

Best Practice 01 N-BS



The transformative power of urban agriculture

From community gardens, urban food forests to rooftop and vertical farms, **urban agriculture** is evolving as a powerful tool to transform unused spaces into productive growing areas that offer a wide range of benefits to local communities. For many local governments, urban and peri-urban agriculture is not just a way to address local food insecurity but also about reconnecting people with the source of their food, helping to create community networks, supporting healthy living and biodiversity goals, making cities greener and more resilient to climate change.

Investments range from neighborhood initiatives to legislative and policy measures, research and advocacy, to comprehensive strategies that convene stakeholders to revitalize neighborhoods, catalyze innovation and build knowledge to develop local food systems to address food insecurity with the support of federal, state and local government funding.

Outstanding examples of vision and collaboration

Three initiatives showcase exceptional visions, the critical role of cities and collaborations in sustaining and growing urban and peri-urban agriculture to benefit community harmony, healthy living and the environment. These examples prove that challenges can be overcome for new models of agriculture to expand.

A network of cities working together in France to preserve peri-urban agriculture: *Terres en ville*

Elected officials and farming stakeholders from across France have been working together since 2000 through the '**Association Terres en ville**' to help sustain agricultural and forestry operations in peri-urban zones in the face of growing urbanization and amalgamation of rural communities. It is a unique forum that brings together elected officials and local players involved in the sustainability of agriculture in urban and peri-urban areas. Directed by their Charter, the network pursues 3 main objectives through dialogue and projects:

1. **Know-how** exchange between members
2. **Joint** experimentation
3. **Contribute** to the debate on cities and agriculture¹



Monitoring and supporting the alignment of urban planning with food policies is an important function of the group that is well supported by in-depth cities' analyses². The resulting plans detail actions to be taken to sustain local food systems, mitigate pressures, address priorities, and educate to also preserve the gastronomic heritage. Their work is extensive, evidence-based and reflects the value of local agriculture in France as well the importance of collective stewardship of the land. Their website offers a wealth of information (in French), including promoting training through the **AESOP4Food program**³.

A city investing in its historical roots : Philadelphia's comprehensive plan to create a sustainable urban agriculture economy

Philadelphia has a history of agricultural practices nurtured by residents for generations. In 2014, the Farm Philly program was initiated by the department of Parks & Recreation to support some 60 agriculture projects on the lands it managed (e.g. youth education gardens, community gardens, vegetable farms, orchards, composting programs and a public greenhouse to grow seeds). In 2019, it raised its ambition by adopting a city-wide 10-year plan that serves as a road-map to develop a thriving local food system and urban agricultural economy⁴. The plan identifies resources, policies and programs to grow urban agriculture opportunities for all

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residents and provides recommendations to the city and its partners for investing in agriculture and food justice.

Three public meetings provided the inspiration, feedback and recommendations regarding the systems, structures, resources, and policies necessary to sustain and grow urban agriculture in Philadelphia and nurture a more just local food system. The city implements several programs to support gardening, propagation, youth education and a critical Land Access Program **which contributes to expanding the 450 active urban agriculture spaces and 130 acres dedicated to urban agriculture in the city**. Farm Philly has also assembled a wealth of information and resources on its website to support stakeholders efforts and engagement⁵.



1. **Land:** Increase land security for growers, access to growing space in all neighborhoods, and stewardship of the land.
2. **Production:** Build long-term support for urban agriculture initiatives into the City's infrastructure, policies, and programs.
3. **Preparation & Distribution:** Invest in existing and new local systems necessary to support a sustainable, just, and equitable food system.
4. **Consumption:** Build long-term support for locally sourced, nutritious meals and increased fresh food access into the City's infrastructure, policies, and programs.
5. **Food Waste Reduction:** Be accountable to existing zero-waste commitments and create new ones.
6. **People:** Recognize the role urban agriculture can play in the lives and livelihoods of people and communities.

<https://farmphilly.org/urban-agricultural-plan>

Urban Food Forests – creating edible ecosystems : *Boston Food Forest Coalition*

A food forest is a diverse arrangement of plants that attempts to mimic the ecosystems and patterns found in nature⁶. While providing healthy seasonal foods, these forests also provide useful tree canopy during hot weather, mitigate erosion, improve biodiversity and sequester carbon.

The Boston Food Forest Coalition is an innovative community land management model based on a community land trust (CTL). Their mission is to reclaim vacant urban spaces and design them as edible community sites prioritizing neighborhoods with less access to parkland. Each food forest has its own stewardship team that determines the vision for the site and ensures its maintenance while supporting the efforts of the broader coalition.

The city of Boston is the partner that transfers city-owned plots of land into the CTL which then become legally protected from development and available to the stewards for food forest gardening, educational classes and events. The food forest is a complement to Boston's urban forest plan which guides how the community can work together to improve the health, longevity and density of the tree canopy⁷.



1. <https://terresenvilles.org/lassociation/>
2. https://terresenvilles.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Tev_Planif_Fiche_urbanisation_Nantes_VF.pdf
3. AESOP4Food seminar 2024 - WIKI Landscape Portal
4. Urban Agriculture Plan - Farm Philly- <https://farmphilly.org/urban-agricultural-plan>
5. <https://farmphilly.org/resources/>
6. <https://www.bostonfoodforest.org>
7. <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/>

