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# Roots of a Movement: Community Action and the Impact of Urban Agriculture in Chicago

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**Roots of a Movement: Community Action and the Impact of Urban Agriculture  
in Chicago**

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In partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Analysis, 2016-  
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Readers:

Professor Char Miller

Professor Heather Williams

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## Introduction

Urban agriculture in Chicago is an example of the power of community to propel a movement; the combined efforts of numerous organizations, businesses, and neighborhoods have begun driving the city towards a greener future through urban food production. I argue that utilizing these interconnections and networks more deliberately could create even broader access to resources and help build a larger audience. I hope to illuminate how a community was built around urban agriculture in Chicago, the obstacles that the movement has faced, and what its future prospects look like. I suggest that in promoting cross-pollination of ideas and resources, increasing transparency and communication between organizations, and perhaps more critically, between farmers and city, state, and federal policymakers, these efforts will gain more momentum. The tangible outcomes of collaboration between these entities include increased public awareness, more access to training and resources, and policy reform that would allow urban agriculture projects to achieve more ambitious goals such as providing produce retail opportunities in underserved neighborhoods and growing food in spaces not historically zoned for agriculture. I seek to capture the extent to which community building is fundamental to the progress in the urban agriculture movement, and assess whether urban agriculture will continue to grow as a means of deepening connection to food pathways.

The potential future of this movement is directly tied to Chicago's origins. Upon its founding in 1833, the City of Chicago adopted the official motto, *Urbs in Horto*—Latin for City in a Garden (Bachrach). This may seem out of place given

Chicago's industrial roots. The city was the birthplace of the national rail system in the mid-1800s; it is the setting of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which revealed the reality of the meatpacking industry in the early 1900s; and still today the surrounding region is known for its industrially produced grain, which is shipped throughout the country and internationally. Though all closely associated with food production, none of these affiliations suggest that Chicago could live up to its motto: City in a Garden. But it is clear that gardening has, in fact, played an important role in this urban landscape. No doubt like their peers in New York and other eastern cities, European immigrants in Chicago who had fled hunger in their home countries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries turned to gardening to preserve traditional ways of knowing food. Environmental historian Ann Vileisis writes in her book, *Kitchen Literacy*: "In clinging to their distinct, traditional foodways, America's immigrants interjected into the story of how we lost knowledge of our foods a temporary countering force... While low prices of America's mass-produced breads and meats enabled immigrants to eat far better than they had in their countries of origin, many persisted in finding ways to grow their own foods" (107). During WWII, Chicago pioneered the Victory Gardens movement and grew 55,000 pounds of food on community gardens in 1943 alone (Joy, "Chicago Victory Gardens 101"). In recent years, the city has seen burgeoning growth in the movement to reclaim Chicago's reputation as a city in a garden. From community gardens to technology-driven sustainable farming, individuals, organizations, and businesses are planting the seeds of a greener Chicago. I hope to call attention to these efforts, pinpoint what has made certain ventures successful, and identify what needs to change for the

movement to secure its green potential. I propose that urban agriculture is the next step in the evolution of our relationship with food in this country, and that Chicago is on the forefront of this growing movement.

Chicago has established itself as a national leader in urban agriculture because residents of the Windy City have used farming as a mechanism for social activism, sustainable development, improved food access, and economic advancement. The organizations I highlight are growing food on rooftops, in greenhouses, in the basement of repurposed meatpacking facilities, on the southwest side of the city where unemployment rates are high and access to fresh produce is low, and in the northern suburbs where the market for locally produced food is supported by middle and upper class consumers. The mission statements of these projects range from growing the most flavorful heirloom tomatoes to creating jobs for people with employment barriers; and from improving food access in underserved neighborhoods, to teaching children about where their food comes from.

Although in this study, I have only scratched the surface of the innumerable efforts being made throughout Chicago and the surrounding area to effect positive change through urban agriculture, if I were to expand this paper, I would tell the stories of many more farmers and activists who have played crucial roles in shaping the urban agriculture movement, and whose work has had a positive impact on many of the organizations that I describe.

I chose to focus on the projects that I was able to interact with most closely, mainly through interviews with the individuals working on them. During these

interviews, I asked questions such as: “What advancements have you seen in the urban agriculture movement in Chicago?” “What impact has municipal government had on your work?” “Do you see Chicago as a national leader in the urban agriculture movement?” and “What changes would help your project achieve maximum success?” The responses I received were more personal than I expected. While almost every interviewee expressed that they saw Chicago as being on the forefront of the movement on a national level, each also stressed the importance of the web of relationships that have been created within the city to make this happen. I originally set out to discover how the City of Chicago could reshape its policy mechanisms to better allow urban agriculture to flourish, but I wound up learning more about the power of community-based initiatives, cross-group support networks, and the strength that comes from a collective mission.

Helen Cameron, owner of the restaurant [Uncommon Ground](#), home to the nation’s first certified organic rooftop farm captured this when she said, “It’s funny because I never even considered that element of what we are doing right now when I decided to put that farm on the roof. And I have to tell you it’s probably one of the things I’m most proud of. Not only are we producing amazing food for the restaurant and providing this beautiful space for our community to enjoy and participate in, but I’m also growing people that can grow food, and I’m furthering this whole ideal, and that is tremendously gratifying.”

I interviewed Cameron while perched on the rooftop garden above her restaurant, surrounded by deep green kale leaves, orange shocks of nasturtium, and gleaming red tomatoes. She told me about how, since she started growing cilantro,



she's discovered that if you let some of the plants bolt they start to grow tiny green berries. She described their flavor as sharp and citrusy—unlike the more commonly eaten leaves and roots—and insisted that they instantly transform a salad. She plucked a few and funneled them into my palm, urging me to try them. They were unexpectedly and explosively lemon-y. I made a mental note to investigate what other flavors I might be missing out on due to my plant-part partisanship.

We sat on a bench beneath an umbrella on the corner of the sun-drenched rooftop. To my left, vines climbed up the regulation-height fence. “We decided that because the code was to have a railing at a certain height, we would just do planter boxes and that would increase our square footage of growing space,” Cameron said. To my right was a beehive being tended by one of the Uncommon Ground interns.

I had the opportunity to conduct many interviews like this throughout the summer of 2016, while I was working as an intern with [The Talking Farm](#), an agriculture-based educational nonprofit organization located in Evanston, IL. Under the supervision of Matt Ryan, the Talking Farm's director, my job was to grow the media presence of The Talking Farm by telling the stories behind the people working on or in partnership with the farm. The Talking Farm was my first indication of how vital community support is to the success of these projects—especially nonprofit organizations that rely on grants and donations for financial support. I contacted The Talking Farm's community partners, including an urban design firm, a plumbing company, an organic gardening products company, a real estate business lawyer, and an airline. Each of the partners contributed in some way to the farm's creation and development by donating funds, services, or products. In

speaking to them, I began to understand that these local professionals and business owners chose to support The Talking Farm not only for philanthropic reasons, but because they could relate to its mission on a personal level.

Jim Seckelmann, owner of [The Mulch Center](#), said that he has tried to help the farm in any way that he can by donating compost, gravel, topsoil, and mulch. “The Talking Farm is going to help educate people on the different aspects of farming, and I see it as a very helpful thing. It’s good for the community, and it’s good for the economy,” he said. Seckelmann is not just sending over products and hoping they do their job. “I usually stop by in the fall and Matt lets me have some tomatoes and cucumbers. I have watched the harvest grow in size and abundance since we’ve been adding our organics over the years. It’s very fulfilling to see that our products are helping benefit The Talking Farm.”

Marc Wise, owner of [Greenwise Organic Lawncare](#), another Talking Farm partner, told me: “A big part of our goal is to be more sustainable, and part of that is just planting your own vegetables. So urban gardening is definitely a huge part of our mission statement.”

The Talking Farm also actively contributes to the surrounding community through school garden programs. Kim Minestra is the director of nutrition services at Evanston Township High School (ETHS), and helps manage [The Edible Acre](#), a garden maintained by students whose harvests go to the ETHS cafeteria. Minestra enlisted Ryan to direct operations at the Edible Acre when she wanted to start expanding production in 2012. Over the next two years, 5,500 pounds of produce from the garden were served in the cafeteria; 2,800 pounds were produced in 2015

alone. “I know a lot of schools are like, ‘How do you do this? We don’t have the labor, we don’t have the time, we don’t have the money.’ And its really because we are lucky to have The Talking Farm local and wanting to do it,” said Minestra.

I also spoke to interns and volunteers working at The Talking Farm, many of who expressed how much they valued the fact that the organization is continuously evolving to accommodate the needs of the community. Farmhand, Liza Fischel said: “They just keep growing—literally growing—in so many ways. I’m always impressed. The progress they’re building and making never ends.” She emphasized how welcoming the farm feels, adding, “I’m always meeting people—whenever I’m there somebody will just drive up and be like, ‘Hey I want to help,’ or ‘I want to be a part of this.’”

Zach Cascarano, another farmhand, explained that he volunteers at The Talking Farm because he sees the potential of urban agriculture to address issues that are important to him. “If you teach people how to grow food it addresses poverty, it addresses employment, and it gives young people skills to actually make themselves healthy. I wanted to learn more about doing that so I could actually pass that knowledge on to other people at some point.”

Hearing about the experiences of individuals working with The Talking Farm made me wonder whether other organizations working in urban agriculture had grown similarly deep roots throughout the Chicago community, and whether these networks were impacting them in the same way. I was also curious whether this was a characteristic specific to nonprofit organizations, or if similar principles applied to for-profit businesses such as restaurants or specialty-food producers. I

ultimately found that the same fundamental concept held true for virtually every business, organization, and project I researched.

One of these was [Chicago Market](#), a local food Co-op for whom I also worked in the summer of 2016 while it was still in its membership-building stages. I quickly found that community collaboration was central to this organization's strategy. I was asked to write an article for the [August 2016 newsletter](#) that mapped some of the farms in and around Chicago that offer tours or visiting hours to the public. [Grant Kessler](#), who is on the Chicago Market Board of Directors, sent me a list of some of the organizations he thought I might include. As a food photographer, writer, and local food advocate, Kessler is well connected to the community, and introduced me to many of the farmers, activists, and entrepreneurs that I interviewed for this study. Many of them are Chicago Market Owners and have supported growth of the Co-op in various ways.

Chicago Market has become a hub for people in the Chicago community who are interested in local and sustainable food. Regular owners' meetings and events offer spaces for these individuals to come together not only to talk about goals and progress in the creation of the store, but also to learn about what is happening with food production more broadly in Chicago. Chicago Market holds "pop-up" markets each season where products from local producers are sold. The store itself will source products locally once it is built. The presence of Chicago Market as a way for urban farmers to engage with a broader community is furthering the success of the movement as a whole. Actively creating opportunities for various urban agriculture

initiatives to intersect with one another is a means of empowering the community and accelerating progress.

