



**An Urban Agriculture Summit:
A Re-Gathering of the Urban Agriculture Community**

The McKnight Foundation

Sunday, April 3, 2011



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Invitation Letter.....2

2. Meeting Goals and Agenda.....3

3. Key Themes: Small Group Scenario Planning Exercise, Executive Summary.....4

4. Next steps toward building a Twin Cities-wide Urban Agriculture Alliance.....7

Appendix A: Transcribed notes from the small group exercises.....8



1. The Invitation Letter

An Urban Agriculture Summit

Collaboration in a Time of Scarcity

Sunday, April 3rd from 4:00-7:00pm

Located at the McKnight Foundation
710 South 2nd Street, Suite 400, Minneapolis

*Re-Gathering of members of the urban agriculture community.
Dinner provided. Hope you can join us!*

In April 2010, urban agriculture practitioners and supporters were invited to help Gardening Matters, Land Stewardship Project and Kingfield Farmers Market to develop strategies for land access for urban agriculture. A year later, we are meeting again to share work advancing the broad goals envisioned at the meeting for all aspects of urban agriculture.

Please join us at the McKnight Foundation to dig into a shared vision and identify how we can all work together in a stronger partnership for a robust and unified urban agriculture movement.

As leaders of community gardens, urban farms, farmers markets, and organizations focused on just and sustainable food systems, together we can create solutions that are anchored in your urban agriculture experience. Please join us!

If you would like to attend, or cannot attend but would like more information, please email John Brosnan, john@gardeningsmatters.org.

2. Meeting Goals and Agenda

Approximately 80 participants from various sectors of the urban agriculture community gathered at the McKnight Foundation on Sunday, April 3, 2011, to further the discussion of developing a region-wide urban agriculture network or alliance. Participants could view the meetings goals and agenda for the day, below, upon entering the room.

Goals for the day:

- ❖ Re-gather our community
- ❖ Share work that's happened since our last gathering in April 2010
- ❖ Focus on developing an urban agriculture collaborative alliance:
 - What would it do?
 - Who would it be for?
 - What could it help us do that we cannot do individually?
- ❖ Ask your participation in the work of defining a collaborative, as well as other related efforts that are currently underway.

Agenda for the day:

- 4:00 Participants arrive and help themselves to dinner
- 4:15 Opening remarks, welcome
- 4:30 Report outs on resource hubs and the land access working group since last April
- 4:45 Presentation, Collaboration in a Time of Scarcity, by Annie Young
- 5:15 Group work exercises; perspectives on developing a collaborative from 8 different sectors of the urban agriculture community:
 - Community development
 - Composting
 - Distribution, farmers markets and marketing
 - Education and outreach
 - Land use, leaseholders and landowners
 - Policy and advocacy
 - Producers and growers
 - Social justice, jobs, equity and inclusivity
- 6:15 Sector-based group report outs
- 6:45 An invitation to help, next steps, closing questions, and thanks
- 7:15 Wrap up

Facilitators and presenters: Linda Alton (Minnesota Technology of Participation/MNToP), John Brosnan (Gardening Matters), Neisha Reynolds (MNToP), Kirsten Saylor (Gardening Matters), and Annie Young (Harrison Neighborhood Association)

Each group was asked to report out on four items:

- ❖ Share what you see as **current opportunities** and **current challenges** for urban agriculture today?
- ❖ What do you envision a functioning urban agriculture coalition/alliance doing in 2 years and what would be **the potential benefits** and **the potential outcomes** associated with that structure?

There was noteworthy consensus among all of those participating in the afternoon group exercise. Each group's complete set of comments is listed on page 8, Appendix A. Listed below are the areas where there was significant agreement across all groups:

- ❖ We need improved access to land for agricultural uses, and we need more permanent access to land.
- ❖ An urban agriculture coalition has the potential to help build a common vision and common language among our community and assist with networking and communication among all members.
- ❖ We need more research, particularly economic research, to measure the benefits of urban agriculture.
- ❖ The urban agriculture movement offers great potential for green job creation and economic and community development.

Less frequent areas of agreement among the community, yet still significant agreement:

- ❖ An urban agriculture coalition offers new opportunities to share knowledge across a broad and diverse community.
- ❖ We need more marketing and education around healthy foods, improved nutrition, and how to prepare healthy foods; a coalition could help to advance this type of outreach and education.
- ❖ We need expanded infrastructure for marketing, processing, storage and distributing in the local food system.
- ❖ We want to build a vision for urban agriculture that is a commonly accepted part of sustainable and livable communities.

Current Opportunities

Almost all groups talked about the potential for creation of a wave of green jobs that could emerge from the urban agriculture movement. Vacant land is currently abundant and the present-day economy is creating an opportunity to secure land for farming and gardens. There is a need for a coordinated and organized coalition. Groups identified evolving public policies through municipal/county efforts such as the Saint Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission and Homegrown Minneapolis.

