
URBAN AGRICULTURE



FY2018 WORK PLAN
SUSTAINABLE FOOD THE ARLINGTON WAY

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Introduction and Background

Here in Arlington, the urban agriculture movement is about so much more than just growing vegetables -- it is about building a healthy community, it is about sharing the plentiful resources of our region with all who reside here, and it is about strong connections to the earth and to those who grow and provide our food.

Research indicates that what people eat is a key factor in their overall health. While an excess of food or food of poor quality, is a problem for some, food insecurity is an ongoing challenge for others. According to the USDA report, "The Food Assistance Landscape, FY16 Annual Report" published in March, 2017, about one in four Americans participates in a domestic food and nutrition assistance programs. In Arlington, thirty percent of our public school children rely on reduced price or free school meals.

There are many factors that influence dietary habits of a population but access to fresh, healthy, locally produced food is something we can impact in positive ways. Some of these ways include providing space for growing food, access to locally produced food at farmers markets and other distribution outlets. We can support food assistance such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). We can also educate Arlingtonians about growing, selecting, preparing and then preventing the waste of healthy food choices.

In early 2012, the County Board appointed twenty community stakeholders to the Urban Agriculture Citizen Task Force to develop a comprehensive report presented in June, 2013. For more on the Urban Agriculture Task Force, including the complete report, see this link:

<http://topics.arlingtonva.us/urban-agriculture/history/>.

Each year thereafter, staff has developed a work plan with goals and strategies to further the urban agriculture program. The work of the task force and the subsequent staff plans are seen as a model for surrounding jurisdictions as the region moves forward with urban agriculture and food planning efforts.

To better align this work plan with the County budgeting process, staff changed the planning and reporting period from a calendar to a fiscal year basis beginning July 1, 2017. This change is reflected in this current plan.

Staff has completed many of the goals and strategies in the work plans for the previous years. The following are highlights of ongoing staff work and tasks completed in CY2016 and FY 2017:

- The County purchased a 9,400 square foot property adjacent to the Lang and Glebe Community Garden and expanded this garden by 35 new spaces.
- Aging fencing was replaced at three gardens, located at N. Barton Street, Key Boulevard, and S. Lang Street. This completes the replacements for all the seven community gardens.
- A pilot rooftop garden was installed at the DRP Trades building located at 2700 S. Taylor Street. All the hardware required was recycled from previous park projects. Staff will manage this garden and make observations on the effects of this elevated, hot, windy environment.
- The County Board approved a special use permit for a new farmers market located on the Marymount University campus in N. Arlington. At the same time the Board

removed a barrier to market expansions by approving an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow open air markets, including farmers markets, under certain circumstances in residential zoning districts.

- The ninth farmers market special use permit was approved by the County Board for the Rosslyn Farmers Market. A previous market had been operated by the Rosslyn BID, but had been closed due to construction. The new Rosslyn Farmers market will be managed by a non-profit company and will serve to activate the public space at Central Plaza in the heart of this community, near the busy Rosslyn Metro Station.
- Arlington County Farmers Market at Courthouse, managed by Community Food Works (CFW) had another successful year, with an increase in sales and participation in the SNAP and SFMNP. Staff from CFW volunteered to be the regional representative to the Virginia Farmers Market Manager Association to help further a Statewide approach to market planning and management. SNAP matching programs were also offered at four other farmers markets this year: Rosslyn, Ballston, Crystal City and Columbia Pike.
- Staff demonstrated a Desktop Aquaponics Farm --an indoor growing system, at the Arlington County Fair.



Figure 1 Desktop aquaponics system

- DPR collaborated with AED to assist the George Mason University English Department to conduct a student-led oral history project at the community gardens. In conjunction with the Smithsonian Folklore program, the material collected will be housed in the Virginia History Room of Arlington Central Library.
- The Arlington Friends of Urban Agriculture (FOUA) held monthly meetings, and four quarterly public educational events. They partnered with Marymount University student club, Food for Thought, to grow basil seedlings, and with DPR Staff conducted a giveaway event for metro commuters at the Ballston and Courthouse Metro stations. FOUA also developed and adopted a set of By-laws, and elected a Board of Directors. They created a web site, Facebook page and have an email list of over 200 names used to share information about upcoming programs.



