



# Atlanta's Local Food Baseline Report

FALL 2017 | VOL. 1



## Together We Grow Local Food. Together We Build Community.

### A VISION FROM BILL BOLLING

Food builds community and is vital to creating the vibrant and prosperous Metro Atlanta where we all want to live. Through my work over the last 37 years, I have had the privilege of seeing first hand the role food plays in bringing people together and nourishing our communities.

The power of our city's local food is not only supporting our urban farmers and community gardeners, and increasing access to healthy food. It is uniting the individuals, neighborhoods and local food organizations that share a common goal in building healthier communities.

### TAPPING THE RESOURCES OF OUR COMMUNITY

In Georgia, we're fortunate to have agricultural resources and temperate climates for growing healthy, seasonal fruits and vegetables year-round. In fact, agriculture contributes approximately \$74.9 billion annually to the state's economy<sup>1</sup>. So Metro Atlanta should be fertile ground for a local food movement. And it is.

From our urban farmers and community gardeners providing food-insecure communities with access to fresh fruits and vegetables to compost experts turning wasted food into healthy soil for farms and gardens – the heroes of our local food movement are building a more sustainable and resilient Metro Atlanta. They're tackling some of our most challenging issues with innovation through their commitment to food security, food justice and food access.

### THE PATH TO A GREAT VISION IS PAVED WITH SHARED KNOWLEDGE

It's my hope the momentum of our local food movement will attract many more people, organizations and investors who share our vision that people from all walks of life can thrive by growing, sharing and eating healthy,



**Bill Bolling**  
Board Chairman and Senior Advisor, Food Well Alliance

local food. While this is a worthy and inspiring vision, we need a shared roadmap to get there.

At the Atlanta Community Food Bank, we had a saying that things that get counted get done. To create a roadmap, we need to collectively start understanding what success looks like in Metro Atlanta, and where we should set milestones along the path to our vision.

### WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

In this baseline report, Food Well Alliance is sharing foundational knowledge that can be used as a resource to create our roadmap.

This report provides a snapshot of the Metro Atlanta food movement. It highlights examples of local food movement successes and leadership, demonstrating the strength of diversity, creativity, ingenuity and collaboration.

The overarching goal for this publication is to develop a collective vision that legitimizes the impact of Atlanta's local food movement. To that end, I hope this report will introduce you to a person or organization you do not know and now want to meet. I hope it inspires you to participate in programs and approaches that are working to fill gaps where

our local food system needs strengthening. Lastly, I hope it gives you stories to tell others about how local food creates a flourishing community where we all want to live.



**James C. Kennedy**  
Chairman, Cox Enterprises, Inc. and Founding Benefactor, Food Well Alliance

Food Well Alliance is leading the community in helping grow community gardens and making locally-grown food more widely available. We are happy to partner with Bill and his team in this important work.

### Acknowledgment for The James M. Cox Foundation

Food Well Alliance is thankful for the operating support of the James M. Cox Foundation, which makes our work possible.

Food Well Alliance believes food builds community, and that a healthy food system ensures that all people have equitable access to sustainably grown, locally sourced food.

For more information, visit: [www.foodwellalliance.org](http://www.foodwellalliance.org)

# Table of Contents

- 02 Founder's Vision: Together We Grow Local Food. Together We Build Community
- 05 Acknowledgements

## 06 Atlanta's Snapshot

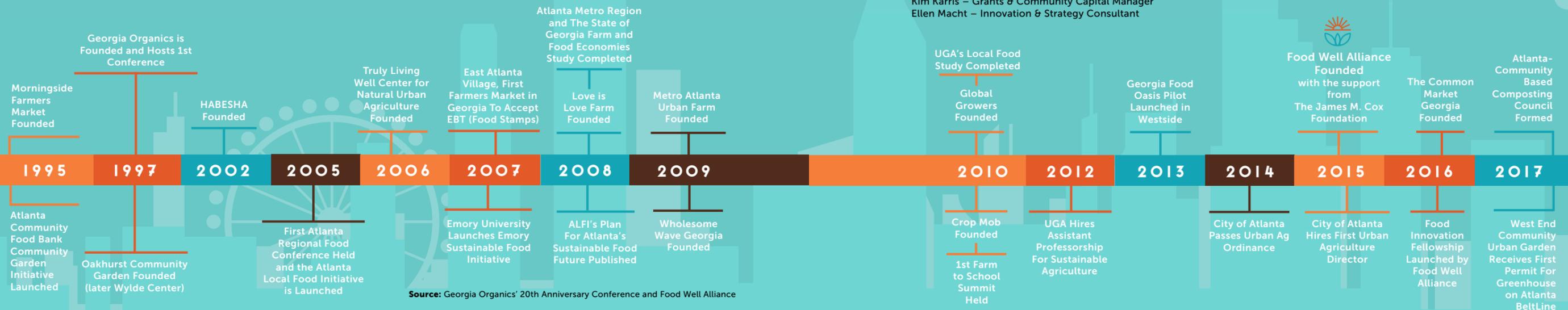
- 07 What is a Local Food System?
- 09 Local, Sustainably Grown Food Impacts All of Us

## Local Food Baseline

- 10 Local Food Impacts Community Vitality
- 16 Local Food Impacts Environmental Stewardship
- 22 Local Food Impacts Health and Nutrition
- 28 Local Food Impacts Economic Development

## 34 Take Action: Creating The City We All Want To Live In

- 36 Executive Director's Perspective: Collaboration is the Keystone of a Strong Local Food System
- 38 End Notes



Source: Georgia Organics' 20th Anniversary Conference and Food Well Alliance

# Acknowledgments

Food Well Alliance would first like to thank the Atlanta Community Food Bank for its generous support and commitment to ensuring the sustainability of our organization since 2015. They made this report possible.

Food Well Alliance believes that collaboration is essential to strengthening Metro Atlanta's local food system. We collaborated with an accomplished, diverse group of local food system leaders, community and civic champions, and public, private, and nonprofit leaders for research and guidance on the Local Food Baseline Report. Food Well Alliance thanks them for lending their time, expertise, and willingness to collaborate on the Local Food Baseline Report's production.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bill Bolling – Chairman / Senior Advisor, Bolling Consulting  
 Robby Kukler – Secretary / Partner, Fifth Group Restaurants  
 Bill Levisay – Treasurer / Owner and Principal, Levisay Consulting LLC  
 Alexander C. Taylor – Chief Operating Officer, Cox Enterprises

### COMMUNITY BOARD

Peggy Barlett, Ph. D. – Goodrich C. White Professor, Department of Anthropology, Emory University  
 Sara Berney – Executive Director, Wholesome Wave Georgia  
 Suzanne Burnes – Founder / CEO, Collective Wisdom Group, Inc.  
 Mario Cambardella – Urban Agriculture Director, Mayor's Office of Resilience, City of Atlanta  
 Leesa Carter – Executive Director, Captain Planet Foundation  
 Fred Conrad – Community Gardens Manager, Atlanta Community Food Bank  
 Allison Duncan – Principal Planner, Atlanta Regional Commission  
 Michael Halicki – Executive Director, Park Pride  
 Katie Hayes – Executive Director, Community Farmers Markets  
 Susan Kidd – Director of Sustainability, Agnes Scott College  
 Mary Pat Matheson – Executive Director, Atlanta Botanical Gardens  
 Rashid Nuri – Founder, Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture  
 Susan Pavlin – Board Member, Global Growers  
 Alice Rolls – Executive Director, Georgia Organics  
 Bobby Wilson – President / Founder, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm

### LOCAL FOOD BASELINE REPORT STEERING COMMITTEE

Sara Berney – Executive Director, Wholesome Wave Georgia  
 Mario Cambardella – Urban Agriculture Director, Mayor's Office of Resilience, City of Atlanta  
 Hilary King – Director of Special Projects, Community Farmers Markets  
 Rashid Nuri – Founder, Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture  
 Alice Rolls – Executive Director, Georgia Organics

### STAFF

Nadirah Ali – Administrative Coordinator  
 Britni Burkhardtsmeier - Collaboration Program Coordinator  
 Bobby Farmer – Grants Coordinator  
 Kim Karris – Grants & Community Capital Manager  
 Ellen Macht – Innovation & Strategy Consultant

Will Sellers – Collaboration Program Manager  
 Myriah Towner – Communications and Marketing Coordinator  
 Bobbi de Winter – Executive Director

### INTERNS

Sofia Maria Allende - Earth University  
 Zoe La Soya – Intern, Emory University  
 Jacqueline McCrary – Intern, Spelman College  
 Molly O'Neil – Intern, Emory University  
 Mariah Slaughter – Intern, Spelman College  
 Allegra Tucker – Intern, College of Charleston

## Report Production

### RESEARCH AND PRINCIPAL AUTHORS

Amy Webb Girard, Ph.D. - Assistant Professor, Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University  
 Becky Griffin - Community and School Garden Coordinator, Center for Urban Agriculture and Extension, Northwest District, University of Georgia  
 Ken Meter - President, Crossroads Resource Center  
 Britni Burkhardtsmeier, MPH - Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University  
 Bella A. Girovich, MPH - Hubert Department of Global Health, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University  
 Anna Grace Tribble - PH.D Candidate, Department of Anthropology, Emory University  
 Mackenzie Aime - Undergraduate Student, Institute for the Liberal Arts, Emory University

### EDITORIAL REVIEW

Molly Riordan – Local Food Systems Consultant  
 Jo Ann McCracken – Redding – Principal, McCracken & Associates  
 Anamarie Shreeves – Communications Consultant

### INFORMATION DESIGN

Joey Thompson - Visual Director for Film, Brand and Design, Founder of Atlanta Makers, Co-Founder of Southend Films  
 Bryan J. Noel - Brand Strategist & Process Designer Co-Founder, Fervr, LLC

# Atlanta's Snapshot

## In Atlanta, Local Food is About Inclusion

Home to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the civil rights movement, Coca-Cola, and startup successes like MailChimp, Atlanta is steeped in cultural history and thrives on its shared entrepreneurial spirit. Inclusivity is certainly what makes Georgia's capital unique and in recent years, has attracted a diverse influx of new city dwellers with its 22-mile Beltline trail development, a burgeoning film and hip hop industry and nationally acclaimed chefs, mixologists and food halls like Krog Street and Ponce City Market.

True to its Southern core, the booming restaurant community in Atlanta has brought us together with authentic soul food and ethnic cuisines from Buford Highway. But if you live in Atlanta, the effects of our current industrialized food system are too visible to ignore. Neighborhoods lined with gas stations and fast food chains, without a grocery store in sight, are commonplace. We also see the effects in our school lunches, in our rising rates of obesity, in our depleted soil and in our separation from where food is actually grown.

