



# MAYOR'S OFFICE OF URBAN AGRICULTURE

## Annual Progress Report



The City of New York  
Mayor Eric Adams

November 2024

# *Letter from the Executive Director*

To my fellow New Yorkers,

Just one year after releasing New York City's first urban agriculture report, I'm excited to share the Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture (MOUA) has made significant strides over the last 12 months in integrating urban agriculture into the city's fabric to support a greener, healthier, and more equitable New York.

As the leader of the city's efforts to increase access to and production of locally grown food, MOUA is helping to minimize the city's contributions to the climate crisis and spurring economic activity throughout the city. And our work goes beyond food access, climate, and environmental justice – we're leveraging urban innovation to foster educational and economic opportunities for community-based groups and small businesses.

This annual progress report details accomplishments the office has made over the last year in several key areas including agriculture education, economic development, data, and policy.

As we enter our third year, we will continue to integrate nature-based solutions into the city's plans to support a vibrant, more prosperous city for all New Yorkers. We encourage readers of this report to learn more about us and our ongoing activities at [nyc.gov/agriculture](https://nyc.gov/agriculture) or on social media - we're @nycurbanag on Instagram, X, and Facebook.



**Qiana Mickie**  
Executive Director,  
Mayor's Office of Urban  
Agriculture

# *Executive Summary*

## **Year of Progress**

Since the establishment of the NYC Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture two years ago, we have worked to meet our mission, fulfill our mandate, and achieve our goals. There have been both valuable successes and unique challenges along the way in our efforts to strengthen equity while advancing urban agriculture in New York City.

We have made strides in our community engagement, data collection, and creating economic opportunities through urban agriculture.

The following will be covered in detail regarding what MOUA has accomplished this year:

- Implement Reimagining Farm to School in NYC
- Launch NYC School Food EATS
- Grow business opportunities for emerging urban agriculture & food entrepreneurs
- Strengthen stakeholder engagement and data collection within the city's urban agriculture community
- Explore and design innovative land tenure opportunities
- Integrate urban agriculture innovation into policy and programs
- Measure the impact of urban agriculture and identify models in NYC

## **PULSES in Urban Agriculture**

**EDUCATION** – One of our most popular initiatives this past year was the Reimagining Farm to School in NYC initiative. Parents, teachers, and students have all indicated that urban farm and farmer engagement is the type of agriculture programming and activity that they would like to see more of in city schools.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT** – The New York City urban agriculture community has expressed strong interest in the potential for scaling up its operations and gaining access to paid city contract opportunities.

**GREEN SPACE** – Now more than ever, New Yorkers are valuing their green spaces for health, respite, wellness and education, demonstrating interest in, and enthusiasm for, innovative approaches to developing agriculture spaces in New York City.



# *Foster Future Urban Agriculture & Climate Leaders*

## **Initiative: Implement Reimagining Farm to School in NYC**

**Progress Snapshot:** The Reimagining Farm to School in NYC initiative is a two-year pilot in collaboration with the New York City Public Schools Office of Food and Nutrition Services (NYCPS OFNS) and Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest NY (CCE Harvest NY), which is now entering its final year. MOUA utilized New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Patrick Leahy Farm to School grant funds to design and implement an equitable agriculture-based approach to resource public school students, urban gardeners, and regional food/farm businesses. New York City public school students ranging from elementary to high school grades are provided with the opportunity to build relationships with local farmers and learn directly about farm topics ranging from the seasonality of crops to the critical life cycle of food. Students learned about community gardens in their neighborhoods and were inspired to share their own food stories and recipes from their homes and families. Select school groups also participated in immersive cooking demonstrations led by a community chef, courtesy of Just Food, a food justice non-profit, that used locally grown fresh produce. The learning goes both ways for students and farmers, as farmers also go to the schools to deliver additional educational instruction and observe what students are growing in their classrooms and/or school gardens. Additionally, 16 schools were selected to receive funding to refurbish or develop their school gardens with technical assistance provided by project partner GrowNYC, an agriculture-based nonprofit.

