

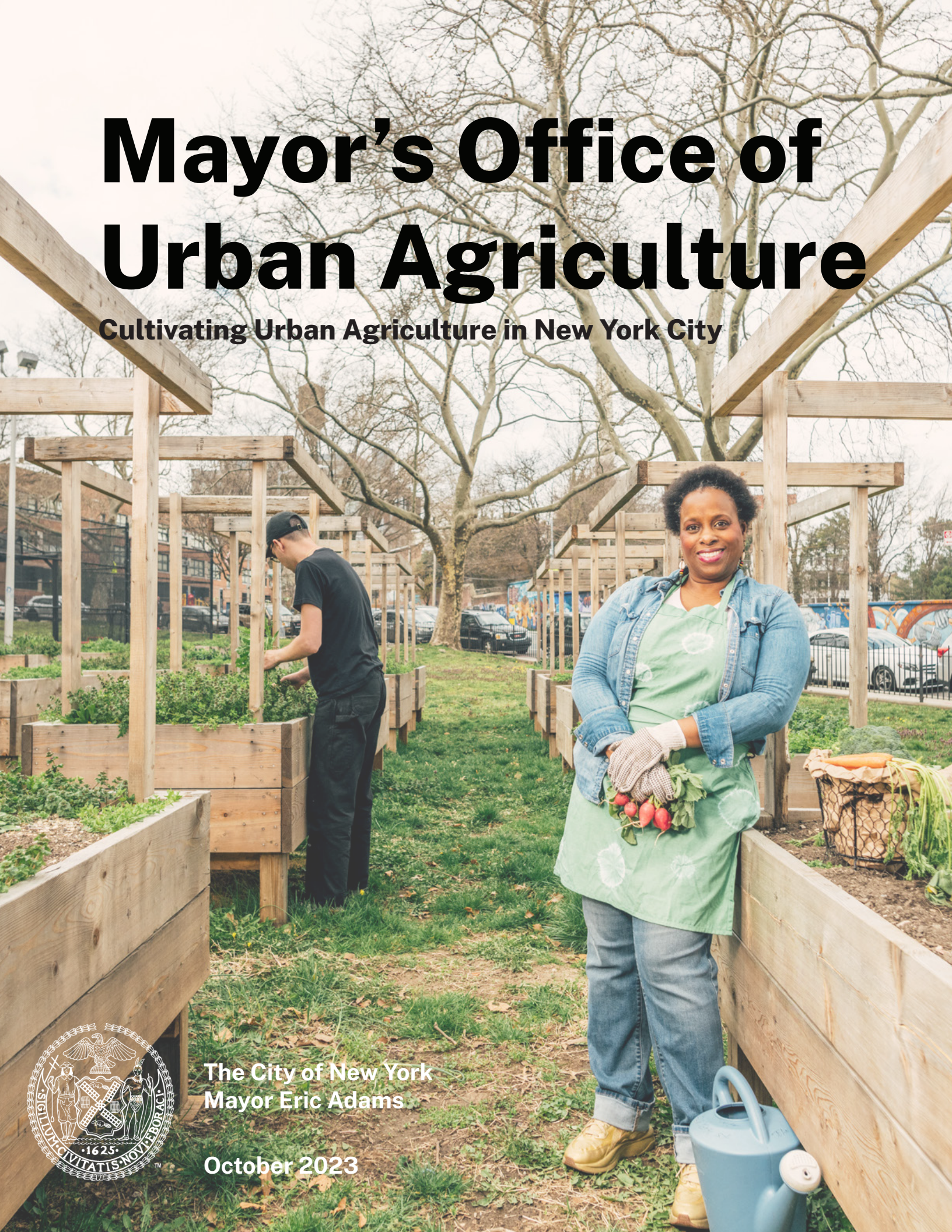
# Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture

Cultivating Urban Agriculture in New York City



The City of New York  
Mayor Eric Adams

October 2023



# Table of Contents

- Letter from Leadership
- Executive Summary
- Establishment of City's First Urban Agriculture Office
  - Mission
  - Local Law Mandate 121
  - Local Law Mandate 123
- First Year Priorities and Initiatives
- Conclusion
- MOUA: Our Plan
- Endnotes

# Letter from Leadership



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**Elijah Hutchinson**  
Executive Director,  
Mayor's Office  
of Climate &  
Environmental Justice

To Our Fellow New Yorkers,

Today, we are pleased to release New York City's first urban agriculture report. Cultivating Urban Agriculture is the result of the establishment of the inaugural Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA) as legally mandated by City Council and launched by Mayor Eric Adams in 2022 to acknowledge the crucial links between urban agriculture, climate resiliency, and strengthening our local food systems. MOUA is located within the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ), which is advancing the Adams administration's bold and actionable climate policy. But beyond the legal mandate that brought us together, our offices are united under one collective goal: advancing environmental justice. MOCEJ works to ensure that New York's 8.3 million residents have access to clean air, clean water, green infrastructure, and the necessary resources to build sustainable and resilient communities. The Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture leads the City's efforts to increase access to and production of locally grown fresh food, minimize our contributions to the climate crisis, and spur economic activity through agriculture. We believe urban agriculture can be a driver of equity and change, MOUA looks to address climate, food, and health disparities in our natural and built environment.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Qiana Mickie'.

