



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

Montclair Community Farms Coalition



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



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

Production Aspects of Urban Farm	Very to Extremely Challenging	Slightly to Moderately challenging	Not at All Challenging	X ² (Difference Between Start-Up & Established Farms)
Production costs	31.9	54.6	10.3	0.20
Managing pests	27.1	65.3	7.6	0.94
Managing weeds	26.9	60.9	11.5	0.29
Climate (e.g., shade, temperature, wind)	26.2	64.1	9.1	0.55
Maintaining adequate yields	21.3	68.2	9.4	1.02
Infrastructure	20.9	60.8	16.8	0.89
Soil health	16.5	70.5	12.3	2.54
Access to water	14.3	46.4	38.7	2.15
Environmental pollution (e.g., toxins in the soil)	11.3	41.4	45.3	1.64
Food safety	6.8	55.6	31.2	1.14
Animal health	3.6	32.9	27.2	0.14

Other Challenges for Urban Farms

Challenges	Very to Extremely Challenging	Slightly to Moderately Challenging	Not at All Challenging	X ² (Difference Between Start-Up & Established Farms)
Profitability	45.6	37.2	8.0	2.92
Financing	34.8	38.7	16.4	0.29
Farm labor	21.2	51.9	22.3	4.19*
Managing business activities	18.4	65.1	10.8	0.07
Access to land	17.7	41.7	33.0	0.47
Distribution and logistics	15.7	58.1	20.6	1.09
Marketing venues for your products	12.6	51.4	29.7	0.17
Security/vandalism	9.3	50.7	36.4	0.01
Community relations (neighbors)	7.3	45.3	46.7	0.35

Oberholtzer, L., C. Dimitri, and A. Pressman. "agriculture in the United States: Characteristics, challenges and technical assistance Urban needs." *Journal of Extension* 52.6 (2014).

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

Hoskins, Linda and Emil Angelica. (2005). *The Fieldstone's Nonprofit Guide to Forming Alliances: Working Together to Achieve Mutual Goals*. Saint Paul, MN: Field Stone Alliance

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

