

## Urban Agriculture Working Group – Running Notes 2025

**Location: 7W03 Conference Room A**

**March 20th, 2025**

**12 – 1:30pm**

### **Goals:**

- Get to know each other!
- Understand the newly created Urban Agriculture Liaison role and scope of work
- Discuss purpose of Urban Agriculture Working Group and generate ideas/input
- *Introduce councilmember(s) and/or their staffers to UAWG*

### **Agenda:**

- 1. [12:15 – 12:30pm] (15 min) Welcome & Introductions**
  - a. Name, pronouns, garden/farm, neighborhood
  - b. *Intro councilmembers and thank members that supported creation of UAL/AGNO campaign*
- 2. [12:30 – 12:50pm] (20 min) Overview Urban Agriculture Liaison role and work**
  - a. (10 min) A Greener New Orleans campaign (Chris)
  - b. (10 min) Updates on AGNO Platform Pillars
    - i. Urban Agriculture Liaison – a win!
    - ii. Land Access
    - iii. Water Access
    - iv. Blight Citation
- 3. [12:50 – 1:20pm] (30 min) Urban Agriculture Working Group**
  - a. (5 min) What is its purpose?
  - b. (5 min) How can each member contribute?
    - i. Working on getting stipends to be able to compensate members. Want to respect people's time.
  - c. (10 min) Reflection Questions
    - i. What is the biggest challenge your garden/farm/growers in your community are facing?
    - ii. What is one benefit your garden/farm provides to the community?
    - iii. What is one thing you wish the city did differently to support urban agriculture/community gardening?
  - d. (10 min) Report Out Reflections & Generate Feedback
- 4. [1:20 – 1:30pm] (10 min) Next Steps**
  - a. Meeting rhythm and communication in between
  - b. Proposed next meeting time: week of June 23<sup>rd</sup>

### **NOTES:**

## Attendees –

- Chris Gang: Rainbow in the Dark Flowers, Greater New Orleans Growers' Alliance (GNOGA)
- Michael Richard II: Recirculating Farms (Central City)
- Jackie Baham: New Orleans East Green Infrastructure Collaborative, GNOGA, Bunny Friend Park (New Orleans East, Upper 9)
- Maddiy Garn: Veggi Farmers' Cooperative (New Orleans East)
- Mina Seck: Sprout Community Farm (Faubourg Lafitte)
- Farley Bliss: Faubourg St. John Community Garden (Bayou St. John)
- Ute Petit: Popsie & Vivian's (Lower 9)
- Lang Le: Community Member from NOLA East, connected to many home growers
- Kelly Cahill: Yardbirds Farm (Lower Coast Algiers)
- Klie Kliebert: Imagine Waterworks/Imagination Farm (St. Roch/Gentilly)
- Jeanette Bell: Garden on Mars, Fleur d'Eden (Central City)
- Jenna Mae: Land Back Gardens (9<sup>th</sup> ward), Okla Hina Ikhish Holo (Gulf South/South LA), Nanih Bvlbancha (Lafitte Greenway)
- August Green: LA Heritage Seed Program, Grow Dat Youth Farm, Speakeasy Farm (Upper 9)
- Luke Felty: New Orleans Health Department, Food Access Specialist
- Katherine Prevost: Bunny Friend Neighborhood Association (Upper 9)
- Oriana Taylor: Crown Community Garden (New Orleans East)
- Pamela Broom: Newcorps' FARMacia Wellness Hub (7<sup>th</sup> Ward)
- Sayde Finkel: Councilmember Moreno's Chief of Staff
- Ella Jordan: Councilmember Harris's office (Asst. Director of Land Use)
- Darren Martin: Councilmember Thomas's office (Director of Community Engagement)
- Greg Nichols: Deputy Chief Resilience Officer (Office of Resilience & Sustainability)
- Anna Nguyen: External Affairs Manager (Office of Resilience & Sustainability)
- Madorah Sesay: Community Energy Fellow (Office of Resilience & Sustainability)
- Grace Treffinger: Urban Agriculture Liaison (Office of Resilience & Sustainability)

## A Greener New Orleans Campaign

- [A Greener New Orleans Campaign History \(Chris\)](#)
  - o Policy campaign that came out of research and listening sessions done by Devin Wright and others involved with Sprout NOLA
    - 2021 – 2022: many interviews conducted of gardeners/farmers across the city.
    - Chris was one of the interviewees. Shared his experience of losing land.
    - Cathartic experience to be part of this campaign trying to make
    - June 2022(?): effort to synthesize research and turned into set of policy planks touching on all the pressing issues that people trying to farm/garden in the city were facing.
    - Policy campaign was a collaboration between Sprout NOLA, GNOGA, Food Policy Action Council (FPAC NOLA).
    - Campaign members began reaching out
  - o **Policy planks** ([read more here](#))
    - Land Access
    - Water Access