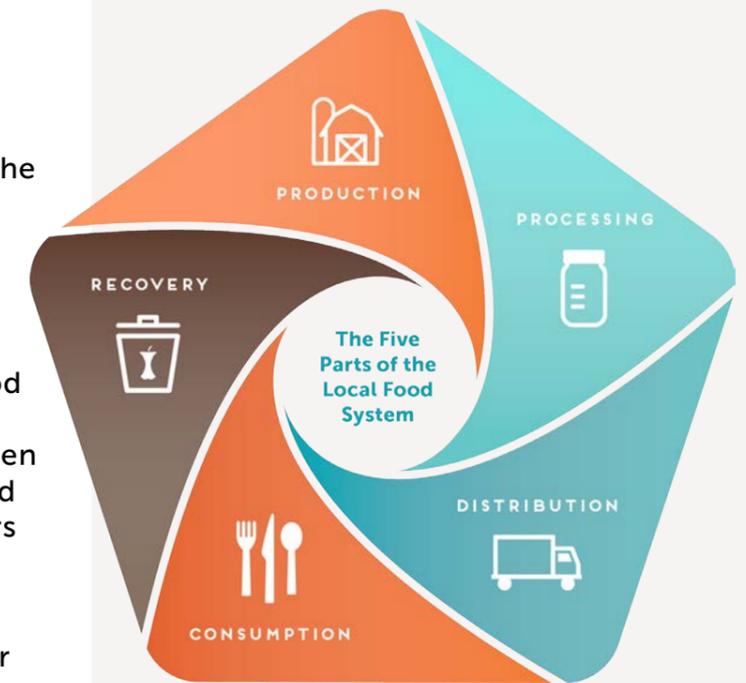
It is in these neighborhoods and schools where leadership and innovation have taken root, quite literally. Born out of necessity, urban agriculture has brought fresh, sustainably grown food to the Atlantans who most need it. Today, it has the potential to ensure that our ever-evolving, multicultural city boasts a resilient local food system just as vibrant, forward thinking and accessible as its parks, music and art.

**NURI ICGOREN**  
Founder / Farmer, Urban Sprout Farms

## What is a Local Food System?

At its core, a local food system is about the social relation, not just the spatial location, of food. It's about the interaction between producer and consumer, between farmer and eater. In Atlanta, local food is not simply a trend or an agrarian counter culture. Atlanta's local food system is a collaborative network shortening the supply chain between sustainable producers, value-added processors, distributors, consumers and composters.

When functioning efficiently and equitably, local food has the power to embolden educators, policymakers and anchor institutions to help create resilient, inclusive communities where our social, ecological, economic, and nutritional health flourish. Indeed, when a city prioritizes its local food system – from production to food waste recovery – enhanced community vitality, economic development, health and nutrition, and environmental stewardship occur naturally.



## THERE IS A MOVEMENT TO STRENGTHEN ATLANTA'S LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

At the core of our food system are Metro Atlanta's local **PRODUCERS**, from small farmers to urban gardeners that sustainably grow and harvest local vegetables, fruits, and animal protein.

From Doux South Pickles to King of Pops, our city's **PROCESSORS** "add-value" to fresh local vegetables and fruit, by canning, processing and packaging it into something new.

Local food **DISTRIBUTORS** like Turnip Truck and Common Market Georgia, aggregate fresh food from local producers and deliver it directly to consumers, such as restaurants, schools, hospitals, and grocers in Metro Atlanta.

All of us in Atlanta are **CONSUMERS**, whether we are buying local food at farmers markets, preparing meals at home or eating it at local restaurants.

To close the loop of our local food system, Atlanta depends on those who recover the wasted food we don't eat for **COMPOSTERS**, to return critical nutrients back into our soil for more healthy food production by our local growers.



## Baseline Report: Measuring Local Food's Impact

This Local Food Baseline Report is the first of its kind for Atlanta. Cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Detroit and Boston have engaged researchers, academics, and food system experts to develop snapshot reports that quantify the impact of their localized urban food systems. Atlanta's Local Food Baseline Report was inspired by the systemic approach and metrics framework used in these reports.

Building off years of foundational work by leaders including Metro Atlanta Urban Farm, Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture, HABESHA, Atlanta Local Food Initiative and Georgia Organics, to name just a few, Food Well Alliance set out to aggregate existing data and document how local, sustainably grown food impacts Atlanta's community vitality, economic development, environmental stewardship and health and nutrition.

Of course, local is defined in many ways. For some, it describes only food grown within 250 miles and for others, it describes the entire state of Georgia. However, in Metro Atlanta there is a vibrant movement of community gardeners, urban farmers, educators, policymakers, funders and social entrepreneurs working to ensure that food is grown sustainably and distributed equitably within the five most populous counties in Metro Atlanta: Fulton (pop. 1,023,336), Gwinnett (pop. 907,135), DeKalb (pop. 740,321), Cobb (pop. 748,150), and Clayton (pop. 279,462).<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Baseline Report, we will focus on providing a snapshot of leadership, best practices and food system data from these five counties.

Throughout this process, we learned that food associated with high levels of well-being, of social justice, of stewardship, and of system resilience is grown locally by farmers and gardeners right here in our city. We learned that both teachers and healthcare providers are critical to awakening Atlantans about the importance of eating local, fresh, nutritious food. We also learned that while segmented local food data exists in Atlanta, there is little access to common success metrics or a shared vision for our city's local food system.



A View of Metro Atlanta's Most Populous Five Counties

**Fulton** (pop. 1,023,336), **Gwinnett** (pop. 907,135), **DeKalb** (pop. 740,321), **Cobb** (pop. 748,150), and **Clayton** (pop. 279,462).<sup>1</sup>

Numbers are important, but translating that data into a valuable story that clearly outlines measurable impacts for Metro Atlanta will determine the future of our local food system.

This is our collective work going forward. At the end of each chapter, you will be invited to visit [FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood](http://FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood) to track your data and find ways that you can get involved to strengthen Atlanta's local food system. Please join us as fellow collaborators in creating lasting change for our local food system and our city.

## Local, Sustainably Grown Food Impacts All of Us

### COMMUNITY VITALITY

Building a Strong Community Identity & Spirit

Food that is grown locally, within urban neighborhoods and schools, brings people together to build vibrant, healthier and more connected communities. Inclusive community gardens, urban farms and farmers markets are making it easier for all people, regardless of income or where you live in Atlanta to grow, access and eat healthy, locally-grown food.



### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Creating a More Environmentally Sustainable Food System

Atlanta is home to a diverse movement of leaders from urban growers to environmental educators to composters, who are demonstrating that a strong local food system is one that preserves natural resources, promotes ecological balance, and protects our urban landscape. Creating a more environmentally sustainable urban food system is critical to making our food safe and our city a more climate-resilient, healthier place to live.



### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Increasing Consumption of Sustainably Grown, Local Food

Local, sustainably-grown food is some of the most nutritious fruits and vegetables available in our city. Hospitals and health-care providers have an opportunity to collaborate with urban growers to prevent disease and improve health in patients with low access to fresh food. Educational opportunities at farmers markets, community gardens and farm-to-school programs are already raising awareness of how to grow, cook and eat nutritious meals.



### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Generating a Robust Local Food Economy

At the heart of a resilient local food system are communities in Atlanta that are centered around productive and viable farms. From full-service restaurants that source from local farms to social entrepreneurs creating jobs to reach low-access neighborhoods through community-supported agriculture - Atlanta growers and eaters are critical to our local food economy.





# Local Food Impacts Community Vitality

## Building a Strong Community Identity & Spirit

By eating local, city dwellers connect with local farmers. And by growing food in their community, they connect with neighbors in shared green spaces.

## Overview

Vibrant community gardens and thriving farmers markets throughout Metro Atlanta are increasing access to sustainably grown, locally produced food for thousands of Atlantans. However, community gardens and farmers markets are more than local food production and distribution sites.

These special places bring people together. They serve as safe spaces where children learn about ecology, young adults learn agricultural and entrepreneurial skills, senior citizens socialize, and neighbors work together to beautify where they live.

From Southwest Atlanta to Lilburn to North Marietta to Decatur, close to 300 community gardens<sup>1</sup> across Metro Atlanta connect an estimated 7,000 citizens<sup>2</sup> -growers to their neighbors, mitigate food deserts, and encourage the vitality of urban neighborhoods.

For years civic leaders have been leveraging gardening as a tool for community development in Atlanta. The Atlanta Community Food Bank created their own community gardening program in 1996 to address food insecurity and improve community vitality. Now the program brings in thousands of volunteers every year to work in over 100 gardens across Metro Atlanta.

Nationally, developers are starting to incorporate community food-growing spaces into real estate development projects to create a sense of community and provide tenants with access to fresh, local food. In Fayetteville, Arkansas, ECO Modern Flats created a community-growing space maintained by a resident gardener, and the company reports that its investment in the community-growing space contributed to tenants renewing leases.<sup>3</sup>

Local governments are seeing the benefit of supporting these safe spaces too. In 2010, the City of Suwanee in Gwinnett County opened Harvest Farm Community Garden, Georgia's largest organic community garden, to provide families with intergenerational fellowship and fresh food.

With over 63 farmers markets located in the five-county Metro Atlanta region,<sup>4</sup> our city has growing access to fresh food and healthy social interaction. According to Wholesome Wave Georgia, "a study by the Project for Public Spaces revealed that people who shop at farmers markets have 15 to 20 social interactions per visit, while they would only have one or two per visit to the grocery store. Nearly 90% of Wholesome Wave Georgia's Fresh for Less shoppers reported increased feelings of community engagement."<sup>5</sup>

### FARMERS MARKETS ARE ATLANTA'S NEW COMMUNITY HUBS

Founded in 2011, Community Farmers Markets (CFM) manages the Grant Park, East Atlanta Village, Ponce City Market, two Decatur and four Fresh MARTA markets. In 2016 alone,<sup>6</sup> attendance numbers represent a growing demand for community gathering places where healthy food is accessible and affordable, nutrition education is offered, and relationships between farmer and eater are formed:

- 131**  
farmers, food makers, and vendors
- 172,385**  
market shoppers
- \$81,329**  
SNAP dollars doubled by Wholesome Wave Georgia's Fresh For Less Program
- 307**  
healthy cooking demonstrations by chefs at the markets
- 253**  
volunteers totaling 3,718 volunteer hours at markets

As Atlanta's new community hubs, organizations such as Community Farmers Markets and Georgia Farmers Market Association create venues for thousands of diverse shoppers and farmers in Metro Atlanta to exchange stories, create memories, and enjoy local food every day of the week.

