

NOURISH

St. Albert Urban Agriculture Plan



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Treaty & Land Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples. As treaty People, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, we share the responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful land.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The community in St. Albert is passionate about urban agriculture. Agriculture has historically been a part of the community, being practiced by the Métis people and settlers along the Sturgeon River. Today, online communities share gardening tips and techniques, citizen groups run several bountiful community gardens, residents keep hens and bees in their backyards, and there are countless volunteers who support community events, festivals, markets, and the foodbank.

To promote and support urban agriculture within St. Albert, the City has developed an Urban Agriculture Plan (UAP) – Nourish. The Plan establishes the following vision for urban agriculture:

“As the Botanical Arts City, urban agriculture is valued as a source for connection to the community, to our food, and to the environment. Through urban agriculture, the City promotes wellbeing, food knowledge, climate resilience, and preserving agricultural lands.”

Nourish identifies ten key actions which outline how we aim to bring that vision to life. To allow for innovation and creativity, the actions provide direction without prescribing the specific steps to complete each action. The Plan is intended to build on the existing community efforts and be implemented as a collaborative effort with residents and community groups.

Nourish was initiated to respond to the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board’s Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) requirement for urban member municipalities to prepare an Urban Agriculture Plan. During the development of this Plan, the RAMP requirement was repealed; however, the project team chose to complete the Plan to support urban agriculture as it brings environmental, economic, and well-being benefits to the community.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

What is Urban Agriculture?

Urban agriculture is the practice of cultivating and harvesting food in an urban area. This includes a wide variety of activities from growing, processing, and distributing agricultural products. While people who live in cities have the benefit of purchasing food at grocery stores, they can also participate in urban agricultural activities to grow some of their own food, understand where food comes from, connect with others with similar interests, and be stewards of the land.

Some examples of local urban agriculture found in St. Albert include community gardens, backyard hens, urban beekeeping, and the farmers' market. More local examples are highlighted in Section 2.0.



St. Albert Farmers' Market

Why Create an Urban Agriculture Plan?

Supporting urban agriculture can result in many positive impacts within the city. Four key benefits are highlighted below:

Well-being – Food brings people together, and participating in urban agriculture events like food festivals or growing food in a community garden encourages people to connect with their neighbours and helps create a sense of belonging. Urban agriculture gets people active and spending time outdoors, which reduces stress and improves mental health.

Food Security – Urban agriculture initiatives help address food security by enabling more people to participate in urban agriculture and increasing the access and availability of food. It may also reduce the amount people pay for groceries during the growing season and may allow those to spend the savings after the growing season ends.

Economic – New opportunities for local businesses such as restaurants, food trucks, distilleries, food processing and other cottage industries are created, which in turn creates additional jobs and can attract new investment.

Environmental – Producing and shopping locally for food reduces carbon footprints, while additional green space captures and filters water runoff, improves air quality, provides habitat for wildlife, and reduces urban heat island effects.



St. Albert Botanic Park

Policy Context

Regional Agricultural Master Plan (RAMP)

The City of St. Albert was an urban member municipality of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB). The EMRB developed the Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) to conserve prime agricultural lands and guide agricultural related development within the Region. The RAMP document also required member urban municipalities to prepare an Urban Agriculture Plan that:

- Creates awareness and public support for urban agriculture,
- Identifies opportunities and constraints for urban agriculture specific to each municipality,
- Identifies how urban agriculture will be supported in the municipality, with particular attention to the needs of public and private forms of urban agriculture, and
- Ensures that urban agriculture is a vital component of complete communities and is integrated into the social fabric of the municipality.

Flourish

Flourish, the City's Municipal Development Plan (MDP), is the city-wide plan for growth and change, envisioning a future population of 100,000 over the coming decades.

Urban agriculture is supported in the MDP by the following principles:

- Support agricultural producers' ongoing contribution to the economy, and
- Support food security, community building and cultural awareness through local food production.

Additionally, the table below indicates which MDP policies support urban agriculture and which of the four Nourish principles the MDP policy is linked to.

Flourish Policy	Nourish Principles
Support the development and implementation of the EMRB Regional Agriculture Master Plan through the creation of an urban agriculture strategy and other opportunities.	Conserving Agricultural Lands
Prevent the premature fragmentation and subdivision of agricultural land, thereby maintaining viable agricultural operations and reducing development challenges when urbanized.	Conserving Agricultural Lands
Protect existing agricultural operations by maintaining appropriate development definitions and upholding land use districts in the Land Use Bylaw.	Conserving Agricultural Lands

Require an Agricultural Impact Assessment for all new Area Structure Plan applications and for any newly proposed greenfield development associated with Area Structure Plan Amendments to help sustain the continuation of agricultural operations.	Conserving Agricultural Lands
Require appropriate buffers and other measures to minimize conflicts between agricultural uses and urban development.	Conserving Agricultural Lands
Require new development within agricultural lands to reflect agricultural context and servicing requirements. Proposed development that exceeds requirements will be considered when an Area Structure Plan governs the lands and urban servicing is available.	Conserving Agricultural Lands
Encourage value-added agricultural uses to advance economic development and synergistic opportunities.	Climate Resilience & Resource Management
Promote land and environmental stewardship by supporting existing provincial legislation and policy related to agriculture within the context of an urban environment.	Climate Resilience & Resource Management
Encourage community-led food initiatives that support local food security, environmental objectives, community well-being, economic opportunities, and community gathering.	Well-being Climate Resilience & Resource Management Education & Awareness
Update the Land Use Bylaw and other relevant bylaws to support community led food initiatives.	Well-being Education & Awareness
Encourage the use of privately owned land for food production, with limitations and mitigation measures that reflect the surrounding context.	Well-being Climate Resilience & Resource Management Education & Awareness
Encourage the integration of community or privately organized gardening through neighbourhood plans, site plans, and building designs.	Conserving Agricultural Lands Well-being Education & Awareness
Promote compatibility with surrounding land uses for all community and local food production through site design and regulations.	Conserving Agricultural Lands Well-being Education & Awareness
Work with community organization to enable City land to be used for community gardens and edible landscapes.	Well-being
Support the harvest of traditional foods and plant materials by Métis and First Nation people within St. Albert.	Well-being

Land Use Bylaw

Following the direction outlined in Flourish, the Land Use Bylaw (LUB) regulates land use and development within the city. In the Future Urban Development and Transitional Districts agriculture is a permitted use and is a discretionary use in the Industrial District. Urban agricultural uses such as greenhouses and community gardens are enabled in various districts.

Hens, Bees, & Animal Bylaws

The Hen Bylaw enables residents to obtain a licence for hen keeping for personal use on residential properties. Similarly, the Urban Beekeeping Bylaw enables residents to obtain a licence for keeping of honeybees and hives for personal use on residential properties. The Animal Bylaw regulates all other animals within the city. These bylaws promote educated and responsible husbandry, by requiring training courses before licencing. These bylaws also allow for self-sufficiency and food production within the urban community, while minimizing effects on neighbours.



2.0 URBAN AGRICULTURE IN ST. ALBERT

Historical Context

St. Albert is within Treaty 6 territory, the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples, and within Region 4 of the Métis Nation of Alberta. Agriculture has always been a part of St. Albert history and was practiced by the Métis along with hunting and fishing. During the fur trade, the Métis participated in agriculture and were particularly known for their skills in communicating and trading with Indigenous peoples and working with horses.

In 1861, Father Lacombe came to the shores of Big Lake to build a new Mission and community, and named it St. Albert. As the Mission grew, settlers were trained in agriculture and gardening by the Grey Nuns. Once they learned to harvest hay, onions, carrots, beets, potatoes, cabbages, and turnips, they began establishing farms. Father Lacombe divided up land to settlers in long rectangular lots along the river (also known as river lots).

Along with the railway, the first grain elevator was built in 1906 which allowed farmers to sell grain more widely. As cooperative wheat pools became popular, a second grain elevator was built in 1929. As technology continued to develop, grain began to be shipped through trucks and grain was stored on-site.

The Hole family opened a market garden business in 1952, which started as the family selling the vegetables they grew on their farm. As the business grew it became one of the largest independent retail garden centres in Canada. In 2009, the Enjoy Centre was constructed, housing the Hole's greenhouse and a variety of other businesses.



Grain Elevator Park and Train Station



Salisbury at Enjoy

Urban Agriculture Today

Urban agriculture is all around St. Albert. Below are a few highlights of urban agriculture found in the city.

St. Albert Farmers' Market

The St. Albert Farmers' Market is the largest fully outdoor local farmers' market in Canada. Open from June to October, the market attracts crowds of 15,000 to 25,000 people each week. At the market you'll find fresh produce, homemade baked goods, and artisanal crafts. There are also activities for kids like live music, balloon animals, and jumpy castles, along with a free kids' program, *Market Buds*, where each week brings a new activity teaching kids about local food and businesses.

Enjoy Centre

The Enjoy Centre is a multi-use facility featuring a greenhouse, spa, cafe & restaurant, whole foods, bakery, and event venue.