Throughout the twentieth century, the global urban population expanded from 15 to 50 percent of the total population (Deelstra and Girardet). This massive shift brought about fundamental changes in how food is produced, distributed, consumed, and conceived. The social, economic, and environmental viability of an increasingly urban population must therefore be considered with reference to food pathways. The issue of urban sustainability is being addressed on an increasingly global scale. The Habitat Agenda, signed at the 1996 United Nations City Summit in Istanbul by 180 nations, states: "Human settlements shall be planned, developed and improved in a manner that takes full account of sustainable development principles and all their components" (Deelstra and Girardet).

Urban agriculture should be a component of achieving this goal. Despite population density, there is significant potential for food production in cities. 1990 U.S. census data shows that urban metropolitan areas produced 40 percent of the dollar value of agricultural production nationwide. Tjeerd Deelstra and Herbert Girardet write in the paper "Urban Agriculture and Sustainable Cities": "These are remarkable figures given the neglect of agriculture in urban planning policy. Planners tend to think that urban food growing is a messy business, and have little understanding of peoples' need to grow food in cities. But for hundreds of millions of urban people, it is a vital component of their livelihoods and during hard times it is an important survival strategy, and city dwellers are increasingly trying to persuade planners to give them space for growing crops. This is true not only in

developing countries, but also increasingly in the developed countries, particularly in cities where unemployment is endemic. In addition, many people like to spend part of their time growing things as a leisure pursuit” (46).

Urban agriculture has historically been most prominent during times of crisis. The Victory Garden Movement, which was spearheaded in America by the City of Chicago during WWII, is an example of this. In a 2011 lecture given at the Library of Congress, author and urban farmer LaManda Joy argues that social, economic, and environmental concerns surrounding urban development call for a resurgence of urban agriculture similar to that of the 1940s. “We have a new motivation for Victory Gardening,” she says.

In the same vein, Deelstra and Girardet write, “Today we face a new kind of crisis: chronically high levels of unemployment are a growing concern in some cities, forcing many people to adapt or adopt new survival strategies, including spending some of their time on growing food” (46).

The urban agriculture movement does not seek to replace rural agriculture; rather, the two are complementary. In addition to producing food, urban agriculture addresses urban poverty and sustainable development. The limitations of urban agriculture having to do with the amount of food that can be produced based on spatial restrictions are less important to consider than the limitations imposed by restrictive policy and lack of organized support. In the paper “Urban Agriculture: Definition, Presence, Potentials, and Risks,” Luc J.A. Mougeot argues: “Official support to urban agriculture is age-old, has been diverse and can be organized into several types of interventions, often combined in a single city. Access to resources,

and in particular, is central; access is more often an issue than availability per se. But urban agriculture production systems have diversified and producers have adapted to cope with these and other urban constraints and opportunities” (2). Such coping mechanisms are being employed by urban farming initiatives in Chicago.

Despite limited support, urban agriculture consistently generates tens of millions of dollars per year in the U.S. There have been few studies, however, on the effects of urban agriculture on local economies. The potential to improve food security in underserved neighborhoods through urban agriculture is especially notable. Farming in cities creates job opportunities, provides sources of affordable, fresh produce, and contributes to a healthier living environment (Bailkey, et al). In the paper, “Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe,” Bailkey, et al write: “The regenerative effect of urban agriculture is especially visible when vacant lots are transformed from eyesores—weedy, trash-ridden, dangerous gathering places—into bountiful, beautiful and safe gardens that feed peoples’ bodies and souls” (8-9). Challenges facing urban farmers include access to education and training, start-up costs, marketing costs, land tenure limitations, and access to markets (Bailkey, et al), which I argue are at least partially being addressed through community-organizing efforts by urban farmers in Chicago.

As a city whose history is inextricably linked to food production, Chicago has a future in pushing the urban agriculture movement forward on a national scale. Efforts to maintain a connection to where food comes from have existed since the

industrial revolution. The urban agriculture movement is working to reclaim our increasingly elusive relationship to food in cities. Intentional community building and opportunities for mutual support among urban agriculture activists must enable this reclamation.

The first chapter of this thesis highlights evolving relationships to food throughout U.S. history. Beginning in the early 1800s, with the advent of the national rail system, and extending through today's organic movement and increasing consumer demand for locally produced food, I argue that there has always been public interest in maintaining connection to food pathways. The 2014 amendments to the Farm Bill during President Barack Obama's term, and Michael Pollan's critiques of insufficient political support for altering the industrial food system in America in 2016 reflect this interest. I have primarily employed the frameworks set forth by environmental historians William Cronon and Ann Vileisis to explain this.

The second chapter describes Chicago's historical connections to the food industry, discusses city and state policies that have impacted urban agriculture in Chicago, and highlights the ways in which specific organizations have dealt with the limitations of these policies. The chapter also summarizes the Victory Garden movement in Chicago during WWII, which I argue is important to understanding Chicago's position today as a leader in the urban agriculture movement.

The third chapter profiles some of the organizations throughout Chicago that I believe are representative of the urban agriculture work being done on a larger scale across the city in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The choices I



made of what organizations to highlight were also based somewhat on which I was able to develop the closest relationships with through conversations and interviews. I assert that each of these organizations has helped advance the urban agriculture movement in some way, and has also leveraged interconnections within the Chicago community to further its own progress and that of the larger movement.

## **Chapter 1: Maintaining a Relationship to Food Pathways in America**

The story of our relationship to food in the U.S. is not a linear one. From the subsistence gardens of eighteenth century New England, to the [controversy](#) of oleomargarine in the late nineteenth century; from the pre-packaged slabs of beef mass distributed nationwide from Chicago's stockyards (See Chapter 2), to Monsanto's domination of the corn and soy industries; the distance from plant to plate has grown and shrunk, food chains stretched and shortened, and consumer opinion waxed and waned. Though technology has made it increasingly possible for us to distance ourselves from food production, the inclination to question the origins of what we put in our bodies has been continuous

Sales of organic food have grown rapidly in recent years and those with the means and opportunity to do so are persistently seeking ways to purchase food more directly from farmers and producers, especially in progressive urban centers like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. While the vast majority of food consumed in the U.S. is still produced via industrialized monoculture and weathers many stages of processing before reaching consumers, there is a market for regionally produced, direct-to-consumer food, which also coincides with the push for more sustainable cities. Urban agriculture is an important part of our journey to connect with the food we consume, and it can be done in a way that not only provides local food to farmers market-goers, but also empowers underserved communities and promotes more sustainable cities.

Canning became popular in the U.S. around 1820, but it wasn't until the 1880s that producers began adding chemicals to canned food to create the illusion

of freshness. As canned food production became increasingly mechanized, and the products themselves became increasingly obscured from the forms in which they came out of the earth, consumer skepticism arose. As Vileisis writes, “The appeal of uniformity had its limits” (208). Women’s magazines called for readers to be suspect of manufactured foods because of possibly unhealthy additives and adulterants, and instead advised buying whole, unprocessed items. An article in *Ladies’ Home Journal* in the 1890’s warned that artificial colors and chemicals were making it too difficult to tell whether the food was fresh—an act of deception intolerable to the discerning housewife.

Vileisis writes: “Raising food had long been a means of engaging directly with the natural world, and so for some the idea of city dwellers buying anonymous foods and eating out of tins and boxes signified a troubling disconnect from the land. The prospect of an increasingly urban society losing its rudimentary knowledge of the natural world seemed an entirely new and fearsome possibility. Some warned that physical distance from nature would lead to psychological divergence from nature, with untold effect. America’s children—the largest generation ever to be raised chiefly in cities—would be most at risk” (103).

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, concerns about urban children becoming disconnected to nature in the face of industrialization gave rise to the Nature-Study Movement—an act of education reform that became the foundation for science teaching in elementary schools (Lorsbach and Jinks). After research by child psychologist G. Stanley Hall on Boston first graders revealed that the majority of the children had no concept of a wheat field, did not understand

seasons, and thought meat was dug from the ground, his recommendations to reunite schoolchildren with the natural environment were put into action. Curricula were developed based on conservation and growing food. In 1897, over 26,000 students raised their own plants with Nature Study Programs in New York State (Lorsbach and Jinks).

A radical transformation of America's agricultural system occurred throughout the twentieth century. In 1900, 41 percent of the workforce was employed in agriculture, by 2000 that number had dwindled to a mere 1.9 percent. Technological innovations allowed for massive increases in productivity, as the average American became less connected to farming. During the twentieth century, the nation's farmers moved from complete reliance on animal power to enthusiastic adoption of mechanical power in the form of tractors and harvesting methods, and began to embrace chemical pesticides and fertilizers. These developments coincided with and responded to an increasingly affluent consumer base that demanded convenience, and introduced new pressures on the farming sector that led to greater specialization and scale. This is an oversimplification of the complex process of industrialization and consolidation that American agriculture underwent post WWII, but it is important to note that Americans instigated, and later began to criticize intensive farming that created a barrier between food production and consumption. After a decades-long process of transition from decentralized, diversified farming to ultra-high-yield, fossil-fuel-dependent monoculture, consumers started to question the implications of such a shift (Dimitri, et al).

The 1960s saw the beginning of an opposition to the U.S. food system on ecological grounds. The publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* shed light on the dangers of synthetic pesticides. Carson wrote to an audience of individuals who were already somewhat skeptical of ever more elusive methods of food production. She warned against the dangers of humans seeking dominion over nature, buttressing her environmental concerns with moral imperative. *Silent Spring* cemented looming anxiety about food production into the collective conscious. Soon after, President John F. Kennedy established a presidential committee to investigate pesticide use. In 1972, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned DDT because of its adverse environmental effects and human health risks ("DDT - A Brief History and Status"), a feat for which Carson is widely credited, despite the fact that it occurred after her death (Griswold).

In the 1970s, under rising public scrutiny, the federal government began to take action on chemicals used in the food system. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) banned several artificial colorings, and issued warnings against artificial sweeteners, mercury in canned fish, and growth hormones in beef. The General Accounting Office (GAO) also issued several reports about unsanitary factory farm conditions and the use of antibiotics and pesticides in meat. During this time of increased public awareness of the possible dangers of industrially manufactured food, surveys showed that shoppers ranked pesticide residues and additives as their top two food concerns, and nearly 30 percent had stopped purchasing or cut back on certain food items. "While the food production and distribution system has evolved to match an industrial model, with consumers

leaving decisions to producers, more and more new stories accumulated to suggest that this way of divvying up the burden of knowing wasn't necessarily serving the public interest," writes Vileisis (213).