**Qiana Mickie**  
Executive Director,  
Mayor's Office of  
Urban Agriculture

As climate change leads to more severe weather, urban gardens and farms aren't just places for respite. They also absorb stormwater, reduce outdoor temperatures, and create cleaner air. Climate-leading cities like New York understand that sustainable urban agriculture growing practices can reduce atmospheric carbon in the air by sinking it into the soil, otherwise known as carbon sequestration. Gardens, both on the ground and on rooftops, are effective in mitigating stormwater. They absorb runoff through the soil as well as capture it for use in irrigating raised beds for food production. According to a 2016 analysis by Earthjustice, community gardens divert an estimated 165 million gallons of stormwater from our city's streets and sewer system every year. Green spaces are also effective at alleviating what's known as the Urban Heat Island Effect. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), research shows urban forests have temperatures that are, on average, 2.9°F lower than unforested urban areas.

As we look to pave the way for bolstering urban agriculture in NYC, this report establishes key metrics across our priority areas. As mandated, we will provide updates on our achievements in an annual progress report, due out next October.

As leaders and practitioners in climate justice, we will continue to collaborate on how to best integrate agriculture within the City's climate action steps. We will find shared solutions to climate and food injustice, while creating a greener, more prosperous city for all New Yorkers. We encourage readers of this report who are interested in learning more about the MOUA office and ongoing activities throughout the year to visit [nyc.gov/agriculture](https://nyc.gov/agriculture) or to check us out on social media. We're @nycurbanag on Instagram, X, and Facebook.

# Executive Summary

In this report, the NYC Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA) will detail how the office plans to grow New Yorkers’ awareness, access, and activity through urban agriculture in the city. There are cross-cutting themes rooted in the office’s priorities:

- **Livability and Affordability:** How urban agriculture can grow food and businesses in the green economy while also supporting other city capital demands like housing
- **Local Food Production and Distribution:** Strengthening the connections between communities and farmers
- **Foster Future Urban Agriculture and Climate Leaders:** Through education, training, and land stewardship throughout the city
- **Innovative Urban Agriculture and Climate Smart Policy:** To strengthen and fund nature-based practices in the city
- **Measuring Data and Impact in Urban Agriculture:** Developing comprehensive information on the urban agriculture landscape
- **Cultivating Economic Development:** For emerging urban agriculture businesses and new entrepreneurs

## Reading the Report

The report will outline how the office met its legal mandates through the establishment of the Urban Agriculture Office within the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice<sup>1</sup> (MOCEJ), appointment of the City’s first Director, and achieving of key priorities in our inaugural year. The Office of Urban Agriculture actively strives to meet its legal mandates by:

- Developing overarching priorities to set the goals and metrics the office will use to demonstrate progress on an annual basis moving forward
- Implementing equity-driven initiatives collaboratively with city agencies and partners that will bolster innovation and production within the agriculture and food sectors in the city
- Highlighting and delivering on the strategic action needed to chart the course for the expedient growth of the breadth of urban agriculture activity throughout the city

## First Year Wins

The Urban Agriculture Office has earned some distinct achievements and success over the last 12 months.

### *Awarded Top State and Federal Farm to School Funding*

The City was awarded the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Patrick Leahy and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Farm to School grants (\$200,000 in total), and the \$8.4 million New York State Department of Education Local Food for Schools grant this year. In collaboration with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), the Office of Urban Agriculture supported the Department of Education Office of Food and Nutrition Services (DOE OFNS) in acquiring the funding from these three grants to increase the supply of local, healthy food and agriculture education for NYC students, develop a farmer/producer training, and facilitate connections to New York State's small-mid scale farmers and producers.

### *Leadership in Urban Agriculture and Climate Policy*

The office was successful in **shaping federal urban agriculture legislation**, such as H.R. 3902, the Growing Opportunities for Innovative Farming Act, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Adriano Espaillat (D-NY 13), which would allow for more equitable access to funding for small farmers and producers, and A.1909, introduced in the New York State legislature by Assembly Member Stefani Zinerman (D-Kings County), allowing water fee exemptions for community land trust gardens, thus alleviating an onerous burden.

### *Pursued Federal Grant Funding to Develop NYC Urban Agriculture Programming for New and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers*

In a pivotal Farm Bill year, MOUA **prioritized applying and advocating for federal grants** relevant to urban agriculture, food, and climate. This effort is also in alignment with the NYC Federal Infrastructure Funding Task Force goals. The MOUA, in partnership with NYC Department of Veterans Services (DVS), applied for USDA Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program **to support urban agriculture and horticulture training** that would foster wellness, fresh food access, and workforce development **for NYC veterans**.

### *Initiated Planning for Land Use Feasibility Study*

The MOUA, in partnership with the NYC Economic Development Corporation (EDC), developed a plan for a **feasibility study** targeting East New York, with the goal of **identifying underutilized city-owned land and developing innovative licensing and land-use agreements** which would facilitate urban agriculture enterprise and other climate benefit uses. This plan was initially submitted for funding under the USDA

Urban Agriculture Innovative Production Grant program, but EDC will continue to engage with MOUA's mission as part of a broader effort to re-examine a number of city-owned sites in the East New York Industrial Business Zone for a number of economic development purposes such as creating local future-forward jobs, fostering businesses in green manufacturing sectors, and other job-dense industrial uses, and strengthening opportunities for green workforce development. This feasibility plan will also be evaluated for replication potential.

This early progress demonstrated by the MOUA, to name just a few examples, will pave the way for future fruitful partnerships with city agencies and urban agriculture stakeholders, as we move forward.

# Establishment of Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture

## Mission of the Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture

The mission of the Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture is to lead the city’s efforts to support the increase of and access to locally grown food, minimize the city’s contributions to the climate crisis, and spur economic activity throughout the city.