- Blight Citation and Enforcement
- Urban Agriculture Liaison (a win!)
- In 2022 – 2023, a relationship was built with Office of Resilience & Sustainability (ORS) and AGNO campaign members had meetings with ORS team, Councilmembers, and their staffers. There was a lot of support.
- In June 2023, [City Council passed Resolution 23-244](#) supporting A Greener New Orleans platform.
- At end of 2023, the Urban Agriculture Liaison position was included in the proposed budget.
- Late October 2024, Grace was hired as Urban Agriculture Liaison (UAL)
- Decision was made to sunset AGNO because of UAL position being created.
- Big shoutout to everyone involved in the campaign for putting so much work into creating the UAL role, especially Devin Wright!

### Urban Agriculture Liaison Role and Updates

- Go to <https://nola.gov/urbanag>
  - For additional resources: <https://nola.gov/next/resilience-sustainability/resources/urban-agriculture-resources/>
- Priorities and Updates
  - Land Access
    - Acknowledging that this is the issue that comes up most frequently and carries with it lots of racial and equity concerns of land that Black families' lost post-Katrina.
    - NORA's Growing Green Program
      - Very little success with growers purchasing land after leasing (too costly)
      - Grace has met with NORA and continues to communicate with them about how to improve Growing Green (such as including urban agriculture as part of annual auction)
      - Some growers have learned of the possibility of getting the land appraised for 'agricultural use' rather than 'highest and best use'
    - Potential for other land access pathways
      - Adjudicated lots
      - City-owned lots
      - Grace developing proposal for 'Grow-to-Own' Program (modeled off of [Mow to Own Program](#))
        - Ute is 6 months in to participating in Mow to Own on two lots. Price is significantly cheaper than Growing Green program (only pay back taxes instead of highest and best use).
    - Important to collaborate with groups/offices working on affordable housing
  - Water Access
    - Still getting outreach from growers who have had their meter switched from irrigation-only to residential and getting incorrectly billed. Getting these accounts resolved as growers reach out.

- Guide: How to get irrigation-only water meter/account
    - Grace has met with SWBNO every 2 weeks since she began to develop a how-to guide for growers to get an irrigation-only meter
    - Michael: Sanitation Dept told Recirculating Farms that until there was a residence on the lot, they would not pick up trash (even though they pay for irrigation, sewerage, and trash)
- **Blight Citations**
  - Regenerative Agriculture Exemption in the works
    - Met with Code Enforcement and Office of Economic Development
    - Could go to One Stop to register (hopefully, for free) with the city as a garden/farm so that if/when there is a code violation/citation, Code Enforcement would see your garden/farm registered and reach out to Grace (to avoid fines).
  - Community education/neighborhood education component
    - Yard sign (Sprout already mocked up) that lets neighbors know that this is actively managed/stewarded land.
- **Technical Assistance to growers!** Complete this form (or reach out to Grace) if you are a grower facing challenges navigating city processes:  
[https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hfTLCcLccAkqalQ3ZtFuf9-9tBfAVcl9LrH6\\_uc2qUEZUNEdVUzRJT1pPSjk2U1BOU0FCMUpXOFhQVy4u&route=shorturl](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hfTLCcLccAkqalQ3ZtFuf9-9tBfAVcl9LrH6_uc2qUEZUNEdVUzRJT1pPSjk2U1BOU0FCMUpXOFhQVy4u&route=shorturl)
- **City's first Urban Agriculture & Food Plan**
- **Guide for getting Accessory Structures Permitted**

## Urban Agriculture Working Group

- **Stipends**
  - Grace is pursuing funding to be able to offer stipends to honor UAWG members' time.
    - Applied for AARP grant and will hear back in May
    - Looking for other grants to apply for.
- **Intention of the UAWG:** The Urban Agriculture Working Group is being created as a way for growers from across New Orleans to share their common issues and work together to influence how the city can change its policies and programs to support and uplift urban agriculture and foster a stronger local food system. The UAWG will ideally have no more than 15 formal members but will also be a public space that any community member can attend. We will collectively decide our structure and decision-making processes, which will take some time. To start, the UAWG will have 1.5 - 2 hours long meetings quarterly. In between those quarterly meetings, UAWG members and the public are encouraged to reach out to Grace Treffinger, our new Urban Agriculture Liaison, with any other ideas, suggestions, and concerns related to urban agriculture and the city.
- **Membership:** The UAWG will represent neighborhoods across the city (especially neighborhoods with a strong urban agriculture presence). We want to use this as an opportunity to increase participation from more urban gardeners/farmers who aren't typically engaged in advocacy or city spaces. The goal is to prioritize neighborhood leaders connected to home gardener networks, community gardeners, small-scale growers/market gardeners, and other

growers who could benefit from a formal entry point into city process. If you are employed by an urban agriculture-related non-profit already involved in this network, the expectation is that you use the next six months to identify another grower in your community who you can slot into your role to continue to fold more community members into this work. Non-profit employees in the urban agriculture space generally have more time/capacity to get in contact with our new Urban Agriculture Liaison, Grace, than growers who are doing this work outside of their employment.

