

*Photo Credit: Cedillo's Fresh Produce*

# A MESSAGE FROM AUA

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our work. For us, 2021 was full of opportunities and growing pains that were tied to the changes we saw at-large in our society as we lived through another year with Covid-19, reckoned with racism and white supremacy, and witnessed extreme climate change. Recognizing AUA's role in this complex system while holding responsibility to our growers and communities, we undertook a year of introspection to restructure internally and redefine our work as a means of reckoning with the realities of the system we operate within.



Setting the foundation of our restructuring and redefining meant identifying why we do this work: Our food system is founded on settler colonialism, white supremacy and racism, slavery, genocide, and land theft. To identify these historical realities is to provide acknowledgement to those whose existence has been subject to ongoing violence. Simultaneously, this recognition serves as a means for AUA to situate ourselves in a foundation of necessity and responsibility to grow with our communities and shape our food system toward change.

In recognizing why we do this work, we are able to reaffirm our key commitments: we center growers, farmers, earth stewards, the water which sustains us, and the land that nourishes us. In partnership with growers we provide funding, technical assistance, advocacy, and political education as a means to reimagine our relationship to earth, while honoring and centering queer voices, indigenous sovereignty, black liberation, and immigrants' rights.

# A MESSAGE FROM AUA

As a result of this reckoning, AUA made the following shifts and reaffirmations in our organizational structure and work:

- We implemented a horizontal and consensus-based organizational model which incorporates accountability and transparency to create a more democratic and sustainable organization.
- Our programming continued to center growers through mentorship, regranting, technical assistance, and advocacy. We deepened our relationship with each other and growers through our collaborations and partnerships.
- We incorporated a social justice movement framework that will inform our future organizing and solidarity work.

In 2022, we look forward to strengthening our organizational structure and deepening our work with continued support from our staff, funders and donors, board members, and community of growers. We reaffirm our commitment to hold ourselves accountable, transparent and continue to center those who are at the forefront of resistance and liberation. We do this work as a tool to cultivate healing and hope rooted in a deep desire for a just and dignified food system.

**IN SOLIDARITY,  
AUA TEAM**



*Photo Credit: Jazmin Martinez  
BIPOC Bird Watching  
Englewood Nature Trail*



# NEW TEAM MEMBERS



## **Ren Encinas** **Organizing Steward** **They/Them**

Ren is from the California Central Valley and comes from a lineage of farmers in the Philippines. They are currently tending to the land in South Chicago with Catatumbo Cooperative Farm and have previously grown with Lightly Farmed and UIC's Heritage Garden. As a land steward, they are committed to dismantling colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy within agriculture and uplifting Native and Black sovereignty and self-determination. They bring nearly a decade of experience in community organizing and anti-imperialist and anti-militarist movement building across Chicago. As an educator, they are passionate about nurturing political education spaces grounded in global BIPOC and working class people's ongoing legacies of resistance. They also enjoy working with food and art to build community, share people's histories, and envision free futures.



## **Alexandra Hachem** **Group Gap Coordinator** **She/Her**

Alexandra is a produce safety and compliance expert who champions safe and sustainable food systems. She comes to AUA from the Produce Safety Program at the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture where she worked directly with growers, providing them with technical assistance and conducting farm audits and regulatory inspections. Her job also focused on community outreach and program development through collaboration with federal and state agencies, local organizations and industry stakeholders. Alexandra holds a Bachelor's degree in Nutrition and a Master's Degree in Food Technology. She grew up in a family of restaurateurs and has immense admiration for the people who put food on our table. Her work revolves around the values of fairness and respect for the earth and she is eager to start working with urban growers.