### GARDENS NOURISH NEIGHBORHOODS

Although local food cuts across all demographic and geographic lines, Atlanta’s urban gardens are clustered in the city’s lowest-income neighborhoods – areas where community gardening is arguably making the greatest impact.

Many of these neighborhoods, predominantly comprised of people of color, are considered food deserts, where thousands of households do not have access to affordable or good-quality fresh food. Community gardens have transformed lives by increasing food security and serving as beacons of light in neighborhoods that before had no access to healthy and nutritious foods.

Westside Atlanta is an example of an expansive area known as a food desert. Here, Georgia Food Oasis Atlanta provides backbone support for resident-driven solutions to improve how people eat, cook and grow in the neighborhoods of English

Avenue, Vine City, Bankhead and Southwest Atlanta. In these same neighborhoods, Historic Westside Gardens is building community capital by helping residents install fresh vegetable gardens in their own backyards. These neighbors are within walking distance of each other and now exchange crops, seeds and tools.

And just minutes from Hartsfield–Jackson Atlanta International Airport in College Park, Metro Atlanta Urban Farm provides a free monthly leadership training program for low-income community gardeners. The program includes horticulture lessons, community activism, and educational outreach for families without access to affordable fresh produce.

No matter where they are located, local gardens, farms and markets in Atlanta are also home to community events, from music festivals to face painting to yoga. Local food brings people together. It nourishes the community.

### Where Do We Go From Here?

#### CHALLENGES

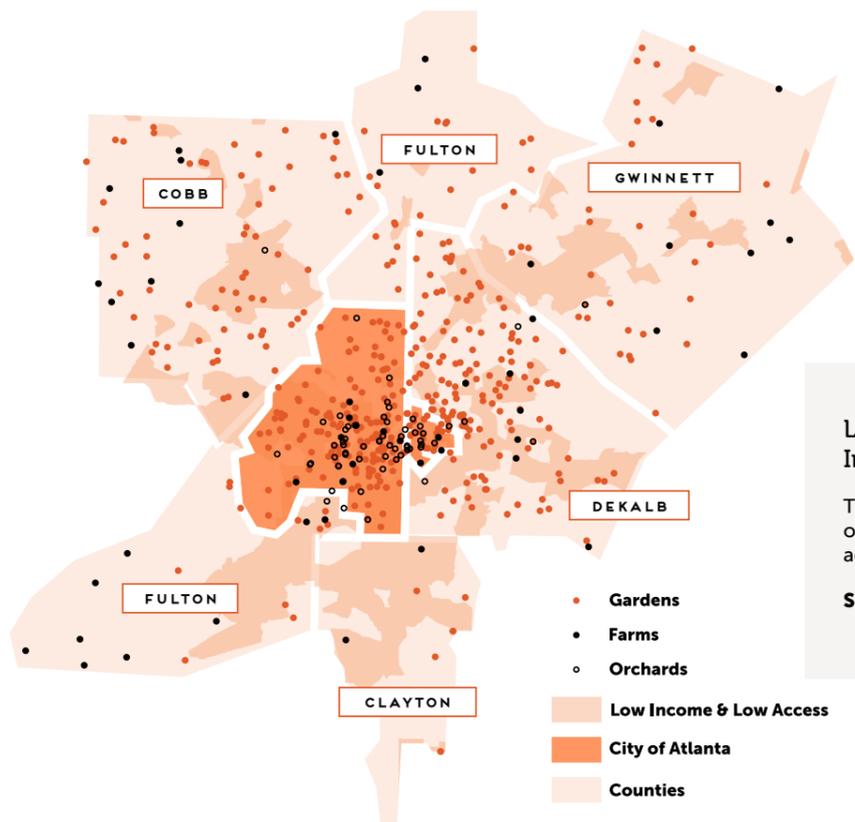
What are your ideas for removing these barriers?

- Farmers markets in Metro Atlanta struggle to attract demographically diverse shoppers and vendors.
- Because most farmers markets in Metro Atlanta are volunteer-led and unpaid, manager burnout and turnover is a major reason why markets fail.<sup>7</sup>
- Sustaining neighborhood participation at community gardens is difficult because of lack of knowledge around volunteer management, community engagement and access to funding resources.<sup>8</sup>
- Growing development in Atlanta threatens available green spaces for community gardening.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine if we worked together to make this happen in Metro Atlanta:

- More local governments followed the example of the City of Norcross by creating farmers markets with free access to city-owned land and budgeted salaries for seasonal farmers market managers.
- More farmers markets used community-based engagement strategies to ensure that markets are inclusive of growers and shoppers of all ages, ethnicities and cultures.
- A centralized “go-to” association provided a place where community gardens could access tools, knowledge, city officials and other resources.
- Preserved green spaces, designated for community gardening in urban and housing development plans, resulted in more gardens and more people eating healthy local food.



#### Locally-Grown Food Combats Urban Food Insecurity

This map shows community gardens, urban farms and orchards clustered in “food deserts,” areas with low access to nutritious foods.

Source: Atlanta Regional Commission. (2017, Mar 31).

### LEADERS BUILDING Community Vitality



**CASHAWN MYERS**  
Executive Director

**HABESHA, Inc.** cultivates leadership in children, young adults and seniors through community gardening, entrepreneurship and urban agriculture training.



**KATIE HAYES**  
Executive Director

**Community Farmers Markets** creates authentic spaces for all people to share community and healthy food at markets that support local producers who steward the earth.



**K. RASHID NURI**  
Founder and Chief Executive Officer

**Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture** educates and connects people through urban farming, builds positive personal relationships and establishes an ethic of community and environmental stewardship.

## Norcross Community Market Celebrates Cultural Diversity Through Food

Just blocks away from where Buford Highway – Atlanta’s multicultural commercial thoroughfare – passes through the City of Norcross, a crowd of adults and children gather at the Norcross Community Market. Some are browsing booths selling a variety of delicious, locally produced goods from fresh fruits and vegetables to honey and eggs. Some are tasting ready-to-eat treats such as arepas, tamales, and elote prepared by local food vendors. Others are participating in cooking demonstrations or simply enjoying live entertainment.



**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**  
Sagdrina Jalal, Executive Director, Georgia Farmers Market Association; Karla Blaginin, Primary Analyst, Dichos de la Casa; Connie Weathers, Founder and Chair, Sustainable Norcross

This market is unique in its appeal to the diverse communities that make up the city where more than 40 percent of residents are foreign-born, according to Sagdrina Jalal, Founder and Executive Director of the Georgia Farmers Market Association. Jalal’s organization developed the market in partnership with Sustainable Norcross and the City of Norcross.

In 2016, 56 percent of the market’s vendors were minority-owned by women, African Americans, veterans and non-U.S. born residents. When the number of Latino vendors increased, the market provided ServSafe trainings in Spanish to help sell prepared foods at the market.

The market is one of four in Metro Atlanta that accepts the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers issued to low-income senior citizens. For qualifying purchases and those of customers with SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) EBT cards, each dollar spent is matched with a dollar added to the card. This double up program is provided through the market’s partnership with Wholesome Wave Georgia and their Georgia Fresh For Less program.

The market works to strike the right balance in appealing to diverse communities; providing residents with access to healthy food; increasing sales for local, small-scale farmers and developing local entrepreneurs while bringing the community together around food, according to Connie Weathers, Founder of Sustainable Norcross.

Through the market’s success, the Georgia Farmers Market Association and Sustainable Norcross have helped the City of Norcross understand the value of a farmers markets.

“City support has been instrumental in making this possible through in-kind support. I know other farmers markets do not have support from local government, so it makes me appreciative of what we have,” says Weathers.

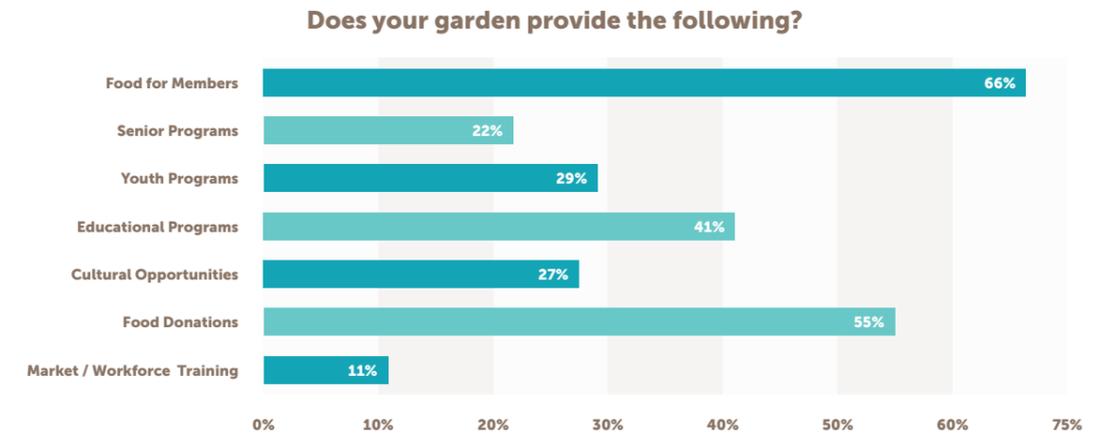


**VENDOR**  
Norcross Community Farmers Market



## Metro Atlanta’s Gardens Grow Much More Than Food

**But they need resources and stronger neighborhood engagement to continue.** In response to a 2016 Food Well Alliance survey, 170 community gardens provided the information charted below about the food and services they provide – including programs that educate, train, entertain and provide healthy, local food for the community.



**Source:** Food Well Alliance. (2016). Leaders Growing Community Gardens survey. Analysis provided by Leaders Growing Community Gardens Initiative members Khari Diop, Think Green, Inc. and Maria Rossotto, Partners in Action for Healthy Living.

## SHARE YOUR DATA AND IDEAS AT [FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD](http://FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD)

If you believe that local food builds a stronger community identity and spirit in Atlanta, let’s work together to demonstrate the value of this to individuals and organizations that can bring resources to our city.

How can we collectively measure local food’s impact on community vitality in Atlanta? Are you capturing this data? This social data is critical to galvanize investment and major policy change to strengthen Metro Atlanta’s local food system. Please share your metrics and ideas about innovative ways to collect data together on [FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood](http://FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood). – a place for our community to aggregate valuable data and work together on expanding the local food movement in Metro Atlanta.

