

## Institutional Requirements for Urban Agriculture

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## Investments by Public and Private Institutions Necessary to Grow Urban Agriculture

#### A Holistic Approach is Required

- Vision and Leadership
- Land
- Water, Security, and Compost
- Credit
- Markets
- Agricultural Extension



## Vision and Leadership can be provided by

- Food Policy Council
- City Dept. (in Baltimore City, Office of Sustainability, Dept. of Planning)
- or Non-Profit Organization

Local Leadership is essential to identify priorities (income growth, improved nutrition), select geographic regions (food deserts), create ownership (grassroots empowerment), and identify resources (land, compost, water)

Federal and state grants are also useful for implementing the necessary investments required for urban agriculture



# Systematic allocation of abandoned land within cities with declining populations Baltimore City has 30,000 abandoned properties

#### In Baltimore City:

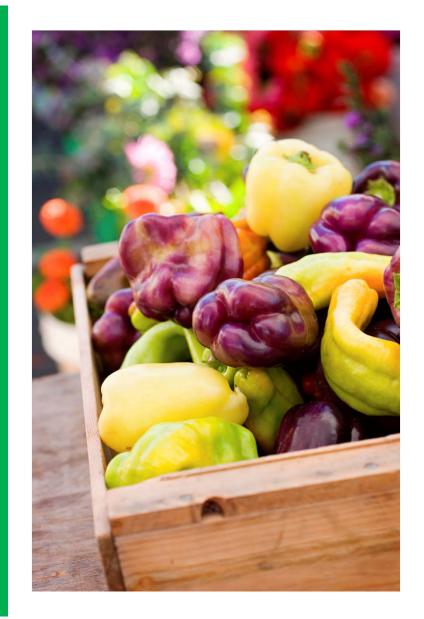
- Community Gardens: There is an "Adopt-a-Lot" program where, on an adopted lot, several families produce food on adjacent plots for their own consumption, lots vary in size, long-term lease.
- Urban Agriculture: Urban agriculture is producing food for profit by sale to others, includes food banks. Currently, there is a "Request for Qualifications" by farmers for 35 one-acre lots, <3% slope, 90% sunlight, 5-year lease with potential 5year extension



Critical Inputs Requiring Public Sector Support Water, Security, and Compost

#### In Baltimore City:

- Community Gardens when possible, free compost, security fences, and access to city water
- Urban Agriculture \$5,000 to \$10,000 grants for water, compost, and security fences





#### **Credit Requirements for Infrastructures**

Typical technologies are high tunnels (20 ft x 100 ft) that extends the production season. Gross \$10,000 per tunnel; 10 high tunnels/A; Net \$75,000/A (w/two farmers); Cost \$5,000/tunnel





## Credit problems with leased land and inexperienced farmers

- Private lenders difficult to make loans for high tunnels on leased land
- Public lenders
  - Farm Service Agency Beginning farmers < 10 years of experience, but need at least one year. New urban farmers typically lack experience.
  - Natural Resource Conservation Service cost sharing for conservation technologies but need to see a 'standing crop'.



#### Markets are Critical (but often lacking)

- Farmers markets (producer only)
  - Land issues: If located on public lands, permission by city authorities to operate, food safety inspection, and access to parking are required
  - Transactions: Tremendous opportunities for WIC, Seniors,
     & SNAP (but EBT machines may be required)
- Restaurants
  - Tend to benefit high volume producers who sell wholesale
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
  - Does not work as well with poorer families who struggle with cash flow issues for family expenses
- On-Farm Markets
  - With limited land, production space has to be sacrificed for marketing space.



#### **Agricultural Extension**

- Agricultural Extension (support for farmers)
  - Extension agents and/or Master Gardeners (BC)
  - Soil Conservation Districts (doesn't exist in BC) and NRCS
  - Non-profit organizations (Tacoma, WA)

Often time, these support groups can also provide seeds and transplants

We have the support for rural farmers, looking forward there needs to be similar support for urban farmers.