# REGRANTING



**\$277,500k**

**TOTAL FUNDS  
GRANTED TO  
GROWERS IN 2021**

## CAPACITY BUILDING GRANT

in August of 2020, AUA launched the first Capacity Building Grant co-designed with growers to support growing entities in scaling up their operations and increasing their capacity. This year, AUA increased the amount of funds distributed for the Capacity Building Grant and worked with an advisory committee of 6 growers, organizers, and community members to grant **\$102,500,000 to 11 Chicagoland farm businesses.**

## SOLIDARITY FUND

In January of 2022, AUA distributed a total of \$175k in partnership with the Chicago Region Food System Fund as a means to support growers who are at the forefront of food justice and food sovereignty work in their communities. This was part of the Chicago Regional Food System Fund regranting initiative with Advocates for Urban Agriculture, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization, Chicago Food Action Policy Council, Heal Food Alliance, Faith in Place, and Illinois Stewardship Alliance **A total of \$175k funds will be distributed Mid-February 2022.**



*Photo Credit: Getting Grown Collective*

# WATER ACCESS

## IN 2020, THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER MANAGEMENT (DWM) MADE CHANGES TO THE HYDRANT PERMIT POLICY THAT SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED WATER ACCESS FOR GROWERS.

In 2020, Advocates for Urban Agriculture in partnership with Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Neighborspace, Grow Greater Englewood, Chicago Food Policy Action Council and the Community Food Navigator Project advocated for an equitable and accessible change as Urban Agriculture Partners (UAP). Together we proposed the Pilot for Equitable & Affordable Water Access for Urban Growers Program to address water access needs of growers in Chicago in 2021. We continued to meet and advocate with partners in City departments throughout 2021, steadily chipping away at the unjust policy. In tandem with the new Food Equity Council for the City of Chicago, we will continue these efforts in 2022 striving towards equitable access to water for growers.

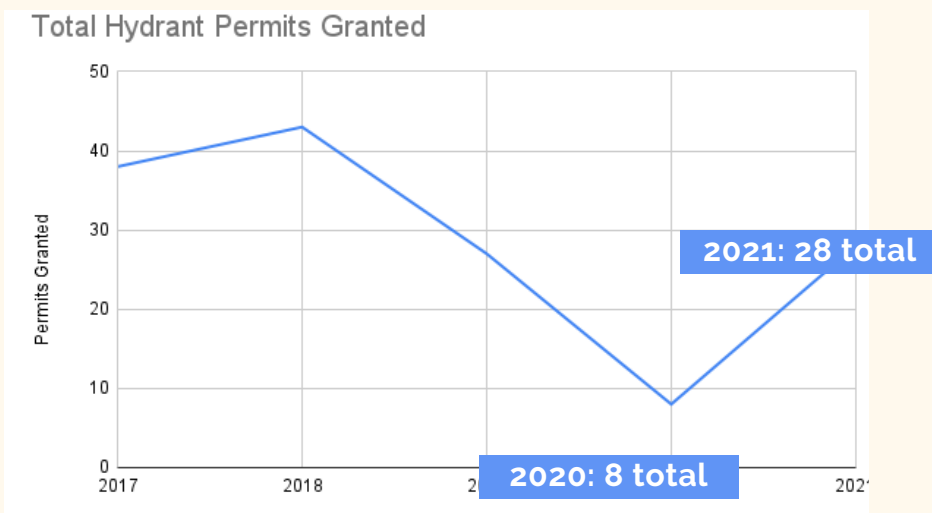
### In 2021, UAP provided the following technical support:

1. 50+ Office hours of technical assistance regarding the permit application.
2. \$10,295 in funding for bulk Reduced Pressure Zone (RPZ) valve purchasing, testing, and certification.
3. \$2850 in funding for custodian cap removal.
4. \$2808 in funding for insurance coverage.
5. Accompaniment during DWM site visits.
6. Co-created language accessible resource guides in Spanish.
7. Funding for rain barrels and totes for farms without hydrant access.
8. Research and data gathering to continue improving the pilot program.

**\$128k**

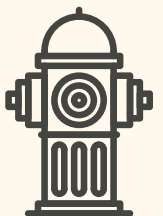
In support  
of growers

**50+**  
OFFICE  
HOURS



This graph demonstrates how, following the policy change in 2020, permits granted to growing sites began decreasing drastically until the introduction of the UAP pilot program in 2021.