**This is the community vitality data we encourage you to share:**

- # of people (youth, adults, seniors) participating in community gardens in your community
- # of pounds of food produced and donated from community gardening
- # of youth the farm/garden trained in job skills
- # of farmers markets in your community
- # of vendors selling local fruits and vegetables at your community farmers markets



# Local Food Impacts Environmental Stewardship

## Creating a More Environmentally Sustainable Food System

Local food production encourages sustainable land-based practices that conserve our urban landscape, support biodiversity and return critical nutrients from food scraps back into our soil.

## Overview

Metro Atlanta's five most populous counties were once dairy farms, horse farms, and open fields. Today, that heritage is still visible in one of Atlanta's greatest natural assets, a large tree canopy of mature magnolias, dogwoods, oaks, and southern pines. However, this "city in a forest" is now sprawling with high-density clusters of neighborhoods, subdivisions multifamily housing developments, and office space filled with close to 3.7 million city dwellers<sup>1</sup> seeking walkability, parks and good transportation.

Our urban progress has also come at a cost to local food production. Much of our soil is eroded and stripped of nutrients. The acreage of land zoned for agriculture has diminished. In urban neighborhoods, we have less land to preserve as green space or to plant orchards and tree species that host their pollinators. And access to the water needed for urban agriculture is not always available or affordable. Compounded with a changing climate, these conditions threaten our natural environment and ecological balance.

Urban growers are perhaps our city's greatest environmental stewards. They play a critical role in improving our natural environment by nurturing Atlanta's local food-producing ecosystem and employing sustainable agriculture practices that promote climate resilience, protect biodiversity and soil fertility.

### REVIVING OUR SOIL

One of the most significant ways Atlanta growers are improving our urban environment is by replacing pesticides and fertilizer with soil enrichment practices such as composting.

Since organic soil amendments are scarce and expensive, many urban farmers and gardeners depend on kitchen food scraps from local restaurants and homeowners to turn into compost and healthy soil, diverting thousands of pounds of food waste from Atlanta's landfills every year.

In fact, Atlanta's farms and gardens are part of our food waste solution. With 80% of wasted food coming from homes and consumer-facing businesses<sup>2</sup> such as grocery stores and restaurants, local farms and gardens are able to close the loop by recycling food scraps into compost. When critical nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium are returned to our soil, crop yield increases and healthier plants are not as susceptible to disease and parasites. Compost also helps conserve water, which creates soil resilient to drought, while decreasing dependence on toxic pesticides that endanger our health and ecological balance.

Atlanta's farmers and urban gardens are relatively small in scale, which encourages natural, organic and ecological growing practices, such as crop rotation that preserves biological diversity and soil health. An example is Freewheel Farm, growing over 120 different "Certified Naturally Grown" vegetable varieties and flowers on a one-acre lot south of Grant Park. Community-based organizations in Atlanta such as Concrete Jungle and Fruit Forward Orchards are preserving more than 2,800 edible fruit trees of over 20 different varieties, including peach, fig, apple, and blackberry, to help mitigate stormwater runoff and soil erosion in our urban ecosystem.

This kind of diversified growing in Atlanta is distinct from conventional farming, which relies heavily on mono-cropping, chemical pesticides and intensive irrigation, resulting in large-scale erosion and soil degradation.

### THANKS TO POLLINATORS

The old adage that you can thank a pollinator for one out of three bites of food you eat was validated by research out of University of California, Berkeley, when it estimated that pollinators affect 35 percent of the world's crop production, increasing the output of 87 of the world's leading food crops.<sup>3</sup> For example, fruit trees need pollinating insects to produce apples, peaches, and pecans. In addition to being necessary to local food production, pollinators also provide a critical link in a healthy ecosystem.

### GARDEN-BASED EDUCATORS INSPIRE STUDENTS' LOVE FOR NATURE AND LOCAL FOOD

With their "Project Learning Gardens," Captain Planet Foundation is a leader in creating garden-based environmental learning strategies for teachers in over 400 Metro Atlanta, Gwinnett, Clayton, Fulton, DeKalb and Cobb Public Schools. The Wylde Center is another example of a community garden whose goals include connecting children to the local environment by making nature accessible in the City of Decatur.

Along with other innovative environmental educators, both of these organizations are helping teachers incorporate school gardens into Georgia "STEAM" (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) curriculum standards.

### Collaborative Pollinator Projects Restore Our City's Natural Habitat

- University of Georgia's Center for Urban Agriculture is developing native pollinator seed packets for gardeners to attract the beneficial insects critical for ecological balance and urban food production.
- The City of Atlanta's Office of Resilience is encouraging the planting of pollinator forage in unusual places, such as around transmission lines. And in the summer of 2017, the city passed an ordinance to protect bees.
- Georgia Institute of Technology is partnering with local farms on their Urban Honey Bee Project to research the impact of urban habitats on honey bees.

## Where Do We Go From Here?

### CHALLENGES

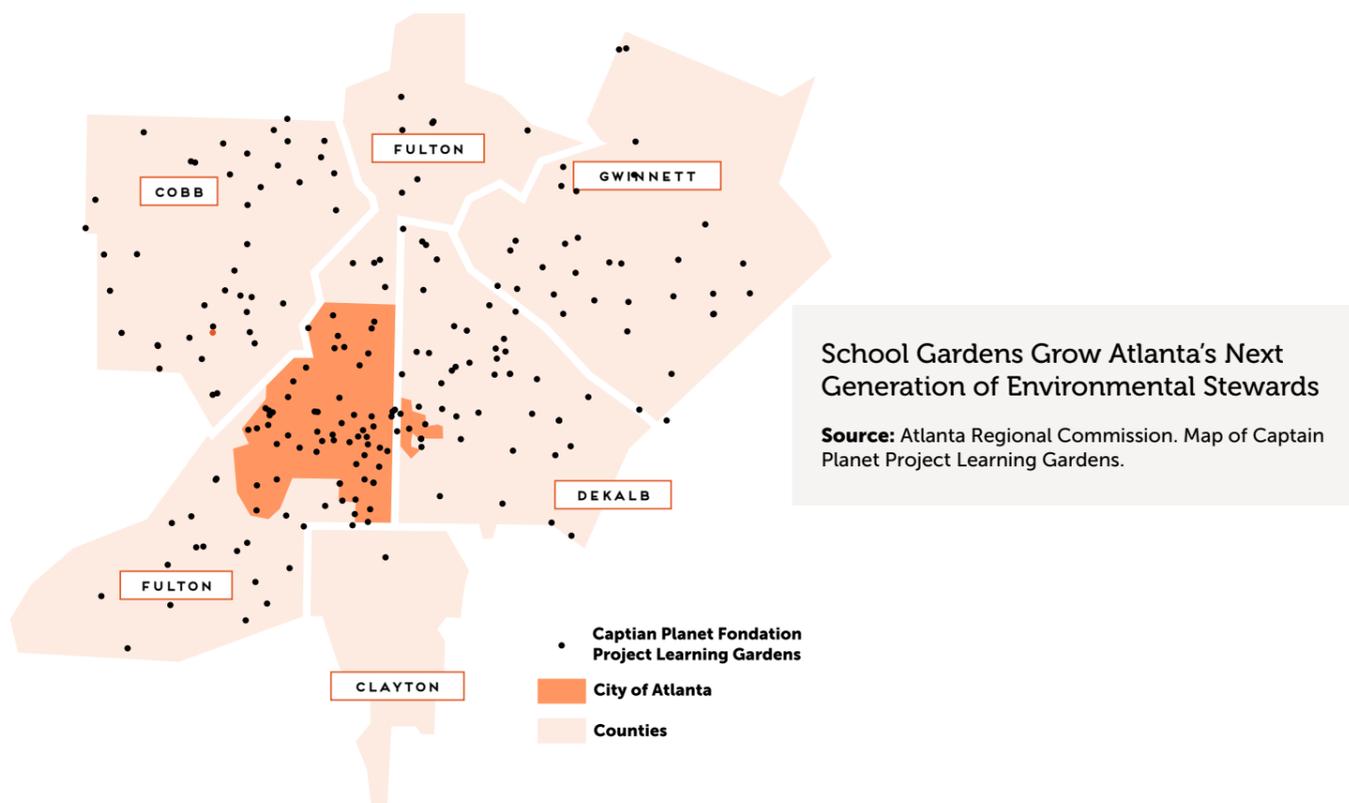
What are your ideas for removing these barriers?

- Haulers that recover thousands of pounds of food waste from commercial sites, such as universities, do not have the partners or processes to deliver that feedstock directly to farms and gardens to turn into compost.
- Small-scale compost producers are unable to meet the demand for high-quality, locally produced compost for Atlanta growers.
- Many people believe all insects are "bad" and take steps to eliminate them when only about 3% of insects are problematic.
- Metro Atlanta's pollinator habitat is being harmed by broad-based insecticide use and increased construction, which can damage the population of insects that are beneficial to food crops.
- Land that is available for growing is often poor quality, with soil and water contamination.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine if we worked together to make this happen in Metro Atlanta:

- A more favorable regulatory climate that mitigates barriers to scaling and increasing capacity of community-based compost production in Metro Atlanta.
- Garden-based education that increases understanding among Atlanta growers to help restore pollinator habitat.
- City of Atlanta's Office of Resilience that reevaluates their use of pesticides in city landscaping and encourages the planting of pollinator forage in unusual places, such as around transmission right-of-ways.
- Urban planners and developers are incentivized to preserve green spaces for sustainable food production.



## LEADERS BUILDING Environmental Stewardship



**MICHAEL HALICKI**  
Executive Director

Park Pride has partnered with UGA extension to create pollinator gardens in public parks to educate community gardeners on the importance of pollinators in growing food.



**ANGELOU EZEILO**  
Executive Director

Greening Youth Foundation trains diverse and underserved inner-city youth for careers in land management and conservation, including urban agriculture, in an effort to develop and nurture enthusiastic and responsible environmental stewards.



**JOE REYNOLDS**  
Co-founder

Love is Love Farm makes their soil fertile by recycling thousands of pounds of food waste annually - vegetable and fruit scraps from restaurants, community partners, neighbors and customers that might otherwise end up in the landfill.



DAVID PAULL and his team

### Compostwheels: Recycling Food Waste to Generate Rich Soil, Abundant Growth

Nearly 40 percent of all household trash is compostable – meaning those tea bags, coffee grounds, egg shells, and fruit and vegetable peels you were about to toss into the garbage can be turned into healthy soil for farms and gardens.