St. Albert's Historic River Lots + Grain Elevators

St. Albert's Historic River Lots + Grain Elevators is a historic site that is open seasonally from May long weekend to September long weekend. The site includes two beautifully restored grain elevators from 1906 and 1929, a replica train station, historic houses and agricultural buildings, community garden, pollinator garden, and the Dr. Anne Anderson Memorial Herb Garden. The site features educational programming with historic activities such as Morse Code and tours of the elevators to learn about St. Albert's rail and agricultural history.

Community Gardens

In addition to the community garden at the historic site, there are several other community gardens in St. Albert that are managed and run by citizen groups and not-for-profits. The City offers grant funding for eligible community gardens on private land. Community gardens provide places where individuals or groups come together to garden or cultivate a piece of land.

Food Forest

The St. Albert food forest is a community initiative to create an edible public forest with food that is free for all and designed with sustainability principles. The design utilizes water from rain and snow to hydrate plants and optimizes sunlight with a south facing exposure. The forest is located on City-owned land next to the grain elevators and is stewarded by Arts and Heritage St. Albert

3.0 PROCESS

How was the UAP developed?

Phase 1: Background Research

In Phase 1, a review of existing urban agriculture plans within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region and the Regional Agriculture Master Plan identified best practices and explored the requirements for Urban Agriculture Plans. This information was used to create a public consultation plan and outline for the UAP.

Phase 2: Community Consultation

Phase 2 continued to gather information to help develop the Plan through community consultations designed to identify components of urban agriculture that are important to our community. Phase 2 consisted of the following consultations:

Internal Workshop

An internal workshop was held with City staff from departments whose roles involve an aspect of urban agriculture. In the workshop participants discussed their vision for urban agriculture in the city, idea generated opportunities to support or expand urban agriculture and identified potential barriers to urban agriculture.

Public Survey

An online public survey was launched on the Cultivate the Conversation page to collect input from the community on urban agriculture priorities in St. Albert.

Community Workshop

A community workshop was held with interest holders and self-identified residents with an interest in urban agriculture. In the workshop, participants identified key themes and potential actions for the plan. They also highlight potential barriers to urban agriculture.

Phase 3: Putting it all Together

Using the data and ideas gathered in Phases 1 and 2 a draft Urban Agriculture Plan was created. The draft plan was distributed to City staff for review and shared on the Cultivate the Conversation page.

Consultation Highlights

The Plan is based on input received from City staff, local urban agriculture representatives, and the community at large. Throughout the community consultation phase, the project team collected ideas for urban agriculture initiatives and identified key themes for the Urban Agriculture Plan.

In the survey, participants shared what aspects they thought contributed to their understanding of urban agriculture in St. Albert and identified community well-being, educational opportunities about food, and food affordability as the top three. Survey respondents indicated they most commonly participate in urban agriculture through growing food in their yards at home, buying locally produced food, and making compost at home. Additional ways respondents would like to participate include: learning more about urban agriculture, growing food in a greenhouse, and participating in a community garden.

In the internal workshop City staff suggested opportunities to address community wellness issues like supporting the local foodbank and various community events, and opportunities to celebrate culture, history, and the arts through educational programming.

Lastly in the community workshop, participants identified four key themes to discuss in detail and proposed initiatives or outcomes that could be part of the Plan. Key themes discussed included:

1. Climate Resilience & Resource Management
2. Well-being
3. Education & Awareness
4. Preserving Agricultural Lands

The results of the consultation have been incorporated into the vision, principles, and actions in the next section. For the full summary on engagement, please see the What We Heard Report in Appendix A.



4.0 PLAN DIRECTION

Vision

As the botanical arts city, urban agriculture is valued as a source for connection to the community, to our food, and to the environment. Through urban agriculture, the City promotes well-being, food knowledge, climate resilience, and preserving agricultural lands.

Principles

Climate Resilience & Resource Management

St. Albert incorporates sustainable urban agriculture and resource management practices to adapt to and mitigate climate change impacts.

Education & Awareness

St. Albert supports urban agriculture initiatives that teach skills, share educational resources, and promote urban agriculture within the city.

Well-being

St. Albert supports the physical, mental, and social well-being of residents through urban agriculture events, programs, and other initiatives.

Conserving Agricultural Lands

St. Albert prevents the premature fragmentation of agricultural lands and protects existing agricultural operations until such time as the land is deemed ready for urbanization.

Actions

The vision of this Plan will be implemented through 10 key actions. The actions are designed to allow flexibility in implementation and provide direction without describing specifics on how they will be completed. Each action is summarized below.

Action 1 – Identify Plan Implementation Champion

As Nourish is a City-wide plan with multiple City departments working on enacting the plan, a department or staff member will be required to lead the overall implementation and monitoring of the plan. The City will assess whether this can be completed within existing capacity or if a new employee is required. The Champion staff member or department will co-ordinate implementation of these actions with various City departments.

Action 2 – Explore ways to Expand Urban Agriculture

Explore the feasibility and technical requirements for new or expanded urban agriculture initiatives in St. Albert such as, but not limited to, edible public landscaping, establishing community gardens on City owned lands, and extending hen licencing to institutional or commercial districts. Pilot programs may be developed as a way to explore initiatives.

Many new ideas for urban agriculture were suggested in the preparation of this plan; however, challenges to these initiatives were also raised and further work is required to determine if they are suitable in St. Albert.

Action 3 – Collaborate with partners on urban agriculture initiatives

One of the benefits of urban agriculture is an increased connection and sense of belonging within the community. The City will explore collaborating with community groups, businesses, and residents to expand programming, events, and educational opportunities. Anything from cooking classes and workshops to seed swaps could be included. Some partnership opportunities may include local food producers and vendors, community organizations and non-profits, community garden societies, neighbouring municipalities, and Indigenous communities.

Action 4 – Update regulations to support urban agriculture

Conduct a regulatory review to determine which existing regulations, plans, policies, and bylaws require updates to support this Plan, conserving agricultural lands, and urban agriculture initiatives within the City. Updates may be required to the Land Use Bylaw, Municipal Development Plan, Community Standards Bylaw, ASP Terms of Reference, Green Environment Strategy, Engineering Design Standards, Recreation & Parks Master Plan, Hen Bylaw, Urban Beekeeping Bylaw, and more.

Action 5 – Create an urban agriculture webpage

As urban agriculture initiatives are anticipated to be led by many different community groups, business, and residents, information on urban agriculture is scattered and may be difficult to access. Creating a single resource that stores this plan, educational resources, community events, and information on existing resources will reduce barriers to participation and increase avenues for connection. The webpage should include educational resources on food orchards, food preservation (such as pickling, canning, and drying), environmental benefits related to urban agriculture activities, and community gardens and home gardening. Clearly identify contact information for City staff for City-led initiatives. The webpage will be updated to keep residents informed.

Action 6 – Promote urban agriculture and educational resources

Building off action 5, promoting the many different urban agriculture events, learning opportunities, and programs through the City's other communication channels such as social media or City billboards will increase awareness and participation in urban agriculture. This includes sharing community and City-led opportunities.

Action 7 – Create opportunities for school aged children to interact with urban agriculture

Work with schools, libraries, daycares or afterschool care centres, and community groups to create hands-on learning experiences for school aged children to participate in urban agriculture. Opportunities could include small garden beds at school or on City-owned lands, workshops, events, tours, etc.

Action 8 – Create a map of urban agriculture in St. Albert

Create a map which identifies the location of different urban agriculture initiatives within St. Albert including community gardens, edible public landscaping, food stores, and community facilities. This may be incorporated into the webpage.

Action 9 – Review existing urban agriculture initiatives

Review existing urban agriculture initiatives such as the hen and bee keeping programs to determine if they are working well or if any changes are required. Get feedback from participants on barriers to participation and suggestions for improvement.

Action 10 – Explore incorporating climate resilience into urban agriculture initiatives

Examine ways to improve urban agriculture initiatives using a climate resilience lens. Some ideas provided by the community include water runoff management through swales, permeable surfaces for improved water capture, making organic waste available to public for personal use, increasing drought resistant and native plant species, testing of compost composition, and regenerative gardening.



Red Willow Trail

Action Alignment with Principles

The Table below identifies which Actions align with the plan principles:

Principle	Relevant Actions
Climate Resilience & Resource Management	Action 10 - Explore incorporating climate resilience into urban agriculture initiatives
	Action 2 – Explore ways to expand urban agriculture
Education & Awareness	Action 5 - Create an urban agriculture webpage
	Action 6 - Promote urban agriculture and educational resources
	Action 8 - Create a map of urban agriculture in St. Albert
Well-being	Action 1 - Identify Plan Implementation Champion
	Action 3 - Collaborate with partners on urban agriculture initiatives
	Action 7 - Create opportunities for school aged children to interact with urban agriculture
	Action 9 - Review existing urban agriculture initiatives
	Action 2 – Explore ways to expand urban agriculture
Conserving Agricultural Lands	Action 4 - Update regulations to support urban agriculture

5.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation Framework

Nourish is a living document which may change over time as urban agriculture initiatives are implemented and community priorities shift. As the City begins to implement the actions in this Plan, progress will be monitored and reported on a regular basis. The Plan will then be evaluated and updated every 5 years or as deemed necessary.

