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### Final Report

Mill City Grows (MCG) is grateful for the support from the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation to create an Urban Farm model for our educational production farm that uses sustainable farming methods to grow high quality produce for our community while simultaneously training urban farmers and exposing residents to the value of sustainable urban agriculture. With the support of the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation, Mill City Grows expanded our Urban Farm model to ensure that it is scalable, and replicable. We reduced some of our goals based on funding, as our initial request was for \$20,000 and we were funded at the \$3,000 level; we decided to reassess our goals and prioritize our current Mobile Market before launching a new Community Market as it would take resources from an already stretched program. The following report reflects these changes.



### Mill City Grows' Urban Farm increased access to local food through building a scalable and replicable Urban Farm model.



During this past year, including the 2015 season and 2016 spring season we were able to increase the diversity of crops grown at our Urban Farm sites to reflect the cultural needs of our community including: crops widely used by the Southeast Asian community in Lowell – a small, round, green eggplant, thai basil, bok choy, and this season ginger and lemongrass. To increase our capacity to produce our Urban Farms have expanded to include nearly 4 acres of total space, 2 acres are being revitalized through cover cropping and fertility management and 2 acres are used for vegetable production across our two sites. Our demonstration and production Urban

Farm in downtown Lowell, situated on 1/8 of an acre of privately owned land, continues to be a site of hands-on learning and community engagement, as well as intensive organic agriculture.



In 2015, we grew over 4,000 lbs. of vegetables on this small plot. Our larger, more residentially sited farm – a 4 acre parcel we lease from the City – continues to improve as we have implemented a fertility management and soil improvement strategy. In 2015 we doubled the production area to 1.5 acres, and brought the rest of the field into cover crops to reduce weed pressure and improve soil for future plantings – we grew over 14,000 pounds at this site. Across the two sites, we grew more than 18,000 pounds.

In 2015 our two apprentices researched and designed a perennial crops system at our Urban Farm. In 2015 they installed an herb garden (photo above) that included perennial herbs – garlic chives, chives, oregano, thyme, sage and chamomile. And in 2016 we implemented the remainder of perennial plan including – raspberries, strawberries, asparagus and rhubarb.

***We were able to surpass our projected outcomes including:*** increasing production by 50% during the grant period, growing over 20,000 pounds of food; increased number of perennial crops at our Urban Farms for a total of 10 new crops during grant period, exceeding our goal of 4 new crops; and grew 5 new ethnic crops during the grant period.

### **Mill City Grows' Urban Farms increased residents and youth exposure to local food production and education.**



In 2015 we launched our Urban Farm Apprentice training program and brought on two Urban Farm Apprentices for the full season. This program was a wonderful first year, apprentices learned all forms of urban farming, participated in a regional farmer training program called – CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Apprentice Farmer Training) – and lead the farm program for a week. We also had two youth interns through the Lowell Career Center for six weeks during the summer of 2015. Perhaps one of the most exciting part of this program is that one of our apprentices returned to manage

our Urban Farm Program in 2016 and the other apprentice went on to manage a beginning farmer network in the area. The program is continuing in 2016 with more apprentices working part-time throughout the season, as we received many interested applicants with less experience this season.

Our Urban Farm is home to numerous classes, volunteer days, & field trips. Mill City Grows summer youth program, Youth Food Justice Program, has continued to grow. In 2015 we collaborated with 10 local youth agencies to engage at-risk and low-food access youth in hands-on food based curriculum at our Urban Farms. Partners include: YWCA of Lowell, Boys and Girls Club of Lowell, United Teen Equity Center (UTEC), Girls, Inc, Youth Grow, Idea Camp's Got Dirt program, the Lowell Public School District, and Lowell Community Health Center's TeenBLOCK, UMass Lowell, and Freshman Academy Compass Program. In 2015, more than 300 youth experienced hands-on food education at one of our farms. Of these, 25 youth participated in a 4+ workshops series exploring our food system and how local communities can benefit from and be a part of the local food supply.



In 2015 we had over 500 volunteers come to work and learn on our farms. It was wonderful to see the community interest and we were able to learn from the first year to create an even more robust volunteer program in 2016. We currently have volunteer days for corporate groups on Fridays from 1-4 and then we have individual volunteer days monthly on a Saturday. These have been well received and in the two months since launching our volunteer program in 2016 and since its launch we have had 136 volunteers!

**We were able to surpass our projected outcomes including:** Including our apprentices' participation with the CRAFT program and our internal trainings, our apprentices had over 10 trainings; in 2015 we trained 2 Urban Farm Apprentices and in 2016 we have 5 part-time intern/apprentices during the season; we were also able to host well over 150 volunteers at the Urban Farm during the grant period' and hosted over 100 individuals through classes and educational groups at the Urban Farm during the grant period.



### **Mill City Grows expanded community access to fresh produce.**

Mill City Grows' Mobile Market is our farm stand on wheels. In 2015, our Mobile Market was on the road 5 days/week, making stops at 8 regular locations across the city. Mill City Grows partnered with health centers, hospitals, senior facilities, as well as private businesses and the City of Lowell to bring fresh produce to more than 6,000 customers. 11% of our customers used SNAP, WIC, and Senior coupons totally over \$5,000 in purchases. We matched over \$2,000 with our Market Bucks Program (providing 50% to customers paying with SNAP, WIC, and Senior coupons).

Thank you to the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation for the support and for providing us with the capacity to grow our Urban Farm.

**Financial Report:**

All funds were spent to support our Urban Farm Apprenticeship Program including supervision and apprentice wages.

Salaries and Wages: \$2,700

Taxes: \$300

Total: \$3,000