Figure 2 Marymount student prepares basil to give away

- DPR staff was an invited guest at the North East Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) conference in Hartford CT, to participate in review and planning for the next “It Takes a Region” conference to be held in Baltimore in November, 2017.
- DPR staff earned Food Policy Leader Certification from the Center for a Livable Future, Johns Hopkins University, in April 2016, and continues to participate in meetings and research sponsored by the Center.
- DPR staff was invited to join the Washington Council of Governments’ Agriculture Work Group to develop a regional agricultural plan for the greater metro DC area.
- The County Board proclaimed October as Urban Agriculture Month in Arlington. There were a variety of celebrations throughout the month. These included:
 1. The Urban Agriculture Symposium, a day-long educational event sponsored by DPR, VCE and FOUA.
 2. A Food Waste and Recovery public panel discussion, sponsored by DPR, AED, FOUA and AFAC.
 3. Arlington DPR co-sponsored Resilient Arlington’s event, “Co-

designing our Regenerative Future: Unconference on Agriculture and Beyond”.

4. Arlington AED and DPR held a series of three Lawn Chair Talks at the Arlington Arts Center. These public events featured urban ag entrepreneurs.
5. DPR Staff participated in the Virginia Food Council meeting in Lynchburg, to plan a statewide food policy.
6. DPR Staff delivered an overview PowerPoint presentation followed by a panel discussion to the Arlington Civic Federation.

Plans for the next calendar year continue to promote and sustain urban agriculture in Arlington, with a focus on resilience, regional collaboration, and community engagement.

Staff Goals for FY2018

In recognition of the fifth anniversary of the inception of the Urban Agriculture Task Force in January 2012, and the upcoming anniversary of the presentation of its recommendations in June 2013, it is appropriate that we pause to reflect and evaluate the progress and accomplishments of urban agriculture in Arlington. This work plan will include a review of state of the program and strategic planning for the next five years. Along with this planning, staff will continue to support community and regional efforts to further the establishment of a robust and resilient food system.

Strategies listed below are grouped into five main goals. Each strategy within these goals is designated as either administrative tasks, required to manage ongoing programs (Admin); continuation of efforts begun as short term tasks (ST); or work that begins to address the

longer term tasks (LT) as identified in the staff analysis of the urban agriculture task force recommendations. The designation is indicated in parenthesis after each strategy title.

GOAL 1: Evaluate Status of the Program

Strategy 1.1 – Review and evaluate the Status of the Urban Agriculture Program (LT). To develop a “state of the State” report, staff will compile benchmarking information on other urban agriculture programs. In addition to benchmarking, evaluation will include a review of in-house documents including the Task Force report, staff analysis, and work plans, as well as gathering information on ongoing programs and completed strategies in Arlington.

Strategy 1.2 – Community Engagement (Admin). Stakeholders will be invited to comment on the status assessment created in the above strategy. Attendees will also brainstorm new goals for a sustainable and resilient urban agriculture program.

Strategy 1.3 - Prepare Report on the State of the Program (Admin). DPR staff will compile input and information from the two previous strategies into a report describing the current state of urban agriculture in Arlington County. Based on this assessment, staff will develop suggested plans for future goals, with emphasis on prioritizing strategies and developing reasonable timelines.

Goal 2: Manage Community Gardens

Strategy 2.1 – Perform Routine Management and Maintenance of Community Gardens (Admin).

Routine management and maintenance by DPR will include serving as point of contact with the Chief Gardeners, responding to maintenance requests such as infrastructure maintenance and trash pickup. Enforce the County rules by conducting periodic inspections of the gardens

and documenting issues, which will then be communicated to the gardeners. Maintain the wait list and respond to inquiries from the community. Assist the gardens with plot assignment and orientation for new gardeners as needed. Continue to evaluate new garden space opportunities on public land.