Implementation Plan

The implementation plan below shows the 10 actions, who is leading the action (City or City and Community Groups), and the timeline to complete each action. Short term actions will take 0-2 years, medium-term 3-5 years, and long-term 5+ years.

Action	Lead	Timeline
1. Identify Plan Implementation Champion	City	Short-term
2. Explore ways to Expand Urban Agriculture	City & Community Groups	Ongoing
3. Collaborate with partners on urban agriculture initiatives	City & Community Groups	Ongoing
4. Update regulations to support urban agriculture	City	Short-term
5. Create an urban agriculture webpage	City	Short-term
6. Promote urban agriculture and educational resources	City & Community Groups	Short-term
7. Create opportunities for school-aged children to interact with urban agriculture	City & Community Groups	Medium-term
8. Create a map of urban agriculture in St. Albert	City	Short-term
9. Review existing urban agriculture initiatives	City & Community Groups	Short-term
10. Explore incorporating climate resilience into urban agriculture initiatives	City & Community Groups	Long-term

APPENDIX A – WHAT WE HEARD REPORT

Urban Agriculture Plan

What We Heard Report



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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of St. Albert is creating an Urban Agriculture Plan, which will identify the components of urban agriculture that are important to residents in our community. The Plan will lay out priorities for the promotion and development of urban agriculture within St. Albert, and how we aim to bring that vision to life.

St. Albert is a member of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board, and all member municipalities of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board have committed to the adoption of an Urban Agriculture Plan.

An Urban Agriculture Plan will specifically speak to the built urban portion of St. Albert; outer areas which are still rural and may be operating traditional or industrial agriculture will not be affected.

This report is a summary and analysis of the ideas and insights that were shared during the engagement for the Urban Agriculture Plan.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Who We Engaged

There were three target audiences for this engagement:

1. Employees at the City whose work is related to an area of urban agriculture
2. Public and community at large
3. Local urban agriculture representatives

How We Engaged

The project team used the following methods to encourage participation:

- **City Website** – A page for the Urban Agriculture Plan was created on the City's engagement platform [Cultivate the Conversation](#) to share project information with the public, contact information for key project members, the online public survey, and a call out to participate in a workshop.
- **Social Media** – The public survey was advertised on the City's social media accounts.
- **Email** – External stakeholders were invited via email to participate in a workshop.
- **St. Albert Gazette Article** – An article in the St. Albert Gazette shared project information and promoted the survey.

The engagement opportunities occurred in October and November 2024 and included a public survey, an internal workshop, and an external workshop. The details of each opportunity are described in the following sections.

PUBLIC SURVEY FINDINGS

An online public survey was launched on the Cultivate the Conversation page to collect input from residents on urban agriculture priorities in St. Albert. The online survey was open from October 23rd until November 18th, 2024 and received 70 responses.

What We Asked

In addition to demographic questions, the survey asked the following 12 questions:

- What does urban agriculture mean to you?
- What types of urban agriculture would you like to see in St. Albert?
- Are you aware of the City's current urban agriculture programs (urban beekeeping, backyard hens, and community garden grants)?
- Why do you feel urban agriculture may be important in St. Albert?
- Do you participate in any forms of urban agriculture?
- Are there types of urban agriculture you would like to participate in?
- Are there any barriers which stop you from participating in urban agriculture as much as you would like to?
- What urban agriculture topics would you be interested in learning more about?
- Where would you like to see urban agriculture in St. Albert?
- Would you like to see more City offered support, such as programs, grants, or use of public lands, for urban agriculture?

For a complete list of the survey questions and responses, please see Appendix A.

What We Heard

Meaning of Urban Agriculture

Respondents chose from a list of meanings of what urban agriculture means to them and they could select all that apply. The most commonly selected aspect was community well-being, chosen by 87.1%, followed by educational opportunities about food at 75.7%. Food affordability was important to 71.4% of respondents, and 68.6% emphasized connection to food. 67.1% highlighted food security as a key aspect of urban agriculture.

The main reasons respondents feel urban agriculture is important include it promotes healthy eating, increases the availability of locally grown food, increases connection to food, promotes sustainable practices which are good for the environment, and increases awareness and knowledge about food.

Gardens including backyard, community, and front yard gardens are the top type of urban agriculture respondents desire in the City. Followed by edible public landscaping, urban bee keeping, backyard hens, and food orchards, with over 75% of respondents in support.

Participation in Urban Agriculture

Of the City's existing urban agriculture programs, the most well known was the hen keeping program with 65.7% of respondents aware that hen keeping is permitted. 57.1% of respondents were aware that beekeeping is permitted and 41.4% of respondents were aware that there are grants for community gardens. 25.7% of respondents were not aware of any of the City's existing urban agriculture programs.

Currently, respondents are most commonly participating in urban agriculture through growing food in their yards at home, buying locally produced food, and making compost at home. Additional ways respondents would like to participate include learning more about urban agriculture, growing food in a greenhouse, and participating in a community garden. The biggest barrier to participation in urban agriculture is not having enough space at home or on their property.

Educational Opportunities

The urban agriculture topics which respondents want to learn more about are food orchards, food preservation (such as pickling, canning, and drying), community gardens, and home gardening.

Locations for Urban Agriculture

Respondents are most interested in seeing urban agriculture in city parks, with 90% in support, followed by clubhouses and other facilities at 80%. In third came private property at 77.1%, then school sites at 74.3%, and lastly medians or boulevards at 67.1%. However, these numbers still show high support for these varied locations.

Other location suggestions include near stormwater management facilities, recreation centres, planters around town, and specifying growing orchards on the perimeter of parks.

City Support

Respondents are most interested in the City offering support through the use of public lands (88.6%). 4.3% did not want the City to offer more support though land, programs, or grants.

INTERNAL WORKSHOP FINDINGS

On October 31, 2024, an internal workshop was held with City staff from departments whose roles involve an aspect of urban agriculture. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about the Urban Agriculture Plan and learn more about each departments priorities and vision as it relates to urban agriculture. The workshop began with a presentation and was followed by discussions using engaging questions to gather feedback from participants.

What We Asked

The following 7 questions were asked to prompt discussions:

- What does urban agriculture mean to you?
- Are there community wellness issues that could be addressed in part through urban agriculture, i.e., food insecurity?
- Do you see economic development opportunities with urban agriculture?
- Are there public open spaces that could accommodate urban agricultural activities such as edible landscaping, urban bees, community gardens, etc.?
- What opportunities may there be to celebrate culture, history and the arts through urban agriculture?
- Have you received any community feedback about existing urban agricultural programs such as bees/hens and community gardens?
- Are there any operational concerns around implementing urban agriculture initiatives?

What We Heard

Meaning of Urban Agriculture

Below is a list of responses from participants when asked to share what urban agriculture means to them:

- The lifespan of cultivation leases (land leased by City)
- Food sustainability & affordability
- Appropriate scale/intensity

- Community connection
- Reduce dependence on industrial agriculture and trucked in produce
- Less pesticides
- Food security
- Availability of traditional foods and medicines
- Commercial/vertical farms
- Local greenhouse partnerships
- Allows a transition from rural lifestyle, as people move into cities
- Fruit-bearing public plants
- Hobbies & leisure

Opportunities

Below is a list of urban agriculture opportunities suggested by participants related to four key areas:

Community Wellness

- Supply for the local foodbank
- Social and mental wellness
- Neighborhood security (i.e. neighbours knowing each other and keeping an eye on each other)
- Seed swaps
- Promote native species, plants and bees
- Expand what's allowed in the community standards bylaw for yards
- Community health
- Maps and/or lists of community gardens
- Block parties – contributes to community connection
- Open up hens & bees availability to non-residential properties
- Education and FAQs

Locations

- Within some park space
- Near rinks and clubhouses
- Unused greenspace
- Near heritage sites (Grain elevator) [some already existing]
- Larose Park
- Value added production within Campbell business park
- Existing community gardens at:
- Christ Community Church – Erin Ridge North neighbourhood

- Red Willow Park – Riel neighbourhood
- Heritage Park – Riverside neighbourhood
- Star of the North – Mission neighbourhood
- Vacant City lands:
- Red willow park
- 51, 61 & 71 Grandin Road
- Butterfield park

Culture, History, & the Arts

- There has been community interest in a traditional-style “Trading Post” to exchange goods
- Provide food security for elders
- Medicine wheel garden
- Art performances
- Heritage planting and educating kids where food actually comes from
- Public art garden
- Build on the Arts & Heritage Foundation Fall Festival to celebrate Urban Agriculture and encourage people to either start their own gardens or create/volunteer a community garden
- Cooking nights where chefs come in to cook with locally grown produce
- Participate in Open Farm Days
- Create a cooking school in St. Albert or offer cooking classes or gardening classes
- Sponsor or Community recognition

Economic Development

- Business starter
- Local farming
- Value added processing
- Boost tourism
- Use of vacant lots
- Home based businesses
- Up-cycling

Barriers

Below is a list of barriers to urban agriculture identified by participants:

- Staff resourcing and capacity to run additional programs

- Clean up and maintenance – fallen fruit
- Placing food in road rights-of-way is a safety concern
- More urban agriculture could attract pests such as coyotes, deer, and rodents
- Water access – needed for community gardens
- Mediating community groups
- Other uses of land (city parks) and conflicting priorities
- Incompatible uses
 - Using garden space as snow dump in winter; plowed snow may contain contamination
 - home based businesses should not detract from the quiet enjoyment of residential neighbourhoods

EXTERNAL WORKSHOP FINDINGS

On November 25, 2024, an external workshop was held with external stakeholders and self-identified residents with an interest in urban agriculture. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about the Urban Agriculture Plan and work with the community to identify key themes for the plan. The workshop included a presentation which included engaging questions and activities to gather feedback from participants.