Some opportunities were also identified as a challenge

Current Challenges

Challenges include needs, barriers, and issues that need to be addressed to enhance urban agriculture. Most frequently cited were the needs for more information, more research, and more sources of funding. Land access, land permanency, and connecting growers and gardeners with growing opportunities stood out as additional challenges now facing our community. While

not named specifically, current public policies were generally identified as remaining challenges and what appears to be a lack of coordinated efforts to change them in other areas of the metro.

Similarly to current opportunities, above, there is a strong need to gather together all the players in the urban agriculture community to advance our collective discussion, share information, and define a coalition. Development of a common language among our community would lead to greater inclusivity and capacity to work together across socio-economic barriers. In addition, the coalition needs to prioritize which public policies we want to change.

We need to influence the public's perception to get away from the notion of fast and cheap food to a deeper connection with fresh and locally-grown foods. In addition, we need to help more people eat and cook healthier and with fresh foods, both through education and eliminating structural barriers.

Potential Benefits of a Coalition

All groups were asked to imagine a functioning urban agriculture coalition, and name the advantages and assistance a coalition could provide and values it could promote. There was cross-sectoral agreement for more research, a toolbox of resources for growers and gardeners, expanded access to land, better access to education, and improved access to elected officials and policy makers.

When defining the coalition itself, participants envisioned a more unified effort that provided better communication among our community, more connections among us, and an inclusive community that shares knowledge and speaks with one voice. The coalition would present relatively more opportunities for creating green jobs and influencing perceptions of the food system.

Potential Outcomes of a Coalition

After identifying the benefits created by a coalition, people were asked to envision the results and products a coalition could help produce and deliver for the broader community. The potential to create green jobs and coordinate and deliver more research and shared data was repeated here.

Many groups felt a coalition would be able to influence societal attitudes and elevate the public importance of land preservation as a priority in the urban environment. One group envisioned outcomes in terms of expanded marketing as well as processing and distribution facilities for local foods.

Themes of inclusivity, shared resources, and developing a common language were echoed throughout the groups' thoughts. A coalition would expand access to funding for urban agriculture projects and increase influence on policy making. Overall, groups saw a coalition as a framework for advancing and achieving our collective goals.

4. Next steps toward building a Twin Cities-wide Urban Agriculture Alliance

At the April 3rd meeting, we invited your participation to assist in creating a steering committee or a task force focused on developing an urban agriculture alliance. We want to hear from you as we continue to define how we will all work together! Please consider signing up to assist with this group. Please contact John Brosnan at Gardening Matters with your interest or with any questions, at john@gardeningmatters.org or 612-821-2358.

We're currently planning the next gathering for those interested in helping to develop the coalition. We envision a half-day workshop around the first week of June where we will focus on lessons learned in developing collaborative networks and set the stage for how we can define an urban agriculture coalition here in the Twin Cities. If you would like to participate, we will ask that you attend regular meetings every 2-3 weeks over the course of 6 months to focus on the following questions:

- ❖ What efforts have been developed in other cities or regions? What lessons will we learn that might – or might not – be applied here in the Twin Cities?
- ❖ How will we work together as a group? What can we commit to in terms of how we work with each other?
- ❖ What values and working principles will guide our work?
- ❖ What is our geographic area of focus and scope?
- ❖ What objectives do we have for working together as a coalition? What are the short-term and long-term benefits we envision by working together?
- ❖ How will we communicate with each other? What are the ways we will share information and develop a common language across all the sectors of our community?
- ❖ How will we use different forms of media to engage people?
- ❖ What assets do organizations current offer for enhancing urban agriculture?
- ❖ What functions will we need to be successful that are currently not happening?
- ❖ What is our plan for an urban agriculture alliance 1 year from now? In 3 years?
- ❖ How will we implement our goals?
- ❖ How will we know that we are achieving our goals?
- ❖ What types of regular social events will we arrange to deepen relationships in our community?

Do you have ideas about answers to these questions? Please contact us and get involved! We want to hear what you think and we look forward to developing an urban agriculture coalition, together.