Atlanta-based company Compostwheels is on a mission to educate Atlanta residents about the importance of composting. Since 2012, the company has diverted more than two million pounds of food waste from landfills through its composting service, and it has established relationships with more than seven farms and gardens in Atlanta.

What makes Compostwheels unique is the company's focus on local food production, according to Compostwheels founder David Paull. Through the company's compost-pick up service, residential customers in the Atlanta area pay a monthly fee to

have their food scraps and organic material collected by bike or truck straight from their doorsteps.

The small, family-run business then turns the compost into nutrient-rich soil that is delivered to local farms and gardens, or back to customers. Compostwheels also offers its service to commercial customers including Atlanta-area offices, coffee shops, grocery stores, schools, institutions and restaurants.

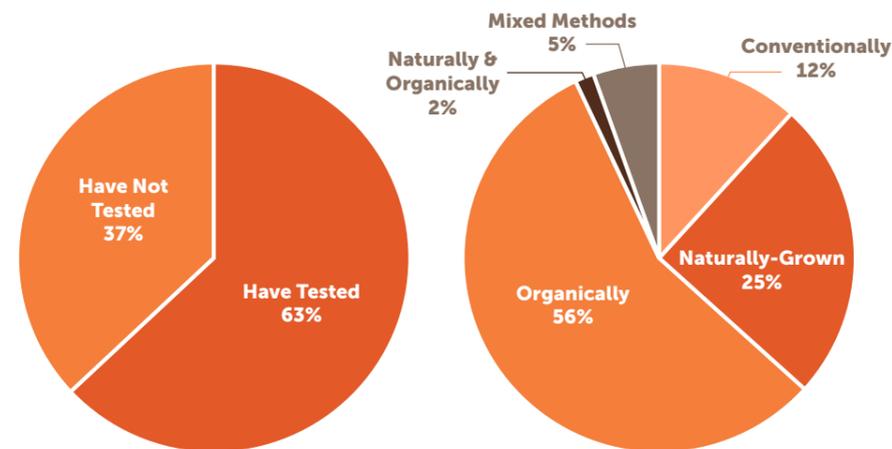
In 2016, through Compostwheels customers diverted 1,190,000 pounds of food waste from Atlanta landfills – nearly triple the prior year's 432,000 pounds.

To date, the compost company's biggest success is the relationship it has established with local farmers, according to Paull. "When talking with our farm partners, we are finding that the condition of their soil has drastically improved from working with us. Just yesterday, I was with a farmer who said their onions have never been this healthy and this large, and root systems are mind-bogglingly healthy. And to hear things like that is just tremendous. It means we're being effective in what we set out to do," says Paull.

### Community Gardeners Improve the Health of Our Soil, Land and Food

Majority Have Tested Soil Nutrients within Past 3 Years

83% Garden Naturally-Grown and/or Organically



Source: Food Well Alliance. (2016). Leaders Growing Community Gardens survey of gardens in Metro Atlanta's 5 county region

### SHARE YOUR DATA AND IDEAS AT [FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD](http://FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD)

If you believe that local food production in Atlanta creates a more environmentally sustainable food system, let's work together to demonstrate the value of this to individuals and organizations that can bring resources to our city.

How can we collectively measure local food's impact on environmental stewardship in Atlanta? Are you capturing this data? This environmental data is critical to galvanize investment and support for critical policy change that will strengthen Metro Atlanta's local food system. Please share your metrics and ideas about innovative ways to collect data together on [FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood](http://FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood).

This is the environmental data we encourage you to share:

- # of school students integrating garden-based curriculum to meet Georgia "STEM" standards
- # certified organic and certified naturally grown farms and gardens
- # pounds of compost produced
- # pounds of food waste diverted from landfills repurposed for composting
- # of pollinator plants that are part of the farm/garden
- # of gardens/farms that have conducted soil tests for nutrients and toxicity



# Local Food Impacts Health and Nutrition

## Increasing Consumption of Sustainably Grown, Local Food

Health-focused organizations are collaborating with sustainable, local farmers and urban growers to meet the need for fresh, nutritious foods.

## Overview

The correlation between the prevalence of urban areas known as “food deserts” and the rising rates of chronic diet-related diseases has drawn national attention.

These areas are dense with fast food chains and corner, stores, but lack access to fresh foods. In fact, 25% of people in Metro Atlanta – over 800,000 – have no car and live more than a half mile from a grocery store.<sup>1</sup> The diet of people living in these neighborhoods is likely to be high in processed, low-nutrient, high-calorie foods.

A rising number of healthcare providers, public health institutions, and community-based organizations are addressing this problem of healthy food access in low-income neighborhoods across Metro Atlanta’s five counties. Among the solutions are farmers and gardeners using sustainable, healthy growing practices and seeking ways to provide their nutritious, fresh produce to those who need it most.

Farmers and gardeners are also educating people about the relationship between good nutrition and health and using local food to demonstrate the importance of knowing where your food comes from. As a result, they are motivating people to increase their consumption of local fruits and vegetables.

### INNOVATIVE CIVIC PARTNERSHIPS EXPAND FOOD ACCESS

A strong local food system provides alternative ways to increase access to nutritious, healthy foods.

Produce markets are sprouting along Atlanta’s public transit lines thanks to a unique collaboration between the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), the local food community, known as The Fresh MARTA Market.

The markets consist of robust produce stands designed by Perkins & Will that offer affordable, fresh and healthy foods in underserved communities with limited access to fresh food.

The initiative is one of the first in the country to intersect transit with healthy food access. It aims to provide MARTA passengers and residents living near MARTA stations with healthy food options.

Urban farmers are at the center of this collaborative work. Community Farmers Markets, Georgia Food Oasis - Atlanta, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Organix Matters, Southwest Atlanta Growers Cooperative (SWAG) and MARTA are allowing them to sell more local produce while giving communities easy access to healthy, fresh food.

- In 2016, the four MARTA markets collectively welcomed more than 13,000 visitors and sold more than 15,000 pounds of produce – about 20% was sourced from local farmers.<sup>2</sup>
- Integrated incentive programs, such as Wholesome Wave Georgia’s Fresh For Less and WIC double-dollar program help ensure affordability. Program participants report eating more fruits (63.5%) and more vegetables (76.2%) since becoming customers at the market.<sup>3</sup>



## Schools Play a Role in Sprouting Healthy, Local Eaters

One of the best ways to encourage healthy eating habits and increase consumption of locally grown food is to start young. In an effort to provide children access to nutritious, high-quality, local food, the farm to school movement in Atlanta is gaining momentum. Schools are collaborating with local farms to serve healthy meals in school cafeterias, offer food and gardening education, and improve students' health.

### INNOVATIVE EDUCATORS IN ATLANTA ARE LEADING THE WAY

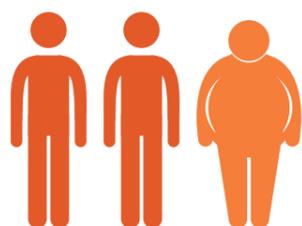
The Wylde Center developed the "Decatur Farm to School" program that works to improve over 3,000 students' nutrition, their knowledge of where food comes from, and

their appetite for fresh fruits and vegetables. The program is presented in classrooms, cafeterias and school gardens. Each month the Wylde Center spotlights one locally grown fruit or vegetable that's offered once a week on the lunch menu at all eight Decatur schools. Watermelon, tomatoes, apples, and greens are some of the local foods that have been featured.

Through their creative incentive program, Georgia Organics' Golden Radish Award publicly recognizes school districts for their local food programs. Last year, Atlanta Public Schools, Cobb County School District, City Schools of Decatur, DeKalb County School District, Fulton County Schools, Gwinnett County Public Schools, and Marietta City Schools were all honored for their efforts, which included serving over 1,000,000 school meals that featured a locally grown product and implementing hundreds of edible school gardens.

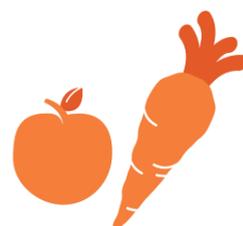
## Local, sustainably grown food is some of the most nutritious produce available in our city.

Let's use it to help solve our diet-related challenges in Atlanta.



**1 IN 3**

Metro Atlanta adults is obese.<sup>4</sup>



**3 OUT OF 4**

Metro Atlanta Adults do NOT consume the recommended 2 1/2 cups of fruits and vegetables daily.<sup>5</sup>



**NEARLY 1 IN 4**

Metro Atlanta families with children are food insecure.<sup>6,7</sup>

## Where Do We Go From Here?

### CHALLENGES

What are your ideas for removing these barriers?

- Low income and diet-related diseases are inextricably linked, and people with the greatest vulnerability to diet-related chronic diseases have the least amount of money to purchase food.
- Local food is often perceived as niche, expensive and exclusively for higher-income people.
- Many school cafeterias face obstacles in incorporating food grown in their own school gardens into their menus.
- Our schools lack a standardized garden-based environmental education curriculum that integrates with Farm to School nutritional programming.

### OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine if we worked together to make this happen in Metro Atlanta:

- Broader marketing of incentive programs like Wholesome Wave Georgia's "Fresh for Less" program by social service providers and local government agencies, raised awareness, resulting in more low-income Atlantans purchasing healthy food produced by local farmers.
- Health clinics and hospitals partnering with sustainable, local farms to serve patients with diet-related diseases in food-insecure areas of Atlanta.
- Schools' budgets support full-time staff educators in garden-based and food systems curriculum.
- Mobile markets supported by county governments that collaborate with nearby urban farms and gardens to provide nutritional education and deliver sustainably-grown produce to low-access communities.

## LEADERS BUILDING Health and Nutrition



**BOBBY WILSON**  
CEO

**Metro Atlanta Urban Farm** is certified with the Department of Public Health to accept WIC and Senior FMNP vouchers at the East Point Farmers Market, where he sells Certified Naturally Grown fresh produce.



**ALISON CURTIS, MS, RD**  
Registered Dietician

**Cobb Health Futures Foundation** is working with the Mableton Farmers Market to provide affordable local produce to food insecure populations in Cobb County as part of their "Farm Fresh Market" strategy of the Cobb2020 Partnership for Health.



**JEFF DELP**  
Executive Director

**Carver Neighborhood Market** is a small food market in Historic South Atlanta focused not just on providing food to its neighbors living in a well-known food desert, but also on providing healthy produce sourced locally from nearby urban farms.