Despite the unease surrounding chemical use in industrial agriculture, the term 'organic' as we know it today did not become standardized until 2002. The Organic Food Production Act was published in the 1990 Farm Bill and established the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The USDA, however, remained loyal to the interests of agribusiness and resisted the act (Vileisis). In 1997 the USDA rejected NOSB recommendations, and proposed rules that would have allowed use of GMO crops and irradiation in the production of organic food. The motion was not well received. "This proposal—so at odds with what shoppers sought when buying organic foods—unleashed an unprecedented response," Vileisis observes. "More than a quarter million people sent comments to the USDA—more consumers than the agency had ever heard from before—contending that organic production rules needed to account for their concerns, not just those of agribusiness trying to elbow into the profitable organic food market" (Vileisis, 233). The organic movement was born out of a desire to regain control over a food system that seemed to be putting profitability over health and safety. The idea that the USDA would allow big business to manipulate its regulation was too disturbing to go unchallenged. For the first time, consumers spoke out collectively against federal regulation of agriculture. Standards were finalized in 2002, with the most controversial provisions removed. Though organic certification still does not require a complete eschewal of chemicals, nor does it reflect the highest standards of "naturalness" held by some Americans,

the fact that public opinion influenced policy on a federal level marks an important milestone in the fight to maintain a relationship with food production in America.

In October of 2008, Michael Pollan published an open letter, titled "[Farmer in Chief](#)," to President-Elect Barack Obama in the *New York Times*, arguing that food policy should be prioritized on the president's agenda. For many years, federal policies have promoted maximized production of commodity crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat, and kept supermarket prices low, allowing the government to ignore the impacts these policies are having on local economies, the environment, and public health. But as demonstrated by the public push for stronger organic standards, this pattern is ripe for disruption. "The American people are paying more attention to food today than they have in decades, worrying not only about its price but about its safety, its provenance and its healthfulness. There is a gathering sense among the public that the industrial-food system is broken. Markets for alternative kinds of food — organic, local, pasture-based, humane — are thriving as never before," Pollan writes.

Federal policy, however, does not necessarily reflect this demand. The Farm Bill is the most influential piece of legislation to address agriculture and food policy at the national level. The first Farm Bill passed in 1933 in an effort to stabilize the depression economy by controlling the production of commodity crops and providing income support to farmers. Congress reauthorizes the bill about every five years. In 2008, The [Food, Conservation, and Energy Act](#) was passed over President Bush's veto, just before President Obama's election, and included provisions for increased funding for states to grow specialty crops, new initiatives to

help beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers, new programs and funding for organic crop, and increased funding for nutrition assistance programs. This bill acknowledged progress towards more localized food systems and sustainable agriculture. The next changes to the [Farm Bill](#) were passed in 2014; they included provisions of the Local Food Farms and Jobs Act (See Chapter 2), and increased funding for The Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program. The new terms in the 2014 Farm Bill illustrate a recognition of increased desire to reclaim control of food pathways in America (Morath).

Though the 2014 Farm Bill successfully addressed some of Pollan's woes, many remained untouched throughout Obama's eight years in office. As a follow up to "Farmer In Chief," Pollan Wrote an article titled "[Why Did the Obamas Fail to Take On Corporate Agriculture?](#)" in 2016. He writes, "In ways small and large, Obama left the distinct impression during the campaign that he grasped the food movement's critique of the food system and shared its aspirations for reforming it." But "Big Food" won out in the end.

Raj Patel sums up the ways in which Big Food has triumphed even against federal efforts to limit its influence. In his book *Stuffed and Starved* he writes: "Here lies the crux. The narrow abundance of the aisles, the apparently low prices at the checkout and the almost constant availability of foods, these things are our sop. 'Convenience' anaesthetizes us as consumers. We are dissuaded from asking hard questions, not only about how our individual tastes and preferences are manipulated, but about how our choices at the checkout take away the choices of those who grow food" (16). The food system in the U.S. has stolen away knowledge



of food pathways in the name of convenience, yet, Pollan and others argue that there is public demand and legislative potential to reclaim it. “Big Food can’t afford to be complacent about its size or power, not when the culture of food is shifting underfoot” (Pollan, "Why Did the Obamas Fail").

In the spring of 2009, Michelle Obama planted a vegetable garden on the White House lawn and helped establish a farmers market a block away. The First Lady also passed the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act](#) in 2010, which raised nutritional standards for the meals served in the Federal school lunch program and eliminated the sale of junk food in public schools. “A case can be made that Michelle Obama, with little more at her command than the power of persuasion and her personal example, has achieved more on food issues than the rest of the administration,” writes Pollan. But he maintains that these initiatives are not enough. Pollan criticizes the Obama administration for failing to confront agriculture as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases and failing to reduce the use of antibiotics in the meat industry, among many other shortcomings.

The central function of Pollan’s article is not to attack the Obama administration’s inadequate attempts to curtail the damage caused by industrial agriculture. Instead, it is to shed light on the immense progress we have made as a nation in our cultural attitude towards food. “The future of food will be decided not only in the corridors of power, but in the wider culture as well,” he writes. This movement, however, has yet to show its face in Washington. “It doesn’t yet have the organization or the troops to light up a White House or congressional switchboard when one of its issues is at stake.”

Nevertheless, I argue that the work being done at a community level is indicative of immense possibilities for addressing Pollan's concerns on a federal level. "The power of the food movement is the force of its ideas and the appeal of its aspirations — to build community, to reconnect us with nature and to nourish both our health and the health of the land. By comparison, what ideas does Big Food have? One, basically: 'If you leave us alone and pay no attention to how we do it, we can produce vast amounts of acceptable food incredibly cheaply,'" Pollan writes. He cites the 2009 release of "[Food, Inc.](#)"—a hugely popular and revealing documentary about factory farming and the food industry in America—as the tipping point for nationwide criticism of the food industry. In the past decade, Americans have taken unprecedented interest in where food comes from, how it is produced, and what impacts their food choices have. Pollan coins the term "Little Food" for an alternative food economy that takes these interests into account. "And while it is still tiny in comparison with Big Food, it is nevertheless the fastest-growing sector of the food economy."

The patterns occurring on a national level—grassroots activism turning to widespread cultural interest and lagging attempts of government to keep with the movement—mirror those occurring in the urban agriculture movement in Chicago. What started as a few spirited gardeners interested in the potential of urban agriculture to transform the city's relationship to food has blossomed into a significant sector of Chicago's food economy. The municipal government has undoubtedly demonstrated intentions of accommodating the growing movement,

but as Pollan describes, legislative action does not always recognize the needs and achievements of the crusade.

## **Chapter 2: *Urbs in Horto***

Chicago is widely recognized as a leader in the urban agriculture movement. The city is home to the first certified organic rooftop farm in the U.S. at Uncommon Ground, as well as the world's largest and most productive rooftop farm, operated by [Gotham Greens](#) (See Chapter 3). But Chicago's history as a hub of food production does not begin with the green-roof movement. The geological history of the region, characterized by glacial ice flowing in from the northeast during the Wisconsin episode, made for flat land, fertile soil, and easy corridors of movement throughout the city. Throughout the nineteenth century the advent of the national railroad, technological advancements allowing for lower-risk shipping, standardization within the agricultural trade market, and an increasingly fervent desire to expand westward made Chicago the focal point for an increasingly centralized national food economy (Cronon).

In the 1830s, with the momentum of frontier ideology behind them, eastern settlers ruthlessly displaced Pottawatomie people who resided in what is now Metropolitan Chicago. The city was officially founded in 1833, the year that the last Native Americans were forced off land there. Crops sold at a higher value and agricultural supplies came cheaper in Chicago than they did on the East Coast, so farmers migrated to the Midwest in droves, bringing with them the ties they had to the eastern market. As a destination for opportunists, and a portal for the expanding national economy, Chicago had become the gateway to the West (Cronon).

While Pottawatomis and other Native American peoples had raised corn on a small scale around Lake Michigan for generations, these new American farmers

grew grain to haul in profit. Because it was cultivated to be transported to market, corn, as well as newly introduced old-world grains such as wheat, were grown in unprecedented quantities with the help of draft animals and mechanical reapers (Cronon).

In 1848, the Illinois and Michigan Canal opened, connecting the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, and agricultural shipments multiplied. Farmers in surrounding rural areas could bring more of their crops to market and return with goods manufactured in the city. The rapid expansion of Chicago's railroad network throughout the 1850s connected it to the Mississippi River at multiple points and joined a number of western rails (See Fig. 1). Trade activity was no longer as urgently contingent upon weather patterns. Corn and wheat reigned over prairie agriculture, and the rails made shipping less risky for farmers. By 1860, nearly 100 times more wheat was shipped to Chicago by rail than by farmers' wagons (Cronon).

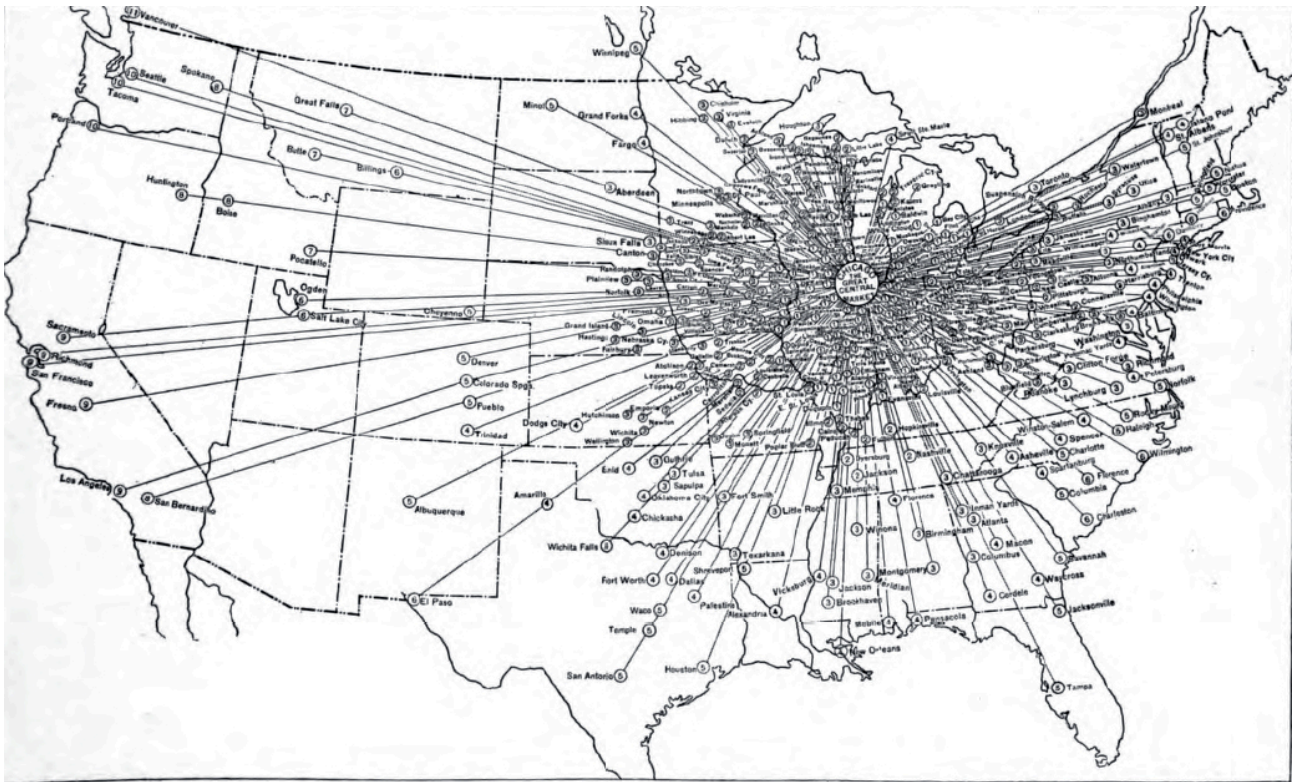


Fig. 1 “Chicago The Greatest Railway Center in the World.” N.d. Online Image.

