

# Urban Agriculture in Post-Industrial Landscape: A Case for Community-Generated Urban Design

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## 1. Introduction

Since the mid-20th century, many United States post-industrial cities have experienced a dramatic loss of population, community resources, and economic growth while their metropolitan areas have continued to grow. These decaying cities are characterized by a high level of crime, substance abuse, unemployment, poverty, food insecurity, vacant land parcels, and urban blight. Many communities rely on urban agriculture (UA) as a mode to achieve not only food security and sustainability, but also community resilience, vacant land remediation, and neighborhood development. While valuable, UA has been treated as a temporary and informal land use. Land tenure conflict often causes the untimely demise of many UA projects. In terms of urban design, UA projects in many cities have been developed as a “patchwork” without a physical connectivity to other gardens, open spaces, community infrastructure, and other built environment components.

Within this context, our paper will focus on three post-industrial U.S. cities – Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia. The UA practices in these cities vary in terms of their successes, struggles, and challenges. We will discuss two particular aspects of UA in these cities: (i) UA as a community-generated urban form in post-industrial urban landscapes and (ii) UA as a planning process and policy problem or opportunity. In particular, we will identify UA practices as an intersection of community development, food systems planning, and land use planning; analyze the role of city government and its policies and ordinances; and critically explain the issues and conflicts that exist among community activists, planners, and elected officials. We will demonstrate the lessons learned from the practice of UA as ecological and cultural regeneration based on a notion of ‘post-growth’.

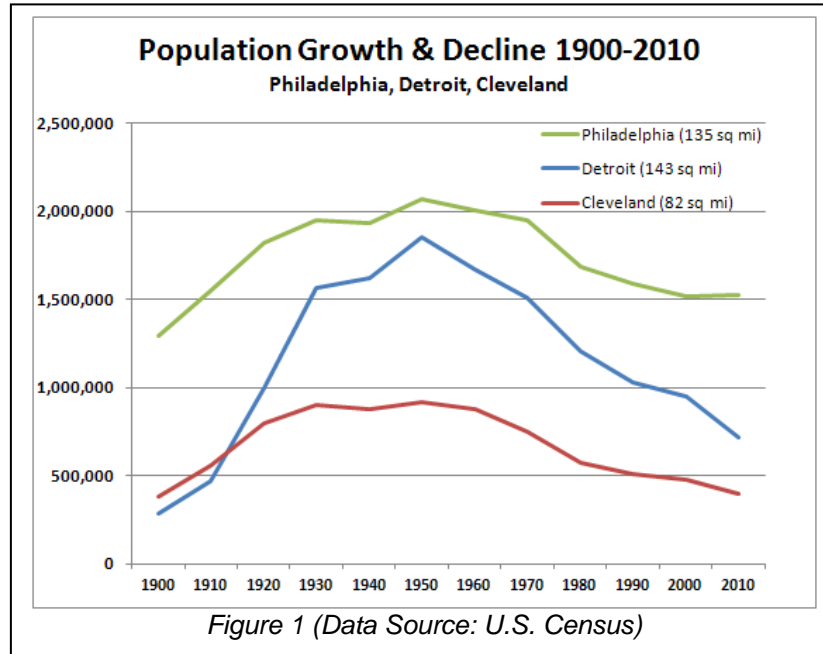
## 2. Background

The discussions of UA within the context of post-industrial cities is relevant in two ways – (i) reusing or repurposing the vacant lands and rebuilding distressed or disadvantaged neighborhoods, and (ii) providing fresh and healthy food in urban food insecure areas.

### 2.1. Post-Industrial Landscapes and Neighborhoods

Over the past 60 years, post-industrial U.S. cities have been affected by significant changes in national policy. Most notably, federal policies regarding housing and highways played a major role in promoting suburbanization and car-centric life style, coupled with white flight and urban disinvestment, including redlining practices. Once firmly in place these policies have greatly impacted the decline of many older cities and overwhelmed revitalization efforts. U.S. President Reagan’s McGill Commission commented that ‘place-oriented’ urban revitalization or redevelopment programs of post-industrial cities in previous decades had shown very little success (McGill, 1981, p.69). The Commission suggested assisting inner city residents to follow

jobs wherever available but not attempting to steer jobs to areas those people already live (Ibid, p.70).