Appendix A: Transcribed notes from the small group exercises

An Urban Agriculture Summit – A Re-Gathering of the Urban Agriculture Community
Sunday, April 3, 2011, 4-7PM, hosted by the McKnight Foundation

Sector-based report outs

OPPORTUNITIES

Community Development

- Green jobs
- Job opportunities for youth
- Donated land
- Emerge
- Processing and growing and selling locally
- Creating equitable access and markets
- Policy
- LCCMR
- Metro-wide vacant land
- Tax forfeiture
- Being open to change
- Urban ag is a community development tool
- Community gardens as tangible community assets
- Precedents in other cities (like Seattle)
- Parallels with other community development stories (like affordable housing and community centers)
- People are longing for community
- Low-impact development potential and best management practices
- Multidisciplinary and many different parties involved (university, community and professional)
- Multigenerational effort
- Land capacity analysis (City of Minneapolis)

Compost

- Building healthy soil
- Jobs, training professionals
- Waste reduction
- Air pollution reduction – HERC
- Self sufficient communities
- Urban-rural connection
- Large scale composting, identifying urban spaces. Grain elevators?
- Education connecting to energy flows
- Involving waste haulers, yard waste

- MPCS.org.matter
- Pesticide/herbicide ban for cosmetic purposes
- Engage/empower neighbors regarding stink issues, “stink council”

Land Use, Leaseholders, and Landowners

- Urban land is abundant, including publicly owned tear down lots, right of ways, and institutional properties
- High demands for healthy, local food, and local products in general
- Super abundant growing techniques
- Good government and good opportunities to partner with government
- Pretty strong consensus, there is a need/role for a coalition

Distribution, Farmers Markets, and Marketing

- Education of the public about the cost of long-range transportation of food, and related impacts of transportation on global warming
- Education on financial transparency
- More direct linkages to the farmer, staying within the community

Policy and Advocacy

- BCBS assistance with advocacy training
- Need central, organized coordinator of issues and group advocacy
- Health impact assessment, not just environmental health assessment
- Cities and counties could work together, people asking for model language (U of M law school could help with this)
- If there are state policies of concern, BCBS might be willing to convene, create an urban division of MN Dept of Ag (What could the state do to leverage FDA funds?)
- Explore PA model with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Explore Ryan Pesh research; how much land is needed to feed __ people?

Producers and Growers

- Favorable city policies (in the works) for urban ag
- Immigrant populations with farming experience
- High need
- Property foreclosures
- Market for crafted/artisan products

CHALLENGES

Community Development

- Health disparities
- Some communities are facing relatively more challenges
- Food deserts
- Creating self-supported programs
- Access to land
- Scale of solutions

- Long-term strategies and plans
- Market driven land acquisition
- Policy
- Elected officials don't see urban ag as a community development tool
- Need to redefine or do away with 'highest and best use'
- Funding and resources
- Diversity of financial support
- How to put this discussion/effort into action
- People are disenfranchised
- Political and economic system are failing us in many ways
- Culture of "food as entertainment" or convenience, and norm of agri-industry food
- Food access in cold weather climate
- How to make a living/jobs
- Organizational support, positioning, and relationships
- Others/outsideers deciding what the community needs
- Need to have access to good information and research for developing sustainable community development
- Information needs to be brought to the community
- Parks and recreation are not as supportive as they should be, and why?

Compost

- Legality
- Length and duration of education
- Developing good science and accessing it
- Identifying sites and criteria for sites
- Minute details
- Funding
- Gathering all key players
- Winter

Land Use, Leaseholders, and Landowners

- Lack of funding
- Lack of proven business models, needs research
- City and county policies, as relates to/is tied to the tax base
- Current mindset: Urban Ag as a jobs creator and economic engine
- Needs to own vs. lease
- Brownfields and remediation
- Current situation puts housing in competition with urban ag

Distribution, Farmers Markets, and Marketing

- Societal messages to be unlearned – the "cheap" food
- Gardens, rather urban farming
- Funding, and investments in promoting
- Storage
- Education on how to cook, nutrition in local foods
- Gardeners not thinking of themselves as farmers to distribute food

Policy and Advocacy

- What is the architecture of this whole effort?
- Need list of policies that are priorities
- Need advocates on a list so that they can be easily activated
- There needs to be the sensation and reality that there is an organized group of people ready to act
- We need a ground level movement to push policy
- Dog park lobby is more organized

Producers and Growers

- City policy regarding land access
- Financing
- High need
- Winter
- Profitable urban ag model
- Lack of understanding of what urban ag is
- Availability of local supplies at the right scale
- Centralized power (one entity holds all resources)
- Living wage jobs

Social Justice, Jobs and Equity Inclusivity

- Need to develop a common language, to achieve inclusivity
- Power language, in relation with
- The Commons
- Need to bring historical oppression into the discussion
- Outreach, need strength-based assessment and shared knowledge
- Need to reframe the food system

VISION - BENEFITS OF A COALITION

Community Development

- Prove that urban ag is an effective tool for community development (to support the idea and build the argument; not just about tax \$)
 - Research
 - Lobbyists
 - Stories about successful impact on communities
- Promote sustainable development and low impact development technologies through policy; consider the model of stormwater credit in Minneapolis – have an urban ag credit
- Toolbox of resources for gardening, etc.
- Resource hubs
- Increase marketability of the Metro

