



# REIMAGINE HOW CITIES GROW

*Supporting Local Food Systems through Community-Driven Planning*

# What Is a Local Food System?

The food system involves all the steps food follows as it moves from the farm to your table. This process includes farmers, processors, distributors, and all residents as consumers.

The journey that our food takes through the food system is influenced by a number of factors including economics and politics, culture and ecosystems, policy and funding.

A local food system shortens the distance between food producers and consumers - literally and figuratively. Transportation, processing, and storage needs decrease, community connections grow, and investment in the local ecosystem and economy increase.



# Why Invest in Local Food Systems?

Strong local food systems support healthy communities, strengthen resilient local economies, and cultivate sustainable practices.

Economic Vitality	Wellness	Sustainability	Equity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep spending local with profitable farms, market gardens, and food businesses</li><li>• Support local entrepreneurs</li><li>• Create good jobs and career pathways</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase access to fresh, healthy food</li><li>• Share gardening, cooking, and preserving skills</li><li>• Enjoy great tasting local produce</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conserve and utilize green spaces</li><li>• Reduce food waste</li><li>• Build healthy soil and water resources</li><li>• Protect pollinators</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on access to good food for all</li><li>• Honor cultural diversity and traditions</li><li>• Promote food sovereignty and community empowerment</li></ul>



## Where Has This Been Done Before?

In metro Atlanta, the following cities have adopted City Agriculture Plans:

- City of East Point (2021)
- City of Alpharetta (2022)
- City of Jonesboro (targeted for 2023)

This work is part of a **growing national trend** to plan for equitable and sustainable local food systems:

- 18 states have developed state level food system plans with another 11 in development
- 550 regional and local food system plans are in action nationally
- 320 Food Policy Councils are working across the country with coalitions of government officials, nonprofits, and growers to advocate for food and agriculture policy change

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<https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/uploads/files/National-Food-System-Plans-and-Charters-Report-Sept-2021-Printer-Version.pdf>

<https://www.planning.org/blog/9219551/food-for-the-people-planning-for-equitable-regional-food-systems/>

<https://foodpolicynetworks.org/councils>

# Support Healthy Communities

Potential plan recommendations to support healthy communities could include the types of policies and programs below. These will depend on the community's priorities and the city's individual assets.

Increase Access to Fresh & Affordable Food	Create Opportunities to Share Knowledge	Celebrate Culturally Diverse Food & Traditions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase points of sale for local food including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Zoning for on-site sales</li> <li>◦ Expanding farmers markets</li> <li>◦ Recommending standards for local procurement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Expand amount of food grown locally including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Equipping home growers with tools and skills</li> <li>◦ Expanding community gardens and farms</li> <li>◦ Promoting edible landscaping</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand accessible education on growing, preserving, and preparing food</li> <li>• Promote learning opportunities for all generations</li> <li>• Promote expansion or development of school and youth programs</li> <li>• Build on existing community assets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage educational opportunities based around diverse growing practices and food preparation</li> <li>• Promote and maintain local crop varieties and underutilized crops by increasing exposure and market opportunities</li> <li>• Ensure diversity and power sharing in all decision making processes</li> </ul>

## Example Strategy Recommendation

### Modify city zoning code to allow for on-site farm and garden sales

In 2021, Atlanta updated its zoning code to allow urban farms to sell their produce directly to consumers at on-site farm stands in residential zones. This was part of the city's effort to ensure 85% of its residents have access to fresh food within a half-mile of their homes. The new farm stand ordinance not only creates economic opportunities for farmers, but also increases access to hyper-local food within Atlanta neighborhoods.

# City of East Point, GA

The City of East Point adopted the first metro Atlanta City Agriculture Plan in April 2021. Since then, local food and agriculture leaders have been working hard to integrate the plan into the city's programs and development including:

- Receiving a 3-year, \$250,000 USDA Regional Food System Partnership grant for implementation
- Collaborating with 30+ institutional, farm and garden, and nonprofit partners to design and fund local food programs
- Staffing a full-time Urban Agriculture Manager for two years
- Forming a Local Food Ecosystem Commission to advise the Mayor and City Council



"This plan is going to be a gamechanger for urban agriculture and building local food ecosystems across the nation. With City Council's approval, guidance from our partner organizations and key resources in place, the East Point City Agriculture Plan is poised to set the standard on providing a framework for equitable access to healthy food in communities similar to East Point."