At the same time, globalization was another key phenomenon that affected many post-industrial cities. Major global forces influenced a new type of urban development pattern. Many local industrial jobs were outsourced from these cities to other U.S. or global cities. The decaying infrastructure of these cities started having a negative impact on the quality of life of the residents. The increased rate of suburbanization made it more difficult to channel government investments into these core areas (Adams et al., 2008). As result, these cities have been losing population consistently since the 1950s (see Figure 1). While shifting from an industry-oriented economy to a service-oriented one, these cities started facing numerous issues, including urban vacant lots, blight, erosion of the tax base, racial segregation, ghettoization of the poor, non-White, and the immigrants, unemployment, and low wage jobs.

Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia are examples of post-industrial American cities (see Figure 2). Cleveland has struggled to make a successful transition to a post-industrial economic base. The city was once an industrial giant where steel and many other manufactured goods emerged as major industries. Today, Cleveland's industrial base is no longer robust and the city's economy is dependent on its health care and health sciences. More residents abandoned the city from 2000 to 2010 than in the 1990s. Cleveland has 3,300 acres of vacant land with 15,000 vacant buildings, 1,000 of which being demolished yearly. At the same time, Cleveland has embraced innovative strategies to address its economic recovery and mass vacancy, such as the creation of both the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Land Bank and network of worker-owned cooperatives.

Detroit has had less success in transitioning to a post-industrial economy. Growing spectacularly during the early decades of the twentieth century when the city was synonymous with the technical innovations that created the automobile boom, Detroit tripled its population from 465,000 to 1.5 million between 1910 and 1930. Detroit has 67,843 unimproved vacant lots and another 23,645 lots with only limited improvements. The city has been labeled as a 'point of no return city', a place with a degree of economic and social distress of such immense proportions

as to preclude revival within existing policy paradigms (Waste, 1998). However, many more recent reports talk of an influx of young leaders and investment and the potential for rebirth (Florida May 15, 2012; Florida April 7, 2012).



Philadelphia, a former manufacturing center in the northeastern U.S., has performed better in restructuring its economy. During the 1980s, Philadelphia lost about 20 percent of its manufacturing jobs, but gained 26 percent in non-manufacturing employment; producers' services grew by about 50 percent (Stull and Madden, 1990). "Meds and Eds" provide a solid base for this service based economy. In the 2010 census, Philadelphia grew in population for the first time in fifty years. However, revitalization has only occurred in certain parts of the city. Major sections have high levels of economic and social distress. Currently Philadelphia has more than 45,000 vacant land parcels.

## 2.2. UA in Post-Industrial Cities

Many urban low income communities and communities of color have insufficient and inconsistent access to healthy and fresh foods, causing negative social, health, and environmental effects to neighborhood residents (Morland et al., 2006). Specifically, population loss and disinvestment in post-industrial cities has also translated to losses in healthy food resources, including full-scale grocery stores and supermarkets. Smaller stores dominate these inner city retail landscapes. Until recently, many of these stores rarely stocked fresh fruits and vegetables (Bodor et al., 2008) and sold primarily processed foods and sugary drinks (Nelson et al., 2009). Commonly, these areas are known as food deserts. Studies show that access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food in lower income households can play a positive role in food choices (Treuhaff & Karpyn, 2010).

UA is not only one potential response to healthy food access issues, but also an integral part of the local or alternate food movement, a movement distinct from and unconnected to industrial agriculture. UA includes projects such as backyard gardens, community gardens, for-profit urban farms, aquaculture, animal husbandry (including chicken raising), and urban orchards. Many of these initiatives address issues of economic, social, and food justice (Wekerle, 2004). They benefit residents by providing local access to food as well as opportunities for social interaction and learning (Macias, 2008). UA is specifically applicable and prevalent in post-industrial cities where there is an abundance of vacant lots, property values are low, and there is no indication that the economy would soon reverse to a positive direction.

Community gardens in these cities have become a symbol of local reaction to two consequences of inner city decline: urban blight and food deserts. Yet, they are more than that. They are symbols of resilience, cultural preservation, intergenerational and cross-ethnic community building, and, more and more, an opportunity for youth leadership development. Many community and grassroots organizations, planners, and city officials see UA as an important way to alleviate the extreme conditions of poverty and environmental stress that are common in these cities.

