Urban Agriculture Working Group – Meeting Notes

Location: Rosa Keller Library

June 25th, 2025

12 – 1:30pm

Goals:

- Get to know each other!
- Review highlights from last meeting
- Hear work updates from Urban Agriculture Liaison
- Generate feedback and questions from UAWG and public

Agenda:

1. **[12:15 – 12:30pm] (15 min) Welcome & Introductions**
    - Name, pronouns, garden/farm, neighborhood
2. **[12:30 – 12:45pm] (15 min) Review highlights from last meeting**
    - **(5 min) UAWG purpose**
    - **(5 min) Urban Agriculture Liaison role and AGNO (Chris)**
        - A Greener New Orleans Campaign
        - Started in late October 2024 within the Office of Resilience & Sustainability
        - More info: https://nola.gov/urbanag
    - **(5 min) Priorities**
        - 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
3. **[12:45 – 1:15pm] (30 min) Work Updates from Urban Agriculture Liaison**
4. **[1:15 – 1:30pm] (15 min) Next Steps**
    - Proposed next meeting time: Wednesday, September 24th at 12 – 1:30pm
    - Time for people to plug community events / workshops

NOTES:

Attendees-

- Chris Gang: Rainbow in the Dark Flowers, Greater New Orleans Growers' Alliance (GNOGA), NOLA Flower Collective
- Michael Richard II: Recirculating Farms (Central City)
- Jackie Baham: New Orleans East Green Infrastructure Collective, GNOGA, Bunny Friend Park (New Orleans East, Upper 9)
- Anna Timmerman: LSU Agriculture Extension Agent
- Sara Fiorenzo: Urban Farming Teacher at Audubon Charter, beekeeper at Docville Farms, Bulbancha Blooms, and Recirculating Farms
- Jess McNally: Faubourg St. John Community Garden, Food Policy Action Council
- Max Ruehle: Restock Academy
- Farley Bliss: Faubourg St. John Community Garden
- Nolan: Restock Academy
- Luke Felty: N.O. Health Department (Food Access Specialist)
- Jeanette Bell: Fleur d'Eden
- Ben Collongues: Imagination Farm/ Imagine Waterworks
- Pam Broom: NewCorp Inc, FARMacia Wellness Hub
- Lissie Stewart: Galvez Garden, Greater New Orleans Growers Alliance (GNOGA)
- Angela Henderson: Hollygrove
- Asha McIntyre: Southern University Agriculture Center

Highlights from last meeting:

- **Urban Agriculture Working Group**
    - Intent was for this group to become a formally recognized Community Accountability Board – this is still the plan, just going to take some time.
    - In the meantime, this is an informal working group open to the public, prioritizing market farmers, community gardeners, and growers around the city.
    - Advisory and accountability body to support work of Urban Agriculture Liaison.
- **A Greener New Orleans Campaign**
    - Full platform here: **https://nola.gov/nola/media/Resilience/AGreenerNewOrleansPlatform.pdf**
    - Campaign leads: GNOGA, FPAC, Sprout, Louisiana Progress
    - Four planks:
        - Water Access
        - Blight Citations
        - Land Access
        - Urban Agriculture Liaison

Work Updates from Urban Agriculture Liaison:

- **Water Access**
    - Water guide created, uploaded, and printed: https://nola.gov/wateraccess
    - Uploaded to SWBNO's Rates, Fees, & Charges page (scroll down): Rates, Fees & Charges - Sewerage & Water Board of New Orleans
    - Working on FAQ

        - A few growers are still getting charged for sewerage on agricultural water meters
        - **Reach out to Grace if you're still getting charged for sewerage so she can contact SWBNO and support you in getting it resolved!**
    - **Blight / Code Violations**
        - June 9: Co-hosted Preparing Your Garden for Summer event with Sprout, shared tips for how to avoid code violations this summer
        - Working with Code Enforcement to address wrongful citations
        - Regenerative Agriculture Yard Signs being distributed
        - Educational page on website: http://nola.gov/regenag
        - **Working on ordinance / code change. Two options:**
            - **Regenerative Agriculture Exemption (like a permit)** – gardens would apply for a permit to be able to implement regenerative agriculture practices. Would require renewal and cost something. City would have list of permitted gardens.
                - Flag to limit abuse of
            - **Language change to city code -** update city code to include cover crops being exempt from 10 in. height requirement.
            - General support for avoiding a new permit and instead changing code language to allow cover crops.
        - **Is there currently a permit that all community gardens and urban farms are supposed to have?**
            - Grace has been told by the Zoning Division of Safety & Permits that all farms/gardens are supposed to apply for a "Change of Use" to Agriculture as the "Principal Use" through One Stop.
                - By default, the principal use will either be residential or vacant, if this isn't applied for.
                - Many growers have had trouble applying for this or even if they receive it, will get cited.
                - Grace is meeting with Safety & Permits soon to discuss.
            - Is agricultural use permitted across all zoning districts?
                - It's allowed by right in **most** zoning districts (without livestock). Safety & Permits still wants people to let them know (through change of use) that the lot is principally used for agriculture.
        - Trying to schedule training with Code Enforcement on how to identify cover crops, native plants, etc…
    - **Land Access**
        - NORA Growing Green Program
            - Very few growers have been able to successfully navigate Growing Green to the point of purchasing the lot. The cost is prohibitive – growers have gotten quotes from $20k to over $100k for small lots.
        - **June 17 – 18: NORA's first auction including 11 non-housing development lots**
            - How were those 11 lots chosen? They seem to be the least desirable lots which isn't appealing to most urban farmers.