**CODY BURNETT,**  
Farm Manager and Nobie  
Ennis, Farm Assistant,

## Good Samaritan: Improving Patient Health With Local Food

Good Samaritan Health Center (known as Good Sam), is a full-service charitable clinic nestled in Westside Atlanta's Bankhead neighborhood. Its work centers around providing Christ-centered quality and affordable healthcare to those who need it most while providing a medical home for their patients.

Founded in 1999, Good Sam provides medical, dental, mental health counseling, health education, specialty care, and case management services for low-income families and individuals, specifically those in the 30318 and 30314 ZIP codes.

Good Sam's innovative approach includes incorporating locally grown food from its own one-acre farm – an oasis tucked away behind the parking lot. Following a holistic "Full Circle of Health" model to treat diet-related disease like hypertension and diabetes, Good Sam provides access to fresh produce in an area designated as a food desert. They prescribe fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables to patients through a subsidized daily farmers market.

As Founder and CEO Dr. Bill Warren explains, "There are two types of food issues – lack of food quantity and lack of food quality. In Good Sam's neighborhood it's not so much a lack of quantity as it is a lack of quality. As a doctor, how can I ask my patients to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables if they can't access them in their community? This is why we added an urban farm – because nutrition is critical for overall health."

### ON-SITE FARM FILLS LOCAL FOOD PRESCRIPTIONS

In the first five months of the 2017 growing season, the Good Samaritan Urban Farm has already harvested 4,200 pounds of produce. In 2016, the farm, managed

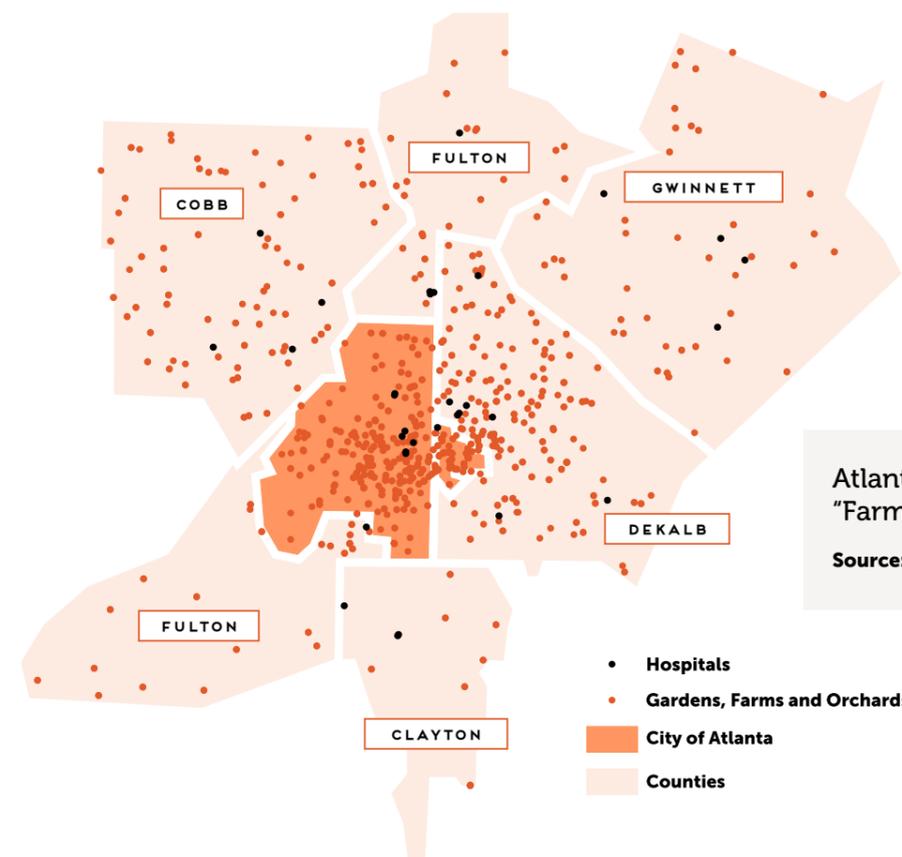
by a full-time farm manager, provided 13,000 pounds of fresh produce to patients at the clinic and the wider community.

Through its partnership with Wholesome Wave Georgia, Good Sam is able to sell garlic, tomatoes, peppers and carrots grown at the farm at double value for SNAP/EBT customers through the Georgia Fresh For Less program.

Patients enrolled in the Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx) program attend clinical visits to outline healthy eating goals, receive "food prescriptions" that are redeemed for fresh fruits and vegetables at Good Sam's farmers market, and learn how to prepare and eat healthy meals through cooking classes using Open Hand's Cooking Matters curriculum.

In 2016, Good Sam's FVRx program is estimated to have provided nearly 170 Atlantans with increased access to affordable, healthy food options. On average, participants' waist circumference, body weight and BMI measurements decreased over the course of the program. Participants also reported increases in knowledge around the importance fruits and vegetables play in their family's diet and how to prepare fresh produce.

"Good Samaritan Health Center is leading the way with innovative programming that ties together the production, distribution, and consumption of healthy food to improve patient health outcomes," says Berney. "Wholesome Wave Georgia's partnership with Good Samaritan Health Center, which brings the Georgia Fresh for Less and Fruit and Vegetable Prescription programs to its patients, is already a model of success in year two of implementation. Through participatory, skills-based nutrition and cooking education, access to healthy food, and a direct connection to farmers, Good Samaritan patients are consuming increasing amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, losing weight and investing in the local food economy."



Atlanta is Poised for More Innovative "Farm to Hospital" Collaborations  
Source: Atlanta Regional Commission. (2016).

## SHARE YOUR DATA AND IDEAS AT [FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD](http://FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD)

If you believe that access to sustainably grown, local food improves community health and nutrition, let's work together to demonstrate the value of this to individuals and organizations that can bring resources to our city.

How can we collectively measure local food's impact on health and nutrition in Atlanta? Are you capturing this data? This health and nutrition data is critical to galvanize investment and major policy change to strengthen Metro Atlanta's local food system. Please share your metrics and ideas about innovative ways to collect data together on [FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood](http://FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood).

This is the health and nutrition data we encourage you to share:

- # of pounds of locally-grown food produced by the farm/garden
- # of farmers market sales doubled through Georgia Fresh for Less
- # of schools and hospitals sourcing from local farms and gardens
- # of garden-based education classes
- # of participants consuming locally-grown vegetables and fruits



# Local Food Impacts Economic Development

## Generating a Robust Local Food Economy

A sustainable local food economy is driven by healthy production on thriving farms and markets that provide equitable access to affordable, fresh, locally grown food.

## Overview

In a current food system that creates distance between producer and consumer, the value of Atlanta's local food system is the interconnectedness of its social infrastructure. A strong local food system not only redistributes value through the food chain, but also rebuilds trust and transparency between producers and consumers in Atlanta.

Traditional economic measures of top-line revenue and jobs are based on conventional agriculture. These industrial operations are typically single-commodity and exist to produce massive amounts of food with minimal physical effort, often relying on tractors, genetically modified seeds, and synthetic fertilizers to ensure high levels of yield to be distributed around the world. This is not the nature of our local food system, which is a collaborative network that integrates sustainable production, processing, distribution, consumption and food waste recovery for the economic, environmental, social and nutritional health of Metro Atlanta.

Most sustainable, local farms are small and diversified, relying on natural cycles that sustain the health of soils, ecosystems and people. Because the geographic distance between producer and consumer is shortened, direct marketing strategies like community-supported agriculture and farmers markets cut the costs of distribution. According to United States Department of Agriculture, for every \$100 spent on locally produced food at a farmer's market, \$62 stay within our local economy, and \$99 stay in the state.<sup>1</sup>

### LOCAL FARMS SOLVE URBAN FOOD SECURITY CHALLENGES

The embedded interdependence of a local food system generates many socio-economic benefits that can sustain Atlanta's rapidly increasing urban population. At the root of the local food economy are thriving, sustainable farmers, living in proximity to

their urban neighbors and often in low-resourced communities. These farmers, such as Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture located in Collegetown, are not only a source of fresh food, they also provide innovation for solving our biggest urban food security challenges. They help improve health, protect the environment, generate community wealth and address historical inequities around access.

These types of sustainability concerns, prompted Emory University to launch its Sustainable Food Initiative in 2007, committing to source from local producers from Georgia. In 2016, it included 200,000 pounds of White Oak Pastures beef, 15,000 pounds of Atlanta Fresh yogurt and 5,000 pounds of produce from Emory's own certified organic Oxford campus farm.<sup>6</sup>

### CONSUMER DEMAND FOR LOCAL FOOD IS GROWING

Much of the growing demand for local food is driven by consumer concerns about the environment, health, animal welfare, and social justice.<sup>2</sup> These statistics are indicators of the growing demand we can take advantage of:

- U.S. local food sales were approximately \$12 billion in 2014, with an expected growth rate of 67% over five years with projected sales of \$20 billion in 2019.<sup>3</sup>
- 68% of consumers are more likely to visit a restaurant that offers locally produced food items, according to the National Restaurant Association.<sup>4</sup>
- 1,600 professional chefs surveyed indicated that locally sourced protein and produce are the top three menu trends in 2016.<sup>5</sup>



### A GROWING MARKET FOR SUSTAINABLE, LOCAL FOOD

Federal Census data shows that the 21-county Atlanta metropolitan statistical area (MSA) has at least 13,497 businesses that involve food.<sup>7</sup> Yet, most of the food that this local industry manufactures, distributes, and sells were produced on farms outside of the five-county region, leaving urban farmers out of this economic opportunity.

Much work is underway in Atlanta to generate a robust and inclusive local food economy. Many organizations are providing training, business development and other critical resources to support the viability of sustainable, urban farms and food enterprises.

Gwinnett Technical College, located in Lawrenceville, offers a Sustainable Agriculture Certificate that prepares students for a career in sustainable, small scale food production that integrates economic profitability and environmental stewardship. Global Growers trains beginning and refugee farmers in organic agricultural production, business development, and food safety on its 15-acre incubator farm located in Stone Mountain.

In 2014, the Atlanta Local Food Initiative (ALFI) was instrumental in advocating City of Atlanta policymakers to update its zoning code to support the growth of urban farms. This new ordinance allows SAP-certified

growers to apply for small business loans and a business license and to enter into legal land lease agreements that certify the operation as a permissive use of land, protecting it from public challenge.