What We Asked

The following 7 questions were asked to prompt discussions:

- What does urban agriculture mean to you?
- Which themes are the most important in St. Albert and should be pillars for the urban agriculture plan?
- What outcomes could support each theme?
- Were you surprised with the public survey results?
- Which urban agriculture initiatives would you like to see in the Plan?
- What are the opportunities?
- What are the barriers?

What We Heard

Meaning of Urban Agriculture

The key words and phrases participants described as the meaning of urban agriculture are shown below:



Key Themes & Opportunities

The four most prominent themes identified were discussed in greater detail and participants proposed initiatives or outcomes that could support each theme.

1. Climate Resilience & Resource Management
 - Reinitiate the nursery by Big Lake
 - Water runoff management and capture by swales
 - Make the organic waste stream available to public
 - Improve city composting process and test compost composition
 - A target for community garden space available (example sq. ft per capita)
 - Boulevard pollinator gardens
 - Require developers to provide community garden amenities (water included)
 - Front yard gardens
 - Increased water capture
 - Composting in every neighbourhood
 - Managing greenspace to optimize environmental outputs (storing water, carbon, improved soil, etc.)
 - Utilizing organic gardening to capture carbon in the soil
 - Maximize use of space, including vertical gardens along walls & fences
 - Access to land
 - Facilitate raised gardens in courtyards
 - Convert unused parking or road allowances into garden space
 - Regenerative gardening
 - Increase in drought resistant & native plant species

- Maintenance cost savings by planting native species and pollinators
- More front yard and boulevard gardens – require less grass

2. Wellbeing

- Enthusiastic sharing and connection
- Community gardens to provide support for gardening
- BLESS currently offers ‘grief walks’ which offer support and time in nature. These can be expanded to include and incorporate garden walks
 - Improve food security and lessen demand on food bank
 - Chemical free gardening
 - Accessible gardens
 - Increase in outdoor experiences/nature interactions
 - Preventative health through fresh, local nutrition
 - Senior friendly community gardens
 - Garden boxes at schools
 - Ease financial burdens
 - Planters with food downtown (example Fernie BC)
 - Partner with River Lot 56 Society

3. Education and Awareness

- School involvement
- Reduced food waste
- More native plants
- Cultural festivals promoting urban agriculture
- Connection through sharing
- A summer gardening program for children/youth
- More community events
- Educational presentations available to the public (at library)
- Trade show booths
- Senior’s educational opportunities in retirement communities
- Support for currently existing educational programs
- Healthy and enlivened population
- Well educated, curious, and nourished population
- Leverage 3rd party groups to access grants & funding
- BLESS offers ‘summer nature program’ for youth – twice per day, 5 days per week
- Utilize city billboards to advertise agriculture & programming
- Educational tourism
- Partner with community garden groups

- City share existing communities events on social media
 - QR code signage and information access
4. Preserving Agricultural Lands
- Adding “food forests” to conventional farming
 - Fruit trees in city parks
 - Permeable surfaces for improved water capture
 - Partner with U of A farms for community gardens
 - Vertical farms in industrial parks
 - Access for strategic partnerships
 - Community Gardens on Red Willow River Flats
 - Expansive growing areas for citizens

Barriers to Urban Agriculture

The following barriers to urban agriculture were identified by participants:

- City regulations
- Access to land
- Community groups cannot afford to expand their messaging beyond social media
- People in St. Albert are having a hard time feeding themselves and their families, lots of reliance on food bank
- Unclear who in city administration handles what, who can residents contact re: parks, planting, gardens, etc.
- No active beekeeping community in St. Albert. Seems to have subsided since the pandemic
- Hesitant to use city compost because the quality is unknown

NEXT STEPS

Findings from this engagement identify priorities for urban agriculture within St. Albert. The information will be used along with direction from existing plans, such as Flourish, to develop an Urban Agriculture Plan.

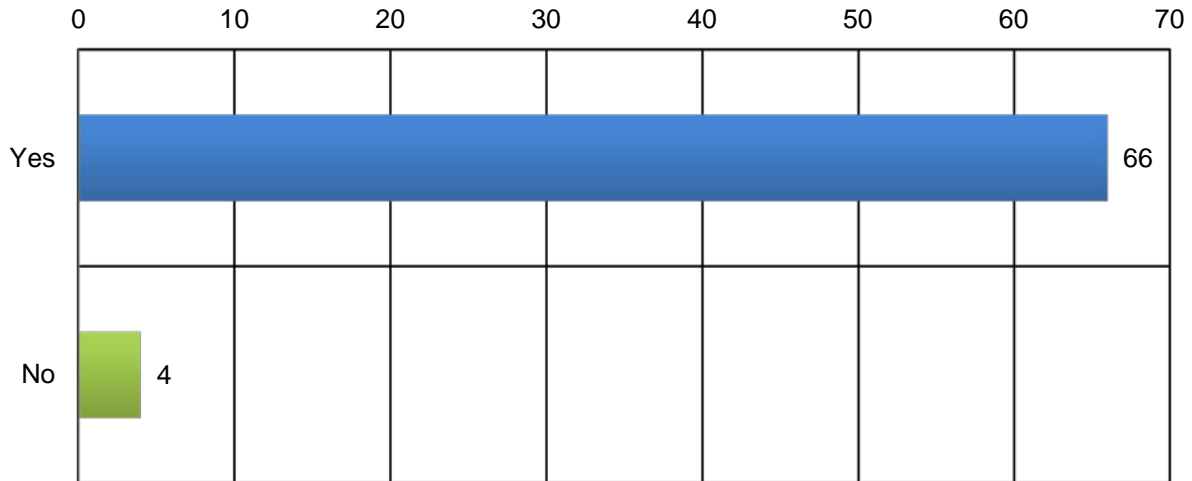
The Urban Agriculture Plan is expected to be finalized in Winter of 2025. For further project updates, please visit the Cultivate the Conversation page at <https://conversation.stalbert.ca/urban-agriculture-plan>.

APPENDIX A – DETAILED SURVEY RESULTS

Demographics

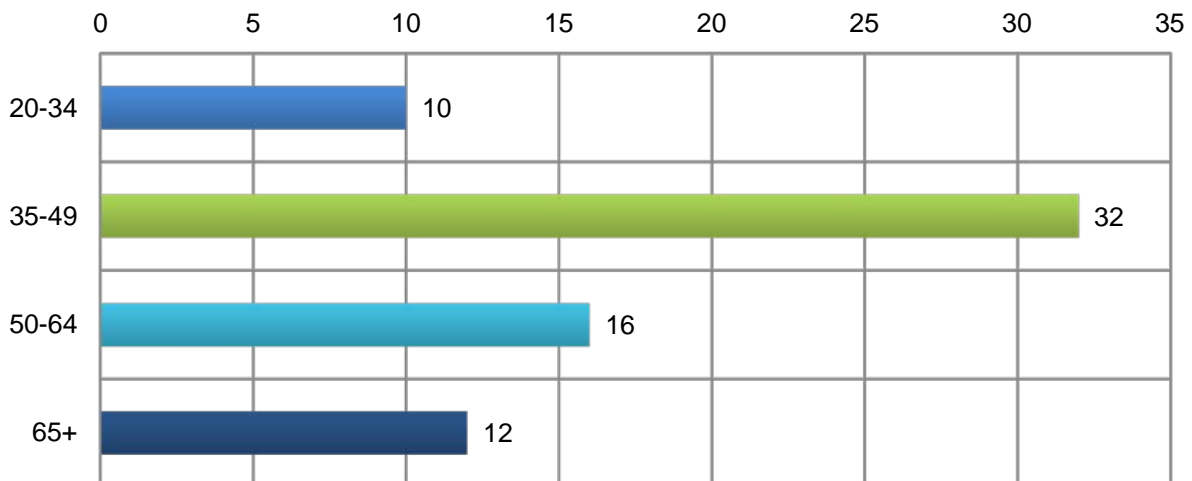
Do you live in the City of St. Albert?

The majority (94.3%) of respondents live in the City of St. Albert.



