

THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOODS RESOURCES & RESEARCH WEBINAR SERIES

THE PROMISE OF URBAN AGRICULTURE: COURSES FOR GROWERS AND PLANNERS

WEBINAR NOTES

Meeting Details

Date: 1/16/2024

Time: 1:00pm ET

[View Our Presenter Slides.](#)

[View Our Webinar Recording.](#)

Featured Speakers:

- **Yolanda Gonzalez** – Urban Agriculture Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension Harvest NY Team
- **Molly Riordan** – Director of Institutional Impact, Center for Good Food Purchasing and Co-author of “The Promise of Urban Agriculture”

Project Overview

USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) partnered with [Cornell Small Farms Program](#) and [Rooted](#), the Madison, Wisconsin based center for urban agriculture enterprise and education, to collaborate and develop courses for commercial urban agriculturists, nonprofit organizations, city planners, and policymakers. This project represents an innovative approach to urban agriculture by addressing city planners and policymakers, as well as farmers, taking a holistic approach to support robust urban farming businesses and communities.

The courses, now available on the [Cornell Small Farms Program website](#), educate participants through unique video content and materials about topics including, *Accessing Urban Land for Farming*, *Urban Farm Planning and Management*, and *Sources of Urban Farm Income*. Upon completion of these courses, participants will know the important factors involved in building viable urban farms, understand relevant policy and planning tools, be aware of economic opportunities and risks, and distinguish between effective nonprofit and for-profit business structures.

These courses are informed by [The Promise of Urban Agriculture](#), a national study of commercial farming in urban areas conducted in 2019 by USDA AMS and the Cornell Small Farms Program. This study interviewed urban growers, planners, and other experts across the United States to investigate what conditions must be present for commercial urban agriculture to thrive. Findings from this study helped inform the development of these courses, which focus on topics like assessing land suitability, understanding zoning requirements, accessing new market channels, addressing racial equity, and engaging the surrounding community.

The courses (<https://smallfarmcourses.com/courses/>) are available free to the public until January 31, 2025 and available for a fee after that date.

Series Overview and Learning Objectives

The Promise of Urban Agriculture (PUA) courses provide critical information for building or supporting successful commercial urban farms. The term 'commercial' includes any farm that sells products to support some or all of the farm's activities. PUA 101 and 102 are designed specifically for an urban farmer, PUA 103 is intended for community non-profits, and PUA 201 focuses on teaching city planners and policy makers about urban agriculture. Though each course has a different target audience and is designed as a standalone learning experience, each one includes knowledge that is relevant to all types of audiences.

PUA 101: *Deciding Where to Farm in the City* discusses topics like assessing site suitability, understanding how municipalities regulate urban agriculture in an area, and making connections with the surrounding community. In this course, urban farmers provide first-hand accounts of their experience starting or expanding their urban farm and share recommendations and resources for anyone trying to start or scale their own urban farming business.

PUA 102: *Urban Farm Planning and Management* covers factors that contribute to an economically viable urban farm, including choosing a business model, knowing when to expand the farm, crop planning, analyzing markets, managing on-farm labor, and promoting a strong farm culture.

PUA 103: *Urban Farming by Community Nonprofits* is designed for nonprofit farm staff and members of community organizations that manage urban farms. It goes deeper into the specific concerns of operating an urban farm as a nonprofit including incorporating as a nonprofit, grant writing, and planning for financial viability.

PUA 201: *Urban Agriculture Skills for Planners* helps planners from any size city or municipality understand how urban agriculture is affected by planning priorities, zoning, comprehensive planning, and other regulations. The course also explores strategies to foster inclusive community engagement, sustainability, and equity. PUA 201 is approved for six Certificate Maintenance (CM) credits through the Institute of Certified Planners.

Case Study Farms

The courses utilize video footage and examples provided by the five core case study farms.

- Red Hook Farm. Brooklyn, NY
- The Side Yard Farm & Kitchen, Portland, OR
- Frontline Farming, Denver, CO
- Rooted's Troy Farm, Madison, WI
- Urban Growers Collective, Chicago, IL

At the beginning of the course there is a "Meet the Farmers" section that includes 5-7 minute video overviews of the case study farms. Throughout the course shorten topic specific videos and examples are also included from these case study farms, and other urban farms located throughout the nation.

Example of “Meet the Farmers” video for Troy Farm - [Troy Farm Overview Final.mp4](#)

Additional Farms Highlighted

- City Roots Organic Farm, Columbia, SC
- Brooklyn Grange, Brooklyn, NY
- Love & Carrots, Washington, DC
- Blue Skies Landscaping, Milwaukee, WI
- Gotham Greens, Brooklyn, NY
- Renewable Farms, Anaheim, CA
- Hellgate Farm, Queens, NY
- Mentoring Positives, Madison, WI
- Windy City Harvest, Chicago, IL
- Walnut Way Conservation Corp, Milwaukee, WI
- Earthwork Urban Farm, Detroit, MI

Story Maps of Highlighted Farms

- [City Roots Organic Farm](#)
- [Grow Dat Youth Farm](#)
- [The Green Scheme](#)

A Planner’s Perspective

Throughout the Planners Course, planners working in the below cities are interviewed to provide insights from their experience and guidance to any planners trying to do similar work.

- Atlanta, GA
- Franklin County, OH
- Rochester, NY
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Kansas City, MO

Some Additional Cities Highlighted

- Philadelphia, PA
- Baltimore, MD
- Detroit, MI
- Chicago, IL
- Cleveland, OH
- Albuquerque, NM
- Boston, MA
- East Point, GA
- Kamloops, BC
- Minneapolis, MN
- Fayetteville, AK
- Lawrence, KS