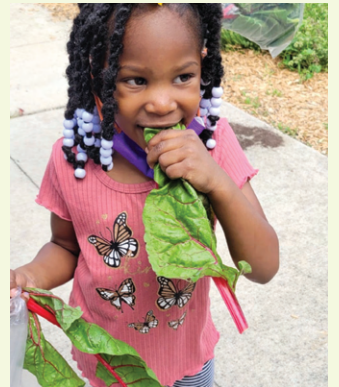


# IMPACT REPORT



2022





# CONTENTS

<b>5</b>	A Message from our Co-Executive Directors
<b>6</b>	UCG in 2022: By the Numbers
<b>8</b>	Farm Update
<b>10</b>	Job Training & Education
<b>12</b>	Community Engagement
<b>14</b>	Food Access
<b>16</b>	Green Era Campus Developments
<b>18</b>	In the News
<b>20</b>	Closing



9/3 Big Beef \$4.75

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

**Dear Friends,**

With the close of 2022, Urban Growers Collective (UGC) is celebrating 5 years of growing since our founding. In 2022 UGC saw our team grow to 38 employees, compared to its founding 4-person team in 2018!

Growing, in all its forms, requires learning, patience and reflection. At the same time, anniversaries remind us to reflect on our impact and to look beyond the numbers. From the teen grower who learned from a new mentor, to the emerging farmer who landed a client, to the Fresh Moves customer eating healthier now that they have empowered access and choice. Our work is complex and the small moments of growth are what invest us in the change we hope to inspire.

These moments of growth are what move us closer to the broader systems change that all of us—the Urban Growers Collective team and you, our supporters—are working towards. The everyday moments of joy, accomplishments, connection, and learning that are a part of UGC’s daily culture as a team and for us all as a collective, reflecting a future where all communities have stable and consistent access and the agency to make healthy and affordable foods embedded in our neighborhoods. UGC has now moved through 5 years of transitioning projects to programs, seeding success through strategic plans and partnerships that reflect our values of justice and equity. We are so grateful for the growth and resilient culture that has taken root and invite you all to celebrate the goals we have achieved.

We are so thankful for our contributors, supporters and partners who have championed UGC in our first 5 years of our organization, and share gratitude to those who set the foundation for our work, and those who will join our collective in the future.

**Sincerely,**



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Erika Allen.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurell Sims".

**Erika Allen and Laurell Sims**

Urban Growers Collective Co-Executive Directors

# UCG IN 2022: BY THE NUMBERS

**6**

INTERNS  
GAINED  
EXPERIENCE

**48**

COMMUNITY  
WORKSHOPS



**137**

YOUTH CORPS  
PARTICIPANTS

**142**

HOUSEHOLDS  
PURCHASED  
CSA SHARES

**227**

COMMUNITY  
MEMBERS  
PARTICIPATED  
IN WORKSHOPS



**15,345**

POUNDS OF CROPS  
HARVESTED ACROSS  
UGC'S FARM SITES

**7**

GROWERS  
APPRENTICESHIP  
PARTICIPANTS

**19**

HERBALISM  
APPRENTICESHIP  
PARTICIPANTS

**81**

COMMUNITY  
GARDENERS

**99**

TOTAL  
VOLUNTEERS  
ENGAGED



**278**

INDIVIDUALS  
TOURED UGC'S  
SOUTH CHICAGO  
FARM

**344**

INDIVIDUALS  
TOURED THE  
GREEN ERA  
CAMPUS

**1,124**

FARM STAND  
TRANSACTIONS



**35,806**

CUSTOMERS SERVED  
THROUGH OUR FRESH  
MOVES MOBILE MARKET



**Upgrading our farm infrastructure makes our work sustainable so we can maintain our production throughout the season. Power in the dome for production and programs, heaters, and a fridge running 24/7—it's the basics. And our farm team—they want to make things succeed and take it to the next level, I love that energy.**

Malcolm Evans, Director of Urban Farms



# FARM UPDATE

2022 was an exciting year for UGC's farms, with improved growing operations, larger farm staff team and new infrastructure projects! Our farm sites were filled with a bustle of activity and new growth in 2022, and we are excited to have this chance to share some updates from the past year.

