Growing Our Local Food System Through Strengthening Community Partnerships

Matt Duker- Montclair Community Farm - Project Director
Marissa Blodnik- Essex/Hudson County 4-H Program Associate

2016 North East Regional Urban Extension Conference
- Thoughts on the sustainability of urban agriculture projects

- About Montclair Community Farms- A community lead Urban Agriculture Project

- Forming successful partnerships

- Planning for sustainability
How do you sustain an urban agriculture project?

What does a successful urban agriculture project look like?
How do you sustain an urban agriculture project?

- Partnerships
- Not relying on soft funds

What does a successful urban agriculture project look like?

- Community lead not community placed
- Cross-sector partnerships
About

“Montclair Community Farms” consists of local organizations committed to providing community farm sites to engage the community in farming, food, agricultural and nutrition education. These local community farms are hands-on resources to create a healthy food environment to support healthy lifestyle choices.”
Functions

Food access

Community interaction and service

Education
History

- Founded in 2011 as a youth led community garden site
- 2012- Seed grant from Partners for Health Foundation
- 2013- Expanded to the Montclair Historical Society
- 2013- Included “urban livestock” bees and poultry
- 2014- USDA Farmers Market Food Promotion funds, started mobile farm-stand project
- 2015- Partnership with school gardens
Current and Future Partnerships

In addition to the community coalition, other partners include:

- Montclair District Initiative for Gardening in Schools (DIGS)
- Vital Restaurant
- Toni’s Soup Kitchen
- Montclair Library
- The Children’s Institute
Mobile Market
Recap 2016

• 79 youth participated in farm camp, raising $9710 in profit

• >125 seniors reached

• >575 produce grown & sold

• 130% increase in farm-stand sales ($196 in 2015 to $445)
Future

- Continue seeking partnership opportunities (YMCA, MSU Research, Environmentally centered programs, 360 Greenhouse, Vital)

- Partner with rural agriculture and small farmers to supplement food availability

- Expand Farm-stand outreach (additional stops or days)
Successes

1. Continual community involvement & awareness

2. Positive responses from target population

1. Mutually beneficial relationship with partners
Challenges

1. Sustainable funding
2. Promotion & marketing
3. Farm-stand produce supply
1. Fruit
## Production Risks and Challenges for Urban Farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Aspects of Urban Farm</th>
<th>Very to Extremely Challenging</th>
<th>Slightly to Moderately Challenging</th>
<th>Not at All Challenging</th>
<th>$X^2$ (Difference Between Start-Up &amp; Established Farms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production costs</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing pests</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>65.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing weeds</td>
<td>26.9</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>0.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Climate (e.g., shade, temperature, wind)</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining adequate yields</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>60.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>0.89</td>
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<td>Soil health</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>70.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>2.54</td>
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<tr>
<td>Access to water</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>2.15</td>
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<td>Environmental pollution (e.g., toxins in the soil)</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>1.64</td>
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<td>Food safety</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>1.14</td>
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</table>

## Other Challenges for Urban Farms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Very to Extremely Challenging</th>
<th>Slightly to Moderately Challenging</th>
<th>Not at All Challenging</th>
<th>$X^2$ (Difference Between Start-Up &amp; Established Farms)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profitability</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
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<td>Farm labor</td>
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<td>51.9</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>4.19*</td>
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<td>Managing business activities</td>
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<td>10.8</td>
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<td>Access to land</td>
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<td>41.7</td>
<td>33.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution and logistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marketing venues for your products</td>
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<td>51.4</td>
<td>29.7</td>
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<td>Security/vandalism</td>
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<td>50.7</td>
<td>36.4</td>
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<td>Community relations (neighbors)</td>
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<td>45.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>0.35</td>
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Partnerships

-City Health Department
-NJ Historical Society
-Home Corps
-4-H
-Master Gardeners
-Montclair University Office of Engagement
-Montclair District Initiative for Gardening in Schools (DIGS)

How can community partnerships be beneficial to your urban program?

What factors help form successful and sustainable community partnerships?
Partnerships

Challenges - Staff turnover, over commitment, lack of follow-up, and competition

Successes - Setting realistic expectations, joining existing networks, using written agreements, mutually beneficial goals, and writing collaborative grants

Sustainability

- Securing hard resources; programing, staff/equipment commitment from partners (Not relying on produce sales!)
- Not putting all your eggs in one basket
- Sharing fiscal responsibilities
- Pooling resources
- Growth within our means
Questions?

Matt Duker- montclaircommunityfarms@gmail.com
Marissa Blodnik- blodnik@njaes.rutgers.edu