The office advances urban agriculture and equity through policy in: Agriculture, Climate/Environmental Justice, Food Access, Economic Development, and Workforce Development.

## Establishment of Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture

For several years, New York City’s (NYC) urban agriculture stakeholders from educational, to non-profit, to for-profit, were looking for innovation and expansion in the NYC urban agriculture space. Advocates from a diverse group of stakeholders, as well as elected officials, envisioned the establishment of an Office of Urban Agriculture to support the city’s rich history of agriculture and to develop a plan which would facilitate the growth of an emerging urban agriculture and food business sector in NYC.

Mayor Adams, throughout his tenure as Brooklyn Borough President, continued his advocacy for the importance of urban agriculture. In a report released in 2021 called “The New Agrarian Economy”, Borough President Adams noted how “Urban Agriculture has the potential to revolutionize our urban landscape and play a significant role in an equitable recovery process, helping us to become a greener, healthier, more prosperous city after the pandemic.”

In 2017, at the request of Borough President Adams, Council Member Rafael Espinal (District 37), and other city council members introduced legislation Int 1661-2017 to further urban agriculture initiatives. In 2021, Local Law 123 and Local Law 121 were passed, and the Office of Urban Agriculture was subsequently established within the first year of the Adams administration.

## Local Law Mandate 121 and Local Law Mandate 123

The Legal Mandates set forth in Local Law 121-2021 and Local Law 123-2021 establishes the Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA) within the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) and requires MOUA to publish the City’s inaugural urban agriculture report in October 2023 as well as a yearly urban agriculture progress report beginning in October 2024. The report shall address, but not be limited to, the following issues related to urban agriculture:





**Mandate 1:** Resources including, but not limited to, support for existing and potential urban agriculture spaces as well as current policies and regulations related to urban agriculture. We addressed this mandate by:

- **Priority 1:** Identifying underutilized municipal land for growing both food and economic activity
- **Priority 2:** Bolstering existing community gardens and urban farms



**Mandate 2:** Opportunities for expanding the availability of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods. We addressed this mandate by:

- **Priority 3:** Increasing access to and production of healthy, culturally relevant food in historically disinvested communities, grown by socially disadvantaged farmers in New York State



**Mandate 3:** Youth development and education opportunities with regard to local food production. We addressed this mandate by:

- **Priority 4:** Empowering students to become climate and urban agriculture stewards through their experiences in gardens and classrooms



**Mandate 4:** Local Law Reference: Integration of urban agriculture into the city's conservation and resiliency plan. We have addressed this mandate by:

- **Priority 5:** Investigating the potential for urban agriculture to mitigate climate effects as part of the city's overall climate resiliency plan



**Mandate 5:** Classification and prioritization of urban agriculture uses. We have addressed this mandate by:

- **Priority 6:** Measuring the impact of urban agriculture activity and identifying models in NYC



**Mayoral Priority:** While increasing M/WBE procurement opportunities was not identified in the initial mandate, MOUA created this priority to increase economic and racial equity within the food and urban agricultural sectors and to support the City in meeting the Mayoral Directive: Executive Order 26-increasing city procurement dollars, in particular for Black, Brown, and Asian Entrepreneurs. We have addressed this priority by:

- **Priority 7:** Growing business opportunities for emerging urban agriculture and food entrepreneurs

The additional mandate for MOUA, stipulated in LL123-2021, states the city will establish an Urban Agriculture Advisory Board (UAAB), comprised of external urban agriculture thought leaders, advocates, academics, and agriculture experts tasked with advising the mayor and the City Council as they implement laws, and bringing this work to New Yorkers through public hearings and other forms of engagement. The UAAB's charge is to ensure the work is grounded in the lived experiences of New Yorkers who are engaging with the NYC urban agriculture landscape, across the board, in all capacities. The board is currently in development and expected to be fully appointed later this year.

## MOUA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Like other major cities, the urban agriculture sector has the potential to help significantly address health, wealth, food, and climate disparities facing many New Yorkers - particularly through efforts such as entrepreneurship, workforce development, healthy food production, and access. The Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture intends to address each of these areas and more with innovative policy solutions and a core commitment to advancing urban agriculture for the benefit of New Yorkers in every neighborhood, in every borough.

In its inaugural year, the MOUA team visited and listened to stakeholders at community gardens, urban farms, and controlled environment agriculture (CEA) sites across the city, while also conducting public engagement through listening sessions, panels, stakeholder focus groups, and interviews. Through this stakeholder engagement process, we will galvanize a citywide urban agriculture data collection effort, the first in the city's history. As part of this endeavor, we will continue to engage NYC communities to gain a better understanding of the lived experience and demonstrative impact urban agriculture stakeholders and other New Yorkers have across our city. As the office moves into its second year, we look forward to engaging further and reporting regularly on progress.

