

## URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Wednesday, November 12, 2025 – 4PM

Grand Rapids Public Library – Ryerson Auditorium

111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

### Committee Members Present:

Carlos Calderon (Committee Chair), Evvia Marshall, Dolli Lutes

Others present: Robert Cloy II (City Staff), Megan Huxold, Alora Joelle, Rachel Higuera-Muecke, Kai Gritter (MSU Extension)

### Mission:

*To educate and empower the community by providing policy review, recommendations, and support for urban agriculture.*

### Agenda:

1. Call to Order: 5:36pm
2. Determination of Quorum
3. Approval of Agenda  
Motion made by Dolli, supported by Evvia, to approve the November 12, 2025, agenda was presented.  
Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes from the October 8 meeting  
Motion made by Dolli, supported by Evvia, to approve the October 8, 2025, minutes as presented.  
Motion carried.
5. Public Comments
  - Megan Huxold: interested in learning more about the committee.
  - Rachel Higuera-Muecke: here to learn more about the committee.
  - Alora Joelle: going to school for planning and agriculture. Wants to be more involved in the committee. Planning on filling out a paper copy of Board and Commissions application.
  - Kai Gritter: wants to know more about the committee and know how MSU Extension can be involved in the committee.
6. Old Business

**Carlos:** is there any discussion on any of the old business topics?

**Robert:** going forward, OS staff will provide a summary of applications received from community members interested in applying for UAC. Committee members will be given a chance to provide feedback.
7. New Business

**Meeting Schedule for 2026:**

  - **Carlos:** last meeting we approved a new schedule for the 2026 year. Switching to monthly and switching the time from 4:00pm-5:00pm. We reduced the meeting time but need meeting locations.

Does anybody have preferred locations? Does the GRPL work for the centralized locations? Trying to hold 1 meeting in each of the 3 different wards in the City. Opportunity for other members of the community to attend those meetings.

**Locations for 2026 Meeting:**

- **Evvia:** what's the reasoning for moving to different locations?
- **Carlos:** trying to be more inclusive of different communities and choosing locations that are related to urban agriculture (community gardens, parks, etc.). The January – May meetings will be held at the Grand Rapids Public Library. The June, July and August meetings will be held outside. Locations will be finalized from the list below at the January 2026 meeting. The September – December meetings will be held back at the Grand Rapids Public Library.
  - Martin Luther King Park, Garfield Park Lodge, Baxter Community Center – 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward
  - Michigan State Extension, Kids Food Basket, – 2<sup>nd</sup> Ward
  - John Ball Zoo, Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association, Las Canchas Garden – 1<sup>st</sup> Ward

***Motion to cancel November 2026 meeting:***

- Motion made by Dolli, Second by Evvia: Motion carried

**UAC Webpage:**

- **Carlos:** Kat working on updates to the website and making it more accessible for community members to find different information.

**Review Strategic Plan:**

- **Carlos:** UAC met over Summer 2025 to facilitate a strategic planning session. This committee was formed over 10 years ago to educate the community and provide ordinance recommendations to the City Commission. There's no standard procedure for creating urban agriculture/community gardens in the City, so this strategic planning session helps the UAC formalize the process. Hoping to become more of a resource hub of information for community members. The SP is a summary of work that we've done this past year.
- **Carlos:** what are the main priorities within the SP that we want to focus on in 2026?
  - **Community Education:**
    - the main reason that we're here. We want more people to be involved in growing food
  - **Community Access:**
    - other than your backyard, are there public places within the City that we can expand locations to grow food. The Parks and Recreation received a grant that goes until 2027 to help establish. 9 parks were identified too. The UAC group will act as a guiding body to the Coordinator position, and to the City.
  - **Shaping Policy:**
    - submitted policy recommendation to the City Commission in 2021/2022. Including easier to implement ordinances, as well as ordinances that would take more time to

implement. In Fall of 2023, they updated the Bees and Chicken permit process to remove barriers. Now, we're waiting on the community master plan to see where all the zoning ordinances will be addressed.

- **Evvia:** task number four in the Shaping Policy category: "Design and Promote a Community Feedback Process to Improve Urban Agriculture Opportunities"
- **Carlos:** in the past, we've attended different events to engage with community. In 2026, with the new Urban Ag. Coordinator position, hopefully there will be other opportunities for engagement.
- **Evvia:** can we define who is "We" for different community events.
- **Carlos:** It's a volunteer effort by the UAC. Whatever committee member has time and capacity to volunteer for the events will be called on.
- **Dolli:** hard to choose 1 thing as a priority as all this work fits together.
  - turning different locations into community gardens – but water access is a big issue for different locations. Was there an assessment done on locations that have water access and viable soil for growing due to different toxins?
- **Evvia:** It's also a land access issue. Any land in Grand Rapids is prioritized for development rather than urban agriculture committee.
- **Carlos:** 23 square miles of vacant land in Detroit, vs 40(ish) square miles of TOTAL land in Grand Rapids. That's why the UAC has been focusing on removing barriers for community residents to grow food on their own land – but also being creative about growing commercialized food in various ways (rooftop)
- **Kai:** have churches been considered?
- **Evvia:** public access is hard for the community to consume that food, as most of it that is grown is usually for the members of the church.
- **Carlos:** another priority we can focus on is trying to work with GRPS on growing food or establishing community gardens on schoolyard space.
- **Carlos:** to review: The Community Feedback Process is a high priority. Participating in Community Events is a secondary priority.
- **Evvia:** why are we looking for funding? What's the distinction between the UAC and City staff?
- **Robert:** Office of Sustainability looking for potential funding through Climate Smart Communities Initiative grant funding. Possible funding ideas include Food System work.

#### **Review 2025 City-Sponsor:**

- **Carlos:** if there are any priority events that need to be passed on. UAC members please review the spreadsheet and give feedback to OS staff.
- **Dolli:** once we have educational materials, going to different events (farmers markets) and distributing that information will be helpful in spreading the message for UAC, as well as recruiting other committee members.

8. Partner Reports – Committee Members

**Dolli:** excited to have more public joining the committee members

9. Agenda Items for future meeting

- 2025 Chair & Vice Chair election

10. Adjournment 7:07pm

**Next Meeting – Wednesday, January 14 – 4:00pm  
at the Grand Rapids Public Library  
(111 Library St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503)**