 17.6% of families are below poverty line (26.8% of population under 18 are below poverty)
  - Roughly 10% of the city's land area is vacant and without buildings or existing parks or community gardens (378 acres)
  - Isles – non-profit self-help and urban greening organization, founded 1981



18



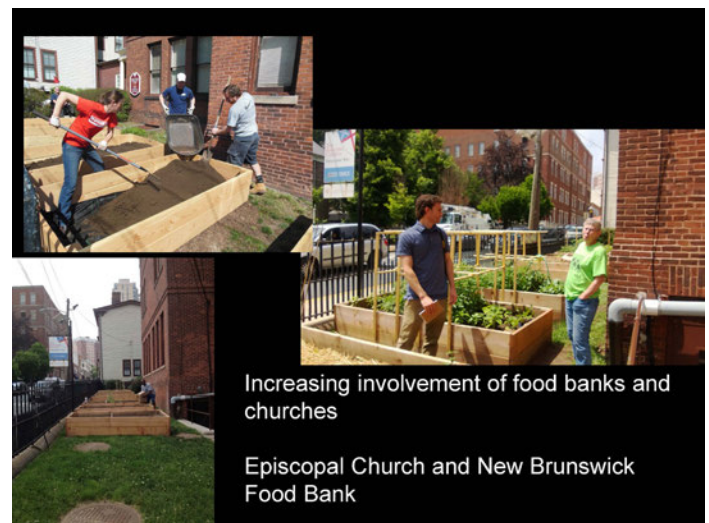
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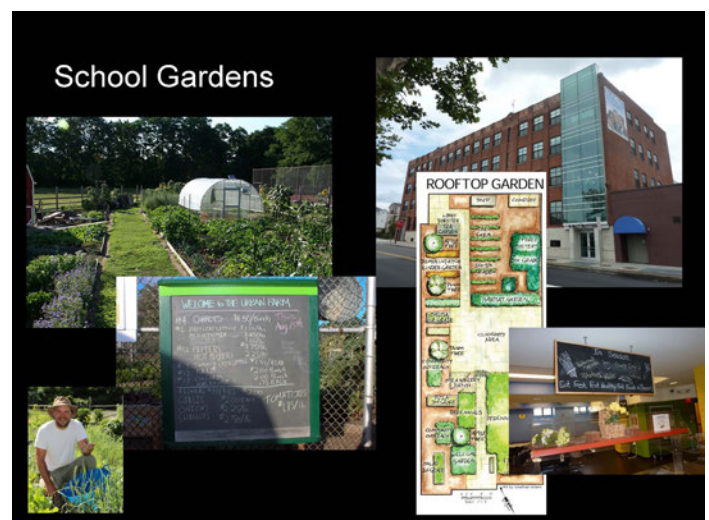
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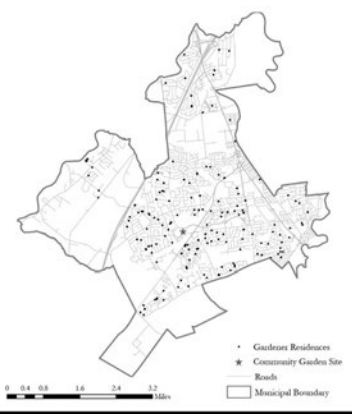
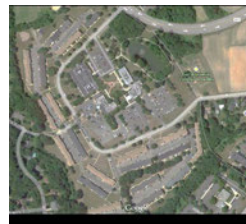
## Large-scale Suburban gardens

Duke Farms Community Garden  
Established 2011 with 210 plots;  
expanded in 2014 to 462 plots



Arianna DeVries, *Suburban Dirt: A Growing Element in New Jersey's Community Gardening Trend* (MLA thesis, 2014)

25



East Brunswick Community Garden  
Arianna DeVries

26

## Institutional Partners: Hospitals

Garden State Urban Farms and Beth Israel Medical Center, Newark



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## Institutions: Universities



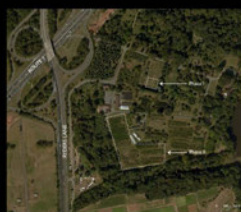
The Farminary, Princeton Theological Seminary

Liberty Hall Farms, Kean University  
and Groundwork Elizabeth



28

## Student Farm at Rutgers Gardens



29

## Aeroponics, Aquaponics, Hydroponics

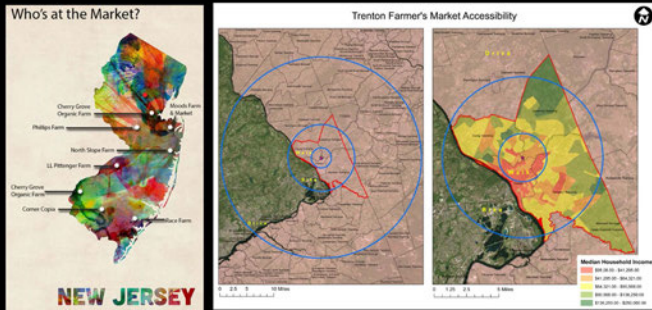


Aerofarms,  
Newark, NJ



30

### Who's at the Market?



- Women and Infant Children (WIC) Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)
- Farmers Market bucks
- Concerns about "5 acre" rule that limits non profit farms/gardens from accepting WIC and Senior MMNP coupons if sites less than 5 acres



The farmers' markets listed accept the **Family First EBT** card. There are, however, other farmers' markets where you can use your **SNAP** benefits. If your local market is not on the list, we encourage you to check with them to see if they accept the **Families First EBT** card.

[Click Here for List](#)

Listening to the experience and perspective of the experts and practitioners here today.

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34

**ag** | in the  
**city**

35