*Chicagology*. Nov. 2016.

William Cronon writes in his book *Nature's Metropolis*, “The greater speed, distance, volume, and power of railroads enabled [farmers] to break free from the economic and environmental constraints of earlier transport systems. Compared with its predecessors, railroad geography rested on differences in degree that people experienced as differences in kind, shifting the human sense of scale in a way that itself became second nature in subtle ways” (72). Chicago’s position as the juncture between eastern and western rail networks “maintained [the city’s] railroad hegemony for the rest of the century” (75).

As the boundary and transit point between eastern and western markets, Chicago established itself as an integrated rural-urban food production center. Just

as the urban market relied on prairie farmers to supply food, the farmers on the periphery relied on the city to provide their income and products like heavy machinery that couldn't be procured on the farm. "Goods and people rode the rails to get to market, where together buyers and sellers from city and country priced the products of the earth. In this sense, Chicago was just the site of a country fair, albeit the grandest, most spectacular country fair the world had ever seen," writes Cronon (82). While the city itself was never a pastoral landscape, Chicago's existence was inextricably linked to food production and distribution. "[Farmers and storekeepers] each performed an essential function for the other. Without the farmers, storekeepers would have had neither customers to sell to nor crops to buy. And without the storekeepers' willingness to purchase produce and extend credit in advance of the harvest, many farmers could not have survived their own lack of capital in growing crops and bringing them to market" (89).

Illinois is home to 28 million acres of the world's richest and most productive soil, and ranks second among all U.S. states in agricultural exports. Paradoxically, 99 percent of food consumed within the Prairie State is imported from outside its borders (West). This food travels an average 1,500 miles from producer to consumer ("Public Act 095-0145"). According to the Illinois Local Food, Farms and Jobs Council, Illinois consumers spend \$48 billion annually on food—almost all of those dollars are exported out of the state economy (West).

Illinois, and the nation as a whole, arrived at this circumstance by way of a gradual loss of engagement with food pathways (See Chapter 1). The physical place or places where a food product was grown is largely absent from the experience of

purchasing and consuming food. I do not argue for the complete re-localization of food networks, nor do I assert that there was ever a time in U.S. history in which an individual's food sources were strictly regional. Rather, I suggest that urban agriculture is one among the tools to employ to reclaim this engagement.

In 2007, The Illinois General Assembly (IGA) passed the Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act, with the objective that "Illinois should be the Midwest leader in local and organic food and fiber production." It is evident based on the goals put forth by the IGA that it would be advantageous from the state's perspective for Illinois residents and businesses to spend more of their food dollars locally. Growing food in the city is one way to encourage this. The IGA notes that within Chicago, "Communities are experiencing significant problems of obesity and nutrition, including lack of daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables." And that "The capture of existing food dollars within the State would help to revitalize the State's treasury by creating a broad range of new in-state jobs and business opportunities within both rural and urban communities" ("Public Act 095-0145"). Urban agriculture addresses both of these issues by improving food access, creating jobs, and inviting city dwellers to reconsider where the food they purchase comes from.

The Illinois Local and Organic Food and Farm Task Force, appointed by the Governor, and convened by the state's Department of Agriculture, was commissioned to create a plan to identify land for local organic agriculture, to expand farmer training and incubator programs, to promote the development of farmers markets and grocery stores especially in underserved areas, to address any



legal barriers to accomplishing these goals, and to identify financial strategies to support the program (“Public Act 095-0145”).

At the time this legislation passed, The City of Chicago did not acknowledge, let alone promote the concept of growing food in the city (Strazzabosco). There was no recognition of urban farming in Chicago’s municipal code, and therefore no guidelines for urban farmers. In 2010, in support of the IGA’s plans to promote the development of local and regional food systems, Mayor Richard M. Daley proposed new zoning provisions identifying what types of land use activities can take place in specific urban zones. Zones were classified as residential, commercial, business, and manufacturing. “Urban agriculture is another tool to restore productive uses to certain properties and to help get more fresh food into the communities that need them,” Mayor Daley said in 2010. “It can also foster skill-building and entrepreneurial opportunities, not just for farmers, but also processors, distributors, retailers and other aspects of the local food chain” (Strazzabosco).

Although this seemed like a step forward for urban agriculture, leaders within the movement voiced opposition to the proposed changes, arguing that such regulations excessively restricted the scale of urban agriculture projects. Community gardens, for example—defined as neighborhood-based developments that provide space for volunteers to grow plants for beautification, education, recreation, local distribution or personal use—would be allowed in any part of the city except manufacturing districts. Their size, however, was restricted to less than half an acre. Sheds and greenhouses could not take up more than 10 percent or 100 square feet (whichever greater) of the site, and composting was limited to materials

generated on-site. Furthermore, processing, storage, and produce sales were prohibited (Cohen).

Erika Allen, who runs the Chicago branch of Growing Power, a national nonprofit and land trust that works to develop community food systems, told the Chicago Tribune, "If this passes, our work would be over." Many of Growing Power's Chicago farms are over the size limit, and some sell produce at farm stands on-site. Ken Dunn, who founded The Resource Center, hoped that vacant lots throughout the city could be transformed as farms modeled after The Resource Center's nomadic City Farm (See Chapter 3). "Rather than the city recognizing the value of temporary use and the possibility of full employment and of healthy food everywhere, the new ordinance will delay each project's start-up for at least a year and increase the cost of urban agriculture by 10 times or more," Dunn said in an interview with the Chicago Tribune. Ben Hepland, executive director of NeighborSpace, viewed Mayor Daley's proposal more positively. He pointed out that urban farms now have certain permitted uses by right, and maintained that acknowledging that urban agriculture has a place of in Chicago's 'urban fabric' is a step in the right direction" (Eng, "The City That Grows").

In 2011, Rahm Emanuel was elected mayor, and proposed an ordinance that according to the Chicago Tribune "mark[ed] a turnaround on almost every thorny issue in the last proposal." Allen served on the Mayor's transition team, and the proposal was announced at one of Growing Power's Chicago farms (Eng, "Emanuel Widens City's Gate"). The new code expanded the community garden size limit to 25,000 square feet, relaxed fencing and parking requirements on larger commercial

urban farms, allowed for hydroponic and aquaponic systems, as well as honey bee cultivation under set conditions, and allowed limited produce sales in residential areas ("Mayor Emanuel Commends City Council").

The bill was approved in September, and its effects were manifested immediately. Within five weeks, Growing Home broke ground for a new farm in Englewood, and an abandoned meatpacking facility was converted to a closed-loop urban food production space called The Plant in Back of the Yards (See Chapter 3).

Suburban communities have also seized opportunities to enact new regulations surrounding urban agriculture. Matt Ryan, the Farm Operations Manager at The Talking Farm, says that from his perspective the trend to support urban farming in the Chicago area has been decidedly upward. The Talking Farm is an education-based nonprofit that runs a high-production farm on Howard Street, the border of Chicago and two northern suburbs, Skokie and Evanston. The organization also runs educational gardens at schools and universities throughout the Chicago area. Because of its Skokie address, The Howard Street Farm is regulated by The Village of Skokie's policy. "Skokie has been very welcoming to us," says Ryan. The Village gave the organization an unprecedented 20-year lease on three acres of land with a 10-year extension. "It's kind of a win-win for them because this was complete undeveloped unused land, it was basically doing nothing. So in return they are getting a developed piece of land, and a great project they can point to as far as sustainability is concerned. Plus it's an educational resource for the community," explains Ryan. Before the Talking Farm, Skokie had no comparable

agreement on record, so it took close to two years to complete the zoning approval process. “The hope is that this is a model for other cities to use,” says Ryan.

Skokie did not have a definition for urban agriculture before The Talking Farm came along, but now farming is defined as a legitimate type of land use in the municipal code. Teska Associates, a community planning and landscape architecture firm partnered with The Talking Farm to draft the new zoning classification and helped develop a long-range master plan for the site. “This was a trailblazing moment for the Village,” says Jodi Mariano, a principal urban designer at Teska. “There was never anything that said that urban agriculture was allowed, so we defined what that would be.” Mariano explains that the firm researched what other suburban communities had done in similar situations, and found that often when an interested property owner wants to convert a piece of land into a farm or community garden, they find that there is nothing in the municipal code either supporting or prohibiting that type of use, making it unclear how to proceed. If the governing body decides to grant permission, that property becomes a precedent case and sets the standard moving forward. Teska and The Talking Farm were therefore very deliberate in how they defined urban agriculture in the code. The Talking Farm’s land is designated for “agricultural research and education,” which was ultimately defined as: “The use of land primarily for urban agricultural research and public education, including: a) the growing, harvesting, processing, storing, and sales of crops including fresh and dried herbs, fruits, vegetables, non-food ornamental plants, and compost; b) associated buildings and structures for agricultural product and machinery storage, production, and sales; c) associated

classrooms, research labs, and office space; and d) wind energy and other alternative energy production facilities.” Although Teska and The Talking Farm were not able to incorporate every component they hoped—beekeeping, for example, was a point of contention because of concerns about allergies—the inclusion of urban agriculture in Skokie’s legal framework can now be an example for surrounding communities to draw from. “It’s not like all land in Skokie can be used for urban farming now. But they wanted to use us as a prototype, so presumably if this continues to go well, and there’s another organization that’s around that pitches something similar, they will hopefully have an easier time,” explains Ryan.