UGC's Farm team expanded to 11 staff at the height of the growing season, including full-time, part-time, and seasonal growers. To support our team's professional development and encourage a wider base of applicants, UGC created and filled grower positions that reflect a range of growers' skill levels. Increasing farm team capacity was a huge support as we moved throughout the different seasons of harvest in 2022, and this past year our dynamic team grew 226 different varieties of crops. Some of our highest yielding crops from 2022 include collards, kale, assorted squash, tomatoes, zucchini, eggplant, hakurei turnips, arugula, spinach, lettuce, and mustard greens.

UGC's farm sites are crucial community spaces for so many reasons, and we are excited to be able to grow the impact of our farm programming as we move into 5 years since UGC's founding. Our farm sites allow our team to grow delicious and nutritionally dense foods so that we can increase access to healthy foods for our communities, improving food insecurity and health, and advancing food justice for all. In addition to increasing food access, our farm sites also serve as safe, healing spaces for neighborhood residents to come together and build community. We love that our farms showcase the beauty of the earth, and in celebrating UGC's 5 year anniversary, we are celebrating more years to come in connection with the land, each other, and all the delicious crops still to come.



# JOB TRAINING & EDUCATION

## YOUTH CORPS

As UGC reaches the milestone of our 5 year anniversary, it is our youth who continue to show us the way forward. Youth Corps programming infuses UGC's overall mission and vision in its daily activities, and the energy our teens bring to this work continues to keep us inspired for more work to come. Through this vital programming we are building knowledge and awareness of healthy food, urban agriculture, and the food system, while creating safe spaces for teens to build relationships, support social emotional learning, and embrace their skills and creativity.

Originally established in 2004 under Growing Power, the teen education and employment program combines hands-on skills training in urban agriculture and business development with an education in community food systems, food justice,

and nutrition. Teens develop food literacy and leadership skills, and graduate with paid job experience and the ability to translate the skills they've gained to their desired career path. It is UGC's goal that teens graduate with a comprehensive understanding of sustainable food system development and the ability to connect and communicate how the skills they've gained at the farm translate to any career path they may follow.

This past year 137 teens ages 14–19 participated in our Youth Corps program, energizing us with the creativity and passion they brought to our farms. Teens sprung into action and supported with managing UGC's weekly Farm Stands, moved through a micro-enterprise curriculum and worked together to build out their own farm business plans, took on leadership roles at UGC's Fall Harvest Fest, received hands-on farm experience, participated in Build-a-Farm workshops, and more.

UGC's Youth Corps collaborated with the Chicago Park District and Friends of the Parks to help paint 2 benches and 2 picnic tables for Schafer Park and the South Chicago Farm during our fall session. This project aims to recognize the Southeast Side's transformation from its industrial history to an environmentally just future, while also creating a space for community rest and collaboration while Youth Corps programming is in session.



Youth Corps Bench at South Chicago farm.

## GROWER & HERBALISM APPRENTICESHIP

UGC completed the first year of our Grower and Herbalism Apprenticeships. As our 2022 cohort of apprentices built foundational skills in farming, farm business management and herbalism, we continue to refine our culturally affirming curriculum to stay relevant to their skill level.

UGC worked closely with Upside Down Consulting to support Grower Apprentices' understanding of Farm Business management rooted in Solidarity Economy values and worker cooperatives. Worker-owned cooperatives are opportunities to move beyond job training and placement and towards creating new pathways for entrepreneurs, economic development, and community wealth building by empowering workers to make business decisions as a collective.



UGC's Herbalism Apprenticeship wrapped up their in-person 2022 season with a sleep-over at UGC's South Chicago Farm in October. During this event, apprentices were invited to join our Herbalism Program Conductor Kim Crutcher in the South Chicago Geodesic dome for an evening of tincture making, storytelling and reflection.