### **3. UA as a Community-Generated Urban Form**

UA projects and policies are primarily thought of in the context of combating hunger and supporting local, sustainably harvested food. There is a gap in literature on how UA might affect urban form and the potential implications of UA projects on the shape and structure of a city. The industrialization of cities changed the form of buildings and neighborhoods to accommodate the industrial process. Physical expressions of this industrial process are structures such as factory buildings, ports, warehouses, and industrial districts. In post-industrial cities, buildings once used to produce “strong goods” such as car-parts or air conditioners can now be used to house city residents or made into art studios, restaurants or even museums. Such changes in use open the door to re-evaluating all internal and external spaces within an urban context. For example, what might have been a garments factory might be now better suited to be a community meeting space or indoor urban farm. Part of this process of re-evaluation concerns the reuse of land that has become available through demolition within the urban fabric. How should we re-evaluate the blank physical space that used to be used for something else? How do we make land productive to serve the needs of people? One of the conclusions is to use vacant lots, and even vacant properties, in lower income areas as UA projects because it renders the land productive that would otherwise serve as a dumping ground.

We evaluated the spatial pattern of UA projects in Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia by viewing maps in the Internet. We did not see any particular spatial pattern of UA project locations in the city fabric, because these projects have never been part of the overall physical design of the cities. Instead, UA project locations can be explained in terms of the socio-economic characteristics of city neighborhoods. In general, UA projects are more or less located throughout the city boundary, but higher concentrations are observed in areas with higher poverty density, lower accessibility to affordable healthy food, higher rates of vacant land parcels, and lower property values. It is hard to get reliable data on the number of UA projects in any city. Based on our Internet search, Cleveland has close to 250 UA projects located throughout the city. A city goal is to have every Cleveland resident living within 1/4 mile of a garden. Detroit has about 1,200 UA projects, proportionate to its significant number of vacant lands. Philadelphia has more than 350 community gardens, urban farms, and urban orchards, a sharp decrease from 1,000 plus projects reported in the 1970's and 80s, but a steady increase from slightly more than 225 projects reported in 2008.

*Table 1: Functions of UA in U.S. Cities*

- UA as an answer to community food insecurity and urban food deserts
- UA as vacant land remediation, blight prevention, and public safety strategy
- UA as community service or volunteer activity
- UA as a representation of cultural or ethnic identity
- UA as a promoter of physical activity among children and adults
- UA as leisure activity
- UA as leadership opportunity for community organizing
- UA as a vehicle for social change
- UA as an educational tool for students and community members
- UA as a model for business, social entrepreneurship, and community and economic development
- UA as a mechanism for community land and food sovereignty

The urban forms are diverse. Many UA projects are located in private backyards and rooftops of large industrial buildings. Some projects are located within existing city parks, others located in lands preserved by a land trust, sometimes even in the city center or other areas with high real estate value. Some projects existed before the city grew and expanded around them. However, most projects are the result of re-purposing vacant land. In a number of cases, the land is purchased, leased, or licensed from the property owner. In others, it is used without permission from the landowner, generally because the landowner cannot be located or because obtaining permission to use city-owned property proves too arduous. These gardens are often referred to as squatter or guerilla gardens, but not necessarily by the gardeners themselves.

Table 1 shows the different functions of UA projects that we have identified. The UA movement has emerged in a variety of ways, through the involvement of grassroots organizations, community institutions, and social entrepreneurial ventures. Each function offers unique opportunities and challenges. UA has been a solution to community needs that often does not rely on government support or permission or funding from nonprofit institutions. At the ground level, the participation in UA can give individuals a sense of ownership and civic pride in their neighborhood, while uniting and reinventing the community.





UA projects have taken a wide variety of forms in the post-industrial landscape. From the late 1920s through the 1980s, owners abandoned homes on a small dead end block of Alter Street in the Greys Ferry area of South Philadelphia. Those homes were bulldozed by the city and the lots left vacant. Incorporated in 1947, the Central Club for Boys and Girls started greening and gardening on these vacant lots and continue to be their vacant land stewards. Without Central Club, these lots would likely have been targets for short dumping and crime activity.

Aspen Farm in West Philadelphia's Mill Creek neighborhood has a long history as a sustainable UA project started on vacant land (see Figure 3). Established in 1975 after the 1965 demolition of row homes and a dry cleaning business, Aspen Farm steadily grew thanks to its active leadership and well-organized garden club of over 40 members. Each member pays an annual fee of \$10, with additional income generated through benefit dinners, casino trips, and donations – all of which help to defray Aspen Farms' operating costs. Las Parcelas similarly emerged in the 1980s as a creative community-based solution to vacancy, as well as widespread drug activity, in the Kensington section of North Philadelphia. Grupos Motivos, the collective of women who started Las Parcelas, drove out an open-air drug market and replaced it with a celebration of the farming culture of Puerto Rican neighborhood.