Barriers to creating and maintaining farms and gardens throughout Chicago are still numerous. The cost of land can be a prohibitive factor, especially in densely populated areas. The lot immediately adjacent to The Talking Farm, for example, is valued at \$400,000 an acre because it is zoned as residential property. This classification makes it virtually impossible for land in highly valued residential areas to become long-term farms or gardens, even if it is not being used for another purpose. Ryan explains that this is part of what makes the Talking Farm’s model unique. The organization was able to acquire a large piece of property because the land is owned by the Skokie Park District, and because The Talking Farm is professionally managed, rather than community managed, not only can the farm maximize yield, but it can also be a resource for individuals in the community to grow food on a smaller scale. “We can act as an incubator for backyard gardeners and for other places like us to pop up,” Ryan explains. Mariano says she can see the

impact that The Talking Farm is having. “I think the coolest thing is when it galvanizes the whole community,” she says.

While large swaths of farmable land are not easy to come by in places like Skokie and Evanston, backyards are in no short supply. Ryan reasons that if a few thousand suburban residents started growing food in their own yards, it would be the equivalent of a large urban farm. “Back in the day, all of our parents had backyard gardens, and all of these houses have backyards, so if the next generation learned how to do that, it would be a smaller scale of urban farming but it would be spread out more easily.”

Gardening was once much more popular in Chicago than it is today. During WWII, Chicago led the country in urban food production with the Victory Garden movement that sprouted 1,500 community gardens and over 250,000 home gardens (Joy, “Yesterday and Tomorrow”). Though the extent to which Chicago residents are exercising their green thumbs is not what it was in the 1940s, the city could be moving towards that. “Communities recognize it as a trend for sure,” says Mariano. In an attempt to capture and facilitate the magnitude of this trend, Advocates for Urban Agriculture teamed up with NeighborSpace and [DePaul University’s Stean Center](#) to create the [Chicago Urban Agriculture Mapping Project \(CUAMP\)](#). This tool provides an interactive map and directory with links to profiles of hundreds of projects from backyard gardens to commercial urban farms (See Fig. 2). Anyone who is growing food in the city can register to be added; administrators review additions before posting them. This resource not only maps progress in how much food is being grown in the city, but it also promotes community networking.

Restaurants can search the directory for nearby gardens if they want to source locally grown food, and individuals looking to participate in a community garden can find out what is established in their neighborhood. AUA's executive director Billy Burdett told NPR in an interview that CUAMP is "a great resource for people to find out what is going on in their communities" (Zielinski).

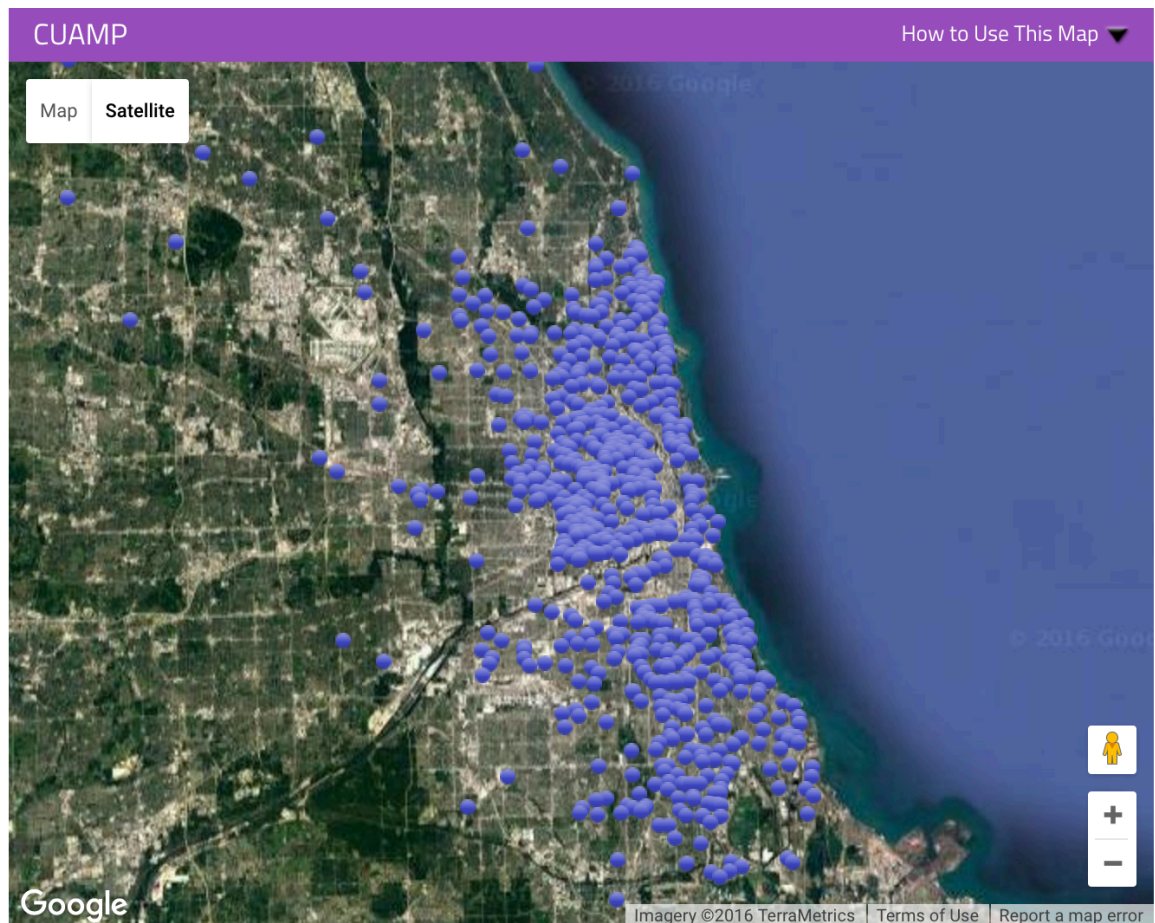


Fig. 2 "CUAMP Map." Nov. 2016. Online Image. *Chicago Urban Agriculture Mapping Project*. Nov. 2016.

LaManda Joy, President of the Peterson Garden Project, has made it her mission to revive the Victory Garden spirit in Chicago. Joy founded the organization

in 2010 after becoming interested in the success of the Victory Garden movement and how the City of Chicago enabled its triumph. In a lecture given at the Library of Congress she explains, “We had government support. There were over-arching organizational structures. There was the donation of space and equipment; there was mass education, promotion, corporate and individual commitment and recognition.” Peterson Garden Project currently manages seven “Pop-up Victory Gardens” throughout the city and recruits gardeners of all experience levels each year. The mission of the project is to teach people how to grow their own food—members receive education, gardening supplies, and a small plot at one of the Pop-up Gardens. Because empty, affordable land in the city is scarce, Peterson Garden Project partners with organizations that allow gardens to be created on a temporary basis. When the land is no longer available, the garden moves to a new location.

In her lecture, Joy emphasizes why Victory Gardens are still relevant today. “We have a new motivation for Victory Gardening. We don't have a universal effort towards defeating an enemy but we all have our own individual enemies or our own worries that we are fighting against. And they are all valid. It could be the economy, your need to save money, transportation costs, your carbon footprint, food safety, or other environmental concerns, GMO's, loss of seed diversity, self-sufficiency; and if you have grown your own food you know that home grown food tastes better” (Joy, “Yesterday and Tomorrow”).

During WWII, as transportation, labor, and materials were diverted to the military, fresh produce was in short supply. Chicago residents were faced with either forgoing many of their staple foods, or growing them themselves. 1943, the



second year of the war, saw the rise of Chicago's "army of gardeners." Thousands of gardens were cultivated in family yards and public land. The plots were dubbed Victory Gardens, alluding to how these new gardeners were aiding the war effort. Chicago-based companies such as Marshall Fields and International Harvester donated seeds and garden equipment. And a city ordinance was passed in July 1944, penalizing anyone who stole from a Victory Garden with a fine equivalent to about \$2,400 today. That summer, 55,000 pounds of produce was harvested within city limits. Since the growing and harvesting seasons in Chicago only last a few months, and tin and other canning materials were being summoned for military use, home preservation methods grew in popularity. Women were encouraged to can, dehydrate, brine, and otherwise preserve as much of the fresh produce they grew as possible to sustain their families during the winter months. An estimated 5 billion pints of food per summer were canned between 1941 and 1945 (Joy, "Yesterday and Tomorrow").

Media played a large role in urging civilians to support the war effort by growing food. Claude R. Wickard, the Secretary of Agriculture at the time, was quoted saying: "A Victory Garden is like a share in an airplane factory. It helps win the war and pays dividends too." The *Chicago Tribune* ran a column called "This Week in the Garden," which gave a tip for each day of the week on how to make your garden the best it could be. Newspapers passed out pamphlets with technical gardening instructions. WGN aired a radio program called "Know Your Onions," which merged gardening how-tos with light public interest stories. Emerging from the depression era, malnutrition was still a major concern in the U.S., so the

importance of consuming fresh produce for one's health was also emphasized in these campaigns (Joy, "Yesterday and Tomorrow").

In January of 1942, The Office of Civilian Defense (OCD) Administrator in Washington issued a memorandum urging local coordinators to set up structural support for Victory Gardens across the nation. Chicago deployed this resource heavily. Democrat, Edward J. Kelly, Mayor from 1933 to 1947, was strong proponent of the Victory Gardens movement. During the mid-1930s, the park district was split into three separately run organizations; under Mayor Kelly, the segments were integrated, and a new system was imposed. Thriving in its new arrangement, the park district was able to hire expert horticulturalists and business specialists to help with the program. Kelly appointed park district leadership to work with the OCD on a program to make urban gardening feasible, accessible, and appealing to Chicago residents. The goal of the program was not to enlist professional gardeners; but rather to encourage civilians to spend their free time growing food, provide resources and information to gardeners, and to lay a foundation for the movement to continue during peacetime. The city was divided into seven divisions, each with a chairman to oversee a certain number of blocks, each of which had a block captain. Captains found land close to homes of interested families, prepared the sites, arranged for plowing, and organized community events. Committees were assembled to manage demonstration gardens, food preservation, land-use planning, seed selection, and other aspects of the process. Guidelines specified that each Victory Garden had to be tended by at least four families, it had to sit on a plot of a certain size, and it had to be inspected to ensure suitable growing conditions. In

1942, 12,000 family gardens on 509 community plots were grown. In one year, those numbers grew to 53,000 gardens on 1500 plots. 14,000 children's plots were also sown when the OCD suggested that public schools be given land on park property for the 1943 season (Joy, "Yesterday and Tomorrow").