In 2023, UGC will be onboarding new 2023 Cohorts into both our Grower and Herbalism Apprentices. The new cohorts will begin their Year 1 curriculums as returning apprentices in each program move on to Year 2 curriculum that has been adjusted to meet the needs and interests identified in 2022.

LEFT: Herbalism balm, including calendulas and tulsi.  
TOP: Herbalism Apprentice Justin W. harvesting yarrow at UGC's South Chicago Farm



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

UGC's community engagement programming aims to increase access to safe spaces that allow for relationship building, skill building, and healing. Programs like our Art on the Farm workshops, Community Garden plots, public workshops, and volunteer opportunities draw local residents to our farm and garden sites, change how they relate to the land and neighbors, and activate a sense of possibility, ownership, and community. We see this as a first step in beginning to heal the historical racial trauma experienced by Black and brown communities throughout Chicago.

This past year brought plenty of opportunities for community engagement with UGC's farms, and we are so grateful for the ways in which neighborhood residents showed up to engage in our community programming. In 2022, we

had 97 community garden plots planted by 81 community gardeners, 99 volunteers engaged in volunteer activities on our farms, and held 82 community workshops that saw 227 attendees throughout the year. Each person who engaged in this programming was a part of building a community space together that feels affirming and allows for learning and co-creation.

UGC wrapped up 2022 with Artist Design Charrettes for the South Chicago Farm's Outdoor Studio and Makerspace. At these charrettes, artists, community members, program participants and UGC convened at the Hyde Park Art Center to vision layouts and amenities for public programming, rest, and studio areas for individual and collaborative artmaking.



December 2022 Artist Design Charrette at Hyde Park Art Center.

# FOOD ACCESS

UGC's Fresh Moves Mobile Market (FMMM), Farm Stand, and CSA Programs all had another successful year of increasing access to, while also building knowledge and awareness of healthy food, urban agriculture and food systems.

FMMM supported 14 site partners in 2022, with consistent service throughout the year. Even when our Fresh Moves bus was not able to fare Chicago's Winter weather and 2022's Summer Heat advisories, UGC ensured that our communities had food access by coordinating pre-packed boxes and bags of fresh produce to be dropped off at partner sites for distribution.

UGC also provided affordability measures such as the Link Match Program and the \$10 free produce vouchers for FMMM and Farm

Stand customers. In 2022, \$182,706 in produce vouchers were distributed at Fresh Moves sites and Farm Stands, and Fresh Moves saw \$13,096 in LINK sales throughout the past year. These extra affordability measures were vital in removing potential financial barriers to ensure access to healthy food for all members of the community.

UGC designed and implemented an evaluation process to build an understanding of the role, value, and impact of its efforts to provide access to fresh food via FMMM in Nearly all (93%) respondents in the surveys indicated that because of the produce they received, they had more money to pay bills or purchase other things they needed. Nearly all (93%) reported that because of the produce they received, they worried less about feeding their family.



Fresh Moves Mobile Market Bus.