One of the most successful examples of an entrepreneurial urban farm in Philadelphia is the Greensgrow Farm (see Figure 3). Greensgrow developed on an abandoned industrial site in the densely populated, working class neighborhood of Kensington on a vacant city block upon the concrete foundation of a former galvanized steel plant. The owners purchased this brownfield and started the farm in 1997. Greensgrow also operates a nursery, a farmers market, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) program, reaching hundreds of families.

Increasingly UA projects are emerging in Philadelphia's city parks and next to recreation centers, the result of collaborations with the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. In some instances, residents may raise private funds for construction and maintenance, but once permission is granted by the city to use the land, they are able to use it at no charge. One example is the Schuylkill River Park Community Garden, which has 70 community garden plots that are leased to residents. Some of Philadelphia's most vibrant UA projects for youth are operated on farms adjacent to recreation centers, such as Teens 4 Good and Earthskeepers.

Detroit has an enormous amount of abandoned land, estimated at 40 square miles and the city owns a third of the real estate through foreclosures. Most of the UA projects in Detroit are community-generated, initiated by residents who are transforming desolate areas into spaces for food production and community building. The Brightmoor neighborhood has a vacancy rate above 60%, but residents along a 14-block stretch now grow food and a wood chip path connects 20 gardens, which have become known as the Brightmoor Farmway. The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network has evolved from a grassroots volunteer group to an organization with a strong leadership role in the city, contributing to the Detroit Food Policy Council. The organization operates the D-Town Farm, which has a 10-year license agreement with the city and, in 2011, received permission to add an additional 5.2 acres to the original 2 acres project. D-Town has solar paneled greenhouses and is now establishing hoopouses for year-round production. These grassroots movements have developed with strong ties to community and youth groups, promoting social and economic self-sufficiency (Campbell, 2012).

In Cleveland, a community institution that has been a pivotal player in supporting urban farming is The Ohio State University (OSU) Extension. It promotes gardening with programs like its Summer Sprout partnership with the City of Cleveland. The Extension also provides education in the business of entrepreneurial urban farming. In 2012, "a corporate executive, a mechanical

engineer and an independent businessman” reunited in their childhood neighborhood of Kinsman to start Rid-All Green Partnership, an urban farm on the site of a former illegal dump (Davis 2011). Rid-All and OSU Extension are at the heart of a new 23-acre *Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone* spurred by a local nonprofit neighborhood development corporation.

UA projects can make a dramatic impact on the physical and community fabric of the urban environment. Besides providing fresh and healthy food, they can act as inspirations for social interaction, bringing people out of their homes and into a shared space. They can be used to foster community organizing around a range of issues. They can function as an outdoor community center, where people of different cultures and social classes come together. They can serve as classrooms and a place where the less fortunate come for food. Ultimately, the garden becomes a catalyst for change, improving a neighborhood's overall quality of life. However, building and sustaining UA projects in most cities are major challenges that many UA activists, grassroots or other nonprofit organizations have to face. It is important to understand the dynamics of UA projects in the context of planning, policy, and politics.

#### **4. UA and the Planning Process**

In looking at recent efforts to incorporate UA into land use planning, it is critical to recognize that UA has been predominately a distinctly nongovernmental, community-based, grassroots strategy. UA emerged, in part, as a response to urban disinvestment and unsuccessful government interventions.

As vacant land stewards, urban gardeners and farmers have saved municipal governments millions of dollars. In this role, however, gardeners are most often growing food on land they do not own and often have no right to stay. Land tenure – obtaining not simply permission, but the right to stay on a plot of land for the long term or permanently -- is often one of the biggest legal barriers faced by gardeners and farmers. South Philadelphia’s Central Club, discussed earlier finally obtained title to the land the organization had stewarded through a quiet title action based on adverse possession. However, with title, the organization was saddled with the tax burden of the owners who originally abandoned the property. To this day, Las Parcelas gardens on lots, which have a checkerboard of ownership – including 4 or 5 different city agencies and private, tax delinquent owners. Like many gardens, both Central Club and Las Parcelas see land tenure as key to preserving these UA projects that represent the community’s legacy. Without land tenure or land use protections, many gardens have been lost, due to development pressure, when cities have sold UA spaces or allowed them to go to sheriff’s sale.