# Priority 1: Identify underutilized municipal land for growing both food and economic activity

**Initiative 1.1:** Identify underutilized municipal land for growing both food and economic activity by exploring and designing new land tenure opportunities in New York City

## Year 1 Accomplishment:

- Developed a pilot plan for a feasibility study targeting East New York, with the goal of identifying underutilized city-owned land and developing innovative licensing and land-use agreements which would facilitate urban agriculture enterprise and other community benefit uses

## 2024 Metric of Progress:

- Complete Phase 1 of the Land Tenure Feasibility Study including development of a land-scan tool and regulation review

## Collaborative Agencies:

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC)

## Why This is Important:

Urban agriculture plays a critical role in the sustainability and resiliency of a major city. Land is an important and high demand resource in NYC. While purchasing land for agricultural use in the city is cost prohibitive for many urban agriculture stakeholders, the need for food grown and distributed, and living wage jobs is ever more present. Like other innovative urban cities, NYC is prime to explore through its land inventory and regulations how to expand land access and legal rights to city property (land tenure). This can be accomplished by:

- Assessing and researching existing city regulations and policies to determine new land use and license agreements that would legally allow urban entrepreneurs to grow food for sale, create jobs, and support other economic activity such as workforce development
- Identifying underutilized city-controlled land, such as vacant lots and buildings not suitable for larger capital projects such as housing, that can be transitioned into agricultural activity to create new urban farms, indoor growing facilities, and rain gardens

- Additional beneficial uses for city-owned land could include increasing climate resilient activities and practices such as carbon sequestration, soil remediation, and stormwater mitigation, to help meet the city's climate goals
- Clarifying and amending city zoning regulations to allow for the expansion of urban agriculture production and business activity in commercial and manufacturing districts

Through local food production, job creation, and other climate smart activities, urban agriculture represents potential to help address the food, health, and wealth disparities facing many New Yorkers.

## Priority 2: Bolster existing community gardens and urban farms

**Initiative 2.1:** Strengthen land security for the city’s network of volunteer-led community gardens and growing greenspaces

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Gathered important data from a range of urban agriculture stakeholders including information pertaining to:

Stakeholders Engaged	Information Gathered	Engagement Session
Community gardeners, food advocates	Funding constraints, need for new license agreements, and zoning implications for community gardens	Department of City Planning/ MOUA City of Yes community session
Food and Ag Tech Businesses	Rooftop/indoor agriculture commercial business development and zoning implications	Department of City Planning/ MOUA City of Yes business session
Community gardeners, nonprofit organizations	Usage of city’s clean soil bank resources in urban agriculture models	Office of Environmental Remediation Soil Bank outreach survey
Community gardeners, nonprofit organizations, food advocates	Food production and infrastructure needs, funding barriers, struggles with current license agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) urban agriculture listening session</li> <li>• USDA Farm Service Agency/MOUA urban ag presentation</li> <li>• NYC Community Garden Coalition meeting and other community meetings</li> </ul>

- Bolstered city level policy by ensuring the inclusion of additional community land trust gardens in state level legislation through the A.1909 bill
  - A.1909, introduced by Assembly Member Stefani Zinerman (D-Kings County), would exempt certain non-profit community gardens from payment for water usage and supply

- Began the development of a MOUA/city council member awareness campaign to expand access to the Parks Equity Initiative which provides funding and resources opportunities to eligible community garden groups and nonprofit organizations for urban agriculture programming and equipment
- Increased awareness of Office of Environmental Remediation (OER) NYC Clean Soil Bank services and outreach in communities

### **2024 Metric of Progress:**

- Phase 1 of the Urban Agriculture Data Collection Strategy which will include identifying new agriculture, food, and climate metrics to integrate in the development of the data collection tool
- Develop and execute new urban agriculture stakeholder engagement strategy and report on findings in the 2024 Urban Agriculture Metrics of Progress Report
- Implementation of New York State Assembly Bill A.1909 Water Infrastructure Bill
- Design and implement public engagement strategy to increase awareness of the Parks Equity Initiative in the urban agriculture, nonprofit, and community garden communities

### **Collaborative Agencies:**

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- Office of Environmental Remediation (OER)
- State Legislators

### **City Council Members**

- NYC Parks GreenThumb
- New York State Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM)

### **Policy Call Out:**

For A.1909, MOUA submitted critical water access and usage data this summer to the New York State Assembly to recommend that 70+ NYC Parks GreenThumb registered community gardens in community land trusts were also included in the provision that exempts other NYC Parks GreenThumb gardens from paying for water costs, which is a significant financial and operational burden. A.1909 was introduced but has not yet passed; however, if enacted with proposed amendments, the legislation would address this cost of water access for the full breadth of registered NYC Parks GreenThumb gardens. In the coming year, MOUA intends to continue to provide leadership along with other relevant city agencies on the passing and likely implementation of the bill in the state legislature.

## Why this is important:

Many of the current vibrant 550+ volunteer-led community gardens within the NYC Parks GreenThumb network were once empty lots, strewn with garbage and rubble, that gardeners have since turned into hubs of community and growing. Ensuring that the city sustains and protects the existing inventory of registered and licensed community gardens so volunteers can continue to grow food, and cultivate spaces for healing, needs to be addressed as an urban component of land security. Land security includes not just access to land, but also the permanence of infrastructure such as water in existing gardens or ensuring gardens remain intact and can generate revenue.

Urban agriculture is an important component of climate resiliency and environmental justice. Growing spaces such as gardens, community land trusts, and urban farms are critical growing spaces that provide environmental benefits including plant biodiversity, lessening air pollution, cooling urban areas, and mitigating stormwater run-off. Through community engagement with garden advocacy groups such as the NYC Community Garden Coalition (NYCCGC), New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Community Gardens Taskforce, and other volunteer-led partners, MOUA has begun to capture information pertaining to the ongoing food and climate beneficial activities in gardens, as well as the struggles, such as barriers to funding or costly infrastructure needs. MOUA utilizes this data to help inform our priorities and advocacy for equitable urban agriculture policy on the city, state, and federal level.

MOUA will continue to find and implement creative approaches to bolstering existing community gardens/urban farms and enabling expansion to underutilized spaces. MOUA will also collaborate with agencies such as NYC Parks GreenThumb to strategize on how the city can still meet other critical land-based needs such as housing, while not jeopardizing land access and security for our needed growing spaces. We believe affordability and livability should not be in conflict. As a city working together, we can accomplish both.