Harvest festivals, planned by block captains, were a way for neighbors to share their bounties and their gardening wisdom. The largest was held at Soldier Field in 1943. Sponsored by the Chicago Sun Times, the event featured hundreds of exhibits of produce, flowers, and canned goods, and drew thousands of visitors, many of who pledged to start their own gardens the following season (Joy, "Yesterday and Tomorrow").

The joint OCD-Park District Victory Gardens program was successful for a number of reasons. Resources were allotted efficiently; vacant lots, backyards, public parks, and schoolyards provided the land; corporate support made enacting the program at a wide scale economically feasible; and a citizenry of enthusiastic Chicagoans was willing to put in the labor. The program was well organized; it is thought to be the first system of reporting or recording the Victory Garden movement for statistical purposes. Decals were distributed to any proprietor of a garden in exchange for demographic information including the name and address of the gardener, and the location and size of the garden. The rest of the nation instituted similar programs soon after. It is because of this detailed documentation that we now know that at the peak of the movement there were over 20,000,000 Victory Gardens across the U.S. ("Victory Gardens at a Glance"). Disseminating information was a cornerstone feature of the program. 90 percent of Chicago's

Victory Gardeners had never gardened before, so lectures, newspaper articles, pamphlets, [instructional videos](#), and community gatherings served as technical training. Organized systems of support, and corporate and individual commitment allowed the landscape of Chicago to literally blossom. The level of investment from the federal government to neighborhood residents was unprecedented. The numbers recorded do not even account for gardens in the suburbs, or people who opted out of the decal system. The triumph of Victory Gardens, bolstered by patriotic loyalty in a time of need, was unparalleled in the history of the nation, and has yet to be matched by any contemporary movement of the like.

After the war ended in 1945, the title of Victory Gardens no longer seemed appropriate. Alternative monikers such as “Freedom Gardens” during the Cold War, and “Thrift Gardens” during the inflation of the 1940s and ‘50s enjoyed brief moments in mainstream media, but as G.I.s returned home, longing for the American Dream dried up the appeal of gardening for the greater good. Moving to the suburbs, buying a car, and shopping for packaged food in colorful, single-serving wrappers was infinitely more glamorous than digging up root vegetables in the city (Joy, “Yesterday and Tomorrow”). Vileisis explains: “As more families moved to swelling suburbs, a new pattern of life became possible for a growing middle class with pent-up yearnings for comfort and ease after years of economic depression and wartime privation.” Thus, without Uncle Sam’s call to action, and with new possibilities that came with a stronger economy and innovations in industrial agriculture, the Victory Garden movement wilted.

### **Chapter 3: A New Army of Gardeners**

Uncommon Ground is a local-food focused restaurant in the Edgewater neighborhood on the North Side of Chicago. It is home to the first certified organic rooftop farm in the U.S. I spoke to Helen Cameron, who opened Uncommon Ground with her husband Michael in 1991 at its original location in Lakeview (their second establishment opened in Edgewater in 2007), about her experience cultivating an urban farm in Chicago.

Just as Dr. Hall was concerned about students thinking cows were the size of mice in the 1890s (See Chapter 1), Cameron worries that as a culture we have not emphasized the importance of knowing where food comes from. The garden at Uncommon Ground grows a wide range of vegetables and herbs, and Cameron says she works to maximize biodiversity not only to enhance her menu, but because she wants to provide as many educational opportunities as possible. “A lot of people who come here, they don’t know where their food comes from they don’t know how it grows. Even adults are like ‘Oh my god, I didn’t realize peas grew like that, or carrots are under the ground.’ I mean literally some people just have no idea. So I want to give an example of what’s possible on a small scale, and how this idea is really expanding,” she says.

Uncommon Ground’s farm, overlooking the busy throughway, Devon Avenue, uses the ideals of square-foot gardening, a method of intensively growing plants so each square foot of soil produces maximum yield. The technique prescribes densely packing in a variety of plant species to prevent weeds and encourage soil vitality. Most of the produce is grown in irrigated raised beds, but there are also high-

efficiency [Earth Boxes](#), and a live wall, where planters are hung vertically. The rooftop produces an average of one to two pounds per square foot. One might not expect to find such an agrarian bounty on Devon Avenue, but Uncommon Ground has taken advantage of every resource available to create a sustainable means of food production and an educational resource for the community. “People that come here are generally blown away because they don’t expect to see something so lush and vibrant in this kind of situation. It is a finite amount of soil, and it took us years to figure out how to keep that soil alive and thriving, but now we have a good system, and you see the results every year,” Cameron says. Uncommon Ground is the first rooftop farm in the U.S. to be certified organic, as recognized by the Midwest Organic Services Association in 2008.

Cameron maintains that her involvement in the greater community surrounding urban agriculture in Chicago has played a large role in the success of the farm. “Within the city we are involved in a lot of community type things, so that connects us. And the city is very supportive of advancing urban agriculture as much as we possibly can I think. It’s great for communities, it’s great to start economies, and this is a way for people to learn job functions,” she says. Cameron is on the leadership council of Growing Home, an organization that uses urban farming to provide transitional work and job readiness training to individuals with employment barriers, located in Englewood on the south west side of the city. Cameron describes urban agriculture as a means of “giving people a second chance at life.”

It's not unusual for local business owners like Cameron to be involved in nonprofit urban agriculture initiatives. Also on the leadership council for Growing Home are Michelin Starred chef [Paul Virant](#); Executive Director of NeighborSpace, Ben Helphand; and Tom Spaulding, Executive Director of [Angelic Organics Learning Center](#).

Cameron explains that although perpetuating the urban agriculture movement in Chicago was not what she had in mind when she first opened Uncommon Ground's Devon location and imagined growing fresh tomatoes on its roof, this aspect has become central to the restaurant's mission. The farm team at Uncommon Ground now trains interns every year, many of who have gone on to pursue their own food production endeavors throughout the city. Stephanie Davis was an intern at Uncommon Ground in 2012 and later became the head farmer at Growing Home. "She's doing an awesome job, and growing way more food than we are able to here, now passing her knowledge along to all these other people," Cameron notes. Jen Rosenthal, who was the first farm director at Uncommon Ground, now runs [Planted Chicago](#), which creates custom edible landscapes for Chicago area chefs, restaurants, and bars, and offers larger scale cultivation on a quarter-acre farm in Bronzeville. "I hadn't thought of how this was going to help further the movement [when we first started the rooftop farm], but it's something I am particularly proud of. Being able to grow all this great food is a very special thing, but to have that extra layer—which is to pass this along on a much grander scale—is really awesome."

When Uncommon Ground first began to actualize its rooftop garden dream, Richard M. Daley was Mayor of Chicago. Cameron had already been working with the Department of the Environment in her efforts to become one of the greenest restaurants in the nation. Through this connection, she discovered that the city was offering grants to Chicago business owners to help them build rooftop gardens. The project the restaurateur had in mind was different from most other proposals, as hers involved relatively large-scale food production, whereas others were more focused on sustainable architecture. But after discussing the idea with Suzanne Malec-McKenna, who was the Commissioner the Department of the Environment at the time, Uncommon Ground was granted \$20,000 from a pool of previous grants that had been earmarked for green roof projects.

Aside from complying with building codes and obtaining approval from a structural engineer that the project was viable, Uncommon Ground did not encounter any licensing issues in constructing the garden. According to Cameron, Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who was elected in 2011, has been supportive of the movement in general. Much of this support is related to the Mayor's attempts to improve food access throughout Chicago's underserved neighborhoods. In 2013, the city released data to track efforts to combat food deserts, including a map of some of the city's urban farms. "This data is critical to continue making progress, and will serve as a source for all those involved in eliminating food deserts to reference, explore and use in the very important work they are doing for our city," says Emanuel ("Mayor Emanuel Announces Release of Food Desert Data").



One notable project the mayor has supported is the creation of an urban agriculture district in Englewood as a means of improving food security and employment. The idea for an urban agriculture district began when Teamwork Englewood was working on a quality of life plan for the South West Side neighborhood. As of 2013, with a population of 30,654, Englewood's poverty level is 42.2 percent and its unemployment rate is 21.3 percent (Tu). Englewood was recognized as a food desert until 2016, when the neighborhood's first Whole Foods Supermarket opened its doors. Commissioning the new grocery store was part of Mayor Emanuel's initiative to increase food access and economic opportunity in Englewood. Subsidized by tax dollars, the store is able to charge reduced prices on many stock items in accordance with the needs of its patrons (Gerasole). It is slightly smaller than the average Whole Foods, and offers more "365" house brand and prepared foods. The opening of this location meant 2,648 more residents in Englewood now live within a mile of a grocery store (Englewood Square). Whole Foods also committed to recruiting a portion of their employees from the Englewood community by partnering with Kennedy-King College, a city college nearby that specializes in food and hospitality, and selling products made by local entrepreneurs such as [Jimmy's Vegan Cookies](#) (Walek).

A new Whole Foods is just the beginning for Englewood's revitalization. Teamwork Englewood was created as a part of the New Communities Program—a 16-neighborhood community development initiative sponsored by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the MacArthur Foundation that ran from 2003 to 2013. The plan included development strategies such as new housing for a range

of income levels, increasing the number of retail establishments, and optimizing a network of cultural activities, health and social services, and recreation programs to promote health and safety. Urban agriculture was a natural component of the plan. Growing food in Englewood would simultaneously address a number of objectives; putting vacant lots to productive use, increasing access to fresh produce, offering employment and job training opportunities, and building community cohesion (Rhodes).

Growing Home got involved early in the Teamwork Englewood project. The organization had been offering training since 2002, and began development on an urban farm on Wood Street in Englewood in 2006. Growing home now operates two USDA-certified organic high-production farms. Harry Rhodes, the executive director, says that in early stages of development, Chicago's zoning policies posed considerable challenges. After securing land from the city to build the Wood Street Farm, it took a year for the law department to provide a redevelopment agreement, they waited nine months to receive a business permit, and the property was eventually zoned as a technical institute because there was no code specific to urban farms at the time. It was in part due to the precedent the Wood Street Farm set that the city established a more streamlined zoning process for establishing an urban farm. Growing Home's Honore Street Farm was the first to open under the new ordinance (See Chapter 2). Rhodes maintains that certain municipal demands like parking and landscaping requirements are still problematic, but it is now significantly easier for Growing Home to do its work.