For decades, gardens in disinvested communities flourished without significant outside attention. Now, across the U.S., UA is suddenly on the radar. In 2010, the American Planning Association released a Planning Advisory Service Report (“APA Report”) that explored how local and regional governments are now integrating UA into planning and land use practices, recognizing that UA is both “embedded in communities” and a “part of the larger food-system continuum [of] built environments” and associated infrastructure and policies (Hodgson, 2011). Municipalities are beginning to see UA as integral to planning and zoning practices, as well as policies allowing gardeners permission to use public lands or purchase surplus or vacant lands (Hodgson, 2011).

Planners and policy-makers have an opportunity to support the kind of stability needed for both historic and new UA projects to achieve sustainability and flourish. Unfortunately, even within these efforts, UA is often still viewed as interim use, perceived as in tension with housing development, and excluded from consideration as the “highest and best use” of a parcel, a



notion inevitably limited to housing and commercial development. Further, municipalities need to incorporate community stakeholders into the process of developing plans and policies for those policies to be effective.

#### **4.1. Land Use and Land Disposition Policies**

With at least 10,000 of Philadelphia's vacant lots owned by multiple city agencies, many gardeners have set down roots on city-owned parcels. Yet, Philadelphia's land disposition policies have long been at odds with UA. In 2010, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA), which controls approximately 2500 vacant parcels, contracted with Econsult Corporation to conduct a study on urban agriculture and land use policy. The study concluded that "urban agriculture [should be] strategically deployed as an interim use to stabilize neighborhoods[,] but that "urban agriculture should generally be pursued via temporary arrangements." (Wachter 2010)

Until recently, city agencies in Philadelphia offered short-term agreements or licenses (usually one year) to use city-owned parcels, which provided a base level of permission, but were revocable at any time. But each of the agencies has had different policies and procedures, with little interagency coordination. This has been particularly problematic for gardens located on multiple lots with multiple owners such as Las Parcelas.

In June 2012, the PRA became the lead agency or "front door" for the disposition of land held by three different city agencies, eliminating some of the problems and providing an easy-to-use web-based map of available properties. In concert, the PRA developed new policies with respect to UA. When first seen by gardeners and farmers back in 2011, these policies appeared to reinvent the status quo -- allowing for one-year licenses to community gardens, revocable at any time. In addition, the proposed policies imposed a new liability insurance requirement, required association with a registered nonprofit, and prohibited growing food for sale. After significant input from stakeholders and the Mayor's Food Policy Advisory Council, the PRA amended its policies to allow multi-year leases for community gardens and market farms and provide flexibility regarding nonprofit status. PRA also introduced a "path to permanence" for gardens able to demonstrate a certain level of stability and reintroduced a program through which homeowners can purchase vacant lots adjacent to their homes for a nominal fee, usually one dollar. These changes suggest that the PRA acknowledges that UA may be the highest and best use for parcels in certain low market areas of the city. However, farmers and gardeners have, yet, to see these policies in action. Other local and regional agencies, such as the Philadelphia Water Department, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, have offered opportunities for UA on public lands for longer periods, but there are no overarching policies from them in support of UA in Philadelphia.

In Detroit, despite the amount of land available, residents still have to fight to use it for UA. As discussed, D-Town Farm, in Detroit, has been able to secure a ten-year agreement with the City of Detroit to farm on over 7 acres of land. However, despite the lack of market pressure for traditional commercial and housing development, land tenure continues to be an issue for Detroit gardeners. Most farms are located on vacant lots without ownership, lease, or permission, or by verbal agreement alone. Growers on borrowed or short-leased land from the city have to uproot at any time if the city decides to sell, as they did with the two city lots that was home to The Birdtown garden in Detroit's Cass Corridor. The Greening of Detroit organization has been helping these farmers navigate policies and politics of securing land rights.

Detroit city laws allow gardeners to adopt lots for agricultural use but they are not allowed to sell the produce. Gardens that operate as a principal use on a property are at risk for land use

violations. Greening of Detroit estimates that there are between 70 and 80 growers selling their produce, some making more than \$10k a year, but only a handful are making a living wage. The Adopt-A-Lot program in Detroit offers city property for gardening, provided the user returns the land to original condition and leaves the property if it is sold. The Michigan Land Bank offers the Garden for Growth program, offering one- and three-year leases for individual or non-profit gardens, but provides no opportunity for land tenure.

