

LORAIN URBAN AGRICULTURE PLAN:

growing together



Lorain County
Public Health
For the Health of Us All





THE CITY OF LORAIN PROUDLY ANNOUNCES THE CREATION OF ITS FIRST- EVER **URBAN AGRICULTURE PLAN.**

Elements of the Plan include:

- Current Conditions
- Plan Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes
- Key Findings
- Recommendations
- Next Steps

The Plan once adopted by Lorain City Council will be available on the City's Website.

Hard copies of the Plan are available upon request made to the Building, Housing, Planning Department.



WHAT IS URBAN AGRICULTURE?

- Improves food security
- Promotes sustainability
- Enhances access to fresh, locally grown produce in food deserts
- Creates job opportunities and small business development
- Reduces negative environmental impact of food transportation



HOW DID WE GET HERE

- Childhood Hunger Summit hosted by Second Harvest and LCPH (2019).
- MOU with Second Harvest and Lorain County Public Health (LCPH) establishing partnership with **Food Forward Lorain** (2023).
- City of Lorain in partnership with Second Harvest, LCPH, and Solidarity Urban Farms was awarded the USDA UAIP Grant (2023).
- Engaged with Residents through surveys and 1 on 1 sessions (2023-2025).
- Contracts with TSW, Inc. (Zoning & Policy) and Agritecture, LLC. (Urban Agriculture Assessments) (2025).
- Design and Facilitation of the Urban Agriculture Plan (2026).



FOOD FORWARD LORAIN

Purpose: To build upon community momentum, sustain efforts and encourage new partnerships to increase access to healthy food, and improve community well-being.

Objectives:

- Evaluate local food systems
- Increase coordination of food system resources
- Identify collaborative opportunities for solutions to system problems; initiate conversations, and convene relevant stakeholders
- Aid in implementation
- Promote outcomes



FOOD FORWARD LORAIN FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREA 1:

Inspiring economic development through urban farm and retail expansion

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Increase access to healthy, fresh food in the City of Lorain by helping to spur economic development and expanding farm & food retail opportunities.

FOCUS AREA 2:

Strengthening healthcare partnerships through Food is Medicine programming

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Establish robust healthcare partnerships with a focus on diabetes prevention and nutrition education/culinary literacy programming.

FOCUS AREA 3:

Connect People to Food through Technology & Transportation Networks

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

Increase food access through the improvement of transportation opportunities and utilize new technology to increase healthy food access.

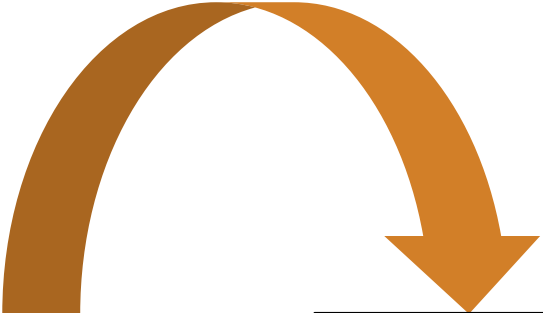


USDA UAIP PLANNING GRANT

USDA Invests \$14.2 Million in 52 Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Efforts

Examples of planning projects include the City of Lorain's Food Forward Lorain Initiative in Ohio, which seeks to create, improve, and expand access to healthy food for economically distressed neighborhoods and families by improving the urban agriculture landscape to support additional urban farming operations. Another planning project, implemented by Tampa Family Health Centers in Florida, will inform and educate residents by offering nutrition education, food preparation classes, and gardening lessons.

WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?





THIS PLAN DOES NOT RECOMMEND:

- Permitting Farm Animals (Cows, Chickens, Goats, etc.)
- City owned and/or operated Community Gardens
- Utilizing all available vacant property as Urban Agriculture activities.



THIS PLAN DOES **RECOMMEND:**

- Amending the Zoning Code to properly regulate and support Urban Agriculture ventures.
- Designing Policy to enable Urban Agriculture to be an economic driver for the City of Lorain (business and job creation opportunities).
- Increasing access to local fresh food resources.
- Designing programming and establishing partnerships to promote educational opportunities around Urban Agriculture.
- Connecting families and youth to local fresh food resources.



HOW WILL THIS IMPACT ME AS A RESIDENT?

- Increased access to local fresh food.
- Increased programming, resources, and support focused on fresh food.
- Potential Urban Farm expansions or creation.
- Increased Urban Agriculture Activities citywide.
- Regulations surrounding front and side yard gardens.
- Regulations prohibiting farm animals.