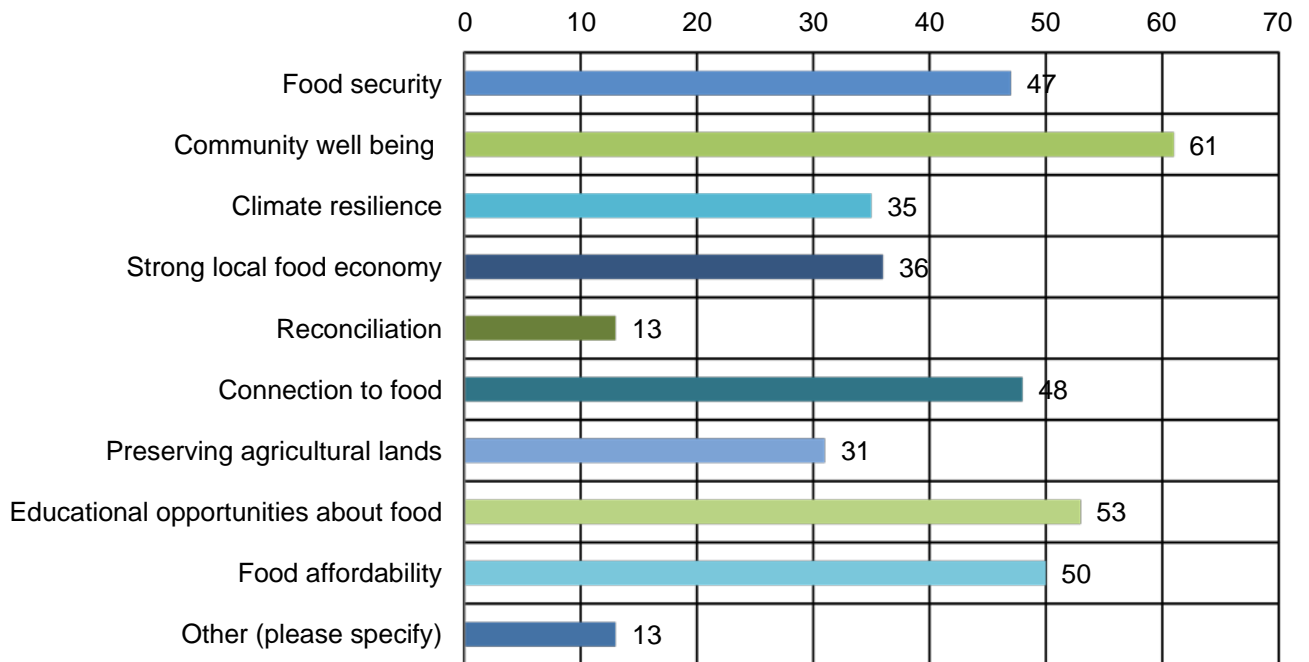
What is your age?

The majority of responses (45.7%) came from people aged 35-49. The second-largest group was aged 50-64, making up 22.0%. Those aged 65 and older accounted for 17.1%, while 14.3% were from the 20-34 age group. No responses were received from anyone 19 or younger.



Meaning of Urban Agriculture

What does urban agriculture mean to you?



The following list ranks what respondents said urban agriculture means to them, from most to least selected:

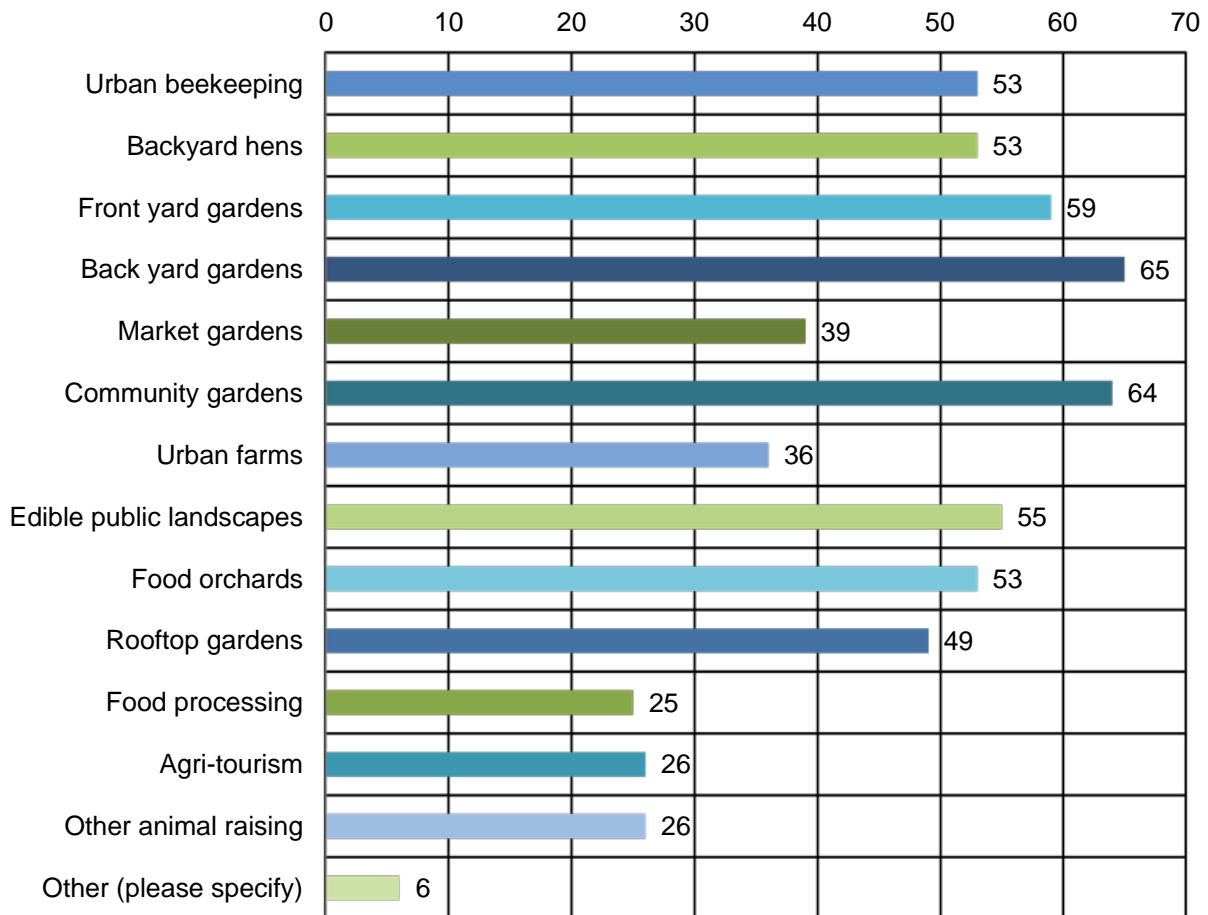
1. Community Well Being – 87.1%
2. Educational Opportunities about Food – 75.7%
3. Food Affordability – 71.4%
4. Connection to Food – 68.6%
5. Food Security – 67.1%
6. Strong Local Food Economy – 51.4%
7. Climate Resilience – 50%
8. Preserving Agricultural Lands – 44.3%
9. Reconciliation – 18.6%

The following responses were submitted under other:

- Mental Wellness
- Mental Health
- Educational
- Understanding where our food comes from. The climate and its impact on growing food. Educational opportunities about growing food

- To increase biodiversity, encourage pollinator population growth
- It is security in an uncertain world
- Food safety - The degree of recalls is increasing
- Local brand capital, Local food accessibility, Potential additional income
- Education around environmentally friendly and sustainable gardening practices
- A nice hobby
- It saves our local economy. Every \$100 worth of food we grow, is \$100 we do not have to export, to import food from elsewhere. Growing food locally is the most cost effective solution to retaining local economies
- Connection to the original way of attaining food that has been grown, ripened and harvested in my own backyard or a community garden. It is sustainable, affordable, and allows for mass canning and preserving of food by the individual as done by previous generations. It's a return to our roots
- No/low-cost outdoor activity

What types of urban agriculture would you like to see in St. Albert?