Figure 3 New garden at Resurrection Lutheran Church

Strategy 2.2 – Encourage Creation of Private Community Garden Space (ST). Create working partnership with AED and with community organizations such as the Chamber of Congress, Civic Federation and relevant professional organizations to connect with developers, property managers and HOA’s. Determine the barriers to providing garden space on privately held property for residents and tenants. Explore options for indoor and outdoor food production in existing and new properties.

Strategy 2.3 – Implement fully automated management of the wait lists using RecTrac (Admin). The application process and the wait list system are partially automated currently. DPR staff will complete the full automation of this system using RecTrac to maintain the wait list and to process participant fees.

Strategy 2.4 – Update Community Garden Agreements (Admin). Update agreements with Community Garden Associations on an as needed basis. Make sure that the agreements

are consistent and reflect current code and other relevant considerations.



Figure 4 Seedlings at Barton Community Garden

Goal 3: Support Farmers Markets

Strategy 3.1 – Serve as Contract Administrator for Arlington Farmers Market (Admin). Act as contract point of contact between Arlington County and Community Foodworks; the non-profit organization contracted for day-to-day management of the Arlington Farmers Market. Attend steering committee and volunteer team meetings. The DPR representative will serve as a liaison to the market to ensure the smooth operation of the market.

Strategy 3.2 – Host Meetings of Farmers Market Managers (Admin).

Invite the management of each farmers market in Arlington County to participate in meetings which may include presentations by Arlington Department of Human Services (DHS), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, VCE, and other State or local staff. Support and encourage collaborative efforts between markets, including support for the Virginia Farmers Market Managers Association, a grassroots non-profit organization seeking grant funding, sharing administrative duties, and educational opportunities for farmers markets. Work with the market managers and their volunteer resources to gather data on the participation at the markets in Arlington.

Strategy 3.4 -- Help Identify Customers for Locally Produced Foods (Admin). Through FOUA membership and other sources, help identify institutions that are interested in procuring and supporting local agriculture production. Producers would not be limited exclusively to market vendors, but also other delivery options such as direct sales, hubs, or CSA's. Consumers may include restaurants, country clubs, hospitals, universities and schools. Determine ways to connect the producers with the consumer.

Goal 4: Establish Collaborative Relationships

Strategy 4.1 – Support Friends of Urban Agriculture (LT). This fledgling community volunteer group has progressed a great deal but the next item that needs to be addressed by the Friends of Urban Agriculture (FOUA) is to become self-sustaining. Staff will continue to support the group, but will encourage independence. Assist in research into various options, such as charging membership, seeking 501(c)3 status, or other organizational structure for this group composed of public stake holders. Attend steering committee and general meetings. Serve as a resource for programs.

Strategy 4.2 - Update Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) Memorandum of Agreement (Admin). The Memorandum of Agreement will include cooperation in creating work plans, budget development and clarification regarding program management and facility use. A draft of this document has been submitted to the CAO for review. DPR staff will serve as a point of contact for the County with VCE.

Strategy 4.3 – Include Gardens in Designs for Housing Development Projects (LT). Support the efforts of CPHD to work with affordable housing organizations to include gardens and

composting facilities in renovation or development designs. CPHD will take the lead on this task.



Figure 5 Garden at Virginia Gardens complex

Strategy 4.4 - Collaborate with National and Regional organizations (LT).

DPR Staff will participate in MWCOG regional planning; contribute to NESAWG efforts to support the Chesapeake region's food security; and collaborate with the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins' research into food policy. DPR staff will travel to Portland, Oregon, to attend the International Master Gardeners Conference on Urban Agriculture in July, 2017. Other organizations staff may work with include the Fairfax Food Policy Council, the Chesapeake Food Network, and CASA Future Harvest.

Goal 5: Conduct Public Education, Demonstrations, and Celebrations

Strategy 5.1 – Develop Agriculture and Food Education Plans (Admin).

DPR staff will coordinate with VCE, Libraries and other County departments and community groups to plan agriculture education for adults and children. Inventory the existing education efforts to identify gaps or duplication. Develop plans for publicizing and coordinating the efforts of these groups' already existing programs. Attend VCE Extension Leadership

Council meetings to help foster communication between County and VCE staff to support mutual goals. As specific to urban agriculture, support the 4-H programs. Encourage the Master Food Volunteers work in the farmers markets. Serve as a subject matter resource for VCE food and agriculture activities.