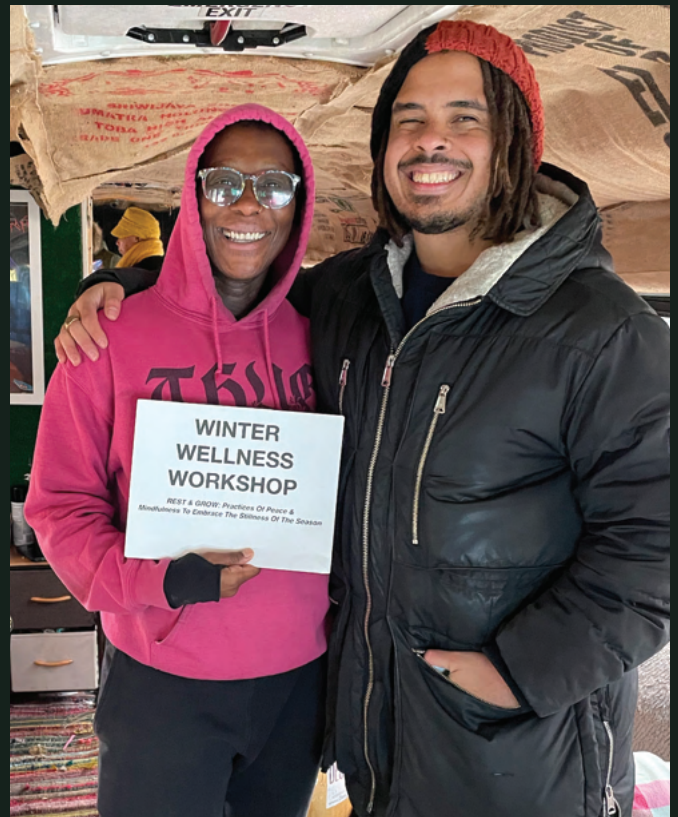
## COLLECTIVE SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

2022 was UGC's second year of offering Collective Supported Agriculture (CSA) boxes for households to purchase, and this past year 142 CSA shares were purchased. CSA boxes were stocked with vegetables and culinary herbs from UGC, fruit from Seedling Farm, micro greens from Urban Eden, and occasionally Grower Apprentices' harvests.

In 2022 UGC continued to offer CSA shareholders the option to purchase full or half CSA shares, as well as mutual aid CSA shares. Mutual aid CSA Shares covered the cost of a full CSA share for the purchaser, while also paying for a half-share CSA that was to be distributed to another household free of charge. Mutual aid is a radical practice of community care that is true to the spirit of UGC programming and values, and plays an important role in increasing accessibility of our CSA shares for all. We are so thankful to be able to share our abundant season harvests with all of our shareholders, FMMM and Farmstand customers in 2022 and to support the multitude of farmers and growers who cultivated those crops.

At our fall Health Fairs, we were able to connect with customers at a different pace. We provided services ranging from COVID vaccinations, cooking demos, and mental health counseling sessions. The health fair also gave us time to connect deeper and catch up with our regulars. We saw a lot of excitement and gratitude among our community, as well as a rejuvenating energy among our staff.

Joshua Hughes,  
FMMM Program Manager



TOP LEFT: Siobhan counting beets for weekly CSA packing.  
ABOVE: Joshua (right) with Ea Williams of T.H.U.G. Hippie at Fresh Moves Health Fair.





# GREEN ERA CAMPUS DEVELOPMENTS

Urban Growers Collective has been hard at work during 2022 in preparation for the Green Era Campus, including tours to 344 visitors and creative placemaking via mosaic art. UGC will launch the quiet phase of the Green Era Capital Campaign in 2023. This campaign will raise funds towards the Green Era Campus' Community Programming spaces that will be collocated with the Anaerobic Digester that completed its construction in 2022. Once the GreenEra Campus is completed, it will include a Community Education Center, Retail Store and Nursery, Commercial Compost Building, Event Plaza Edible Forrest and Walking Trail, and Greenhouse for controlled environment agriculture.

In the past quarter, UGC worked with David Clark of Clark Construction and Terrence Glenn to create a request for proposal for contractors needed for the Edible Forest and Walking Trail and Greenhouse. UGC has selected a contractor from the RFP responses, and will begin further architectural engineering in 2023.

## COMPOST COOPERATIVE KICK OFF

We kicked off our first meeting to develop the Finished Compost Marketing and Distribution Cooperative. This Cooperative will be worker-owned, creating pathways for small business development and economic opportunities. We will primarily be involved in the development of the cooperative, but some UGC staff and program participants may be interested in becoming worker-owners. Ultimately the worker-owners will manage the business decisions of the cooperative independently of UGC once operations are running.