HOW WILL THIS IMPACT THE CITY OF LORAIN?

- Apply for additional grant opportunities for Urban Agriculture, Sustainability, Composting, Food Security, etc.
- Increased business ventures that are innovative and uniquely reflective of Lorain will play a vital role in advancing economic resilience and strengthening neighborhood identity.
- Increased partnerships with LCCC, Lorain City Schools, Lorain Library, and other institutions focused on designing curriculums around Urban Agriculture.

NEXT STEPS



SHORT TERM						
RECOMMENDATIONS	NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	SUCCESS MEASURE
Update zoning and permitting for small- and mid-scale growing	Refine Land Suitability & Data	Adjust model for equity; include ownership, zoning, infrastructure; integrate into GIS; sensitivity testing	Policy & Legislation	City of Lorain & Community Stakeholders	GIS software, data sets, consultants, stakeholder meetings	Updated GIS layers; equitable parcel scoring; stakeholder validation completed
	Consolidate Urban Agriculture Rules and Update Zoning Standards	Consolidate rules; define key terms; create use-specific standards (parking, setbacks, scale); simplify permitting; draft and present ordinances	Policy & Legislation	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH	Legal review, ordinance drafting, public hearing coordination	Ordinances adopted; clear guidance for growers;
	Establish a Parcel Activation Policy and Streamlined Permitting	Design an efficient permitting process that identifies growers and the scale of their operations.	Policy & Legislation	City of Lorain	Internal Policies established, coordination, staff	increased clarity on permitting processes, number of permits process annually
	Unlock larger by-right urban agriculture uses	Enable larger urban agriculture uses by right, allowing qualifying operations to proceed without discretionary review while meeting established performance standards.	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Legal Review, Ordinance Internal Policies established, coordination, staff	number of larger urban agriculture uses
Local Retail and Branding Push	Incentivize Fruit and Produce Production	Cultivate partnerships to enable outlets for sales	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH	Meeting space, staff, coordination	number of partnerships established
	Farmers Market and/or Storefront	Identify Lorain-based producers; create staff guides; coordinate procurement for City events; viability in Lorain and foster necessary partnerships and any marketing and branding that comes from partners	Retail & Economic Development	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH, Local Farmers	Staff training, educational materials, vendor coordination	retail location(s), staff trained, vendor participation, number of markets held, number of sales
Establish a Steering Committee and Stakeholder Engagement Process	An Implementation Team is Established	A group convenes to move next steps forward through the implementation process	Community Engagement & Education	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH, Main Street, Etc.	Meeting space, facilitation, staff time	Team formed and active, number of meetings held, next steps completed and documented

NEXT STEPS



MEDIUM TERM						
RECOMMENDATIONS	NEXT STEPS	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	SUCCESS MEASURE
Establish Urban Agriculture Accelerator Zones	Identify Zone Boundaries	Identify high-suitability clusters; enable by-right uses; support indoor/adaptive reuse; prioritize institutions Create hubs that cluster growers, markets, and shared infrastructure to improve efficiency, visibility, and participation.	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH	Land assessments, planning staff,	number of parcels part of zone, number of parcels active in the zone
Pathway to available and steps access vacant property	Create a mechanism to increase awareness of vacant property availability	Define eligibility for city/vacant parcels; create opportunities; establish activation processes	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Legal templates, listing platform, property maintenance funding	Number of parcels activated, information publicly accessible to the community
	Integrate Suitability Data into GIS Infrastructure	Incorporate key land-use, environmental, and infrastructure data into GIS systems to quickly evaluate site suitability, streamline permitting, and support consistent, data-driven decision-making.	Policy & Legislation	City of Lorain	GIS, Staff, Coordination	Number of parcels cataloged
Expand Water Infrastructure for Urban Agriculture	Expand Water Access & Infrastructure to Urban Agriculture Uses	Identify funding/grants; plan upgrades in corridors & high-suitability areas	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Grant writing support, funding for infrastructure	Number of sites with improved water access, grant funding secured, increased information regarding the process
Provide Resources and Support for Growers	Support Growers with Resources	Connect and create DIY guides, lot layouts, tool & seed libraries, on-site programming; maintain contact network; host trainings	Community Engagement &	City of Lorain, Second Harvest, LCPH, Community Partners, Volunteers	Printing/online guides, tools/equipment, training staff, volunteer coordination	Number of guides distributed; tools borrowed; attendance at trainings; grower satisfaction surveys