**250%**  
hydrant permit  
increase in 2021



*Despite the gains in 2021, more can be done to ensure that everyone who needs access to a hydrant can secure it. We continue to work in coalition with City leaders, food system partners, & growers to improve the hydrant permit program.*

*All data gathered through the UAP's Pilot Program.*



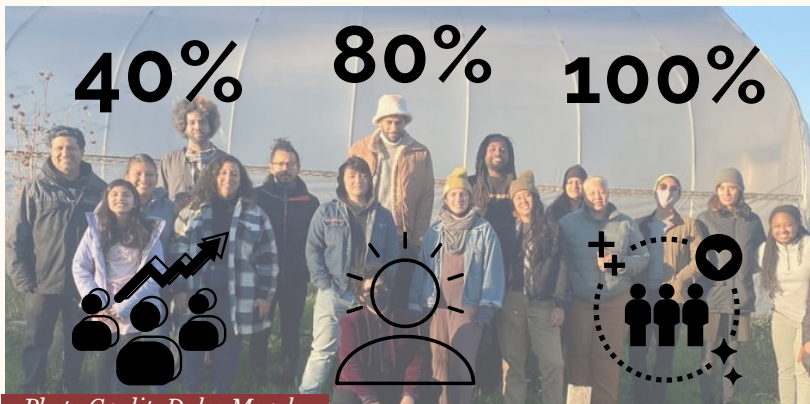


*Photo Credit: Food Sovereignty Action Day  
at Shavon L. Dean Memorial Garden*

# PROGRAMS

## FARMER TO FARMER MENTORSHIP

The second cohort of the Farmer to Farmer (F2F) Mentorship Program matched 14 beginning farmers with experienced farmers to share knowledge and experience while cultivating growers' relationships with each other and fostering a thriving ecosystem. We look forward to strengthening the Farmer to Farmer Alumni network and contributing to a more robust Chicagoland grower community.



*Photo Credit: Dulce Morales*

Returning participants from last year

More aware of emerging food businesses after their participation in the program

Recommend this program to other growers!

## GROWN IN CHICAGO COUNCIL



AUA's Grown in Chicago Council enlisted local urban agriculture experts to support community members by providing technical assistance to growers, keepers, and stewards. The council provided responses and support tailored to community members and their urban agriculture site and/or project. In 2021, GIC provided in-depth technical assistance to 8 growers in Chicago. Also, four technical assistance videos were created on: Safety, Sustainability, Community Education, and business development.

Click for: [Food Safety](#)

Click for: [Sustainability](#)

Click for: [Community Education](#)

Click for: [Business Development](#)





*Photo Credit: Alexy Irving  
BIPOC Volunteer Day*

# COMMUNITY BUILDING & SUPPORT

## FOOD SOVEREIGNTY ACTIONS DAYS

Food Sovereignty Action Days brought more than 30 volunteers to four local growing sites to provide hands-on labor support and cultivate new community relationships. Food Sovereignty Action Days introduce community members to local growers and foster a commitment to support a local food system in the Chicagoland area.

## HOOP HOUSE BUILDING SUPPORT

As part of the Farmer to Farmer Mentorship Program, volunteers supported A & P Paradise Gardens in Pembroke, IL in completing their Hoop House. Over the course of four work days, guided by Grown In Chicago Councilmember, Matt Ryan, and with +20 volunteers the hoop house was completed in November of 2021. A&P Paradise Gardens is looking forward to growing in their newly constructed hoop house in 2022!

## LETTUCE MEET UP: BIPOC VOLUNTEER DAYS

AUA partnered with Urban Growers Collective and the Chicago Food Policy Action Council to create "Lettuce Meet Up: BIPOC Volunteer Days." A space for those that identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color to cultivate and heal relations with the Land, get dirty, find joy and build community while supporting local BIPOC growers in Chicago.



*Photo Credit: Bea Fry  
Medicine Making Workshop: Fire  
Cider Making*

## CONTINUED: COMMUNITY BUILDING & SUPPORT



### MEDICINE MAKING WORKSHOPS

AUA's Medicine Making Workshop Series with Gina Roxas brought together a total of 30 participants to [The Honeycomb Network](#) throughout the month of November. Participants focused on making medicine using materials from local gardens or farmers market while learning about the history of the medicine.



### GROW WITH US SESSIONS & THE GARFIELD PARK CONSERVATORY

In 2021, AUA and the Garfield Park Conservatory collaborated via each organization's respected program. Through AUA's "Grow with Us Session" and the Garfield Park Conservatory "2nd Wednesday Lecture" almost 200 virtual attendees were introduced to speakers highlighting the interconnection between nature with urban agriculture. Speakers spoke on topics such; as Indigenous Food Pathways and Sovereignty, Food Sovereignty and Disability, and Soil Resistance.