Compost

- Good, healthy soil

- Unified effort
- Stronger efficacy
- Composting closes the loops, supports everything else

Land Use, Leaseholders, and Landowners

- Someone who wants to grow local food can access land to do so
- Land preservation as a statutory priority
- Water is accessible
- Hmong farmers do not need to drive to WI to farm
- Greater financial resources for farmers and green jobs
- Collecting research and experiences
- Communications tool for the coalition → policy
- Power in numbers; a democratic voice; working together in a support system
- Connecting existing networks
- Funding
- Help match landowners with farmers
- Sharing our experiences
- Lack of duplication
- More immediate sharing, using technology
- Support local leaders and community to do what we do
- People know that urban farming creates jobs and is economically viable
- Show that urban ag enhances taxable, economic viability
- More people spend their money here, in the local economy

Distribution, Farmers Markets, and Marketing

- Labeling and marketing; label contest to demonstrate foods from the community
- Standardization of production so that growers know what they are buying

Education and Outreach

- An organized directory
- Demonstration projects (Frogtown Farm) of larger scale possibilities
- Leveraging economies of scale
- Education about how to eat healthy at lower costs
- Bridge the gap between who is already involved and who isn't (an outreach to "everyday" communities)
- Expose people who are disconnected from the outdoors
- Build on current community events (church, etc) with education, talks about using, cooking and consuming food
- Face to face interaction (excite people); share with your neighbors
- Teach people how to be community organizers rather than "saviors"
- Bring together a diverse group of educators
- Address the challenge (by pooling resources) of restructuring existing foodservice

Policy and Advocacy

- Influence Met Council, State and the Feds – we can't reach them alone, must mobilize base

- Develop list of policies that are priorities
- Organize gardeners: campaign plan goals, including policy targets, media events, and letter writing; short-term, mid-term, long-term; dream big as well as wedge this issue in as an opportunity arises
- See improvements in health, zoning, economics, and licensing
- What is IATP role?

Producers and Growers

- Shared knowledge and resources
- Common voice
- Broader perspective
- Smarter food system and practitioners
- Helping mainstream idea of local, organic
- Educate the public
- Community building and working together profitably

Social Justice, Jobs and Equity Inclusivity

- Define common language
- Bring and receive; exchange knowledge
- Create a proactive outline of Legal Union Farmers Protection
- Hold standards to maintain focus on equity; benefits and risks are shared
- Ensure that all are able to rise up in this revolution

OUTCOMES OF A COALITION

Community Development

- Prove that urban ag is an effective tool for community development (to support the idea and build the argument; not just about tax \$)
 - Research
 - Lobbyists
 - Stories about successful impact on communities
- Promote sustainable development and low impact development technologies through policy; consider the model of stormwater credit in Minneapolis – have an urban ag credit
- Tool box of resources for gardening, etc.
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Compost

- Good, healthy soil
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- Stronger efficacy
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Land Use, Leaseholders, and Landowners

- Strong statement of consensus for needs

- Sharing research and data
- Policy and advocacy coordination
- (Starred) communication, and telling the story about urban ag
- Less of a private ownership mentality, more of a commons mentality, community holding
- More edible landscaping, incorporated into developmental design
- Land preservation for urban ag is a priority in long term land use planning
- Land access considers water access
- We are working together, research, equity (not just access), policy and advocacy development

Distribution, Farmers Markets, and Marketing

- Healthy, fresher foods
- Better tasting (gets more people to eat it)
- Green jobs, in processing, cleaning and storing
- Two models
 - Malta model: food delivered to neighborhood, beep to announce food arrival
 - Co-op project: co-operative food systems, creating 25 small markets; co-ops for Hmong, African and Hispanic growers.
- One processing co-op on the North Side
- One training co-op, e.g., no pesticides, aggregating all growers' produce
- Farm to school programs – low-margin, keeps the farmers going
- Retail, better marketing to farmers
- Wholesale buyers
- More funding from the state
- Ag-Star credit
- Rural enterprise center, co-op for chickens
- 10T Hills beef
- Influencing the Farm Bill, subsidies to farmers and low-income families
- Distribution network for chefs and corner stores

Education and Outreach

- Pool resources to link together
- Determine how to compensate educators
- Tap into funding and grant resources as partners
- Create an economic model(s) and a common language
- Cross education between “us” and the community
- People will know where to go regarding interests and needs
- Give others the vision of the movement
- Allows other voices to participate; “a common voice”
- We can strategize together to achieve goals
- Create a tool/framework: the natural step
- Broader application?

Policy and Advocacy

- Identify “low-hanging” fruit in terms of policy accomplishments
- Implement measurable goals with connected policy initiatives