At the same time, the massive amount of available land in Detroit has created a different type of market for industrial agriculture proposed for Hantz Farms. This for-profit venture plans to create the world's largest urban farm at a 110-acre site on the city's east side. This large-scale urban farm claims to transform Detroit into a destination for fresh food, beautify the city, increase the tax base, create jobs, and improve the environment and quality of life.

Early in July 2012, Detroit's Mayor Dave Bing announced his intention to present a plan to City Council to sell 1,900 mostly residential, city-owned vacant lots to Hantz to use for timber production (Gallagher, 2012). Many are skeptical of this large for-profit farm, seeing it as threat to the existing UA projects that have grown up from the roots of the city, and worrying that it is a "return to the individualistic, capitalistic motives that some say have led to Detroit's economic and social challenges." (Christensen, 2011, p. 242) Residents are strongly criticizing the equity of handing so much city-owned property over to a corporate venture that has no commitment to the community-based, sustainable, and organic practices of Detroit's strong African American-led UA movement (Gallagher, 2012).

Cleveland has made significant progress in the area of land use and land disposition. In 2004, EcoCity Cleveland conducted a study called "Preserving Community Gardens in Cleveland" that critiqued the then-prevailing notion held by the City of Cleveland that "interpret[ed] 'highest and best' as development, usually for housing." (Kious, 2004) The study called for a more expansive "classification process . . . to include gardens and green space." The study further called for "the need to change the urban development thought pattern from 'housing OR community gardens' to 'housing AND community gardens' though gardens and housing are recognized as "collaborating, not competing, components of a neighborhood's healthy, thriving development." (Kious, 2004). Within a year, the Cuyahoga Community Land Trust, Cleveland Botanical Garden, and OSU Extension began exploring "preservation models," starting with two pilot gardens (Ohio State Extension Urban Programs, 2008).

Cleveland, through the Cleveland and Cuyahoga County land trusts, has provided year-term licenses to hundreds of community gardens. More recently, many acres have been secured through longer-term leases. Further, The Ohio State University Extension is now engaged in a public-private partnership to create an Urban Agriculture Innovation Zone anchored on a 26-acre area of mostly city land bank and tax delinquent properties (Lefkowitz, 2011). Initially, the Cleveland Land Trust sought to require all garden projects acquire liability insurance. But, through community input and advocacy by the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition, that requirement was limited to urban farms with longer-term leases or ones engaging in capital improvements.

In support of these efforts, a Food Policy Coalition working group undertook a vacant land inventory, which will serve to support longer range planning by identifying strategic parcels for urban agricultural use, supporting farmland preservation, and informing land use decisions by the city and county land banks (Taggart, 2009). In its 2020 Citywide Plan, Cleveland committed to "[r]eserve land for both temporary and permanent use as community gardens in every neighborhood throughout the City." (Krumholz, 2009)

#### **4.2. Zoning**

Cities across the country are adjusting their zoning regulations to accommodate urban agriculture, some faster than others. One cannot underestimate the importance of a new zoning regime. Cleveland has been a model in evaluating the barriers to UA and taking progressive steps to amend its zoning code, under the strong leadership of the Cleveland Cuyahoga Food Policy Coalition. In 2007, recognizing the tenuousness of UA projects located on land they do not own, the Cleveland City Council created the first Urban Garden Zoning District in the country by ordinance. This ordinance gives the city the ability to reserve land for garden use through zoning. This permits urban gardens and prohibits all other use of a property. Created in direct response to the loss of gardens to development, this is arguably the most protective UA zoning regime in the U.S.

In 2009, Cleveland also adopted an ordinance that makes it easier for citizens to raise small livestock, including chickens and bees. In 2010, Cleveland passed two additional ordinances that promote and protect UA – one permits agriculture as a principal use on all vacant residentially zoned lots and the other allows for the creation of an “Urban Agriculture Overlay (UAO) District,” allowing for larger scale urban farming and raising of livestock.

Philadelphia also recently completed a process of comprehensive zoning reform. The drafters of the code responded to the rise in attention to urban agriculture by creating an urban agricultural zoning designation. The new code, which is to go into effect on August 22, 2012, recognizes the following as uses: (1) community gardening, (2) market and community-supported farming, and (3) nurseries and greenhouses – the material distinction between the three being whether food is grown for family/community use or donation, retail sale, or wholesale<sup>i</sup>. Under the new code, community gardening will be allowed in almost every residential and commercial area and market farming is only slightly more restricted. While Cleveland’s UA Overlay is arguably more protective to individual gardens than Philadelphia’s new code, Philadelphia’s code is quite permissive.