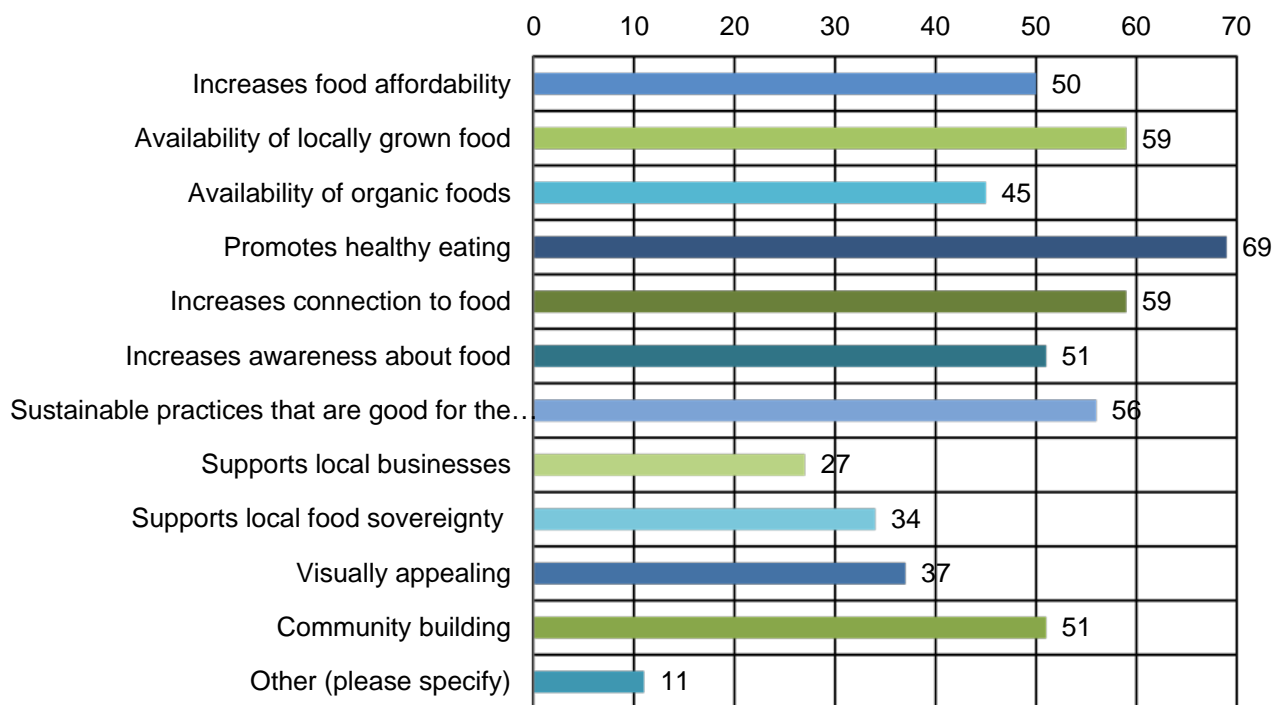
The following list the types of urban agriculture respondents want to see in the City, ranked from most to least popular:

1. Backyard Gardens – 92.9%
2. Community Gardens – 91.4%
3. Front Yard Gardens – 84.3%
4. Edible Public Landscaping – 78.6%
5. Urban Bee Keeping – 75.7%
6. Backyard Hens – 75.7%
7. Food Orchards – 75.7%
8. Rooftop Gardens – 70%
9. Market Gardens – 55.7%
10. Urban Farms – 51.4%
11. Agri-tourism – 37.1%
12. Other Animal Raising – 37.1%
13. Food Processing – 35.7%

The following responses were submitted under other:

- Pollinator gardens, use of what are now 'empty' (grass and minor shrub areas) for fruit trees, vegetable patches, flower gardens. Planting wildflowers on boulevards in between trees and tall grasses.
- Medicinal plant education
- If people want to plant a garden in unused land let's allow that.
- Education around regenerative gardening practices. Creation Care
- Food as Medicine education workshops and lectures
- 'Permaculture' Food Forest applications (water management, mixed with food production). These improve rainwater runoff coefficient, meaning the finished product will reduce flooding and erosion by 99% and be more resilient to fire.

Why do you feel urban agriculture may be important in St. Albert?



The following list ranks the reasons why respondents feel urban agriculture may be important, from most to least popular:

1. Promotes Healthy Eating – 98.6%
2. Availability of Locally Grown Food – 84.3%
3. Increases Connection to Food – 84.3%
4. Sustainable Practices that are good for the Environment – 80%
5. Increases Awareness About Food – 72.9%
6. Community Building – 72.9%
7. Increases Food Affordability – 71.4%
8. Availability of Organic Foods – 64.3%
9. Visually Appealing – 52.9%
10. Supports Local Food Sovereignty – 48.6%
11. Supports Local Businesses – 38.6%

The following responses were submitted under other:

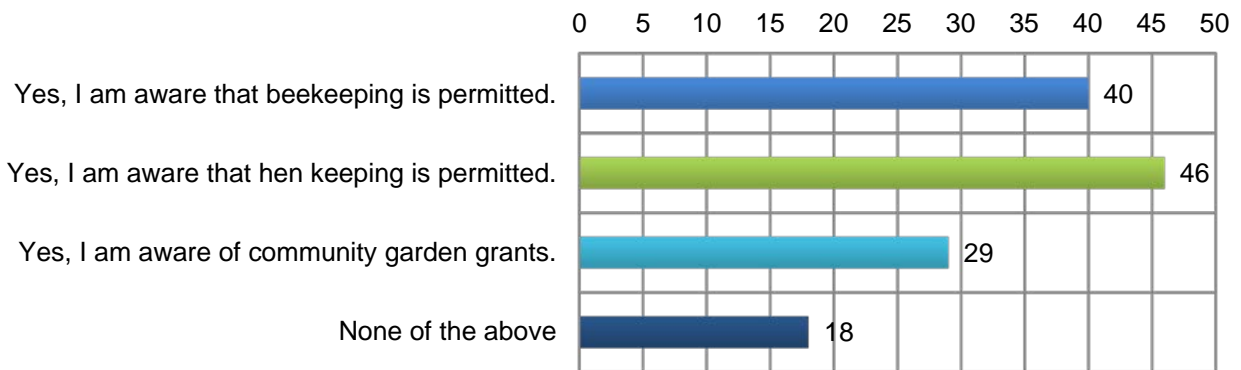
- Just makes sense when your food banks are in demand
- Increases connection to the land
- If 'things' become worse than they are now, imagine the gains of having fully fleshed out gardens with people who support them, capable of carrying us

through the bad times ahead. I'm so proud to be a part of the most treed City but let's make it even more of a practical thing and try to make it a free locally grown food utopia (while our weather permits)

- If you planted raspberries people would pick them
- Better for the environment
- Good use of space, good use of season window of opportunity (in spring, summer, fall), and eco-friendly activity
- Regenerative agriculture eliminates organic waste going to the landfill (branches, leaves, grass, cardboard, compostables) and encourages biodiversity
- It's a nice hobby
- Urban agriculture helps people understand and identify what real food is and where it comes from. It also helps people connect with the healing power of food
- Local food production retains local economy as stated above
- Provides no/low-cost outdoor activity for folks

Participation in Urban Agriculture

Are you aware of the City's current urban agriculture programs (urban beekeeping, backyard hens, and community garden grants)?



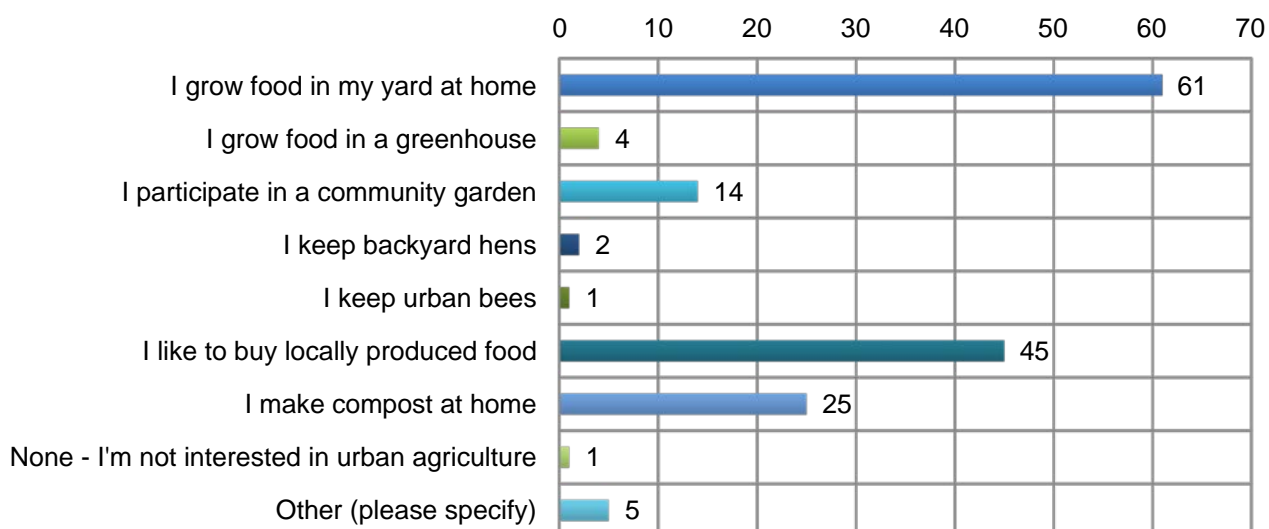
Hen Keeping – 65.7% of respondents were aware that hen keeping is permitted.

Beekeeping – 57.1% of respondents were aware that beekeeping is permitted.

Community Garden Grants – 41.4% of respondents were aware that there are grants for community gardens.

25.7% of respondents were not aware of any of the City's current urban agriculture programs.

Do you participate in any forms of urban agriculture?