The City of Atlanta’s Office of Resilience is prioritizing urban agriculture as an important component to its sustainable Atlanta strategy. The city’s focus and ALFI’s work paved the way for Atlanta to have its first Urban Agriculture Director, a position Mario Cambardella assumed in 2015.

Atlanta’s growing local food network thrives on social interdependence and its entrepreneurial nature. Take the West End Community Urban Garden for example, located on the BeltLine’s west side trail. Ms. Haylene Green, “The Garden Queen,” transforms locally-grown hibiscus produced in her onsite greenhouse, into her highly sought-after sorrel-ginger tea. She processes and bottles her tea at PREP Atlanta, a shared kitchen facility that makes it possible for local food micro-businesses to launch new food products. Since 2014, PREP Atlanta in DeKalb County has contributed to the launching of 110 locally produced food products, 112 small food companies, 40 food trucks and more than 30 catering and prepared meal companies.<sup>8</sup>

### TOGETHER WE CAN GROW OUR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM ASSETS

These are some of the critical local food system assets Metro Atlanta has today.<sup>8,9,10,11,12</sup> With projected urban population growth and with the advantages of our environmental and economic climate, we have the need and opportunity to expand our local food system.



### Where Do We Go From Here?

#### CHALLENGES

What are your ideas for removing these barriers?

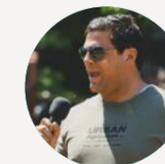
- Lack of political will to expand urban agriculture as one of the tools to increase fresh local food access.
- Lack of access to food within one mile of residence, especially affordable fresh and healthy foods.
- High real estate costs for farm land and food businesses.
- Lack of adequate post-harvest handling resources such as cold storage, processing facilities, customer sourcing, market expansion.
- The cost of living in Metro Atlanta, is challenging for low-earning farms and food businesses.
- Insufficient supply of affordable, local compost for urban farmers.

#### OPPORTUNITIES

Imagine if we worked together to make this happen in Metro Atlanta:

- A local food economic development zone co-locating food businesses to foster business growth with technology and infrastructure and to drive greater efficiencies and profitability.
- Property tax incentives for local farming and food businesses helping to create jobs.
- Long-term leases or sale of vacant land to urban farmers and market gardens adding value to neighborhoods.
- Wide adoption of local food procurement policy by public and private institutions helping farmers diversify their markets and increase off-season sales.

### LEADERS BUILDING Economic Development



**MARIO CAMBARDELLA**  
Director Urban Agriculture

City of Atlanta’s Urban Agriculture team is working on an urban agriculture allotment program, where vacant, city-owned properties will be made available to growers for growing food.



**ALICE ROLLS**  
Executive Director

Georgia Organics is advancing farmer prosperity by helping farmers stay healthy, remain in their chosen profession, and continue to support the growth of the local food system.



**PRENTISS “FARMER P” AND JASANN “LOVEY” GILLIAM**  
Co-founders / Farmers

Gilliam’s Community Garden located in Oakland City of Southwest Atlanta is transforming cottage businesses into sustainable social enterprises. Both to restaurants and their low-income customers at multiple local farmers markets, Lovey and Farmer P offer certified organic vegetables year-round and eggs from their urban poultry flock.

## Fresh Harvest: Growing an Inclusive Local Food Economy

Fresh Harvest is a subscription food delivery service making it quick and easy for families in Atlanta to get fresh, sustainably grown produce from local farms. Through partnerships with 24 Georgia-based organic farmers and food suppliers, the Clarkston-based Fresh Harvest delivers baskets filled with produce and artisan items every week to homes and businesses in the Metro Atlanta area.

Since its launch in 2012, Fresh Harvest's mission has been supporting local farmers by making healthy eating convenient and automated for its customers. Co-founder Zac Harrison adds, "We want to support our city and have the food that's grown here, stay here."

In 2016, Fresh Harvest purchased \$685,000 in food from local farmers and artisans and prides itself on its "responsive supply chain," sourcing from local farmers based on their seasonal availability.

The company also recently started sourcing from its own Fresh Harvest Garden, which sold 1,074 pounds

of produce in 2016, including diverse foods such as Ethiopian kale and New Zealand spinach. The garden serves as a community gathering space for dinners and cooking demonstrations and will expand production from an eighth of an acre to two acres in 2017, thanks to a grant from Food Well Alliance.

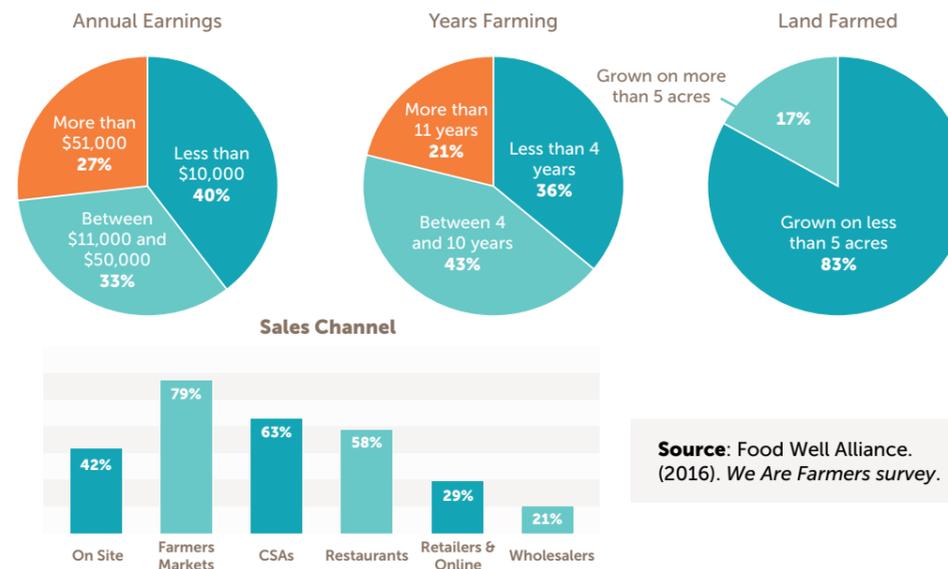
Fresh Harvest was founded not only to be a profitable business, but also to provide community employment. The company plans to grow its 18-member staff, of whom nine are from Clarkston's refugee community.

Hiring local refugees is foundational to Fresh Harvest's social enterprise approach. Refugee employees contribute agricultural skills to the garden. They also help manage a new farmers market for residents at the Willow Branch Apartments in Clarkston.

One of the things that excites Harrison the most about Fresh Harvest is its role in the local food system. Farmers are saying, "How much can we grow for you guys? Is there anything we could grow that would be better for your customers?" To Harrison that means "the buying power of the Fresh Harvest customer can influence what local farmers are growing." It also means that Fresh Harvest is successfully cultivating the supply and demand of local food.



## A Closer Look at Metro Atlanta's Urban Farmers



In 2016, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension and Food Well Alliance, in partnership with the City of Atlanta, Georgia Organics and the Georgia Farmers Market Association, convened over 75 urban and peri-urban farmers, community gardeners, and representatives from nonprofit, educational, and government organizations to evaluate the available resources and challenges to scaling urban and local farms. These graphs highlight some key findings about our urban farmers today.

## SHARE YOUR DATA AND IDEAS AT [FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD](http://FOODWELLALLIANCE.ORG/LOCALFOOD)

Today we lack the data to measure the complex social and economic relationships among local production, processing, distribution, consumption, and food waste recovery. If you believe that local food improves economic development, let's work together to demonstrate its value to individuals and organizations that can bring resources to our city.

How can we collectively measure local food's impact on Atlanta's economy? Are you capturing this data? This quantitative and qualitative data on economic development is critical to galvanize investment and major policy change to strengthen Metro Atlanta's local food system. Please share your metrics and ideas about innovative ways to collect data together on [FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood](http://FoodWellAlliance.org/LocalFood).

This is the economic data we encourage you to share:

- # total revenue generated from CSA memberships
- # of people the farm/garden has trained in job skills
- # total revenue from direct farmers market sales
- # of sales from SNAP benefits
- # of people employed by the farm/garden
- # of produce harvested





# LET'S CREATE THE CITY WE ALL WANT TO LIVE IN

Here are the actions that you can take to ensure that Metro Atlanta is an inclusive, resilient city that is proud of its sustainable, local food system.

**Urban Farmers can work with both neighborhood partners and national organizations to track how much local food is being sustainably produced for Atlantans.**

- Sign up for the U.S.D.A Census of Agriculture. This is a powerful way Atlanta growers can demonstrate the value and importance of urban agriculture and influence national policy decisions.
- Know your neighborhood. Collaborate with nearby organizations who seek to leverage the farm as a way to educate, engage, and empower the community to consume more sustainably-grown, local vegetables and fruits.

**Local Food Entrepreneurs can develop socially inclusive business models with the aim of solving food access and local food system challenges.**

- Establish direct relationships with local urban farmers or local food distributors and incorporate local food sourcing plans, seasonal menu planning, and food waste recovery that work logistically and financially for both the farmer and food business.
- Partner with organizations that double SNAP purchases of local food or implement strategies to make your products accessible to consumers of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Educators can teach Atlantans how to play a part in our local food system.**

- Explore and implement best practices, learning tools, and curriculum that incorporate garden-based and local food system education into your teaching.
- Offer sustainable urban agriculture training programs that include cultivation, sustainability, and business development to prepare future urban growers and local food entrepreneurs to succeed.

**Community Partners can leverage locally-grown food as a tool to strengthen the community in which they work and live.**

- Forge direct partnerships with urban growers, farmers markets, and community gardens as hubs to build community, improve health, and connect people of all ages to local food.
- Employ inclusive and equitable strategies that ensure that locally-grown food is accessible to the communities you serve.

**Policy Makers can create a forward-thinking policy environment for Metro Atlanta's local food system to thrive.**

- Remove barriers to urban growing and local compost production through urban agriculture tax credits, creative land and water use policies, favorable zoning and building codes, municipal food waste recovery programs, and environmentally-sustainable practices and policies.
- Invest resources into local food access by providing public spaces and personnel to operate neighborhood farmers markets and by supporting programs that make access to healthy local food possible, such as SNAP and WIC programs.

**Investors can fund organizations that strengthen the local food movement.**

- Provide funding opportunities and make impact investments that are specifically designated for and accessible to urban growers, community-based organizations, and businesses working in Atlanta's local food system.
- Direct funding that encourages innovation, while supporting collaboration and inclusive growth among all types of organizations working in the local food system.