### **Year Ahead**

- Conduct nine school visits, seven on-farm visits, and three cooking demonstrations
- Complete school garden builds and refurbishments for 16 public schools
- Scale up the Reimagining Farm to School in NYC initiative to reach more NYCPS students and gardens

### **Impacts**

**5** urban farm visits conducted  
**3** classroom visits conducted  
**100** NYCPS students engaged  
**5** urban farmers engaged  
**16** NYCPS with gardens engaged

**“It was excellent, I was a sous chef! I helped prepare a delicious salad dressing. It was cool to look, touch, and taste all of the plants.”**

*– P.S. 721X student*

**“The Farm to School program provides P.S. 154 students with hands-on opportunities to learn about sustainability, healthy eating, and urban farming. Our students thrive when they get to plant, harvest, and taste. They are engrossed in each experience.**

**Their excitement is palpable! ”**

*– Alison Coviello, Principal, P.S. 154/Jonathan Hyatt*



## Strengthen Local & Cultural Food Systems

### Initiative: Launch NYC School Food EATS

**Progress Snapshot:** NYC School Food Enhancing Accessibility, Training, & Support (NYC School Food EATS), the city's first farmer/producer business procurement training, kicked off this fall. In collaboration with NYCPS OFNS and CCE Harvest NY, the multi-month program is designed specifically for regional small-to-mid-scale food and farm businesses that are often left out of city vendor contract opportunities. The training covers critical knowledge, best practices, and resources in order to minimize barriers to the New York City school food procurement process. NYC School Food EATS aims to strengthen the linkages within our regional food system to support the sustainability of historically disadvantaged farmers while increasing healthy, culturally relevant food supply in the city's cafeterias and classrooms. The NYSDAM Farm to School grant program provided funding for NYC School Food EATS.



# NYC EATS

is a MOUA initiative in collaboration with other city agencies to build stronger connections between New York State/New York City farmers and New Yorkers through healthy local food access, trainings, and resource sharing. NYC School Food EATS is the first series to launch.

### Year Ahead

- Implement NYC School Food EATS training
- Develop other NYC EATS training programs

### Impacts

**9** small-to-mid-scale food and farm businesses in the first cohort

## Cultivating Economic Development

### Initiative: Grow business opportunities for emerging urban agriculture & food entrepreneurs

**Progress Snapshot:** In New York City, 89 percent of businesses are small businesses with fewer than 20 employees. Increasing workforce and green jobs in the city's food, climate, and urban agriculture sectors will increase opportunities for New Yorkers who want to transition their passions into starting small businesses and make New York City stronger together. MOUA works to foster economic development opportunities for emerging entrepreneurs to improve pathways to city procurement and to reduce barriers to useful business certification programs like the NYC Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE). In collaboration with the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS), MOUA conducted free M/WBE Jumpstart Training and Certification Workshops for small city-based farmers and producers. MOUA will continue its interagency efforts to explore and create new opportunities in land use agreements, food procurement contracts, and urban agriculture maintenance plans. These efforts will foster more paid opportunities for emerging and qualified businesses and generate climate-smart impact throughout the city.

#### Year Ahead

- Continue to conduct free M/WBE Training & Certification Jumpstart Workshops in collaboration with SBS
- Develop outreach strategy to increase number of eligible participants in sessions
- Collaborate with relevant city agencies to develop climate and urban agriculture-based procurement and maintenance contracts

#### Impacts

**3** SBS/MOUA Jumpstart Sessions

**47** firms participating

**5** businesses M/WBE certified

**9** food and farm small businesses in pipeline

**“The MOUA/SBS Jumpstart sessions were instrumental in helping StrivEquity Consulting LLC achieve M/WBE certification and secure a city contract. This support has been crucial to our collaboration with MOUA and NYCPS OFNS on the Reimagining Farm to School in NYC Initiative, where we engage historically disadvantaged farmers to enhance local food procurement for NYC schools. I highly recommend the Jumpstart pathway for small business owners looking to elevate their business.”**