The following list ranks the ways respondents participate in urban agriculture, from most to least popular:

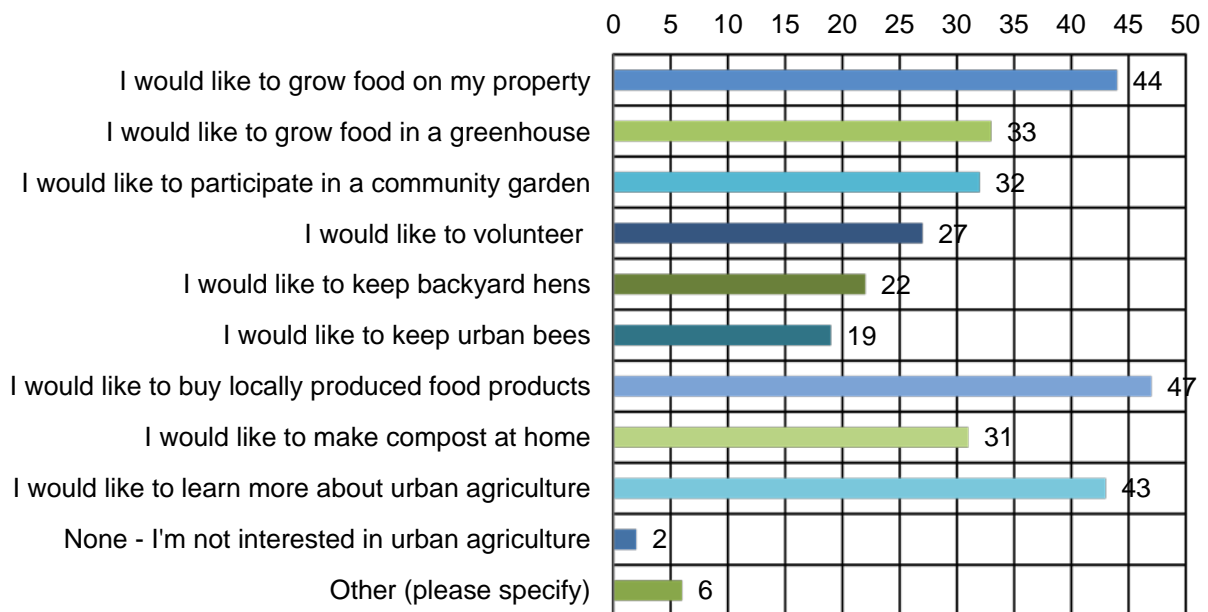
1. I grow food in my yard at home – 87.1%
2. I like to buy locally produced food – 64.3%
3. I make compost at home – 35.7%
4. I participate in a community garden – 20%
5. I grow food in a greenhouse – 5.7%
6. I keep backyard hens – 2.9%
7. I keep urban bees – 1.4%

The following responses were submitted under other:

- I live in a town house so I do not have a large space in which to garden but I am building a perennial (pollinator) flower garden in the back, around my patio and am considering zeriscaping my front yard. I would love to see more community spaces available for fruit and vegetable gardening and wish the city would plant fruit trees and berry bushes in underused green spaces, like where the large power lines run next to Levasseur Road. There is space in all of our lovely parks to add more wildflower gardens and a few fruit trees, while still leaving room for people to use the space for 'play'.
- While I am interested in many other aspects such as hens and greenhouses... St. Alberts setback and ROW restrictions turn a small yard into a completely unusable space.

- I've been planning to do beekeeping since I've moved in but does not have access to a better location than our backyard that has a school directly from it with young students. I'm a trained beekeeper but I'm afraid to get in trouble if my potential bees in hives somehow sting someone like neighbors or students. A location that is accessible and free to put bees on would mean everything to me and if I would be allowed to sell honey
- I grow culinary mushrooms & year-round herbs/other foods. I've also hosted an urban beekeeper at a property in rural Alberta. We also vermicompost
- The 60 Liberton Food Forest project

Are there types of urban agriculture you would like to participate in?



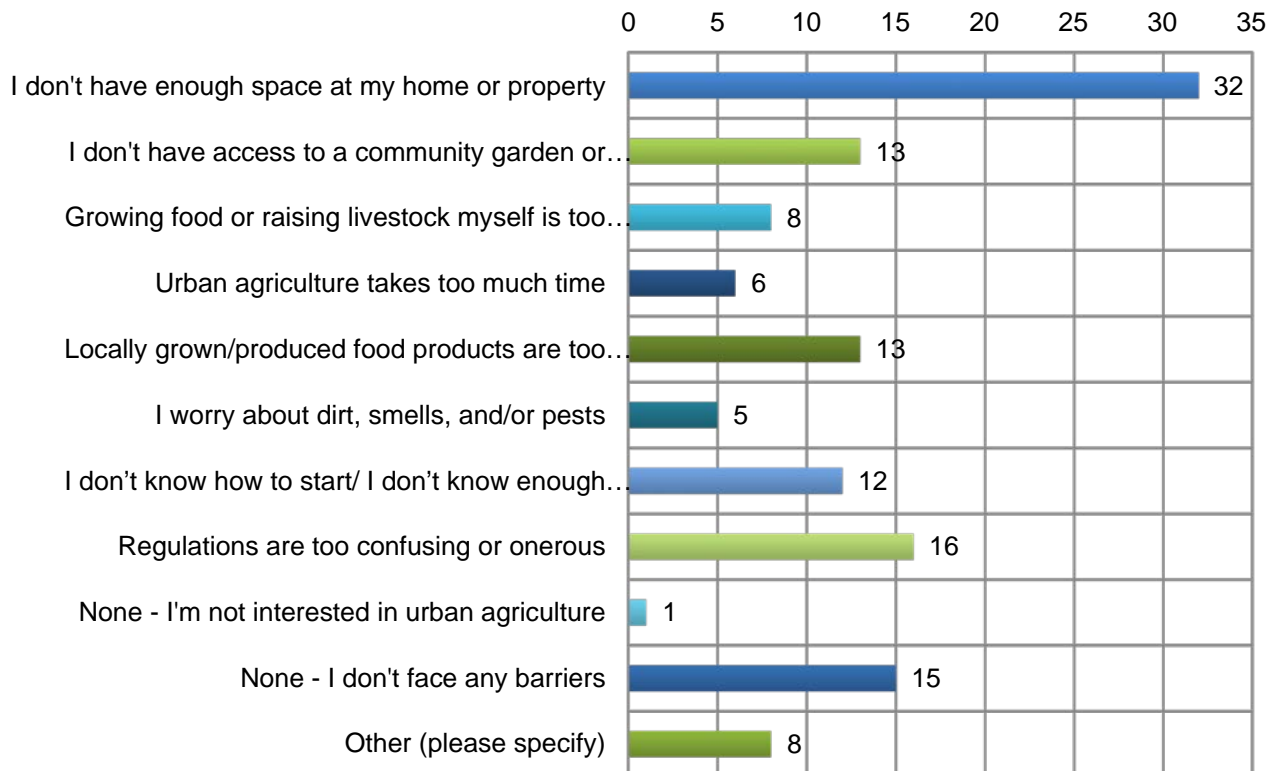
The following list ranks the ways respondents would like to participate in urban agriculture, from most to least popular, with 2.9% not being interested in urban agriculture:

1. I would like to buy locally produced food products – 67.1%
2. I would like to grow food on my property – 62.9%
3. I would like to learn more about urban agriculture – 61.4%
4. I would like to grow food in a greenhouse – 47.1%
5. I would like to participate in a community garden – 45.7%
6. I would like to make compost at home – 44.3%
7. I would like to volunteer – 38.6%
8. I would like to keep backyard hens – 31.4%
9. I would like to keep urban bees – 27.1%

The following responses were submitted under other:

- Sharing produce with others, seed saving and exchanging, meeting with other gardeners to learn from each other
- I would like to grow food on the city property that lies just outside my fenced patio, as it is totally unused grassy space, but gets more sun than anywhere in my yard, which is shaded by trees and fence
- I would like to get additional income from selling honey if possible and allowed
- I enjoy contributing to food security and healthy communities. I participate in a collaborative regenerative garden... different than traditional individual plot "lease" ... we all garden and grow food together... we share the labour and harvest, gifting our excess...to the food bank. in excess of 500 kgs this past season
- I would like herbal medicine to be part of this overall discussion
- I am a certified in Permaculture Design Science. I am more than willing to aid in designing any green space with the water management techniques to make more fertile green spaces

Are there any barriers which stop you from participating in urban agriculture as much as you would like to?