- Deana Holiday Ingraham, City of East Point Mayor



# Strengthen Resilient Local Economies

*Potential plan recommendations to strengthen resilient local economies could include the types of policies and programs below. These will depend on the community's priorities and the city's individual assets.*

Promote Inclusive Economic Growth	Encourage Local Entrepreneurship	Strengthen Connections in the Local Food System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work with economic development on incentive programs to attract local food businesses</li><li>• Conduct feasibility studies for new and expanded local food businesses</li><li>• Promote agritourism activities</li><li>• Create a fund for small business loans for growers and local food businesses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Propose special use and conditional use permits that allow for unique food system enterprises</li><li>• Leverage resources for long term projects such as community kitchens and processing facilities</li><li>• Establish a city representative as a resource guide for new food and agriculture enterprises</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connect food businesses and growers to consumers in innovative ways like online shopping opportunities</li><li>• Create food policy councils or commissions of knowledgeable stakeholders</li></ul>

## *Example Strategy*

### **Form a Food Policy Council or City Commission to advise on local food and agriculture strategy and investment**

In 2021, the City of East Point appointed a Local Food Ecosystem Commission to advise the Mayor and Council on all matters related to local food and agriculture. This group has been integral in guiding City Agriculture Plan implementation projects, managing funding opportunities, and educating the community. Establishing a formal commission ensures that the city will continue to prioritize local food systems work with the input of knowledgeable stakeholders.

# City of Alpharetta, GA

After a year of community engagement and planning, the City of Alpharetta unanimously adopted the region's second City Agriculture Plan in December of 2022.

Alpharetta is uniquely positioned to facilitate their plan's implementation with Community Agriculture staff embedded in their department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Services.

With guidance from local food leaders, the City is prioritizing projects such as:

- An additional working farm on city-owned land
- A community-composting drop off program to divert food waste
- Expanded educational programming focused on growing, preserving, and preparing fresh, local food
- A cooperative network to connect home gardeners with resources and market opportunities



**"This Plan will help our growing city tap into and build on its agricultural roots. We are all dependent on agriculture, and the closer we can be to our food and those who grow it, the healthier we will be."**

**- Amanda Musilli, City of Alpharetta Community Services Manager**



**"The opportunity to develop a comprehensive plan for agriculture is really forward-thinking and will help ensure that Alpharetta is the community we want to leave for our grandchildren."**

**- Jim Gilvin, City of Alpharetta Mayor**



# Cultivate Sustainable Practices

Potential plan recommendations to cultivate sustainable practices could include the types of policies and programs below. These will depend on the community's priorities and the city's individual assets.

Conserve & Utilize Green Spaces	Reduce Food Waste & Support Healthy Soils	Protect Pollinators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Amend zoning regulations to specify and expand zones where various types of agriculture and associated uses/structures are allowed</li><li>• Encourage use of city-owned land for growing spaces like community gardens</li><li>• Propose partnerships centered around community growing spaces with HOAs, mixed-use developments, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Propose steps for scaled composting options like municipal partnerships, community drop off networks, and home composting resources</li><li>• Encourage regenerative growing practices through educational opportunities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revise landscaping and nuisance ordinances to allow for non-ornamental, native, and edible home and city growing</li><li>• Pursue broader certifications such as Bee City USA and Community Wildlife Habitat Certified</li></ul>

## *Example Strategy*

### **Encourage the use of city-owned land for growing spaces**

AgLanta "Grows-A-Lot" is a City of Atlanta program that invites entrepreneurs to apply for a 5-year renewable license on a vacant, city-owned property to start a new garden, farm, or food forest in Atlanta. AgLanta "Grows-A-Lot" partners with Georgia Power Right-of-Ways (ROWS) that represent miles of cleared land across Atlanta. Other cities such as Seattle, Toronto, and Los Angeles have developed creative agreements with utility companies, nonprofits and farmers to transform ROWs into farms and trail networks.

# What Is a City Agriculture Plan?

A City Agriculture Plan provides a roadmap for a community to achieve its vision of a vibrant and sustainable local food system over the next 5-10 years.

Cities that engage in the City Agriculture Planning program will:

- Build community around local food and agriculture
- Formalize local government's commitment to prioritizing health and sustainability
- Attract innovative ideas and valuable resources to their cities

Creating a visionary plan takes time, collaboration, and investment from city stakeholders. This involves a community-driven process that brings together growers, residents, and city officials to collaborate and leverage community strengths. The plan outlines specific policy and program recommendations that can be implemented with grant funding and achieved through collaboration.

Hear from local metro Atlanta leaders about how impactful City Agriculture Planning can be:



City Agriculture Plans are created in partnership with the Atlanta Regional Commission.

