

## FARM IN CITY

Raising vegetables, fruits, herbs, and meat, coming together to prepare and store food, and sitting around a table and sharing a meal, are fundamentally acts that bring us together as a community. There are many reasons that draw people to the practice of urban agriculture, including self-sufficiency, tradition, recreation, saving money, a sense of security, exercise, activism, and a way to get outdoors, connect with family and neighbors, and put long held values into practical action.

Burlington benefits in many ways from continuing its commitment to an equitable, healthy, and sustainable food supply through urban agriculture. In doing so, the City strengthens a local food system grounded in community and linked to rapidly developing state and regional efforts. The Burlington Urban Agriculture Task Force (UATF), created out of a desire to develop a cohesive urban agriculture policy for the city, has begun the work on this effort, understanding that a local food supply accelerates economic development, fosters a stronger and more sustainable community, improves the health of those who live and work in Burlington, and supports a system that regenerates and protects our natural resources and the environment.

Burlington is home to a flourishing community of local food practitioners. Agricultural use in the Intervale, a network of community gardens, a thriving farmers market, and value-added enterprises all provide an opportunity for the City to take leadership in further strengthening public policy and institutional support.

Providing expanded opportunities for urban agriculture in Burlington presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities, especially when considering the denser fabric of our downtown core. The UATF has recently released a draft report which presents a comprehensive evaluation of current and proposed policies and practices the City should consider.

### 1.FOOD ECONOMY

Vermont's food system is critical to our economy, identity, quality of life, and sustainability goals. Jobs throughout the statewide food system represent 16% (or 56,419) of all private sector jobs and are connected to about 13% (or 10,984) of all private businesses. Retail food purchases generated over \$2 billion in sales in 2008. When measured by employment and gross state product, food manufacturing is the second-largest manufacturing industry in Vermont.

Burlington has helped to incubate some of Vermont's most widely celebrated food products. Home-grown examples include Lake Champlain Chocolates, Magic Hat Brewery, Switchback Brewery, and of course Ben and Jerry's. In addition, there are 11 working farms on 135 acres on the Intervale, nearly two dozen local restaurants, and a host of small food processors that contribute significantly to the local food economy and system.

### 2.SELF-RELIANCE & FOOD SECURITY

As the cost of food and fuel increases there is mounting concern about food security. Food security is achieved when every person in a community has consistent access to enough food to sustain a healthy life. Because the majority of food for the average American travels about 1,500 miles from the farm to the plate, most families and communities, other than those who live on or near a farm, are in jeopardy if there is a disruption in the long distance food shipping supply chain. Then there is the issue around the quality of the food that is available – is it good for you, is it safe, is it fresh, is it nutritionally balanced food that you can afford?

Self-Reliance, Urban or Backyard Homesteading, and Localvores, are all part of a growing trend in which individuals, families, and communities seek to grow or locally source as much of their own food as practical, and provide for other basic necessities by limiting input from outside sources. Several proven

intensive, low-effort food-production systems include yard and container gardening and rooftop gardening.

### 3. Community Kitchen Co-op/ Incubator Kitchen

In addition to efforts to enhance commercial production and processing capabilities on the Intervale, Burlington would benefit from a community kitchen/cannery (also known as a kitchen incubator) for use by residents interested in value-added production of jams, baked goods, cheeses, or other local products. This facility could be designed to support home or micro-enterprise processing and preserving. Evaluating the feasibility of using existing underutilized kitchens around the city would be a recommended first step to bring this idea to fruition.

### 4. Expanding the our Burlington Local Food Brand

The Burlington-local food brand that Burlington has had for many years is already associated with value and quality, and many small entrepreneurs have been successful in using this to their advantage to expand locally, regionally, and even nationally. These businesses create local jobs and an expanding market for local agricultural products. Burlington should continue to encourage opportunities for value-added processing, such as bakeries, canneries, breweries, distilleries, and butcher shops. Future development in the railyard area could accommodate and support these ventures along with expanding opportunities for food carts/trucks and creating new spaces for cafes along the street throughout the downtown and waterfront.

### 5. Community & Schoolyard Gardens

Community gardens can be established on vacant, undeveloped, or underutilized properties as a way to generate more activity and potentially spur redevelopment. There are several more locations throughout the City that could be converted to small-scale community gardens, helping to bring vitality to these underutilized areas. Schoolyard gardens can also be used as are one example of a tool to integrate classroom curriculum, with a focus on outdoor hands-on experience, environmental education, culinary arts, and nutrition.

### 6. Local Food Production at All Scales

Local food production is-should not be relegated solely to the large farm. With thoughtful planning and innovative techniques, agriculture can continue be infused throughout the City from the Intervale to the most urban parts of our downtown. There are nearly 40 acres of rooftops in the downtown area of the city alone, of which at least a percentage is flat enough to be used for micro-agriculture - —nearly 1/3 the amount of active farmland in the Intervale. anything from small cContainer gardens in small yards on a patio to and on intensive green rooftops gardens to could support families and even supplement local restaurant use.

### 7. Local Food Distribution networks

To create a more consistent supply of local products and enhance the local food supply chain there needs to be a variety of places and means by which to market the products of local farmers. The City already benefits from a seasonal farmer's markets, local grocery stores like City Market, and activities at the Intervale CenterFood Hub. There is the additional opportunity for farm stands, a year-round market hall, street vendors selling locally-produced foods using and promoting local food products, more specialty food retail outlets, joint marketing, and festivals celebrating local foods.

### 8. Birds and Bees

While free-range chickens on Church Street probably isn't the best idea, many urban residents keep livestock and poultry for the production of eggs or meat. The Urban Agriculture Task Force recently released a set of recommendations to promote best practices and help accommodate the keeping of livestock in the urban city environment.

Alongside these considerations, urban beekeeping offers residents the opportunity to produce their own honey and pollinate their gardens. In addition, because bees will fly for several miles to find pollen, urban bees also pollinate nearby agricultural areas. Bees can easily be kept on rooftops separate from or as

[part of rooftop gardens](#). And it's good for the bees too: urban bees have a higher overwintering survival rate and produce more honey than their rural counterparts. Cities like New York and Boston are enjoying the benefits of urban bees so why not Burlington? [Because urban beekeepings can pose unique challenges](#), proper hive management and public education are important elements of successful urban beekeeping.

[Tools: \(Add\)](#)

[Develop a Small Farm/Garden Loan Fund to foster new and continued local farming efforts. \(CEDO\)](#)