

Tapping into a water main for an urban farm can be very expensive, costing as much as \$20,000. In addition to a hefty price tag, many farmers are both unable and reluctant to make a huge investment in infrastructure when land ownership is not guaranteed.

In cases where use of land for a garden or farm is not permanent, some farmers arrange with a neighboring resident to pay them for use of that home's water.

In Cleveland, the city water department allows people to access fire hydrants for urban agricultural use. This is a creative stop-gap measure until the city can address issues of land tenure, which will encourage farmers to invest in linking to the city water main

From: "Growing Urban Agriculture: Equitable Strategies and Policies for Improving Access to Healthy Food and Revitalizing Communities" by Allison Hagey, Solana Rice, Rebecca Flournoy; *PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by lifting up what works*; Find this report online at [www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org). ©2012 by PolicyLink All rights reserved

.....

**Detroit City Council:**  
**Mary Sheffield, President**  
**James Tate, President Pro Tem**  
**Angela Whitfield-Calloway**  
**Scott Benson**  
**Latisha Johnson**  
**Gabriela Santiago-Romero**  
**Fred Durhal III**  
**Mary Waters**

**RESOLUTION TO DEMONSTRATE STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE CITY OF  
DETROIT TO PROVIDE VIABLE OPTIONS FOR DETROIT URBAN FARMERS TO  
ACCESS WATER UP TO AND INCLUDING ACCESS TO CITY WATER LINES.**

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER \_\_\_\_\_**

WHAT IS URBAN AGRICULTURE:

**WHEREAS**, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, Urban Agriculture is "part of a local food system where food is produced within an urban area and marketed to consumers within that area" (2021); "Urban Agriculture in Detroit, An Overview of Detroit's Urban Farm" By Katherine Dunkle, April 25, 2021 and

## BENEFITS:

**WHEREAS**, Urban Agriculture reunites cities with food production, reducing the time and energy necessary to transport and distribute food supporting sustainability in the food system; (K. Dunkle) and

**WHEREAS**, In Detroit, Urban Farms and Community Gardens are changing the city's landscape, bringing life back to abandoned plots of land and providing opportunity, generating hope, and improving residents' health; (K. Dunkle) and

**WHEREAS**, urban farming benefits the local economy by providing new employment opportunities for local residents and the chance to learn new skills. In fact, in 2010, “community food projects funded by the USDA provided an estimated 2,300 jobs and incubated over 3,600 micro-businesses” (Golden, 2013), and

**WHEREAS**, many urban farms provide educational and youth programs to help teach the community about urban agriculture, of which these new skills can be used to create their own personal gardens, or find a job in urban agriculture; and

**WHEREAS**, many urban farms are placed on vacant lots that cost cities thousands of dollars per lot in terms of upkeep, and a report done by the advocacy group SPUR...found that “community management of vacant lots transformed into urban agriculture sites saved the Department of Public Works (in San Francisco) an estimated \$4,100 a year per site by preventing vandalism, dumping, and labor-intensive upkeep” (Golden, 2013); and

**WHEREAS**, urban farming has been shown to increase local property values by “as much as 9.4% within five years of establishment” (San Francisco) by removing vacant lots and beautifying neighborhoods (Golden, 2013); and

**WHEREAS**, urban farming allows residents to purchase locally grown produce that is typically less expensive than the produce found at a grocery store. Individual gardeners can save around “\$475 a season” and community garden programs can save up “to \$915,000 worth of food a year” (Golden, 2013); and

**WHEREAS**, urban farming can offset the urban heat island effect, which is “defined as higher mean temperatures in an urban area than the surrounding rural area” (Alexandri and Jones, 2008; Getter and Rowe, 2006; Memon et al., 2008 cited in Ackerman et al., 2014) and

**WHEREAS**, urban agriculture increases the amount of vegetation and evapotranspiration, which acts as “a heat sink and also results in lower ambient and surface temperatures than urban areas without vegetation” (Ackerman et al., 2014).

**WHEREAS**, urban farming increases green spaces and biodiversity Green, which "can help reduce levels of air contaminants" because "[I]eaf surfaces on these greened areas act as natural sinks for common contaminants" (Knizhnik, 2012); and

## EVIDENCE OF CITY SUPPORT FOR URBAN AGRICULTURE

**WHEREAS**, in 2013 the city adopted its first ever urban agriculture zoning ordinance<sup>71</sup>, thereby formally permitting, promoting and regulating certain types of food production as a viable (and productive) land use; and

**WHEREAS**, acknowledgement of the economic, environmental and social benefits of urban agriculture, likely influenced the decision of the Detroit City Council to pass the Urban Agriculture Zoning Ordinance and

**THE CHALLENGE (ISSUE)**

**WHEREAS**, urban farmers in Detroit are lacking and need options to access water to assure viability of their gardens/farms and to ensure the continuation of the economic, environmental, and social benefits of urban agriculture practices in the city; and

**WHEREAS**, review of water accessibility in other cities with urban agriculture reveal that accessing water via connecting to the water main, water purchase/reimbursement agreements with neighbors and accessing water via fire hydrants are the most prevalent options; and

**WHEREAS**, accessing via connecting to water mains is often cost prohibitive and neighbors may or may not be present or agreeable, accessing via fire hydrants is often the most viable option;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Detroit City Council supports and encourages city departments (e.g. DWSD, GSD, DPW, Fire Departments, Office of Sustainability, Office of Agriculture, and others) and Urban Agriculture leaders, to create a consensus policy that supports water access options including fire hydrants for urban farmers by June 30, 2024.