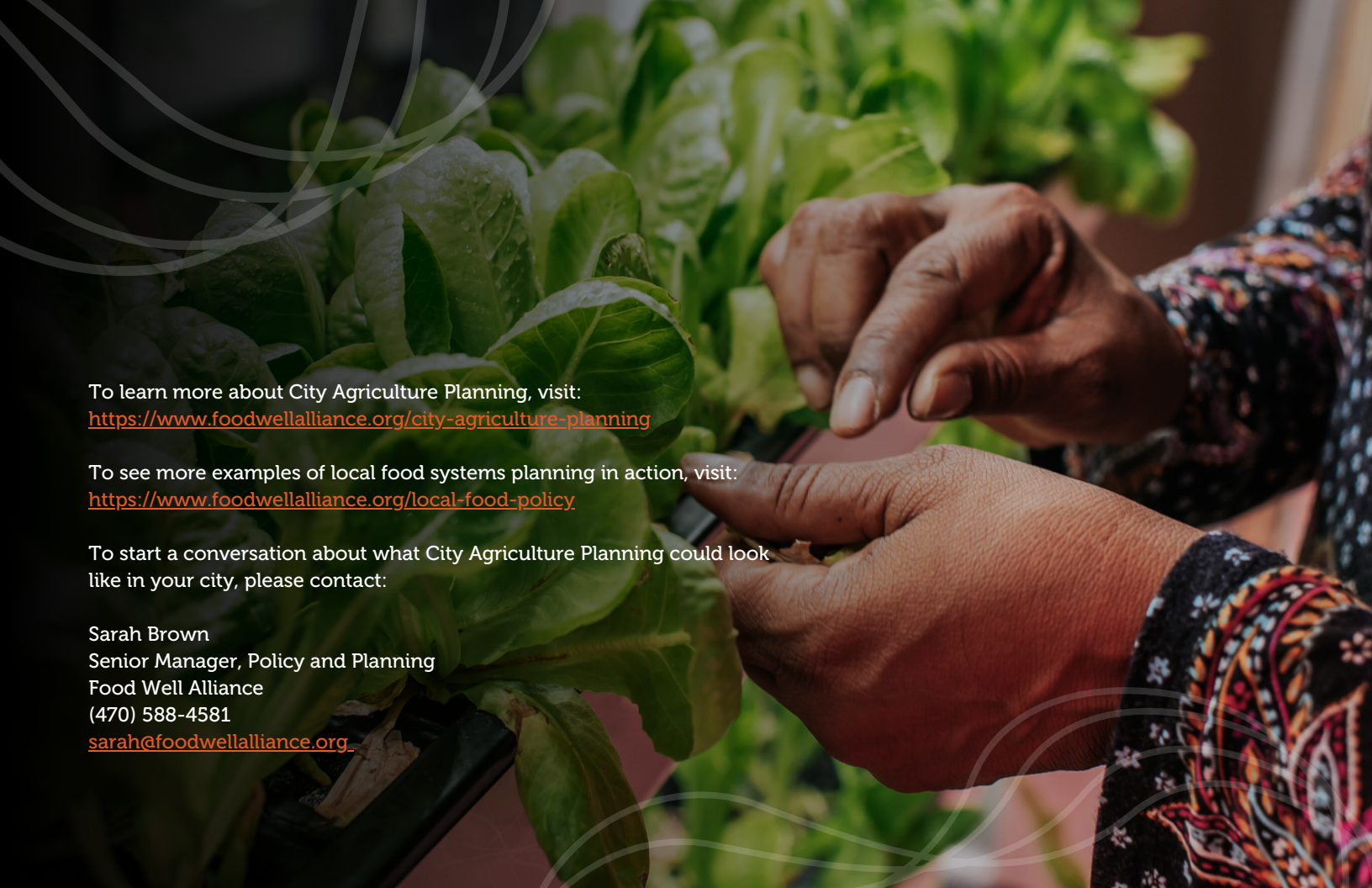


# City Agriculture Plan Timeline

We believe successful City Agriculture Plans are possible when cities and community members are equally engaged in the process. When city officials and diverse community leaders plan together, everyone stands to benefit. Here's how it works.



Application Phase	Community Engagement Phase	Planning Phase	Implementation Phase
<p>All cities in the 5-county metro Atlanta area are encouraged to apply!</p> <p>City applications are evaluated based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment of city staff to facilitate the process</li> <li>• Enthusiasm of residents excited to participate</li> <li>• Diverse food system stakeholders interested in working together to leverage the plan</li> </ul>	<p>Food Well Alliance hosts events, administers surveys, and facilitates focus groups and stakeholder interviews to collect feedback on residents' vision for their local food system. This data is used to set priorities for the City Agriculture Plan.</p>	<p>The Atlanta Regional Commission leads a diverse Steering Committee of city officials and local food leaders in a formal planning process.</p>	<p>Cities use grant funding and collaborative partnerships to implement local food system projects prioritized in the plan.</p>



To learn more about City Agriculture Planning, visit:

<https://www.foodwellalliance.org/city-agriculture-planning>

To see more examples of local food systems planning in action, visit:

<https://www.foodwellalliance.org/local-food-policy>

To start a conversation about what City Agriculture Planning could look like in your city, please contact:

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