

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 110352)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing Council’s Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold hearings concerning the public benefits created by community gardening and urban agriculture, and the need for the City of Philadelphia to develop policies to promote and facilitate the use of vacant land for gardens and agriculture.

WHEREAS, There are tens of thousands of vacant and abandoned lots in the City of Philadelphia, creating a vast number of tracts of open land, which range in size from individual rowhome parcels to multiple city blocks; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Michael Nutter has pledged to make Philadelphia the “number 1” green city in America, and has established an Office of Sustainability and a “Greenworks” plan in furtherance of that goal; and

WHEREAS, The City’s Parks and Recreation Department has recognized the transformative value of green space in neighborhoods, and created an ambitious “Green 2015” plan to transform 500 acres of empty and underused land into parks and community spaces; and

WHEREAS, Evidence demonstrates that greening vacant lots would increase the value of surrounding homes by 30%; and

WHEREAS, Many Philadelphians continue to face hunger and food insecurity, with more than one third of residents in some sections of the city unable to afford or find enough food for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, All over Philadelphia, people are gardening on lots they do not own, for a diverse range of reasons: to access fresh produce in areas without supermarkets; to grow the fruits and vegetables of their home countries and pass these traditions to the next generation; to feed the hungry; to reclaim and revive long-blighted lots and add value to neighboring properties; to remediate soil that has been contaminated and polluted; to spend time in the sun and fresh air; to add beauty and color to the streetscape; to educate

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about nutrition and environmental issues; to connect with others in a common gathering place; and

WHEREAS, Gardeners have struggled to obtain ownership or secure leasing rights for long-term existing gardens, resulting in the permanent loss of a number of valued gardens over the past fifteen years, and faced similar difficulties in accessing land to start new gardens; and

WHEREAS, These challenges are heightened for many low-income, minority, and immigrant communities due to lack of the economic resources, political power, and access to legal assistance that would help them gain and protect land to garden; and

WHEREAS, Many Philadelphia neighborhoods struggle to identify new forms of economic development to bring jobs, investment, and stability following the decline of industries that had formerly shaped those neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, New businesses and nonprofits are seeking to locate in Philadelphia, and existing ones trying to expand their operations, in order to use the plentiful vacant land for varied forms of urban agriculture and farming; and

WHEREAS, Urban agriculture projects have been impeded or prevented because of difficulty acquiring or leasing publically-owned land at terms compatible with the development of agriculturally viable and economically sustainable endeavors, as well as difficulty acquiring tax-delinquent land abandoned by private owners; and

WHEREAS, Chicago, Seattle, and Vancouver are leading examples of cities that provide strong, effective, manageable supports for community gardening and urban agriculture, and are among models that Philadelphia should consider as it strives to become a national leader in sustainability, greening, and food access; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia must develop strategic policies and improve coordination among City agencies so that vacant land can truly be leveraged as a resource for community empowerment and development; therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless hold hearings concerning the public benefits created by community gardening and urban agriculture, and the need for the City of Philadelphia to develop policies to promote and facilitate the use of vacant land for gardens and agriculture.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twelfth of May, 2011.

Anna C. Verna
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Sanchez, Blackwell, Jones, Reynolds Brown and Green

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Sanchez, Blackwell, Jones, Reynolds Brown and Green