## Priority 3: Increase access to and production of healthy, culturally relevant food in historically divested communities, grown by socially disadvantaged farmers in New York State

**Initiative 3.1:** Develop and launch Farm to School Farmer/Producer Procurement Training

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Expanded the Farm to School in NYC program to include the city’s first farmer/producer procurement training, enabling access to city contracts for socially disadvantaged small business farm operations
- The Farm to School in NYC initiative will facilitate direct relationships with regional socially disadvantaged local farmers and producers to increase the volume and variety of locally<sup>2</sup> grown foods in NYC public schools

### 2024 Metric of Progress:

- Farm to School and Local Food for Schools (LFS) grants goals:
  - Increase healthy, local food consumption and activities in NYC schools
  - Expand experiential learning opportunities and restore school gardens to increase agricultural education
  - Provide economic opportunities to historically underutilized farmers/producers to participate in the school food marketplace; remove barriers and create lasting connections to strengthen food systems within NYC school communities
  - Strengthen and broaden partnerships between farmers/producers and NYC schools to ensure distribution of fresh and nutritious food

### Collaborative Agencies:

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS)/ Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)
- Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD)
- New York City Small Business Services (SBS)



## **Initiative 3.2: Implement NYC EATS Community Market Training and Pilot Site**

### **Year 1 Accomplishment:**

- The first phase of the NYC EATS (Enhancing Accessibility & Training) initiative kicks off in Fall 2023 in collaboration with community-based organizational partners, Just Food and International Rescue Committee (IRC), with the development of a new NYC EATS toolkit and execution of in-person training at a local urban farm

### **2024 Metric of Progress:**

- Number of pounds of food and variety of culturally relevant crops grown in urban and rural farms
- 2024 NYC EATS launch and training release
- Initial cohort findings from Farmers Marketing Training
- Develop disability framework with Department for the Aging (Aging) and Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) for inclusion in the 2024 NYC EATS Training, and identify a demo site in the community for the 2024 growing season

### **Collaborative Agencies:**

- Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS)/ Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD)
- New York City Small Business Services (SBS)
- Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD)
- New York City Department for the Aging

### **Why this is important:**

The City can increase local, culturally relevant food access in communities through local fresh food sites, facilitating connections between NYS/NYC socially disadvantaged farmers and New Yorkers. We will identify new sites, farmers, and communities for which the NYC EATS model can minimize food insecurity and begin to explore with city agencies how to minimize physical and structural barriers at fresh food sites to foster higher participation and engagement from New Yorkers, such as elders and people with disabilities.

The first phase of the NYC EATS initiative kicks off in Fall 2023 in collaboration with community-based organization partners, Just Food and International Rescue Committee (IRC), with the development of the NYC EATS toolkit and execution of the in-person training at a local urban farm. The pilot will also consist of a demonstration community garden site that will grow and sell culturally relevant, seasonal food as well as additional produce from a rural socially disadvantaged farm, Star Route Farms. In the coming year, MOUA plans to expand the collaboration to include Department of Aging, Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities, and local community-based partners to provide research and analysis for current sites and toolkit to better integrate accessibility guidelines and modifications, such as American Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, and language justice considerations.

## Priority 4: Empower students to become climate and urban agriculture stewards through their experiences in gardens and classrooms

**Initiative 4.1:** Increase agriculture education and student wellness through the new Farm to School in NYC Program by facilitating direct learning experiences between public school kids and both urban and rural farmers

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Identified and acquired funding for the Farm to School NYC Re-imagining Plan in collaboration with DOE OFNS
- Awarded USDA & New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Farm to School grants
  - **USDA Patrick Leahy Farm to School Grant Program** - \$100,000 awarded –requires MOUA to build a more equitable food and agricultural education plan designed to better align with the city’s larger school food blueprint as well as deepen agricultural learning, connections, and experiences for all city students –in particular, socially disadvantaged students from high need communities with limited fresh food access
  - **NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Farm to School Grant Program** \$100,000 awarded –requires MOUA to create and execute a replicable producer training that targets socially disadvantaged and M/WBE-eligible urban and rural growers, enabling increased local procurement from M/WBE farmers/producers through capacity and pipeline building, resulting in increased variety of products served in schools, increased student participation in school meals, and increased socially disadvantaged farmer opportunities to enter the school food market
- Supporting the development of school and learning gardens across the city, such as the District 22 Learning Garden in Bergen Beach, under the efforts of reimagining Farm to School in NYC with OFNS
- Supporting ongoing site expansion at NYCHA for urban ag programming for young public housing residents, including Green City Force (GCF) Eco-Hubs, and Red Hook Farms, stewarded by Red Hook Initiative
  - Eco-Hubs are a reframing of the GCF Farms at NYCHA to affirm the vocation of these spaces as closed-loop systems supporting sustainability and health in NYCHA developments

## **2024 Metric of Progress:**

- Top metrics -Farm to School grants:
  - Number of student visits to urban and rural farms
  - Number of farmer visits to schools for in class instruction and direct learning with partner farmers
  - Number of community chef visits/harvest event tastings and students reached (potentially 4,500 students)
  - Amount of healthy, local food consumption purchased from partner farmers
  - Up to 85% of the farmer/producer training cohort apply for and obtain M/WBE and NYS Grown & Certified certifications
  - Number of M/WBE eligible farmers/producers connected to DOE OFNS food contracts and OSD vendor pool
- Report initial findings from DOE school garden assessment survey in 2024 Report
  - Support the development of 16 new and refurbished school gardens
- Report on youth stakeholder engagement results and new 2024 NYCHA urban agriculture sites
- Develop and implement Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Project-based Learning with Urban Agriculture Program, in collaboration with NYC Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD)

## **Collaborative Agencies:**

- Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE)
- Office of Food & Nutrition Services (OFNS)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)
- Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD)
- New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)
- New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD)

## Why this is important:

Utilizing a seed-to-plate approach, the reimagined Farm to School in NYC program will focus on creating agricultural learning experiences for students in gardens and the classroom through activities such as lessons, community chef events, and food tastings. The initial plan targets nine high need schools with a total enrollment of 4,500 students and will build year-long relationships with urban/rural farmers and culinary community chef educators of color.