– David DeVaughn



## *Bolster Existing Community Gardens and Urban Farms*

### **Initiative: Strengthen stakeholder engagement and data collection within the city's urban agriculture community**

**Progress Snapshot:** MOUA completed the initial phase of urban agriculture data collection strategy. The goal is to call attention to the importance of urban agriculture data and to measure health, food, and climate benefits in the city and the U.S. MOUA is developing a community-based research data collection tool and information hub that will support the office's efforts to gather, observe, and report findings. (To learn more about MOUA's efforts to collect urban agriculture data, go to page 12). MOUA will also strengthen our grassroots engagement with state and federal governmental offices such as NYSDAM, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS), and USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (OUAIP), aiming to increase awareness and access to federal resources and technical assistance for city land stewards and producers.

**Impacts**

**80+** panels, community events, and other outreach conducted to lift up the critical importance of NYC urban agriculture

**Urban Agriculture Grant Opportunities**

*FALL FUNDING ROUNDUP*

- 1** **USDA People's Garden Initiative**  
 USDA and Just Food will award funding up to \$10,000, to New York City community gardens. Gardens that have previously not applied for, or received, similar funding are encouraged to apply.  
**Deadline:** 12/01/2023
- 2** **KidsGardening Youth Garden Grant 2024**  
 Fifty organizations will be awarded \$500 in funding and a collection of gardening supplies for their youth garden program.  
**Deadline:** 12/15/2023

*Social media post from the seasonal MOUA Funding Roundup launched this year.*

### **Year Ahead**

- **Launch NYC Urban Agriculture Explorer Hub in Fall 2024**
- **Launch NYC's first-ever Urban Agriculture Data Day event in January 2025**





## City Land Tenure & Activity

### Initiative: Explore and design innovative land tenure opportunities

**Progress Snapshot:** This year, MOUA completed Phase 1 of its land tenure and activity research. In the initial phase, we began to explore existing citywide land inventory datasets, new agriculture-based maintenance contracts feasibility, and regulation review. We expanded the initiative to include commercial and city-owned building rooftops as potential development areas for the co-location of food production and solar energy generation using agrivoltaics models in 2024. (To learn more about agrivoltaics, go to page 10).

**Impacts** **95k+** Underutilized city-owned land parcels mapped<sup>1</sup>

*To increase and protect greenspaces, we are developing an urban agriculture criterion to assess the feasibility of climate-smart activities like food production, stormwater absorption, carbon sequestration through soil and solar adoption on underutilized sites. This criterion will also help inform new land use agreements and urban agriculture maintenance plans that can create green jobs, workforce development, and educational opportunities in the city.*

### Year Ahead

- Identify underutilized land parcels for scaled food production and other commercial activity
- Identify underutilized land parcels for urban agriculture and other climate mitigation projects
- Develop new urban agriculture-based maintenance contracts and procurement pathways



<sup>1</sup> [NYC Open Data for DCAS LL48-2011 dataset utilized.](#)

## *Climate-Smart & Innovative Urban Agriculture*

### **Initiative: Integrate urban agriculture innovation into policy and programs**

**Progress Snapshot:** MOUA continued to explore opportunities for intra-agency collaborations to advance urban agriculture priorities in city, state, and federal policy. MOUA is embarking on a pilot project focused on developing New York City rooftops with agrivoltaics - the co-location of solar energy and plants - for both food production and sustainable energy generation on rooftops. We are exploring both private community partner and city site approaches to identify sites such as New York City schools, cultural institutions, and other city buildings. Our community site rooftop urban agrivoltaics pilot was entered into the C40 Reinventing Cities global competition, in which professional multi-disciplinary teams compete to transform underutilized sites in cities into exemplars of sustainability and climate resilience. MOUA also worked with NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) and City Council legislative staff to inform urban agriculture recommendations for the City of Yes for Economic Opportunity zoning initiative, which allows for a greater breadth of urban agriculture business development. City of Yes for Economic Opportunity was approved by the City Council in June.

