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.
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.

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.

$277,500k TOTAL FUNDS GRANTED TO GROWERS IN 2021
**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.
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**

**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.

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.

_All data gathered through the UAP's Pilot Program._
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.

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

Returning participants from last year

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

Recommend this program to other growers!
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.
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’s “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

FUNDERS

Food:Land:Opportunity | Lumpkin Family Foundation | The Food & Farm Communication Fund
Walter S. Mander Foundation | JR Albert Foundation | Patagonia | Margot Pritzker
ChIditarod | 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

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 Buya
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

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THANK YOU

Visit us at:
www.auachicago.org

Photo Credit: Cedillo's Fresh Produce