Growing Home has made significant progress towards its mission in Englewood. According to the [2015 Annual Report](#), Growing Home produced 30,844 pounds of produce, all of which was sold within a 20-mile radius. The majority of individuals who enroll in Growing Home's 14-week training program have an arrest record and do not have stable housing at the time of enrollment. Of the 39 people who participated in the program in 2015, 82 percent graduated, and 84 percent of graduates went on to secure full-time employment afterwards.

Also among the plans for transforming Englewood into an urban agriculture district is the New ERA (Englewood Remaking America) Trail. In 2009, a preliminary design for the trail was released, which outlined how the trail would redefine the neighborhood as a hub of green technology and green jobs. According to the report, "Urban agriculture/horticulture themed redevelopments will provide opportunities for education, job training and new food sources within the community." The Wood Street Farm lies alongside the core of the trail, whose footprint lies on an abandoned L track. In 2015, the city completed a land swap with the Norfolk Southern Railway Company, which previously owned the trail corridor ("New ERA Trail").

A vision for community-controlled farm space along the New ERA Trail was described in 2015 in a report created by the Urban Farm Pathways Project—a group created to connect urban farmers to available land. Participants in the project include Angelic Organics, Growing Home, Growing Power, and Windy City Harvest. According to the report, "Urban farmers will create community-based farm enterprises in Englewood along the elevated rail viaduct between 58th and 59th

Streets. Englewood Community Farms will provide land for-profit or cooperative farming operations on contiguous parcels of land. The farmers will control and manage their own operations, while sharing resources such as tools, soil amendments, refrigeration, hoop houses, fencing and security and build a support network with local partners.” Because redevelopment of the approximated 700 acres of vacant land in Englewood will be a multi-year process, urban agriculture has been made a priority means of land use. Small-scale farms can be established on plots as small as a 40’ X 125’ lot, and can start producing relatively quickly. There is also great potential for phased growth of agriculture sites, as the farm could expand if land becomes available around it, production intensity could increase by building hoop houses or implementing other technologies, and food-processing, refrigeration, or retail operations could be integrated onsite. Urban farms would become keystone elements of a thriving community and economy in Englewood (“Englewood Community Farms”).

In her thesis, “You Are What You (Can) Eat: Cultivating Resistance through Food, Justice, and Gardens on the South Side of Chicago,” Ida Kassa captures the ways in which activists have successfully begun to address food security in the city’s most vulnerable neighborhoods. She writes: “We must not overlook the important work of these food justice programs that stipple Chicago’s South Side, for they are reclaiming power over how they nourish themselves and their communities” (38).

Both Rhodes and Cameron stress the impact that Advocates for Urban Agriculture (AUA)—a coalition of individuals, organizations, and businesses that work to support urban agriculture in Chicago—has had in the evolution of the

movement. AUA advocates for policy that better allows for the expansion of urban agriculture in Chicago; acts as a hub through which urban farmers can share information, resources, and best practices; and connects practitioners, projects, and consumers, through their network. One of the issues the group is currently working on is creating recommendations for business permits that are relevant to urban agriculture projects. Thanks to the 2011 [zoning amendment](#) (See Chapter 2), it is feasible to get land zoned specifically for an urban farm of any type. After that, however, the process becomes murkier. There are currently no business permits specific to urban agriculture, leaving farmers guessing at what type of permit to request. This uncertainty makes the businesses more vulnerable to being penalized for violations of municipal regulations and may limit potential for expansion in the future. AUA is looking at the best practices in other cities that have adopted urban agriculture business permits, and hopes Chicago will eventually offer permits designed specifically for various types of projects such as indoor aquaponics operations, farms in a residential area, or rooftop greenhouses. According to Christy Spees, AUA Outreach Coordinator, the organization's goal is to secure a place for urban agriculture in the city's regulatory structure. "Right now, nothing says 'if you're trying to start an urban agriculture business, these are the things that you need.' Whereas if you're trying to open a restaurant or a coffee shop, those rules and regulations are very clear," says Spees.

A major function of AUA has been to address the laws and regulations currently in place that impede the work of urban farmers. For example, in 2015 Chicago's [composting ordinance](#) was amended to allow urban farms and community

gardens to accept organic waste generated offsite, and permit qualifying urban farms to sell finished compost. The amendment also made the process of creating a community composting facility less arduous, and decreased the cost of procuring a permit by a factor of ten. AUA worked with the Illinois [Environmental Council](#) and the [Chicago Food Policy Action Council](#) to push these changes through. AUA is currently trying to change an ordinance that limits the size and height weeds can be in residential areas. Chicago residents who grow plants that look and act like weeds in their garden for supplemental purposes such as attracting pollinators or beneficial insects are being asked to get rid of those plants because they are prohibited by the ordinance. This often happens when a neighbor does not like the look of an un-manicured garden and reports it. AUA wants to encourage sustainable landscapes and support backyard gardeners, so the group is in conversation with the city to lift the restriction.

Another contention AUA deals with is land-availability and -ownership. “Community gardens are often started on vacant lots that they do not own—the problem with that is they can very easily be ‘evicted,’ so to speak,” explains Spees. Without any official claim to the plot, gardeners can be asked to uproot to make way for some type of development at any time. “That’s not really an ideal scenario,” says Spees. The organization hopes the city will eventually designate land for agricultural use rather than simply making undesignated land available.

City Farm is working on the flip side of this issue by creating urban farms on vacant lots that are designed to be “intentionally nomadic.” According to Meredith Coulter, who works for the organization, the mobile farming structure makes it

possible to move the operation to a new site if the land is purchased for development. City Farm seeks out parcels of land laying fallow in the city—ideally the plot is one acre or larger and available for at least three to five years—and builds a full-cycle, chemical-free farm that can produce thousands of pounds of produce per acre per year, and creates three to four full time jobs as well as seasonal work. City Farm was created by [The Resource Center](#), an environmental education nonprofit organization focused on minimizing waste by utilizing underused or overlooked resources. Other Resource Center programs include triple sort recycling and hazardous waste disposal. Compost plays a large role in City Farm’s model, and thanks to AUA’s efforts and Chicago’s new composting ordinance, the organization was able to create a “Food-to-Farm” service, through which food scraps are picked up from restaurants and other institutions and then used for compost (“Resource Center”).

Neighborspace, a nonprofit land trust, addresses land availability issues for permanent growing operations by providing long-term protection against development for farms and gardens that are already established. The organization covers basic liability insurance for gardeners and volunteers, and provides stewardship support and technical assistance. Neighborspace was established in 1966 by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County with the mission of sustaining small community developed gardens. These agencies still provide financial support for the organization (“About Neighborspace”).

Another act of legislation AUA hopes to see adopted in Chicago is a requirement for certain types of city organizations to purchase food that was produced locally. Los Angeles is the only city that has successfully enacted such a regulation as of 2016, where any institution that is funded in part by the government, such as public schools and social services, is required to purchase a percentage of their food from local farms. The City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) adopted The Good Food Purchasing Policy in 2012, which provides standards and support for large institutions to purchase food from local, sustainable sources. LAUSD spent \$10 million in produce from local growers in 2013 (“Good Food Purchasing Policy,” *Los Angeles Food Policy Council*). According to Spees, AUA is working with other Chicago and Illinois-based organizations to create recommendations to implement similar laws in Chicago. In 2015, The Chicago Food Policy Action Council launched the Good Food Purchasing Policy, and has since built a coalition of organizations, including AUA, that are working towards realizing the vision. In 2016, Mayor Emanuel appointed a task force to begin the process of implementing the Good Food Purchasing Policy in city agencies. Chicago Public Schools signed on to pilot the program for the summer of 2016 (“Good Food Purchasing Policy,” *Chicago Food Policy*).

Spees adds that there have also been discussions of creating a city government position for someone who would preside over urban agriculture. This person would help connect the wide variety of businesses and organizations around the city working in the urban agriculture sphere to each other and to resources such



as education and training. “It would be sort of like what we do now, but the hope is that having a person in place in the city would lead to more funding.”

AUA’s goal is to make Chicago a place for urban agriculture to flourish long-term. “Our dream vision is that the city will look more like it did during WWII when most people grew their own food in a community garden or ‘Victory Garden.’ It was not a niche thing; it was very commonplace,” says Spees (See Chapter 1). The idea would be that anyone could grow their own food on designated land throughout the city. But this dream must be realized gradually. “I think in the nearer future we will see more people growing food commercially for farmers markets, or for CSA sales, or even for grocery stores,” says Spees.

The arrival of Gotham Greens in Chicago in 2015 is emblematic of progress in that direction. This “hyper-local” producer of vegetables and herbs built a 75,000 square foot greenhouse on the rooftop of a [soap products manufacturing plant](#) in Chicago’s Historic Pullman Park District. It is the world’s largest and most productive rooftop farm, and operates completely on renewable energy. Gotham Greens was founded in Brooklyn, NY in 2009 and now operates three rooftop greenhouses in New York in addition to the massive Chicago facility. The produce grown in Pullman is sold at a range of grocery retailers and restaurants throughout the Midwest. The company emphasizes its commitment to the economic revitalization of the neighborhood, which was one of America’s first model industrial towns built by the Pullman Palace Car Company (“Our Farms”).

Another organization that utilizes green technology to grow food is Metropolitan Farms—an aquaponic growing operation in West Humboldt Park.

[Metropolitan Farms](#) was founded by Benjamin Kant and Eugene Funke, young entrepreneurs who dreamed of harnessing biological technologies to grow food in the city where it is eaten. The business combines fish farming and a hydroponic growing system in a 10,300 square foot controlled environment greenhouse to produce herbs, lettuce, and fish year-round (“About Metropolitan Farms”).

According to Kant, “The vision of Metropolitan Farms is that in its current stage it is a proof of concept for the business viability of commercial aquaponic farming.”

Although he maintains he “has a lot to say about education, sustainability, food access, and community engagement,” the objective of this business is to turn a profit. Kant wants to demonstrate the viability of urban farming as a business venture.

The road to success for Kant has not always been smooth. As CEO of a business whose structural needs are so outside the norm of an urban food production facility, he has confronted municipal barriers at every step of the process. “My day is more often filled with negotiating daily business, marketing and troubleshooting than farming. Chicago is a tough city, and many of my preconceptions of what the process would be like proved untrue,” he says. According to Kant, it was a challenge getting someone to take responsibility for approving a business permit because of the lack of a specific agricultural classification. If AUA is successful in getting the city to create business permits for urban farmers, entrepreneurs like Kant will not have to face the same barriers in the future. The success of Metropolitan Farms despite these obstacles, and the building momentum of policy reform in favor of businesses like it, offer a glimpse at the

potential of urban farming to become a vital asset to Chicago's economy. "With tenacity we have survived and are prospering," Kant says.