Figure 6 Healthy snacks at a FOUA event

Strategy 5.2 – Plan Teaching Garden at Ft. C.F. Smith (LT). Coordinate with facility staff to explore the potential of constructing a teaching garden at Ft. C.F. Smith. If feasible, develop a plan for an urban agriculture garden program to be located at Ft. C.F. Smith. This plan will include building and managing a vegetable garden on the grounds. Resources for the ongoing maintenance of the garden, such as a partnership with a volunteer organization, will be a requirement of the plan. Curriculum for a summer camp, and perhaps after school programs and field trips, using the garden as a teaching tool will be developed. This program will support and illustrate, through hands-on learning, healthy and sustainable food and agricultural practices.

Strategy 5.3 – Plan and Host Urban Ag Summit 2017 (Admin). Participate in the planning for a state level Urban Agriculture Summit to be held in Arlington in Founders Hall on the George Mason University Arlington campus in October 2017. The steering committee is comprised of various stake

holders including Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Farm Bureau, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Arlington Food Assistance Center, George Mason University, Friends of Arlington Urban Agriculture and others. Contribute for speakers' fees, tours and other conference costs on a reimbursable basis.

Strategy 5.4 – Manage Rooftop Demonstration Garden (LT). Staff will manage and maintain a demonstration and research rooftop vegetable garden at the DPR Trades building. A volunteer staff team will care for this garden. Observations will be made on the specific needs of the garden including water requirements, type of plants that thrive in the hot, windy environment and unique pest control considerations. As production from this garden increases as the garden becomes more established, food will be donated to AFAC.



Figure 7 Planting day at the rooftop garden

Strategy 5.5 - Install Bee Hive in the Rooftop Garden (LT). Installation in the rooftop garden at the DPR Trades building of a bee hive in FY18 is planned, to be maintained by staff with beekeeper training and experience.

Strategy 5.5– Support the Operation of a Window Farm, (LT). DPR's demonstration window farm will be set up indoors adjacent to the Rooftop Garden at the DPR Trades building. Informational displays will be created to inform

the public about its operation and applicability to small indoor space gardening. This window farm will also be transported to the Arlington County Fair for public display.

Strategy 5.7 – Demonstrate an accessible vertical garden (LT).

Complete the installation of an accessible vertical garden feature at the Lang Street Community garden. After installation is complete, staff will work the DPR Therapeutic Recreation to identify appropriate users. DPR will arrange public education events highlighting this innovative garden feature that is a solution for small space urban gardening.

Strategy 5.8 – Utilize Social Media (Admin).

DPR staff will continue to improve the county's urban agriculture web page by providing more links to local, regional, state and federal resources. Working with technical staff and FOIA, staff will create a social media presence. Maintain the community garden and farmers market pages. See these links:

Urban Agriculture:

<http://topics.arlingtonva.us/urban-agriculture/>;

Community Gardens:

<http://environment.arlingtonva.us/gardens/community-gardens/>; and

Farmers Markets:

<http://topics.arlingtonva.us/farmers-markets/>.

Strategy 5.9 – Create Public Presentations and events. (Admin). Develop an overview of urban agriculture in Arlington to educate and inform people about the program to include handouts, presentations and infographics. Create a communications plan to consider possible presentations to the Civic Federation, individual Civic Associations, the School Board, the Faith Community, the Chamber of Commerce, and other public and private organizations. Staff will conduct public events to educate and celebrate urban agriculture in

Arlington. Some event ideas include guest lecturers, planning a bike tour of urban ag sites across the County, or planning a tour of farms that participate in the farmers markets in Arlington.

Conclusions

The goals and strategies discussed in this plan will continue to move the urban agriculture

program forward as we support a sustainable, equitable and resilient food system. It also reflects a need to assess the status of progress and establish priorities for the coming years. This plan addresses many aspects of a comprehensive food system, and optimizes staff effectiveness through collaboration between County departments, and with volunteers and public groups.



Figure 8 Garden Supplies