

# Audit of Rooftops of City Owned Buildings potentially suitable for Urban Agriculture

Department of Real Estate – John Updike

## **Audit of City Owned Buildings with Rooftops potentially suitable for both commercial and non-commercial Urban Agriculture**

---

The City and County of San Francisco owns over 1,100 buildings scattered over seven counties in Northern California. With the assistance of the City Administrator's Office, the Department of Real Estate connected with environmental consultants that provided some assistance on the best practices and approaches used to analyze building portfolios and begin to identify potential candidate locations for rooftop urban agriculture. It was made clear this will be a multi-step, painstaking process that will take many months.

With the assistance of the Capital Planning staff, the Department of Real Estate began with the database of all non-Enterprise assets owned by the City and County of San Francisco. This list excluded the following departments:

- Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA)
- Airport
- Port
- Mayor's Office of Housing (MOH)
- Public Utilities Commission (PUC)

This list produced 547 buildings. The Department reviewed this list and removed the following:

- All structures of less than 2,000 square feet;
- Structures not capable of carrying the load of a rooftop garden;
- Structures that were industrial in nature (where conflicts between heavy equipment and pedestrians would be problematic);
- Structures of high security (where access is limited, such as jails, police stations);
- Incompatible uses (fire stations, modular buildings, buildings within compounds with high security for entry).

This reduced the list of buildings to 208 buildings. The Department did not pursue SFO Airport assets, due to its location outside the County, and security restrictions. Most likely all MTA assets would be incompatible, with the possible exception of parking garage locations (further investigation to follow). The Department of Real Estate is working closely with colleagues at the PUC, who already have a robust urban agriculture program in place, to review their in-county assets. The Department also plans to work closely with Mayor's Office of Housing staff to review their inventory, recently greatly expanded as a result of the transfer of assets from the Successor Redevelopment Agency.

Real Estate worked with Port staff to review their assets, and after an extensive engineering review, found no assets capable of accepting the weight-bearing load of a green roof.

#### Needs/Concerns:

Next steps involve more in-depth review of the remaining 208 potential building locations (and any other potentially suitable locations of the PUC, MTA or MOH). This will include a structural analysis, security review, and rooftop visit. Visits will focus on whether railings around the perimeter of the roof exist, required exiting from the roof are code compliant for additional rooftop occupancy, type of access to the roof (stairs, ship's ladder or ceiling hatches would rule out a roof for further consideration), vertical circulation within the building and reasonability of bringing tools and volunteers through building to elevators to reach roof. We'll also review existing roof penetrations and eliminate those roofs where no reasonably proximate, flat, unobstructed surface areas are available.

Next steps: The Department of Real Estate will work with the Recreation and Park Department to continue this important process.

# Waiting Lists for Community Gardens – what do other localities do?

---

Participating agency staff: San Francisco Recreation and Park Department – Melinda Stockman, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission – Yolanda Manzone, San Francisco Real Estate Division – John Updike, SF Environment – Mei Ling Hui and John Ribeiro-Broomhead

**Analyze wait lists for residents seeking access to a community garden plot in other localities.**

---

The Recreation and Parks Department, Real Estate Division, Public Utilities Commission, and SF Environment participated in this working group. In addition to focusing on garden waitlists, the group also focused on an inventory of all garden locations and garden related programs; additional reports have been provided for those work items.

The pod determined it was necessary to request information on coordinated garden waitlist programs in other cities to gain insight into best management practices and learn from their experiences. SF Environment led the research, requesting information from seven municipalities: Chicago, Seattle, Vancouver, New York City, Los Angeles, Austin, and Portland, OR. Data on some programs was gathered online and one city, Portland, Oregon, provided an in-depth interview on their waitlist management program.

It appears that in most municipalities, garden waitlist are managed by each garden individually. Portland reported that their cohesive garden waitlist management program was instituted last year and oversees only gardens within their Recreation and Parks Departments community garden program, which serves approximately 1,800 gardeners. Portland's program allows individuals to sign up for the waitlist at more than one location; once the individual receives a plot they are removed from all waitlists. If the individual wants to move to another plot within their garden, to a larger plot, or another garden altogether, there is a separate waitlist and protocol. Garden plots dues are based on plot size. Portland reported that they have been able to reduce garden wait times through developing a cohesive garden waitlist management program, by providing city staff to cite and remove noncompliant gardeners (as opposed to having the garden coordinator perform this duty), by providing city staff to oversee the reassignment of garden plots and collection of garden dues, and by strategically splitting some of the largest

available plots into 2 or 4 new plots. Portland's coordinated garden waitlist and oversight program requires the equivalent of one full-time staff person, with hours and assignments spread among 2-3 staff, depending on the season.