### URBAN LIVESTOCK EXPO: VIDEO SERIES

In 2021, the Urban Livestock Expo was redesigned into a four-part video series. Experts shared their skills on caring for goats, bees, chickens and community building in Chicago. Click on the webpage [AUA Urban Livestock Expo](#) to see all the videos.

# PARTNERS & FUNDERS COLLABORATIONS

*Thank you to our funders  
and partners who made this  
work possible.*

## FUNDERS

Food:Land:Opportunity | Lumpkin Family Foundation | The Food & Farm Communication Fund  
Walter S. Mander Foundation | JR Albert Foundation | Patagonia | Margot Pritzker  
Chlditarod | Chicago Region Food System Fund | Groupon | The Builders Initiative

### Farmer to Farmer Mentorship Participants

A & P Paradise Gardens  
Bee-Utiful Honey & Candles  
B.S.R.R. Youth Farm/Academy  
Catatumbo Cooperative Farm  
Cedillo's Fresh Produce  
Closed Loop Farms  
Earnest Earth  
Fresher Together  
Gardeneers  
Growing Solutions Farm  
Herban Produce  
Hinata Farms  
Just Roots Chicago  
Mother Carr's Farm  
Multiple harvest LLC  
OTIS Fresh Farm  
Run-Away Buckers  
Sistas in the Village  
Soulful Farm  
The Roof Crop  
Windy City Harvest

### Capacity Building Grant Advisory Committee

Azizah Ashraf-Ali  
Erana Jackson Taylor  
Erin Kwiatkowski  
Gina Roxas  
Jesse Schaffer  
Nora Bryne

### Grow with Us Sessions

The Garfield Park Conservatory  
Your Bountiful Harvest  
Washika Torres  
Elena Terry  
Nateo Carreno

### Grown in Chicago Council

Ashley Luciani  
Stephen Brown  
Matt Ryan  
Serrater Chapman  
Fresh Roberson  
Alexy Irving  
stephanie dunn  
Naaman Gambill

### Food Sovereignty Action Days & BIPOC Volunteer Days

The Plant Chicago  
Deborah Dean Memorial Garden  
Cedillo's Fresh Produce  
Urban Growers Collective  
Bomba Con Buva  
Chicago Food Policy Action Council  
Photographer Alexy Irving

### Technical Assistance Workshops

Insurance for Growers with Viti  
Companies

Connecting with Chicago Soils  
with Akilah Martin

Water Access for Growers with  
Neighborspace

### Medicine Making Workshop Series

Gina Roxas  
Cedillo's Fresh Produce  
The Honeycomb Network  
Star Farm Chicago  
Just Roots Chicago  
Trader Joe's  
Pete's Fresh Market  
Bee-Utiful Honey & Candles  
Otis Fresh Market  
Sugar Beet Food Coop  
Catatumbo Cooperative Farm

### Panel Discussions

"Food Systems During COVID-19 and  
Beyond" with UIC Radical Public  
Health (RPH)

"Addressing Legal Barriers in  
Urban Agriculture" with Chicago  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

"Legacy of White Supremacy in Land  
Access" with Stateline Farm  
Beginnings program

### Research Collaborations

Harvard University: Bleeding  
Wounds: Funding Inequities for  
Farmers of Color

DePaul University: Water Access  
Pilot Program Data Analysis

Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil  
Rights: Water Access Survey

### Urban Livestock Expo: Video Series

Little Village Environmental Justice  
Organization  
GlennArt Farm  
Chicago Farm Lab  
Bee-Utiful Honey & Candles  
Videos produced by Daily Planet,  
LTD.

### Water Policy Collaborations

Chicago Lawyers Committee for Civil  
Rights  
Chicago Food Policy Action Council  
DePaul University  
Neighborspace  
Windy City Harvest  
Urban Growers Collective  
Blacks In Green  
Grow Greater Englewood  
Metropolitan Water Reclamation  
District of Greater Chicago  
Contributions by Margo Pritzker





ADVOCATES for  
URBAN AGRICULTURE

**THANK YOU**

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Visit us at:  
[www.auachicago.org](http://www.auachicago.org)