Legislation Text

File #: 240347, **Version:** 0

Authorizing the Committee on the Environment to hold hearings to examine the progress made since introduction of the Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan, to convene agencies and stakeholders needed to make further progress, and to create an implementation strategy to expeditiously meet the goals of the Plan.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan, "Growing From the Root," is the City's first ever urban agriculture plan, detailing a bold vision for Philadelphia's future food system and touching on land, production, preparation, consumption, food waste reduction, and the people holding this system together; and

WHEREAS, Work on the Plan began in 2019 when Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, in collaboration with Soil Generation and Interface Studio, convened over 650 residents and key stakeholders - including local gardeners, farmers, educators, students, City agencies, Indigenous groups, nonprofits and grassroots organizations. The Plan was publicly released in April 2023 and, since its launch, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation has taken significant strides to meet its goal of reshaping the City's food system; and

WHEREAS, In Philadelphia, almost one-quarter of the population lives in poverty, and as of 2021 there were 479,740 food insecure residents in the Philabundance program. Urban gardens and farms have the potential to play a key role in addressing the widespread food insecurity that results from this poverty. They can do this by providing fresh, low-cost, local, and easily accessible produce to families throughout the entire City; and

WHEREAS, Urban agriculture fosters food sovereignty and self-determination, allowing communities to reclaim autonomy over their food system, preserve cultural heritage, and nurture holistic community building, abundance, and healing; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is home to approximately 450 active agricultural spaces. This equals nearly 130 acres of land including individual gardens, community gardens, school gardens, orchards, community farms, and market farms. These spaces hold massive potential to not only provide food, but also to act as safe, community-building spaces to engage and stabilize their neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan is a ten-year roadmap that will support sustainable agricultural activity and help contribute to more just and equitable development of the City; and

WHEREAS, The Plan uplifts Philadelphia's rich history of urban farming and confronts the legacy of structural racism and land-based oppression, while focusing on the values of transparency, racial and economic justice, and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, The Plan centers on six key goals: (1) providing access and ownership to growing spaces in all neighborhoods, (2) building support for urban agriculture initiatives into the City's policies and programs, (3) investing in existing and new systems to support a sustainable and fair food system, (4) supporting locally-sourced, nutritious meals and increase fresh food access, (5) meeting existing zero-waste commitments and create new ones, and (6) recognizing the role urban agriculture can play in the lives of the people and communities that steward and hold up the City's food system; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Parks and Recreation's Farm Philly Urban Agriculture Program is responsible for administering the Urban Agriculture Plan; and

WHEREAS, Robust funding for Farm Philly to develop public services and infrastructure for agriculture will ensure the provision of essential resources, technical assistance, and educational programs to support urban farming initiatives across the City; and

WHEREAS, Such essential resources, assistance and educational programs include the reestablishment of a Municipal Farm, the implementation of a Land Access Program, increasing the amount of Community Compost Network sites, developing The Agricultural Resource Center, and expanding the Philadelphia Food Justice Initiative; and

WHEREAS, The re-establishment of a Municipal Farm will serve as a vital hub for public food production, public knowledge sharing, skill development, and resource exchange, fostering a spirit of communal collaboration and solidarity within Philadelphia's urban agriculture community; and

WHEREAS, The implementation of a Land Access Program at Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, alongside initiatives to enhance transparency within the Department, will facilitate equitable access to park land and resources for urban agriculture projects, addressing systemic barriers and fostering community self-determination; and

WHEREAS, Increasing the amount of Community Compost Network sites supports grassroots, community-led, and municipal efforts to compost and divert food waste will contribute significantly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing soil health, and promoting environmental sustainability, warranting formal recognition and continued support from the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The Agriculture Resource Center will provide a free all-in-one center for gardening and land stewardship needs, such as the tools necessary to start a garden or farm, fruit and vegetable seeds, compost, mulch and gardening knowledge in the form of public workshops. Residents can expand and cultivate food production and their agricultural knowledge by utilizing the tool library, outdoor learning space, and engaging in community programming. The Center operates on the principles of sharing and solidarity economy, aiming to amplify the impact of individual efforts, strengthen community well-being, and build resilient, sustainable communities beyond crisis response; and

WHEREAS, The financial expansion of the Health Department and Reinvestment Fund's existing Philadelphia Food Justice Initiative (PFJI) to include Recommendation 1.12 of the Urban Agriculture Plan, which calls for the establishment and sustenance of a Food and Land Justice Fund dedicated to the preservation and infrastructure support of community gardens and farms, is essential for advancing equitable access to food and land resources, as well as increasing awareness of the program and the amount grants given to community organizations without setting up a duplicative fund; and

WHEREAS, Finally, recognizing the importance of Indigenous land back and rematriation organizing, and Indigenous Peoples Day work is integral to fostering a deeper connection between Native and non-Native residents to the land, acknowledging Indigenous history, presence, and futures; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia City Council acknowledges the critical importance of investing in urban agriculture to transform our food system, enrich our environment, and stabilize our communities and exploring solutions

for preserving gardens, farms, and orchards on public land; and

WHEREAS, The principles of agroecology, ecology, and climate action are integral to sustainable urban agriculture practices and must be prioritized in all City-led initiatives and policies; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia City Council formally recognizes the Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan as a roadmap for the City and recognizes urban agriculture as a critical and productive land use that should be preserved and that it contributes to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of all Philadelphians; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Committee on the Environment to hold hearings to examine the progress made since introduction of the Philadelphia Urban Agriculture Plan, to convene agencies and stakeholders needed to make further progress, and to create an implementation strategy to expeditiously meet the goals of the Plan.