MOUA met with multiple state elected representatives and spoke at the New York State Capitol on Earth Day Lobby Day to advocate for increased free water infrastructure in growing green spaces. On the federal side, MOUA worked with U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow's (D-MI) legislative staff and stakeholders, to provide policy recommendations for the upcoming Farm Bill. MOUA met with representatives from USDA agencies such as NRCS and FSA to explore increasing green infrastructure, conservation practices, and technical assistance for New York City's gardens and farms. MOUA delivered testimony to the New York City Council on a range of urban agriculture topics including data collection and land tenure. Additionally, MOUA began research on climate mitigation approaches such as carbon sequestration techniques that utilize silica-based rock dust soil amendments.

### **Year Ahead**

- Ongoing advocacy for climate-smart agriculture, small farm viability, urban agriculture, and innovative production in the future Farm Bill
- Launch and develop urban agrivoltaics pilot project at community site
- Continue to identify city sites for future urban agrivoltaics projects
- Kickoff MOUA/CCE rock dust urban trials in underutilized land parcels
- Continue to collaborate with DCP and other agencies to gather community engagement data and inform city recommendations on urban agriculture, climate resiliency, and food systems



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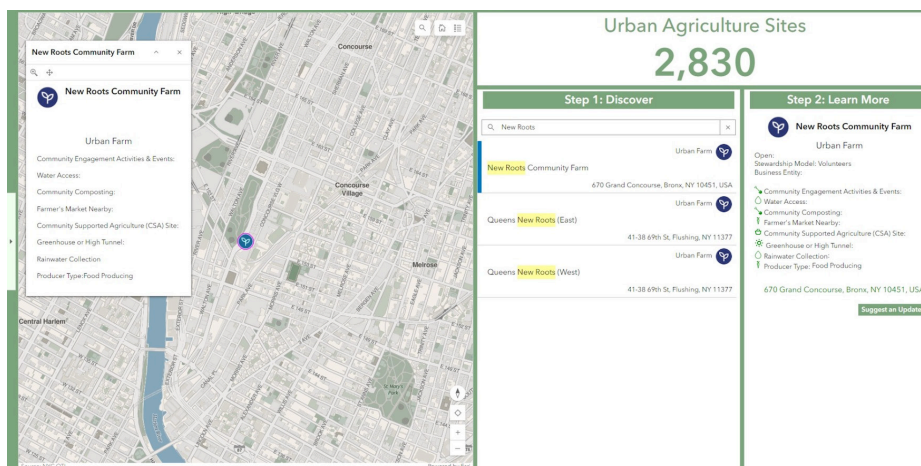
**“Great day in Albany with the Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice, legislators, and 27 environmental organizations for Earth Day Lobby Day! We are here to advocate for innovative nature-based solutions that can address costly impacts of climate change while increasing food production and climate resiliency in our neighborhoods.”**

*– Qiana Mickie*

# Cultivating NYC Urban Agriculture Data & Research

**Initiative:** Measure the impact of urban agriculture and identify models in NYC

**Progress Snapshot:** MOUA completed Phase 1 of its urban agriculture data collection strategy. MOUA developed, built, and will launch a beta version of the urban agriculture data map and dashboard, the MOUA Explorer Hub. The hub will utilize existing datasets for school gardens, urban farms, and community gardens and plans to include other models in the future. It is scheduled for public release on the MOUA website in Winter 2024. MOUA will continue to engage stakeholders to help inform its urban agriculture data effort from collection to publishing, through varied community engagement activities in the coming year. Ongoing engagement like events, field visits, and interactive tools will support MOUA's endeavor to build new metrics for urban agriculture and share data to demonstrate its impact.



## Impact

**2,830** urban agriculture sites such as urban farms, community, school, and learning gardens are currently identified in the MOUA Explorer Hub

## Year Ahead

- MOUA will kick off the new year with the first Urban Agriculture Data Day, convening in early 2025
  - Roll out additional datasets for urban agriculture models to be included in the MOUA Explorer Hub map and urban agriculture data collection effort
  - Continue and broaden stakeholder field research and build new metrics