---

**Update on San Francisco's Program:**

San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) is in the process of changing the administration of waiting lists for all gardens managed as part of the RPD Community Gardens Program. RPD's Community Gardens Manager, Marvin Yee, is leading this process, which involves the consolidation of existing site-specific lists into one master list and transferring the responsibility of managing the waiting list from individual Garden Coordinators to Community Gardens Program management. Now that Melinda Stockman at RPD will also spend 50% of her time on Urban Agriculture, she will work closely with Marvin Yee to implement this change and also work towards other reforms as needed. A consolidated waiting list could allow applicants to identify more than one community garden site that they would like to join, so that whichever garden has a space available first could accommodate their interest. This could alleviate pressure on certain sites that are currently more popular and have longer waiting lists.

# Needs Assessment on Urban Agriculture

---

Participants: The Office of the City Administrator – Amy Torregrossa and Joseph Baxter, San Francisco Recreation and Park Department – Melinda Stockmann, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission – Yolanda Manzone, Department of Public Works -- Jerad Weiner, Department of Public Health -- Paula Jones, SF Environment – Mei Ling Hui

## **A Needs Assessment of Community, Resident and Business Needs**

---

The Office of the City Administrator took on the task of carrying out the needs assessment of resident, community and business needs. With such an aggressive timeline it was imperative that there were multiple ways for individuals to participate. The decision was made to create a two pillar strategy: Qualitative Interviews and Town Halls.

### Methods:

1. Qualitative Interviews: Participants are those who are currently involved in Urban Agriculture. Therefore, their answers will not reflect the needs or views of those who are not yet participating in Urban Agriculture in San Francisco.
  - a. One-on-one confidential interviews were conducted where a series of 15 open ended questions were asked.
  - b. The questions addressed: current trends of Urban Agriculture in San Francisco, goals outlined in the ordinance, ideas for the future Urban Agriculture Program to consider among others topics.
  - c. Interviewees identified themselves as community garden coordinators, practitioners, backyard gardeners or support organizations.

### 2. Town Halls:

- a. Ortega Branch Library November 27, 2012 from 6:00pm-8:00pm
  - b. SE Community Facility November 29, 2012 from 6:00pm-8:00pm
  - c. Veterans War Memorial December 8, 2012 from 1:00pm-3:00pm
- 

### Summary of Findings:

#### **Three main themes were evident throughout the 31 interviews and town halls:**

1. A variety of activities take place on Urban Agriculture projects on public land in San Francisco. These different projects have different end goals.
2. There is a perception that existing community garden plots and garden projects are underutilized.
3. Prior to this process, there was a lack of communication among Urban Agriculture sectors in San Francisco.

#### **Fifteen questions were asked 31 interviewees.**

#### **Below is a summary of the answers to three key questions asked among the varying Urban Agriculture Sectors:**

#### **Breakdown of Question 1: What do you, and or the community you represent, see as indicators of success within Urban Agriculture activities in San Francisco?**

- 65% of respondents indicated that produce was not the primary output of their Urban Agriculture Project, meaning that other activities such as educational workshops, job training and community building were mentioned before food production.
- 29% of respondents mentioned a major indicator of success for projects are returning volunteers to help with workshops, harvest days or data collection.
- 52% of respondents believe that tracking the amount of food produced is not worth tracking as a metric or indicator of success.

The interviews presented a number of opportunities for the respondents to discuss the many activities that they either participate in or run in their Urban Agriculture Projects. Below in Table 1 are the activities that respondents mentioned they either participate in or are hosting on their Urban Agriculture site. Next to the activity are the benefits respondents mentioned while discussing such activities.

Table 1: Shows activities and corresponding benefits mentioned by respondents

Activity	Benefits mentioned by respondents
Animal Husbandry	Youth Development
Bee Keeping	Well Being, Ecological
Composting	Conservation
Community Engagement	Access to Food, Usable Community Space
CSA	Access to Food, Food Education
Education Workshops	Health, Environmental
Grey Water Treatment	Conservation
Growing of Produce/Flowers	Access to Food
Job Training and Job Readiness	Access to Food
Transforming Lots	Usable Community Space
School Garden Programs	Access to Food, Healthy Eating
Seed Library and Seed Saving	Conservation
Tree Planting	Exercise
Youth Training	Empowerment, Access to Food, Healthy Eating
Volunteer Programs	Education (health, environmental, job training)

**Breakdown Question 2:** What is your experience accessing a plot in the City of San Francisco? Particularly regarding wait lists.

- 71% of respondents emphasized the importance of addressing underutilized plots or projects throughout the city, particularly in community gardens.
- 58% of respondents mentioned the need for more Community Garden Coordinator training and/or oversight.

**Breakdown of Question 3:** What would consider as a successful Urban Agriculture Program?

- 90% of respondents mentioned institutional or infrastructure support of Urban Agriculture activities as an indicator of a successful Urban Agriculture Program.
- 96% of respondents mentioned needing a clear point of contact and someone within the City that can provide correct information on Urban Agriculture.

**Next Steps:** With the helpful information provided to the Recreation and Park Department through these interviews, the feedback provided will inform the work plan over the next year for the Department. The Recreation and Park Department will work hard to address these concerns and improve Urban Agriculture citywide by providing one point of contact and becoming Urban Agriculture experts within the City.