However, while care was taken to draft a code that is responsive to gardeners and farmers, resulting in changes to fencing and parking requirements, there are still open questions, in part because of a lack of a coordinated dialogue between UA stakeholders and city officials. For example, while community gardening and market farming will be allowed in most areas of Philadelphia, the city still requires that gardeners obtain a use registration permit. At \$125 per parcel, this will be cost prohibitive for many gardens. Further, questions remain about fencing requirements and how the city will regulate the construction of hoop houses and greenhouses.

Detroit has strived to create an urban agricultural zoning ordinance, but struggles with the overarching Michigan Right to Farm Act (RTFA) that supersedes any local ordinance or zoning regulation. This prohibits municipalities from exercising zoning or regulatory authority over farms. Michigan adopted this law in 1981 to protect farmland from loss to non-agricultural uses. Steady development of residential areas into farmland threatened farmers with ongoing nuisance complaints and related legal costs, making it tougher for farmers to fight for their land. In fact, the lack of proper zoning has been a barrier to the creation of Hantz Farm’s agricultural operations and is the basis for Hantz’s proposal to operate a timber farm, which is not currently prohibited (Gallagher, 2012).

While amendments through generally accepted agricultural and management practices (GAAMPs) have tried to respond to additional agricultural needs, the regulations have not been able to address nuisance concerns in UA settings. Farms that conform to GAAMPs are protected from nuisance complaints and the RTFA includes concentrated animal feeding operations in this

protection. While this may seem to support Detroit growers, it also opens the potential for health and other issues that come from large-scale commercial operations. One solution is for the city to be exempt from the RTFA in order to create agricultural policies that make sense for the city and the impacts of UA operations (Norris et al., 2011).

## **5. Lessons Learned from the U.S. Experience**

Cleveland has been able to move forward, in part, because the city and surrounding county have an active and funded food policy coalition, which has been intentional in engaging stakeholders in policy advocacy, has put resources to researching stakeholder needs, and provided opportunities through public-private partnerships. Cleveland's planning commission and area land banks have evolved to see the value of UA to community development.

The charge of the Detroit Food Policy Council, Detroit Black Community Food Security Network, and Greening of Detroit is to be responsive to community needs and to act as a leader in this African American community. They have succeeded in creating and supporting strong UA projects, grounded in promoting self-determination. They are working to advocate for better land tenure and land use policies, but must now contend with the unique challenges presented by the encroachment of industrial agriculture. The conflict surrounding Hantz Farm and its potentially widespread impact on the urban landscape speaks to the need for a planning process that stresses community engagement.

UA is flourishing in Philadelphia, due to the efforts of gardeners and farmers on the ground. The new zoning code will undoubtedly provide a structure to encourage new projects to emerge and there is an expectation that stakeholders will be involved in making sure that the new code is effectively implemented. Additional and coordinated support and leadership are needed from policymakers and the Food Policy Advisory Council to ensure that policies are effective and responsive to community needs.

Many interim land-use programs rely on year-term licenses, which have provide the licensee no property rights and no stability on which to build a market business or community ties. Cities, like Cleveland, Detroit, and Philadelphia, are now exploring leases for 3-5 years, but most farmers will tell you that a minimum of 10 years is necessary to build and operate a market farm. Further, while community gardens may not originally set out to maintain a garden for 20, 40, or 60 years, they have done so in many instances. The benefits of an anchor community institution do not fade because development begins to look attractive. This makes garden permanence a crucial issue.

Securing the right to farm through land tenure and land use controls is critical in the movement towards self-sufficiency in UA – where the success of a garden depends on its permanence and longevity. The success and potential profit of a farm cannot be actualized in a few growing seasons, since the soil must be cultivated and business and community partnerships must be established. Furthermore, prioritizing resources or developing pro-UA policies are not enough, planners and policy makers must engage UA practitioners in planning and creating policies or the results will not be responsive to community and stakeholder needs.



## Endnote

<sup>i</sup> The new code also recognizes “animal husbandry” as a subset of urban agriculture. However, due to a 2004 ordinance, the raising of animals, including chickens, is limited to educational facilities or parcels of over 3 acres.

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