Farm to School can be more than just serving fresh food in the cafeteria. Innovative programming can build stronger connections between school and farm communities as well as empower families and students to become more informed in their food and health choices. Farm to School also stimulates the local economy by providing contracts to local farmers to supply healthy, fresh food to students to eat during critical school hours.

MOUA will partner with DOE OFNS in launching a reimagining of the Farm to School program in New York City. Funding from the USDA Patrick Leahy and NYSDAM Farm to School grants, as well as the NYS Department of Education Local Food for Schools grant, all awarded this year, lay the groundwork for this important work, including:

1. Local food procurement contracts that will be used in schools via meals, snacks, taste tests, and Harvest of the Month menus
2. Agricultural education that consists of learning activities which will incorporate agriculture, food, health, cultural relevancy in the food curricula, farm site visits, and other school-based engagement
3. Students will gain practical skills and hands-on learning at gardens, farms, or classroom experiences within controlled learning environments (i.e. vertical farming, hydroponics, aquaponics, etc.)

The Farm to School in NYC initiative will facilitate direct relationships with regional socially disadvantaged local farmers/producers to increase the volume and variety of locally grown foods in schools.

## Priority 5: Investigate the potential for urban agriculture to mitigate climate effects as part of the city’s overall climate resiliency plan

**Initiative 5.1:** Identify and establish collaborations to support urban agriculture field research and data collection for climate resiliency

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Explored opportunities for interagency collaboration in advancing priorities for Downtown Jamaica as part of the DCP-led Jamaica Neighborhood Planning Process
- Identified field research projects focused on the potential for increasing nutrient density in urban grown food, and carbon sequestration, utilizing rock dust in soil amendments
- Collaborated on the OER Community Gardens Soil Survey

### 2024 Metrics of Progress:

- Gather interagency and community engagement data from DCP Jamaica Resiliency Study
- Identify research site and report initial findings on CCE/MOUA rock dust urban trials
- Share final OER Community Gardens Soil Bank Survey findings

### Collaborative Agencies:

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ)
- New York City Department of City Planning (DCP)
- Office of Environmental Remediation (OER)
- Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE)

## Why this is important:

Studies have shown various activities within urban agriculture can enhance stormwater mitigation, promote healthy soils, support biodiversity with native plants, and strengthen resiliency in our food system in the face of climate-related disruptions.

According to the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP), the Jamaica Neighborhood Plan will provide a long-term vision for a more resilient and thriving Jamaica. The plan, developed in collaboration with local community members and organizations, would support more housing, more jobs across many industries, improvements to public space, and investments in local infrastructure.

MOUA will continue to research climate-smart urban agriculture practices and explore opportunities the city could learn from and potentially include in future planning by MOCEJ. MOUA is collaborating with ongoing urban agriculture research projects throughout the city to support NYC-relevant data, and reporting on outreach efforts and urban agriculture leadership. An example of this is the MOUA outreach collaboration with the Office of Environmental Remediation (OER) to explore continued benefits and impact of the utilization of clean soil from the OER NYC Clean Soil Bank in public and institutional gardens. MOUA has begun to explore how to support future phases of research with Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) soil scientist Kwesi Joseph as he conducts studies on the use of rock dust to enhance carbon sequestration in agricultural soils and increase nutrient densities in fruits and vegetables.

MOUA will continue to support these partnerships through the dissemination of insights and updates from ongoing research projects and by supporting educational programs which highlight key findings related to climate resiliency and long-term planning. MOUA will also seek out research for climate resiliency approaches for the controlled environment agriculture (CEA) sector such as low-carbon energy solutions.

The Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture is positioned within the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to strategically develop and implement actionable steps to help protect New Yorkers from climate threats, improve quality of life, and build a green economy. Urban agriculture promotes climate mitigation, resiliency, and environmental justice. It offers integrative solutions that address environmental challenges while also working towards creating an equitable and resilient urban environment. Examples of key initiatives our offices will work collaboratively on in the coming year include:

- Integrate climate and agricultural education in public school classrooms across all subject areas and grade levels
- Install solar energy, electric building infrastructure, green roofs, or other renewable energy on all viable City-owned property by 2035
- Activate NYC's climate resource hubs for workforce development
- Further engagement with the OER clean Soil Bank resources and research

## Priority 6: Measure the impact of urban agriculture activity and identify models in NYC

**Initiative 6.1:** Develop and launch an urban agriculture data collection platform to gather information to identify and classify urban agriculture models and operations in NYC

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Gathered baseline data on various aspects of the NYC urban agriculture landscape
- Identified metrics needed to measure progress towards meeting priorities-including economic and climate resiliency activity occurring within urban agriculture models

### 2024 Metrics of Progress:

- Kickoff Phase 1 of urban agriculture data collection platform development including building metrics and executing stakeholder field research with consultants
- Report initial findings in the 2024 Urban Ag Progress Report