The following list ranks the barriers respondents experience to participation in urban agriculture, from most to least common, with 1.4% not being interested in urban agriculture:

1. I don't have enough space at my home or property – 45.7%
2. Regulations are too confusing or onerous – 22.9%
3. I don't have access to a community garden or gardening program – 18.6%
4. Locally grown/produced food products are too expensive – 18.6%
5. I don't know how to start/ I don't know enough about urban agriculture – 17.1%
6. Growing food or raising livestock myself is too expensive – 11.4%
7. Urban agriculture takes too much time – 8.6%
8. I worry about dirt, smells, and/or pests – 7.1%

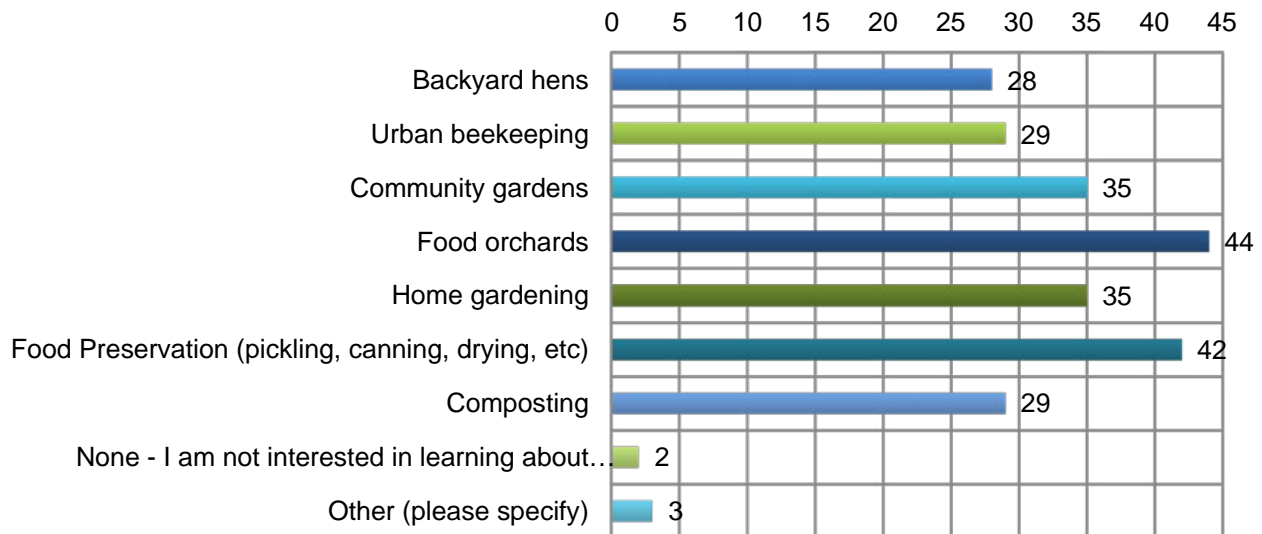
21.4% do not face any barriers to participating in urban agriculture.

The following responses were submitted under other:

- I've been able to participate in a community of St. Albert gardeners via Facebook and via a community garden. I'm not experiencing barriers but would like to see more of this in our community
- I know there are a few community gardens, but I have not looked into finding out how long the wait list might be to get a plot of my own. Plus, the ones I do know of are not fenced in, so animals can wander in and eat the food you have worked hard to grow. Any new allotments should be fenced in. Gardening is hard enough and so weather dependent that if we are going to do the work it would be nice to not have the food eaten by animals. Although I'd be ok with the idea of a 'critter only' garden if someone else wanted to create one like that, specifically for animals.
- Gardens and other, non-grass, front yard features are not available
- My home is not situated in a way which best supports growing food (ie. mostly shaded)
- I'm not sure if I'm allowed to garner some income from it to be able to sustain long term as my proud project that could become a small business
- The people who have the least amount of money are the ones who benefit from local food the most. However, the biggest barrier is 'location'. Poor people do not own land to grow food on. Also, travelling to other neighbourhood in town just to go check your garden is not ideal. Edible landscapes should be found in each neighbourhood
- Coyotes - not sure if this would be included under pests
- Options should exist for residents to utilize public areas suitable to harvest native fruits and vegetables

Educational Opportunities

What urban agriculture topics would you be interested in learning more about?



Respondents are interested in learning about urban agriculture topics in the following order, with 2.9% not interested in learning about urban agriculture:

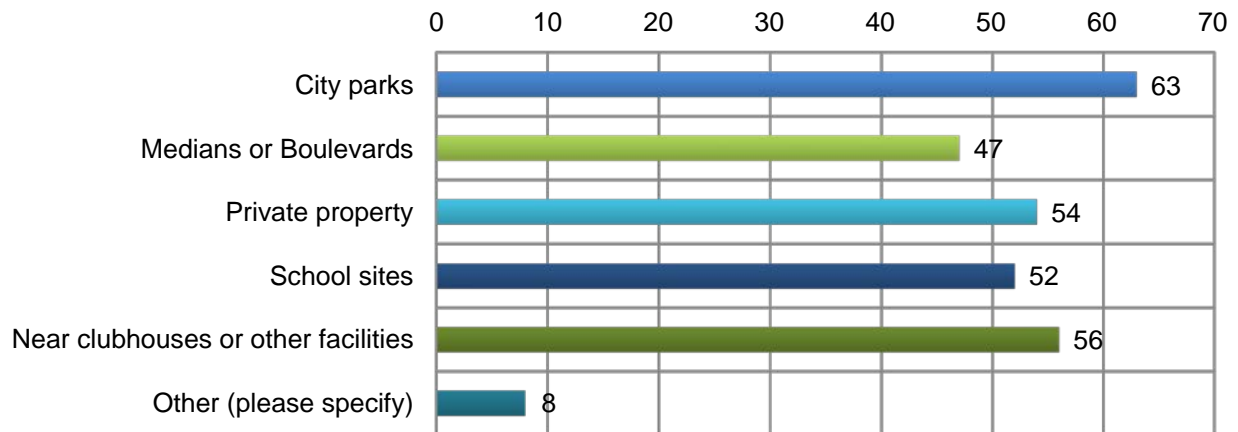
1. Food Orchards – 62.9%
2. Food Preservation (pickling, canning, drying, etc.) – 60%
3. Community Gardens – 50%
4. Home Gardening – 50%
5. Urban Beekeeping – 41.4%
6. Composting – 41.4%
7. Backyard Hens – 40%

The following responses were submitted under other:

- Why the city doesn't plant more food bearing trees and post locations
- Learning more about the healing power of plants
- I have been doing this for over ten years, in four countries (St. Albert is my hometown). I came back home to help teach my community. I willing to help teach

Locations for Urban Agriculture

Where would you like to see urban agriculture in St. Albert?



Respondents are interested in seeing urban agriculture in the following locations:

1. City Parks – 90%
2. Near Clubhouses or Other Facilities – 80%
3. Private Property – 77.1%
4. School Sites – 74.3%
5. Medians or Boulevards – 67.1%

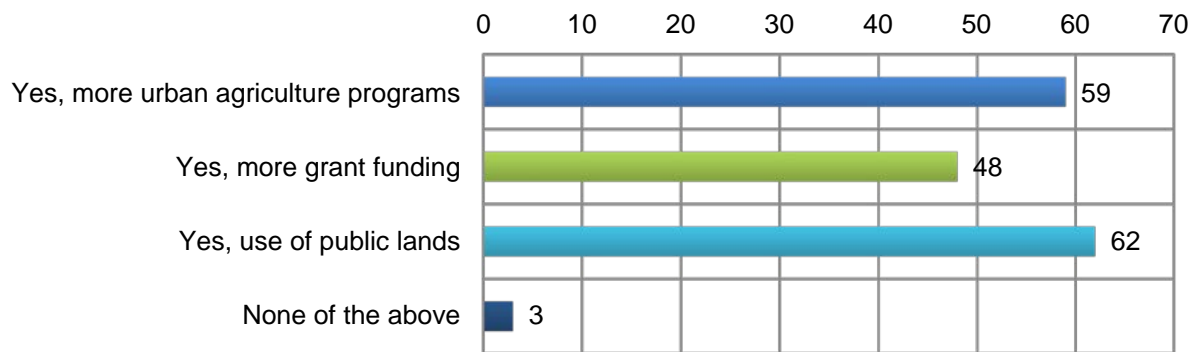
The following responses were submitted under other:

- Front yards and medians
- Fill all empty spaces that don't otherwise have a use. It is ridiculous that we don't have food things growing wherever they are able to grow, when they're able to give food
- Anywhere there is dirt lol. If someone wants to maintain it let's open it up
- Would like to see existing Star Garden grow in size and diversity..to include hens and bees
- NOTE, we do not have to compromise people's grassland parks for food, because Urban Orchards can be grown around the perimeters of these grass parks. This means we can grow food anywhere, without having to upset the locals by affecting their green spaces
- Planned community gardens in new neighbourhoods like we had at our last two neighborhoods in Greisbach and Ardrossan. Fruit orchards at Pocket parks and rec centres

- I'd love to see herb gardens or planters around town that folks could pick from (at community entrance sites where the pink flower containers are would be great). Herbs can be so expensive to buy in such small quantities- my family purchases about \$10 in herbs a week. Community herb containers would be a really lovely way for folks to dip their toes into urban agriculture and to get frequent use out of a minimal-effort/temporary installation
- Public areas accessible to water sources. Lands surrounding storm water management facilities

City Support

Would you like to see more City offered support, such as programs, grants, or use of public lands, for urban agriculture?



Respondents are interested in the City offering support through the use of public lands (88.6%), more urban agriculture programs (84.3%), and more grant funding (68.6%). 4.3% did not want the City to offer more support.