NEXT STEPS

MEDIUM TERM						
RECOMMENDATIONS	NEXT STEPS	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	SUCCESS MEASURE
Develop Youth and Workforce Programs	Create Opportunities for Youth & Workforce	Develop urban farming fellowships/ internships; provide stipends, certificates, mentorship; link to education & job pathways	Community Engagement & Education	City of Lorain, Lorain City Schools, Local Farms, LCCC, Second Harvest, LCPH	Program funding (stipends, materials), mentorship network, school partnerships	Number of youth participants; program completion rates; post-program employment/ education placement
Incorporate urban agriculture into mixed-use development	Encourage and Incentivize developers and end users of mixed-use developments to incorporate and support local food production as part of future development efforts.	Integrate urban agriculture uses into mixed-use developments to support local food production, activate underutilized space, and enhance community amenities.	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Staff, coordination, Legal Review	Incentives based on integrating urban agriculture.
Support indoor and adaptive reuse agriculture	Amend zoning code to support CEA and other indoor and adaptive reuse agriculture	Facilitate the use of commercial properties for urban farming while ensuring compliance with building and fire codes.	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Staff, Coordination, Legal Review, Planning Commission, Council, Ordinances	Success is achieved when the zoning code permits CEA and indoor food production and initial operations are approved.
Clarify and expand composting standards	Develop and Coordinate a City wide composting program	Clarify and expand composting standards to establish clear requirements for scale, materials, siting, and operations, ensuring composting activities protect public health, minimize nuisances, and support urban agriculture.	Land Use & Incentives	City of Lorain	Staff, Coordination, Legal Review, Council, Ordinances, Contractor	Establishing a Composting Program in the City of Lorain



NEXT STEPS

LONG TERM						
RECOMMENDATIONS	NEXT STEP	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES	RESOURCES NEEDED	SUCCESS MEASURE
Use urban agriculture for brownfield remediation and cultivating biodiversity	Use urban agriculture for brownfield remediation	Map vacant/brownfield properties; integrate urban agriculture; incorporate pollinators; clarify composting standards	Land Use & Incentives	City, Second Harvest, LCPH	GIS mapping, environmental assessments, planting resources, ordinance updates	Number of brownfields repurposed; pollinator plantings installed; composting compliance metrics.
	Integrate pollinators and food-producing plants into city landscaping	Integrate pollinator-friendly and food-producing plants into city landscaping to support urban biodiversity, local food systems, and resilient public spaces.	Land Use & Incentives	City, Second Harvest, LCPH	Staff, Assessment of Land and Available Public Spaces	Pollinator Gardens and Fruit Bearing Landscaping is included in public spaces.
Unlock Larger accessory uses tied to distribution	Food Distribution & Access Infrastructure	Establish accessory uses (greenhouses, storage); regulate size/location; support residential-scale sales	Retail & Economic Development	City, Second Harvest, LCPH Growers	Ordinance drafting, zoning staff, outreach to growers	staff, outreach to growers Ordinances adopted; number of accessory uses established; compliance rates.
Establish Program Evaluation	Establish Program Evaluation	Track and share out Impact and future funding opportunities. expand resources for growers; reports for growers to model after.	Community Engagement & Education	City, Second Harvest, LCPH	Staff and Coordination	Summary outcomes report or annual impact report.
Permit Residential-Scale Produce Sales	Permit Residential-Scale Urban Agriculture Sales	Allow residents to sell produce under clear, enforceable standards; distinguish residential vs commercial operations	Policy & Legislation	City, Second Harvest, LCPH Residents	Staff time, surveys, ordinance drafting	Ordinances adopted; number of residential-scale sales; compliance rate.
Marketing for Large Scale Retailers	Engage large-scale retailers in supporting local food systems through targeted outreach.	Support partnerships with large-scale retailers to expand access to locally grown food, strengthen supply chains, and promote community-based food initiatives.	Retail & Economic Development	City, Second Harvest, LCPH	Staff, Coordination, Supply & Demand Figures	Partnerships are established and local supply chain strengthens.
Enable institution-led agriculture programs	Support institutions in launching agriculture programs to supply local food and promote sustainability.	Support schools, hospitals, and other institutions to grow food for community meals, education, and outreach.	Retail & Economic Development	City, Second Harvest, LCPH	Staff, Coordination, Supply & Demand Figures	Local institutions begin to implement locally sourced produce and goods.

THANK YOU!
QUESTIONS?



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