### Collaborative Agencies:

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- NYC urban agriculture stakeholders

### Why this is important:

The legal mandate for the office requires yearly accounting and measurement of progress in NYC urban agriculture, starting in 2024. However, it is a challenge to measure the impact of urban agriculture activity in the city due to the lack of comprehensive data collection and reporting. The creation of a data-driven strategy includes research to gather quantitative and qualitative data directly from stakeholders on their models and activities, to identify and classify the spectrum of urban agriculture models and operations in NYC. The metrics developed will measure impact across multiple critical urban agriculture areas such as:

1. Food production and other economic activity (such as food sales or donations, creating value added products) that is addressing food scarcity for communities and supplying local businesses
2. Access and affordability of locally grown food and products –particularly in historically divested communities



3. Climate and environmental justice (activities such as stormwater capture/irrigation, composting, etc.)
4. Social benefits such as education, training, and community wellness

For data collection, an easy-to-use tool for both community and business-oriented stakeholders will be developed so that MOUA can analyze and report on the information shared in the upcoming 2024 Urban Agriculture Metrics of Progress Report. Metrics developed will include varied ways to account for yield for food production, climate resiliency such as stormwater capture and minimizing waste, as well as economic activity like selling or food donations. The 2024 report will also provide updates on the results of initiatives outlined in the 2023 report and include recommendations for future city investment, policy, and interagency and partner collaborations.

MOUA can begin to make a stronger case for innovative urban agriculture policy initiatives and affect change on multiple fronts with improved data collection and reporting.

### **Quantifying economic activity in gardens and urban farms**

Economic activity in urban agriculture can be defined as the process of producing, exchanging, and consuming of goods and/or agricultural services in an urban area. Businesses grow and sell food for profit; however, non-profit urban agriculture models and community gardens cannot sell the food they grow for profit under existing agreements. Instead, all revenue generated must go back into operational costs for the gardens. Since many gardens sell or donate food under these agreements, this is an important, yet underreported urban agriculture metric. It is often requested as proof of operations to be eligible for grants, loans, and other sources of funding. Quantifying economic activity beyond profit will ensure all food production and associated benefits are being accounted for in city reporting.

## Priority 7: Grow business opportunities for emerging urban agriculture and food entrepreneurs

**Initiative 7.1:** Create opportunities for emerging urban agriculture/food entrepreneurs to gain critical certifications such as Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) and New York State Grown and Certified

### Year 1 Accomplishments:

- Launched Urban Agriculture M/WBE Training and Certification Program with NYC Small Business Services (SBS)
- Successfully conducted the first in a series of M/WBE Training and Certification Workshops, providing technical assistance to 20+ businesses
- Executed urban agriculture focused info sessions with Department of City Planning (DCP) for business and community stakeholders as a part of DCPs “City of Yes” campaign. These sessions shared how upcoming zoning regulations can support business development in the food and agriculture sector
  - The City of Yes campaign: “Zoning for a more equitable and sustainable city. NYC plans to modernize and update our city’s zoning regulations to support small businesses, create affordable housing, and promote sustainability”<sup>3</sup>

### 2024 Metrics of Progress:

- M/WBE certifications obtained by 85% of participating businesses that complete the SBS/MOUA Jumpstart Sessions in Farmer/Producer M/WBE Training and Certification program cohort
- Number of SBS/ MOUA Jumpstart or other info sessions for small businesses
- Number of farmers that complete the Urban Agriculture M/WBE Training and Certification Program
- Report initial findings from urban ag stakeholders in the first year of MOUA/ SBS M/WBE engagement in the 2024 Urban Agriculture Metrics of Progress Report

## **Collaborative Agencies:**

- Mayor’s Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA)
- Office of Environmental Remediation (OER)
- New York City Small Business Services (SBS)
- Office of Supplier Diversity (OSD)
- Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises (OM/WBE)
- New York City Department of City Planning (DCP)

## **Why this is important:**

One of the prevailing metrics of equitable procurement within government institutions is the percentage of M/WBE certified businesses that are awarded contracts. There remains a persistently low number of M/WBE certified firms in the agriculture and food sectors, both citywide and statewide. In its first year, MOUA embarked on a collaborative partnership with NYC Small Business Services (SBS) to offer a continuing series of workshops that will work towards building pathways to certification for food and agriculture based small businesses. After hearing from food and agriculture stakeholders about the difficulties of juggling a small business while also entering the process of M/WBE certification (which many don’t complete), MOUA this year strategized on ways to make stronger connections to critical SBS services while keeping the demands of these business owners in mind. We also wanted to provide a feasible approach to increasing the vendor pool for city procurement for other agencies. This partnership kicked off with an inaugural SBS/MOUA “Jump Start” training workshop for the food and agriculture sector in August 2023, and we plan to continue to develop resources and outreach for eligible farmer/producer firms at all stages of readiness, from certification-ready small businesses to entry level introductions. The Jump Start workshop session included technical assistance from MOUA and SBS and all participants were provided with necessary materials for M/WBE filing and certification.

# Conclusion

The potential of urban agriculture in unlocking socio-economic opportunities and improving health, wealth, and environmental outcomes for NYC and its residents is great. Our city is well-positioned to be a global leader in advancing agricultural innovation, building upward economic mobility for New York City businesses, and cultivating urban agriculture as a central pillar for addressing the climate crisis. In realizing all this potential, we will center and integrate our environmental justice communities in informing and shaping our key policies and priorities.

