

URBAN AND LOCAL AGRICULTURE (2012)



Policy Statement

The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) believes that urban and local farming contributes to the sustainable and practical use of urban and suburban land. When people raise their own food, know where their food comes from, and have relationships with the people who grow their food it can increase their self-reliance, social connectivity and their community's resilience. ASLA urges implementation of land use policies at the local, state, and federal levels that enable and encourage local agriculture.

Rationale

There is a considerable amount of research available devoted to the benefits of local and sustainable agriculture, including various types of urban agriculture. The primary purpose of this policy is to point out the social and community benefits of local and urban agriculture as a viable land use.

Incorporating urban farms, school gardens, community gardens, and farmers markets into the urban fabric can provide direct and indirect benefits to the community in terms of health, safety and welfare through increased socialization, revitalization of underused or derelict sites, increased physical activity, and better nutrition. Consideration should be made to the inclusion of these specific land uses in large scale land use or master planning efforts.

Farm stands and farmers markets have been shown to be important public open space which provides increased opportunities for community building. As an important part of the public realm, they can add to the sense of community and connectedness. *(Mark Francis and Lucas Griffith, The Meaning and Design of Farmers' Markets as Public Space: An Issue-Based Case Study, "Landscape Journal". February 2011)*

Agricultural lands, especially those near the fringe areas of a city, are often subject to pressure for development, which may result in undesirable land use patterns characterized as "suburban sprawl". The most recently released U.S. Census of Agriculture reported a decline in farmland acres from about 938.3 million acres in 2002 to about 922.1 million acres in 2007, a loss of 16.2 million acres over five years.

School Gardens have been shown as an effective tool to teach children responsibility, teamwork, and self-reliance. The gardens can be incorporated into many areas of the curriculum, including math, science, social studies, history, and the language arts. School gardens can also be used as a way to increase socialization and self-confidence, increase physical activity and to teach better nutrition and eating habits.

By providing additional opportunities to support local and urban agricultural endeavors, communities support economic and cultural vitality as well as a reduction in its carbon footprint.