        - **Mow to Own** – a couple people have navigated successfully. Needs to be a vacant lot adjacent to a lot you own that is also included in the program.
            - Code Enforcement - Programs - Mow to Own Program - City of New Orleans
        - **Grow to Own Program Proposal:** a program idea modeled off of Mow to Own but focused on land access for more gardens and farms. It would be focused on vacant adjudicated/tax delinquent lots that people could apply for use of to launch a garden/farm project. It's in the very early research phase and unclear if it will get legal approval or funding anytime soon.
        - For your reference, this should be most updated public info regarding vacant *city-owned* lots (Dept of Property Management's dashboard): https://nolagis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/f7dfd1e96cab45cfb302dd738cc45e79
    - **Urban Agriculture & Food Plan**
        - This would be the city's first plan focused on urban agriculture and food with a robust community input process. It would likely take at least 2 years once it started and include action and implementation steps.
        - Early stages, doing preliminary research, meeting monthly with FPAC
        - Looking for funding (to also cover stipends for members of UAWG)
        - Funding suggestion: speak with Crescent City Farmer's Market and Recirculating Farms about USDA food system planning grants.
    - **Livestock Working Group**
        - Had first meeting last week with about 20 growers with chickens, ducks, goats, bees, etc… to address issues with livestock zoning ordinances.
        - Going to meet regularly to identify interventions (like a code change) to bring the CZO up to date with research-based best practices for keeping animals.
        - Offering: Garden on Mars is putting together a small handout about how to get started with a few backyard chickens.
    - **Ongoing Technical Assistance**
        - ~32 hours of grower support so far
            - Code violations, interpreting zoning ordinances, getting irrigation-only water meters, navigating Safety & Permits, and more
        - If you have any similar issues, email/call: grace.treffinger@nola.gov, 504-905-0402
        - Has anyone completed Urban Ag Support Request Form yet? Working through technical issues with Microsoft Forms.
    - **Accessory Structure Permitting Guide –** need to revisit
        - A few growers have had success getting greenhouses/hoophouses/sheds permitted but it's been costly and slow.
        - Grace is going to keep working on the permitting guide, after getting clarity on the "change of use to agriculture" process – since these seem to be connected.

- **Polling Priorities (raise your hands for 3 most important priorities to you)**
    - City-wide Urban Agriculture & Food Plan (11 votes)

- Land Access (9 votes)
- Incentives from the city for Growers (8 votes)
- Livestock Working Group (8 votes)
- Blight Citations (3 votes)
- Cold Storage (2 votes)
- Accessory Structure Permitting Guide (1 vote)
- Technical Assistance for Growers (1 vote)
- Water Access (1 vote)
- Accessory Structure Permitting Guide (1 vote)

Next Steps:

- Review the water access guide and share with any growers you know: https://nola.gov/wateraccess
- Email grace.treffinger@nola.gov if you're still getting charged for sewerage/sanitation on an agricultural water meter
- Check out the Detroit Land Based Projects guide I referenced: CoD_PlotPlanGuide.pdf
- Next Greater New Orleans Growers' Alliance (GNOGA) meeting is Saturday, September 21st at 1pm. Email jackiebaham1@gmail.com to get added to GNOGA's email list!
- As a reminder, we meet quarterly and our next proposed meeting time is Wednesday, September 24th 12 – 1:30pm.
- If you're a grower who has chickens, ducks, goats, or other animals, please join the Livestock Working Group's second meeting on Friday, July 25th 10:30am – 12pm at Nora Navra Library.