



FROM	NAME & TITLE	LISA MCNEILLY, SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR	 CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	OFFICE OF SUSTAINABILITY 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET 8 th FLOOR		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #21-0064R INVESTIGATIONAL HEARING—URBAN FARMING		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and
 Members of the City Council
 City Hall, Room 400
 100 North Holliday Street
Position: Favorable

February 9, 2022

The Office of Sustainability is in receipt of City Council Bill #21-0064R, for the purpose of briefing the council on the current state of urban agriculture across the city, exploring how best to support urban farms and community gardens and what if any revisions of current standards can provide a more accommodating environment to support the success of urban farming operations.

The 2019 Sustainability Plan (formally adopted by the Planning Commission on April 22, 2019) supports the expansion of Urban Agriculture and protecting existing farms through policies, administrative coordination, and enhanced funding. Specifically, the Plan outlines a wide range of strategies and actions in the Urban Agriculture chapter, including:

Strategy #1: Create agriculture land-use policies that encourage urban farms and local food production.

Strategy #2: Ensure farmers and gardeners can produce food, flowers, fiber, and fuel in ways that are safe, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible—and educate residents on opportunities to support and engage with them.

Strategy #3: Support growers to create financially viable urban agriculture

The Office of Sustainability acknowledges African Americans and other historically oppressed groups have been systematically stripped of opportunities for land and property ownership and realizes Baltimore should reassess its commitment to prioritizing opportunities for long-term urban agriculture activities that address historic disinvestment in marginalized communities. Continuing these efforts is vital for a more equitable Baltimore.

As of 2022, we estimate that there are at least 29 active urban farms and 75 active food-producing community gardens within the city limits, with a great potential to expand these numbers. Our goal is to ensure that residents that have historically been denied access to land and to fresh, healthy food are those that benefit most from urban agricultural opportunities. We are working closely with the Department of Housing & Community Development to identify parcels of City-owned land in neighborhoods where residents want to see more urban agriculture and looking at the best ways to offer them for use and are raising funds for the installation of new water lines.

In addition, we are working with the Department of Planning's Food Policy and Planning Division (FPP), the Baltimore City Department of Recreation & Parks, and the Farm Alliance of Baltimore to support the creation of a new demonstration and incubator farm training site in Farring-Baybrook Park. This farm will help build a resilient local food supply chain and train the next generation of BIPOC urban farmers. FPP's ARPA proposal includes funds to support the infrastructure of this farm. In considering City policies that could be updated to better support urban agriculture, we are particularly interested in uplifting the recommendations of the Black Yield Institute and the Farm Alliance of Baltimore in their 2021 report *Community Control of Land: The People's Demand for Land Reparations in Baltimore City* (https://drive.google.com/file/d/12I46gvUeNp60rwoIbPxES_skdfDISzVG/view?usp=sharing) for how land is distributed, protected, and connected to utilities.

The Office requests a **favorable** report on City council Bill 21-0064R and looks forward to sharing more information with the Committee on its work to support urban agriculture, growers, and advance the related health, nutritional and economic benefits of urban farming in Baltimore.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Ava Richardson, Sustainability Manager, at 410-396-4556.

LDM/ar

cc: Ms. Natasha Mehu, Mayor's Office
Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office
Mr. Matt Stegman, City Council President's Office
Ms. Nikki Thompson, City Council President's Office
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services
Mr. Matthew Peters, Council Services
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Department of Law
Mr. Chris Ryer, Department of Planning
Ms. Ava Richardson, Department of Planning