In closing, we would like to express our gratitude to Mayor Adams, the City Council, and the urban agriculture community for their long-standing efforts which resulted in the establishment of this office. We feel strongly that urban agriculture-based activity and industry has the potential for tremendous impact across our city. From improved access to fresh, healthy food to increased economic and workforce development opportunities, to helping us mitigate and adapt to climate effects, the future for urban agriculture in NYC is bright. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many stellar community stakeholders, gardeners, and producers for their committed, passionate work in this area. We are looking forward to long and fruitful collaborations into the future as we continue to meet our mandates, and to realize Mayor Adams' vision for urban agriculture in New York City.

# OUR PLAN

Legal Mandate Language	Urban Agriculture Priority	Initiative	Action
<p>Resources including but not limited to support for existing and potential urban agriculture spaces as well as current policies and regulations related to urban agriculture.</p>	<p><b>1. Identify</b> underutilized municipal land for growing food and economic activity</p> <p><b>2. Bolster existing</b> community gardens and urban farms</p>	<p>Explore and design innovative land tenure opportunities in New York City</p> <p>Strengthen land security for the city's network of volunteer-led community gardens and growing greenspaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence initial phase of land tenure research in existing city land use and license agreements and regulations</li> <li>Develop an urban ag criterion to use in the inventory scan</li> <li>Develop community engagement strategy to engage East NY community</li> <li>Developed and executed new urban agriculture stakeholder engagement strategy</li> <li>Gathered early data from partner surveys and meeting feedback on topics such as the need for new license agreements, zoning implications for community gardens, utilization of city soil remediation resources (OER Soilbank), land security for food production, and climate resiliency activity for existing gardeners</li> <li>Developed MOUA/City Council awareness campaign on Parks Equity Initiative funding and other urban ag/food issues based on meetings with CM Shekar Krishnan, CM Sandy Nurse, CM Gale Brewer, CM Althea Stevens, and CM Chris Marte</li> </ul>
<p>Opportunities for expanding the availability of healthy food in low-income neighborhoods.</p>	<p><b>3. Increase access</b> to and production of healthy, culturally relevant food in historically disinvested communities, grown by socially disadvantaged farmers in New York State</p>	<p>Develop and launch Farm to School Farmer/Producer Training</p> <p>NYC EATS (Enhancing Accessibility &amp; Training) Community Market Training and Pilot Site</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Established Farm to School in NYC Program, including the city's first farmer/producer procurement training</li> <li>First phase of NYC EATS initiative kicks off in Fall 2023 with development of new toolkit and in-person training</li> <li>Developed disability framework for inclusion in 2024 NYC EATS training with Mayor's Office of People with Disabilities and Dept. of Aging</li> </ul>
<p>Youth development and education opportunities with regard to local food production.</p>	<p><b>4. Empower</b> students to become climate and urban agriculture stewards through their experiences in gardens and classrooms</p>	<p>Farm to School in NYC -increases agriculture education and student wellness by facilitating direct learning experiences between public school kids and urban/rural farmers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified and acquired grant funding for the Farm to School in NYC Reimagining Plan, in collaboration with DOE OFNS</li> <li>Supported ongoing site expansion at NYCHA for urban agriculture programming for young public housing residents</li> </ul>

Livability and Affordability

Local Food Production and Distribution

Foster Future Urban Agriculture and Climate Leaders

# OUR PLAN

	Legal Mandate Language	Urban Agriculture Priority	Initiative	Action
Innovative Urban Agriculture and Climate Smart Policy	Integration of urban agriculture into the city's conservation and resiliency plan.	<p><b>5:</b> Investigate the potential for urban agriculture to mitigate climate effects as part of the city's overall climate resiliency plan</p>	Identify and establish collaborations to support urban agriculture field research and data collection for climate resiliency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased awareness of OER Soil Bank services in communities and collaborated on the OER Soil Survey</li> <li>Explored opportunities for interagency collaboration in advancing priorities for Downtown Jamaica as part of the Jamaica Neighborhood Planning process, led by DCP</li> <li>Identified field research projects focused on the potential for increasing nutrient density in urban grown food and carbon sequestration with soil amendments</li> </ul>
Measuring Data and Impact in Urban Agriculture	Classification and prioritization of urban agriculture uses.	<p><b>6:</b> Measure the impact of urban agriculture activity and identify models in NYC</p>	Develop and launch an urban agriculture data collection platform to gather data to identify and classify urban agriculture models and operations in NYC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gathered baseline data on various aspects of the NYC urban agriculture landscape</li> <li>Identified metrics needed to measure progress towards meeting Priority goals</li> </ul>
Cultivating Economic Development	Not identified in the legal mandate, but a Mayoral goal	<p><b>7:</b> Grow business opportunity for emerging Urban Agriculture and Food Entrepreneurs</p>	Create opportunities for emerging urban agriculture/food entrepreneurs to gain critical certifications such as Minority/Women-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE) and New York State Grown and Certified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launched urban agriculture M/WBE Training &amp; Certification Program in collaboration with NYC Small Business Services (SBS)</li> <li>Successfully conducted the first in a series of M/WBE Training &amp; Certification Workshops, providing technical assistance to 20+ firms</li> </ul>

# Endnotes

- 1 Formerly known as the Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability
- 2 OFNS defines “local” as food items comprised of 100% ingredients that are grown, harvested, and processed in NYS. This definition was carefully chosen to meet both the local parameters set by USDA and under the LFS grant and NYSDAM under the NY 30% initiative.
- 3 NYC Dept. City Planning website <https://www.nyc.gov/site/planning/index.page>