# Department Specific Urban Agriculture Programs

Participants: Mei Ling Hui – Department of Environment, Yolanda Manzone – Public Utilities Commission, Holly Pearson – Department of Recreation and Parks, Melinda Stockman – Department of Recreation and Parks, Jerad Weiner – Department of Public Works

**Outline of current City and County of San Francisco Urban Agriculture programs within each department.**

---

## Current Program / Resources

Department of Recreation & Parks – The Department of Recreation & Parks (RPD) manages community gardens under their Community Garden Program. RPD provides construction and repair of basic garden infrastructure, in addition to providing compost bins at garden sites.

Department of Environment – The Department of Environment (SFE) supports urban agriculture by connecting requests for support with existing resources and agencies. SFE has also worked with other organizations to provide compost on a limited basis at special events.

Department of Public Works – The Department of Public Works (DPW) supports urban agriculture efforts through the Street Park program. The Street Park program turns over maintenance responsibility of DPW owned land to neighborhood stewards. Many of the Street Parks have a gardening or urban agriculture component. DPW also provides tools to program participants. DPW also provides compost to residents at our Community Clean Team events citywide. DPW also runs a public tool lending library.

SF Public Utilities Commission – The Public Utilities Commission supports Urban Agriculture through a grant program that provides free installation of dedicated irrigation water services and meters at community gardens, urban agriculture sites, demonstration gardens, and small scale urban market gardens in San Francisco.



Also, basic Urban Agriculture supplies such as compost, manure, and soil amendments are available locally for low or no cost from private companies. Delivery costs and quantities can be challenging for individual gardeners. The Recreation and Park Department will become an expert on these available resources and be able to direct citizens to this information in the future.

# Streamlined Application Process

Participants: Planning Department – Diana Sokolove, SF Environment – Mei Ling Hui, Recreation and Park Department – Melinda Stockmann, SPURR/SFUAA – Eli Zigas, SF Parks Alliance – Jill Brashares

**Develop a streamlined application process for Urban Agriculture projects on public land, with clear evaluation guidelines that are consistent across all agencies.**

---

Currently, people who are interested in starting a new urban agriculture project need to contact individual city departments to determine whether there are parcels available for gardening. There is not a point person dedicated to assisting applicants. This will change with the move of the program to the Recreation and Park Department – now there will be one point of contact within this department to assist the public with urban agriculture projects.

Below is a draft Urban Agriculture Project Screening Form. This form will now be circulated to for feedback. The Recreation and Park Department will take this feedback and then issue a “final” application form along with instructions and contact information for help filling out the form.

## Agriculture Project Screening Form

Submit this screening form to request assistance with starting a new urban agriculture project. Complete as much of the form you can. After your application is received, we'll contact you to schedule a meeting to discuss your proposal.

Email or Fax Completed Form To: XXXXX

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Person Completing Form: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part 1 - Applicant Information

<b>Your Organization and Individual Name and Primary Mailing Address:</b>   <b>Website:</b>	<b>Type of Organization (check one):</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> For-profit entity <input type="checkbox"/> Non-profit entity <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
--	---

Organization Members		
Primary Contact(s)	Phone and Email	Role
Additional Member's Names	Phone and Email	Role


**Part 2 - Site Information**

Provide as much information as you can. The Urban Agriculture Program can assist you with completing the form, as needed.

<b>Property Owner Name and Address:</b>	<b>Site Address:</b>
	<b>Block/Lot Number:</b>
	<b>Project Square Footage (approximate okay):</b>
<b>Any Known Safety Concerns Onsite:</b>	<b>Any Information about Soil Quality:</b>
<b>Existing Land Use:</b>	<b>Adjacent Land Use:</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Attached	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo Attached
<b>Describe Attractive on-site features, such as level of sun exposure, size of lot, location, etc.:</b>	
<b>Zoning District:</b>	<b>Height/Bulk District:</b>

**Closest Similar Urban Agriculture Project to Site. For example, if your project is a plot-based community garden, note the closest plot-based garden to your project:**

**Address:**

**Part 3 –Project Description**

Please fill in the boxes using the space below for summary answers to the questions. Attach additional pages to provide more detail as needed.

**Project Description. For example, include base line project goals, proposed programming plans and project scope, plans for classes or events, proposed use of produce grown on site, any plans for bees or other animal husbandry projects, etc.:**

**Long-Term Objectives:**

**Describe how the site will be managed. Include both day-to-day and long-term oversight:**

**Describe proposed capital improvements and construction plans. For example, include any proposed built structures or signage, tool sheds, raised planting beds, terracing, greenhouses, gathering spaces, fruit trees, etc.:**

**Describe how you will engage the local community in building and starting your project:**

#### Part 4 – Budget

If you don't yet have a budget for your project, please indicate that below.

- 1) Please attach information on your project's construction budget. Include existing and proposed funding sources. See Urban Agriculture Program website for a budget template.
- 2) Please attach information on your project's operational budget. Include existing and proposed funding sources. See Urban Agriculture Program website for a budget template.