

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on the Environment to hold public hearings on Urban Agriculture in Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia intends to grow its sustainable, local food system through the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food locally; and

WHEREAS, Through Greenworks Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Food Charter, the City of Philadelphia has set targets to create more equitable access to healthy food in neighborhoods, improve the environment and public health, and stimulate the economy by increasing access to local, fresh, and healthy food; and

WHEREAS, Urban Agriculture provides an excellent opportunity for a greener, more efficient way to supply diverse Philadelphia neighborhoods with local, fresh, healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food; and

WHEREAS, Intensive Farm Systems, including intensive food production, animal husbandry, aquaculture, agroforestry, beekeeping and horticulture, are growing in cities across the nation; and

WHEREAS, The history of Urban Agriculture in Philadelphia dates back at least as far as the Vacant Lot Cultivation Association of the late nineteenth century, and many of the City's existing gardens have thrived for decades; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is currently home to hundreds of community gardens, supported by a network of urban farmers, gardeners and social justice organizations for whom the opportunity to expand urban agriculture is a priority; and

WHEREAS, Urban Agriculture has been shown to increase sustainable sources of fresh local food supporting underserved neighborhoods in Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Urban Agriculture also provides significant co-benefits to Philadelphia's neighborhoods, including playing a role in managing stormwater runoff, mitigating rising urban temperatures, developing youth leadership, and building social cohesion; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's 2012 zoning code created a framework for urban agriculture uses, making gardening and farming permitted uses in most parts of the City; and

WHEREAS, Locally grown foods would expand business for many of Philadelphia's local farm-to-table restaurants and food industries; and

WHEREAS, The United States Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Centers for Disease Control Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry have recently funded the collaboration of multiple city and nongovernmental agencies to invest in improving soil safety for local food production; and

WHEREAS, The five-year Strategic Plan of the Philadelphia Land Bank calls for reinforcing open space

initiatives & urban agriculture, as well as preserving existing community gardens and identifying opportunities for larger-scale food production; 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 formerly shaped those neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Urban Agriculture provides opportunities for long-term, sustainable employment, particularly for returning citizens, some of whom have opportunities to learn agricultural and horticultural skills while incarcerated; and

WHEREAS, There is need to continue to increase available resources for Urban Agriculture projects, particularly in historically disinvested neighborhoods and neighborhoods with large amounts of abandoned property; and

WHEREAS, Increasing land values and associated real estate development pressures have put many community gardens and urban farms at risk despite in many cases having existed for decades; and

WHEREAS, The problem of securing legal land access and preserving gardens and farms for the long term has long been one of the major barriers to increasing the viability of Philadelphia's Urban Agriculture sector; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, The Committee on the Environment is hereby authorized to hold public hearings in support of the growth of urban agriculture in the city of Philadelphia.