○ **Reflection Questions**

- What is the **biggest challenge** your garden/farm/growers in your community are facing?
  - Land access – long term leases and pathways to ownership (on at least 5 growers' post its)
  - SWBNO charging for water connection as if a residence and challenging process to get irrigation-only water meter (on at least 3 growers' post its)
  - Funds for supplies, time, land security
  - Land access to tend and harvest wild stands of culturally significant plants for tribal community members in public spaces
  - Land covenants for development – can agricultural infrastructure be considered “development” to the city?
  - Making neighbors aware we are here for everyone and that all can benefit from harvest and community
  - Equitable land access, transparency
  - Permitting with food processing/conditional use permit
  - Unhoused people's presence on the farm
- What is **one benefit** your garden/farm provides to the community?
  - Combining food and cultural practices with disaster hub
  - Community-building safe space beautifying our neighborhood
  - Gathering space and community events
  - Opportunity to have relationships with land/plants and learn about contemporary Indigenous cultures/values
  - Raising meat in New Orleans and teaching folks how to raise and process birds
  - Youth engagement and professional development
  - Environmental education
  - Opportunity for a grower to have an incubation space to produce for the marketplace or to create value-added items
  - Easy access to fresh organic produce
  - 24/7 food access and direct money to spend at the Crescent City Farmers' Market
  - Community fridge, free classes/events and food for the community
  - Bringing life and productivity to abandoned/neglected spaces previously empty/blighted
- What is **one thing you wish the city did differently to support urban agriculture/community gardening?**
  - Make more city-owned land available for growing food and fruit trees
  - Wish the city was more open minded, flexible, and supportive to access, as well as receptive to experimentation. Embody more of a 'City of Yes' spirit
  - More clarity about how city processes work (ex. How to guides)
  - Assistance with moving through permitting and city departments fees

- Community education
  - We need the city to more boldly champion urban agriculture as a community economic and ecological development asset-base
  - The city could source local produce for events, schools, hospitals
  - Push a citywide urban agriculture and food plan that is creating business/financial contracts between growers and consumers
  - Creative solutions to land access/ownership
  - I wish farmers and growers didn't feel they were having to make a case for urban growing every time
  - Create programs for more regenerative and native plant species.
  - I wish the city had a realistic and functional system for gardeners to access city-owned property! Through NORA or tax repossession/adjudicated lots
- **Polling Priorities (raise your hands for 3 most important priorities to you)**
  - City-wide Urban Agriculture & Food Plan (13 people)
  - Water Access (11 people)
  - Land Access (11 people)
  - Technical Assistance for Growers (10 people)
  - Accessory Structure Permitting Guide (3 people)
  - Blight Citations (1 person)
    - Chris: Note that this is still very important and, as summer is approaching, it's important to get at least signage out to growers to prevent blight citations
  - \*\*\*Cold Storage – Maddiy mentioned as something to keep in mind since that's such a challenge for growers
- **Future Meeting Times**
  - Wednesday afternoon (15 people)
  - Thursday afternoon (15 people)
  - Tuesday early evening (10 people)
  - Saturday afternoons (5 people)
  - Thursday evenings (4 people)

## Next Steps

- Share any ideas/updates for the Urban Agriculture city website with Grace: <https://nola.gov/urbanag>
- Complete this form if you are a grower who needs technical assistance navigating city processes (such as issues with SWBNO billing): [https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hfTLCLccAkqalQ3ZtFuf9-9tBfAVci9LrH6\\_uc2qUEZUNEdVUzRJT1pPSjk2U1BOU0FCMUpXOFhQVy4u&route=shorturl](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hfTLCLccAkqalQ3ZtFuf9-9tBfAVci9LrH6_uc2qUEZUNEdVUzRJT1pPSjk2U1BOU0FCMUpXOFhQVy4u&route=shorturl)
- Email Jackie ([jackiebaham1@gmail.com](mailto:jackiebaham1@gmail.com)) if you'd like to be added to the Greater New Orleans Growers' Alliance (GNOGA) email list. There are many helpful resources/classes shared there!
- **Next proposed meeting time:** Wednesday, June 25<sup>th</sup> 12 – 1:30pm
  - **Proposed locations**
    - Libraries (Rosa Keller?)
    - Desire / Florida Multi-Service Center

- Old Road Coffee
  - Free meeting spaces for community groups (warehouse, no A/C)