**Consumers can spend their dollars on local food and reconnect with where food comes from.**

- Purchase fruits, vegetables, and local food products directly from urban farmers and producers at neighborhood farmers markets and on-farm market stands, join a local farmer's community supported agriculture (CSA) program, and eat at restaurants that commit to making direct relationships with urban farmers core to their menu and business.
- Grow your own food at home, collect your food scraps at home for compost production, and join a community garden in your neighborhood.



## Collaboration is the Keystone of a Strong Local Food System

BY BOBBI DE WINTER

One of the many privileges of our work at Food Well Alliance is people.

We are blessed to have the opportunity to meet so many people from all walks of life who are growing the local food system in their communities: urban growers providing fresh food, organizers building healthier neighborhoods, compost experts preserving our environment, and educators teaching our children where food comes from. All of these leaders, and many others, are building a more resilient Atlanta.

While all of this important work is happening in our city, the local food movement is fragmented. Many of its leaders and organizations are working alone to solve the challenging problems of our local food system. But they are not alone in their work, and for this reason, Food Well Alliance exists. We bring local food leaders and contributors together to support one another, share knowledge and produce innovative solutions through collaboration.

Since 2015, Food Well Alliance has had many successes in facilitating more than 300 organizations and 800 individuals. Our vision is to continue developing new partnerships and initiatives to grow our local food movement and the local food system.

Many people are unaware of just how important local food is to the sustainability of Atlanta. So an important part of our work is increasing awareness on how local food benefits our city.

To that end, local food is already benefitting Atlanta by:

- Contributing to our local economy through community-supported agriculture, farmers markets and innovative local food businesses
- Improving health outcomes in our adults and children by increasing access to fresh, locally grown food
- Building community by giving neighborhoods beautiful green spaces that bring people together. Preserving our environment through growers using sustainable farming practices and recovering food waste to rebuild the soil



**Bobbi de Winter**  
Executive Director,  
Food Well Alliance

To help people understand the full value of local food, we need to tell the larger story of how the local food system works. That's the story of people working within it – their vision, challenges and successes.

This baseline report is one way of telling the big story about our local food. It's a picture of where we are today and invites us to create the story of the future together.

The next step is to identify the greatest opportunities to scale the local food work already being done in our city, apply the collective experience of our community, and chart a roadmap to the place where all of Atlanta can enjoy the benefits of local food. With this baseline report, we began this work, but we need your help to formulate a map that identifies strategic opportunities for building the sustainable, resilient Atlanta we all want to live in.

I invite you to collaborate with Food Well Alliance on strengthening our local food network and bringing diverse people together as a community to build a thriving Metro Atlanta.

*Bobbi de Winter*



## FOOD WELL ALLIANCE

### Uniting Atlanta's Local Food Movement

Food Well Alliance envisions a livable, resilient Metro Atlanta growing, sharing and eating healthy, local food.

Our success is driven by collaboration, working with organizations and individuals to create thriving communities with measureable environmental, economic, community and health impacts.

As an Alliance, we unite communities in Atlanta to build a robust local food system - a network of individuals and organizations that grow, process, distribute, consume and recover fresh local food.

Food Well Alliance operates in ways that are equitable, collaborative and transparent to:

- Connect people, ideas and capital to strengthen local urban growers and markets to increase production of sustainably grown local food and access to local compost
- Identify, invest in and promote innovative ways to strengthen the local food system and how it is valued

We accomplish this work in three ways: facilitating collaboration, mobilizing capital and promoting innovation across the diverse local food movement in Metro Atlanta.

As a convener, Food Well Alliance brings together diverse organizations to learn from one another and develop a shared understanding of needs and opportunities to build greater collaboration across the local food system. We inspire collaboration and co-innovation by providing Design Facilitation to solve local food problems and increase the capacity of local food movement leaders.

As a grantmaker, Food Well Alliance mobilizes capital by connecting diverse organizations to funding and other important resources to build their capacity and further their work to strengthen Atlanta's local food movement, including our annual Local Food Grant and the Food Innovation Fellowship, a local food business accelerator program.

As a champion for its Alliance members, Food Well Alliance promotes innovation by telling the stories and uplifting the innovative programs, practices, and work that are building healthier communities.

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT**

[foodwellalliance.org/join](http://foodwellalliance.org/join)

## Endnotes

### FOUNDER'S VISION

1. The University of Georgia: College of Agricultural & Environmental Studies. (2017). 2017 Ag Snapshots: A brief focus on Georgia's agricultural history. Retrieved from: <http://caes2.caes.uga.edu/center/caed/documents/AGsnaphots.2017.spreads.pdf>

### SNAPSHOT

1. U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). Quick Facts. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/>

### COMMUNITY VITALITY

1. Atlanta Regional Commission. Retrieved from: <http://opendata.atlantaregional.com>
2. Food Well Alliance. (2016). "Leaders Growing Community Gardens" survey.
3. Urban Land Institute. (2016). Cultivating Development: Trends and Opportunities at the Intersection of Food and Real Estate. Retrieved from: <http://uli.org/wp-content/uploads/ULI-Documents/Cultivating-Development-Trends-and-Opportunities-at-the-Intersection-of-Food-and-Real-Estate.pdf>
4. Georgia Organics. Good Food Guide. Retrieved from: <http://goodfoodguide.georgiaorganics.org/>
5. Wholesome Wave Georgia. (2017). Celebrate National Farmers Market Week! Retrieved from: <http://www.wholesomewavegeorgia.org/news/2017/8/17/celebrate-national-farmers-market-week>
6. Community Farmers Markets. (2016). Program Update presentation provided to Food Well Alliance.
7. Food Well Alliance. (2015-2017). Interviews with Executive Directors from Wholesome

Wave Georgia, Community Farmers Markets, and Georgia Farmers Market Association.

8. Food Well Alliance. (2015). Community and Educational Garden Working Table.

### ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

1. U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). Quick Facts. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/>
2. ReFED. (2016). A Roadmap to Reduce U.S. Food Waste by 20 Percent. Retrieved from: <http://www.refed.com/?sort=economic-value-per-ton>
3. Yand, Sarah. (2006). Pollinators help one-third of world's crop production. UC Berkeley News. Retrieved from: [http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2006/10/25\\_pollinator.shtml](http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2006/10/25_pollinator.shtml)
4. Reese, A. (2003, Feb 21). IPM: Control Pests Without Excessive Pesticides. University of Georgia: College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences. Retrieved from: <http://www.caes.uga.edu/newswire/story.html?storyid=1770&story=20---Best-control,-least-toxic>

### HEALTH AND NUTRITION

1. Food Well Alliance analysis of data derived from United States of Department of Agriculture
2. Food Well Alliance. (2017). Interviews with Executive Directors from Community Farmers Markets, Georgia Food Oasis, and Organix Matters.
3. Anderson, C., Blackwell, S., Gerndt, E., & Martin, I. (2015). Evaluation of Wholesome Wave Georgia's Double Value Coupon Program. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54e3786ae4b0c344d00446b1/t/556>

<7179fe4b07db22b85710e/1432819615170/Final+Evaluation+Report+%281%29.pdf>

4. Ogden, C. L., Carroll, M. D., Fryar, C. D., & Flegal, K. M. (2015, Nov). Prevalence of Obesity Among Adults and Youth: United States, 2011-2014. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db219.pdf>
5. Community Commons. (2016, Nov). Georgia Community Health Needs Assessment. Retrieved from: <https://www.communitycommons.org/maps-data/>
6. Weinfield, N. S., Mills, G., Borger, C., Gearing, M., Macaluso, T., Montaquila, J., & Zedlewski, S. (2014, Aug). Hunger in America 2014. Feeding America. Retrieved from: <http://help.feedingamerica.org/HungerInAmerica/hunger-in-america-2014-full-report.pdf>
7. Atlanta Regional Commission. (2016). The Food Insecure in Metro Atlanta - A Deep Dive into Metro Atlanta Speaks. Retrieved from: <http://33n.atlantaregional.com/special-features/the-food-insecure-in-metro-atlanta-a-deep-dive-into-metro-atlanta-speaks>

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. The U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2015). Research, Education & Economics Information System: North Dakota State University. Retrieved from: <https://reeis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/1006759-high-value-crop-production.html>
2. Fitch, C. & Santo, R. (2016). Instituting Change: An Overview of Institutional Food Procurement and Recommendations for Improvement. Johns Hopkins: Center for Livable Future. Retrieved from: [https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/\\_pdf/research/Instituting-change.pdf](https://www.jhsph.edu/research/centers-and-institutes/johns-hopkins-center-for-a-livable-future/_pdf/research/Instituting-change.pdf)
3. Statement by The Honorable Thomas Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, United States House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture, February 24, 2016. Retrieved from: [https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/vilsack\\_testimony\\_022416.pdf](https://agriculture.house.gov/uploadedfiles/vilsack_testimony_022416.pdf)
4. National Restaurant Association. (2016). 2016 Restaurant Industry Forecast. <http://restaurant.org/news-research/research/forecast-2016>
5. National Restaurant Association. (2016). What's Hot Culinary Forecast. <http://restaurant.org/news-research/research/what-s-hot>
6. Food Well Alliance interview with Bon Appétit Management Company. (2017).
7. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from: <http://www.census.gov>
8. Figueras, L. (2016, Dec 6). Shared Kitchen Facility PREP Atlanta Announces \$7 million expansion. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Retrieved from: <http://www.prepatl.com/ajc-article-prep-atlanta-announces-7-million-expansion/>
9. Atlanta Regional Commission. (2017, Mar 31). Retrieved from: <http://opendata.atlantaregional.com/datasets/gardens-farms-and-orchards?geometry=-85.487%2C33.587%2C-82.874%2C33.986>
10. Georgia Organics. (2017). Golden Radish Award Application Analysis.
11. Figueras, L. (2016, Nov 2). Atlanta shared kitchens set stage to help micro food businesses. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. Retrieved from: <http://www.myajc.com/lifestyles/food--cooking/atlanta-shared-kitchens-set-stage-help-micro-food-businesses/027aRGK6jhQR1FChAavsbK/>
12. Food Well Alliance. (2017). Membership Database.



# JOIN THE MOVEMENT

[foodwellalliance.org/join](https://foodwellalliance.org/join)



[@thefoodwell](https://twitter.com/thefoodwell)



[/foodwellalliance](https://facebook.com/foodwellalliance)



[@foodwellalliance](https://instagram.com/foodwellalliance)



[/food-well-alliance](https://linkedin.com/company/food-well-alliance)



**FOOD WELL**  
ALLIANCE