Entrepreneurs around Chicago are pushing the limits of how, where, and when fresh produce can be grown. Just outside of the metropolitan area lies a 7.5-acre glass house that grows vine-ripened tomatoes of "mid-summer" quality even through frigid Midwestern winters. This enormous facility is [MightyVine](#), a hydroponic tomato farm in Rochelle, IL, where tomatoes are grown using 10% of the water field-grown tomatoes require. Because of its proximity to consumers, the farm is able to choose its varieties based on flavor rather than transportability ("Our Growing Process"). MightyVine tomatoes are sold at restaurants and grocery retailers across Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison. Uncommon Ground is a loyal customer.

It is clear that community collaboration has been vital to the success of these organizations. A palpable example of this can be found in what was once the Pure Pork meatpacking facility in Back of the Yards on the south side of the city. The building has since been repurposed as The Plant—a hub for local, sustainable food production within a closed-loop system. The foundation of The Plant is its circular economy—would-be waste from one process is repurposed as input for another. The Plant is home to small batch coffee producers, gourmet mushroom growers, kombucha makers, bread bakers, and aquaponic greens farmers, among other food businesses. The expansive facility processes waste in an algae bioreactor that grows spirulina to feed fish and uses an anaerobic biodigester to convert organic matter into biofuel. Each week, The Plant also hosts a farmers market featuring produce

and value-added items from local Chicago producers alongside their own. The market draws customers from all over Chicago, but more importantly, it serves as a resource for the surrounding community, which has very limited access to fresh food. Link Card holders (anyone approved to receive cash assistance or SNAP benefits from the state of Illinois) receive double value on their purchase at the market, so if they spend \$10 they receive \$20 worth of food (“What Is ‘The Plant?’”).

Back of the Yards lies just beside the former Union Stock Yard, which was, until the 1950s, the largest livestock yards and meatpacking center in the country. The amassing of railroad lines in Chicago in the mid-nineteenth century—which carried grain from the wheat fields of northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, and later connected the city to Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, New Orleans, St. Louis, Kansas City, Omaha, and St. Paul—defined Chicago’s role as a hub of the grain marketing and meatpacking industries (Hudson).

Union Stock Yard operated from 1865 to 1971, during which time it handled over one billion animals (Pacyga). Back of the Yards is the setting of Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, the novel that cemented the image of Chicago’s nightmarish meat industry in the collective consciousness of the nation. While the slaughterhouses where indeed a terrifying reality, Back of the Yards was also home to a particularly vocal community of working-class activists. The [Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council](#) became a model for labor movement organization throughout the country, and is still functioning as one of the oldest community organizations in America (Barrett). This spirit of activism is alive in the radical transformation of a 93,500 square foot meat packing plant into a collaborative community of food growing and

processing businesses. This building was constructed in 1925 to try to meet the needs of a rapidly industrializing society; now it is supporting sustainable urban agriculture in the twenty-first century (“What Is ‘The Plant?’”).

Increasing demand for the freshest, tastiest, non-factory-produced food in Chicago has opened the door for businesses like Gotham Greens, Metropolitan Farms, MightyVine, and The Plant to flourish. These entrepreneurs are utilizing technology and maximizing resources to grow food sustainably in the city, and customers are eager to support them. Within this network, activists are empowering one another through financial and technological support, community and professional engagement, legal guidance, publicity and marketing, and beyond. On the group level, none of these farmers and entrepreneurs would have the markets they do, if it were not for the attention that has been generated by the movement collectively. The work that is currently being done in Chicago demonstrates the potential for urban agriculture to transform the city as urban agriculture drives progress in consumer taste, sustainable development, and neighborhood revitalization.

## Conclusion

In August 2016, I attended AUA's second annual "Grown in Chicago: Summer Soiree and Showcase." The event was held at [Big Delicious Planet](#), a restaurant and catering company with a sprawling garden whose harvests supplement the menu. Located in an industrial area in the near west side of the city, it was named the "Greenest Caterer in America" by the [Green Restaurant Association](#) (*Big Delicious Planet*). I had been researching urban agriculture all summer, so as I walked around booths set up by the city's farmers at the "hyper-local night market" I expected to recognize most of them. I was surprised to find that I had not heard of the majority of the projects being presented. Numerous school gardens, local honey producers, and micro-greens growers had eluded my attention. I was humbled not only by the limitations of my research, but by how many Chicagoans have devoted themselves to cultivating positive change through urban farming. Even during the time it took me to write this thesis, which was conceived in the spring of 2016, advancements were made. In an email response to my request for a clarification about his business, Benjamin Kant of Metropolitan Farms led with, "It feels like ages since we've spoken, we have some interesting things in the works...."

For even more progress to be made, we must consider what needs to be done to allow urban agriculture to reach its full potential. Through interviews with individuals working in this field, I found that while there was considerable frustration with the existing municipal legislature, most interviewees expressed certainty that the movement will continue to advance in Chicago, and with that will come policy reform. Christy Spees of AUA reflects, "What is happening at the state

and local level is just organizations advocating for specific changes and succeeding, which is great.”

As a result of the dedicated activism of numerous organizations such as AUA, city policy is changing, and Chicago is becoming an increasingly accommodating place for urban agriculture projects to thrive. As policy evolves to better support urban agriculture in Chicago, the community surrounding this movement must also actively create opportunities for increased interconnectedness, transparency, and mutual support. Urban agriculture has the potential to become a prominent facet of the food system in Chicago while improving food access, promoting sustainability, supporting neighborhood resilience, and boosting local economies.

Harry Rhodes, known widely for pioneering the urban agriculture movement in Chicago through his organization, Growing Home, contended: “I think it’s a crucial point in our development—in the movement’s development.” New and expanding avenues for growth offer great promise for the urban agriculture community in Chicago.

**Appendix A**

This appendix provides a list of individuals who I interviewed for this thesis.

Helen Cameron

Jim Seckelmann

Marc Wise

Kim Minestra

Liza Fischel

Zach Cascarano

Matt Ryan

Jodi Mariano

Harry Rhodes

Christy Spees

Meredith Coulter

Benjamin Kant



## **Appendix B**

This appendix provides the Web URLs that are linked to in the electronic version of this thesis.

### **Introduction**

Uncommon Ground: <http://www.uncommonground.com/home>

The Talking Farm: <http://www.thetalkingfarm.org/>

The Much Center: <http://mulchcenter.com/>

Greenwise Organic Lawncare: <http://www.iamgreenwise.com/about-us-3/>

The Edible Acre: <http://www.eths.k12.il.us/Page/493>

Chicago Market: <http://www.chicagomarket.coop/>

August 2016 Newsletter:

[http://www.chicagomarket.coop/newsletter\\_201608?utm\\_campaign=newsl\\_201608&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=chicagomarket](http://www.chicagomarket.coop/newsletter_201608?utm_campaign=newsl_201608&utm_medium=email&utm_source=chicagomarket)

Grant Kessler: <http://www.grantkessler.com/>

### **Chapter 1**

Controversy: <http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2014/08/13/the-butter-wars-when-margarine-was-pink/>

“Farmer In Chief”: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html>

Food, Conservation, and Energy Act:

[http://www.usda.gov/documents/Bill\\_6124.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/documents/Bill_6124.pdf)

Farm Bill: <http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-2014-farm-bill-highlights.pdf>

Why Did the Obamas Fail to Take On Corporate Agriculture:

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/09/magazine/obama-administration-big-food-policy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/10/09/magazine/obama-administration-big-food-policy.html?_r=0)

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/healthy-hunger-free-kids-act>

Food Inc.: <http://www.takepart.com/foodinc>

## **Chapter 2**

Gotham Greens: <http://gothamgreens.com/>

Illinois Food, Farms, and Jobs Act:

<http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs3.asp?ActID=3137&ChapterID=7>

Zoning Provisions:

[https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/provdrs/sustain/news/2010/dcc/zoning\\_amendmentwouldnourishurbanagriculturecitywise.html](https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/provdrs/sustain/news/2010/dcc/zoning_amendmentwouldnourishurbanagriculturecitywise.html)

Growing Power: <http://www.growingpower.org/>

The Chicago Tribune: [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-01-03/news/ct-met-urban-agriculture--20101228\\_1\\_city-farm-urban-farming-urban-agriculture](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-01-03/news/ct-met-urban-agriculture--20101228_1_city-farm-urban-farming-urban-agriculture)

The Resource Center: <http://www.resourcecenterchicago.org/>

City Farm: <http://www.cityfarmchicago.org/>

Neighborspace: <http://neighbor-space.org/>

Growing Home: <http://growinghomeinc.org/>

The Plant: <http://plantchicago.org/>

Teska Associates: <http://www.teskaassociates.com/>

Long-Range Master Plan: <http://www.thetalkingfarm.org/howard-street-farm/>

DePaul University's Stean Center: <http://steans.depaul.edu/>

Chicago Urban Agriculture Mapping Project:

<http://cuamp.org/#/searchGardens?community=-1&ward=-1&boardDistrict=-1&municipality=-1>

Peterson Garden Project: <http://petersongarden.org/>

Instructional Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkPVInuJZII>

### **Chapter 3**

Earth Boxes: <https://earthbox.com/earthbox-systems/the-original-earthbox-gardening-system>

Paul Virant: <http://www.paulvirant.com/>

Angelic Organics Learning Center: <http://www.learn-grow-connect.org/>

Planted Chicago: <http://plantedchicago.com/>

Jimmy's Vegan Cookies: <http://www.jimmysvegancookies.com/>

2015 Annual Report:

[http://growinghomeinc.org/docs/GrowingHome\\_AnnualReport\\_FY2015.pdf](http://growinghomeinc.org/docs/GrowingHome_AnnualReport_FY2015.pdf)

Zoning Amendment:

[https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Sustainable\\_Development/Publications/Urban\\_Ag\\_Ordinance\\_9-1-11.pdf](https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/zlup/Sustainable_Development/Publications/Urban_Ag_Ordinance_9-1-11.pdf)

Composting Ordinance: <https://auachicago.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/chicago-compost-substitute-ordinance.pdf>

Environmental Council: <http://ilenviro.org/>

Chicago Food Policy Action Council: <http://chicagofoodpolicy.com/>

The Resource Center: <http://www.resourcecenterchicago.org/>

Soap Products Manufacturing Plant: <http://methodhome.com/beyond-the-bottle/soap-factory/>

Metropolitan Farms: <http://www.metro-farms.com/>

Mightyvine: <http://www.mightyvine.com/>

Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council: <http://www.bync.org/>

### **Conclusion**

Big Delicious Planet: <http://www.bigdeliciousplanet.com/#creative-stylish-full-service-custom-catering-in-chicago>

Green Restaurant Association: <http://www.dinegreen.com/?ID=REST11780>

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