## MAHALIA JACKSON PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL ACTIVATION

Urban Growers Collective worked with Auburn Gresham residents and the Chicago Park District to activate a Park Advisory Council for Mahalia Jackson Park, which is a 3 minute walk from the Green Era Campus. Park Advisory Councils represent more than 225 parks in all 77 community areas across the city of Chicago, and provide a community voice in their local parks. Park Advisory Councils provide recommendations for services provided to parks, needs, problems, accomplishments, and any other matters councils consider important to the operation of their parks. The initial meetings planning meeting was held in November 2022, and additional meetings will organized in 2023 to formally register the Park Advisory Council with the Chicago Park District

LEFT: Elijah and Alyssa collaborating with other UGC staff on mosaic planter. TOP: Mahalia Jackson in concert in Zürich in 1961, courtesy of Wikipedia.

# IN THE NEWS

## **WBEZ**

“Although coping with weather uncertainties is part of both rural and urban farming, urban farms are in a unique position. They provide horticultural crops—like fruits and vegetables—directly to communities that might not have access to fresh produce. City farms are subject to contaminated soil and complex urban water access issues ...

The crucial role urban farms play in their communities motivates growers like Allen to face the effects of local climate change head on.”

‘Not in a state of anxiety, but in a state of preparedness,’ she said. “People are food insecure ... Why can’t we address all of those things and be climate prepared? Because it’s just being resilient.”

Indira Khera, October 15, 2022

## **BLOCK CLUB CHICAGO**

“South Chicago Park Hosting Truck-Or-Treat, Fall Festival and Charity Walk Saturday.

Schafer Park’s advisory council is teaming up with the Urban Growers Collective and the New Prospect MB Church for the free events.

the Harvest Fest hosted by the Urban Growers Collective ... will feature pumpkin and face painting, apple cider, a farm stand and free farm tours.”

Maia Pandey, October 27, 2022

## **BIOCYCLE.NET**

The Green Era Renewable Energy and Urban Agriculture Campus on Chicago’s South Side includes an AD designed to recycle millions of pounds of food waste to produce RNG and nutrient-rich compost and fertilizer, supporting local food production. The first-of-its-kind project transformed a vacant 9-acre brownfield site into a vibrant green educational campus. In partnership with other community groups, including the Black- and women-led Urban Growers Collective, the Green Era Campus will be a clean energy facility, urban farm oasis, and empowerment engine, driving economic development in a historically polluted and underserved community. Other urban communities could replicate Green Era’s model. If cities use the RNG fuel they produce to replace diesel in their local refuse trucks or other commercial fleets, they’d get a major clean air benefit as well as an income stream.

Joanna D. Underwood and Matt Tomich, December 6, 2022

## **CHICAGO CITIZEN**

On Saturday, Dec 10th, Allen received an Honorary Ph.D. in Public Health from the University of Illinois Chicago ... I love that I’m being recognized by Public Health because poverty and all of its companions—structural violence, structural racism, lack of resources—all impact our public health, impact how long we live. Some things we’re doing is bringing joy and stability to our communities. We’re youth serving first and when our young people are cared for, that signals to the community that we have a future,” Allen said.

Tia Carol Jones, December 14, 2022



## CHICAGO SUN TIMES

“Biden administration officials are crisscrossing the nation in August—with three in Illinois this week ... U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Thomas-Greenfield on Thursday will tour an urban farm in Chicago run by the Urban Growers Collective.”

Lynn Sweet, August 25, 2022

## JAMES BEARD

“The James Beard Foundation’s Leadership Awards ... raise awareness of these timely issues by celebrating the visionaries responsible for creating a healthier, safer, and more equitable and sustainable food system ... Rebecca Treon spoke with 2022 James Beard Leadership Award honoree Erika Allen about how she is using urban agriculture to invest in her community.”

Rebecca Treon, June 3, 2022

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**CITIZEN** WEEKLY HYDE PARK

Week of December 14, 2022 citizennewspapergroup.com FREE | VOL. 34 | ISSUE 4

**BUSINESS**  
Association of African American Financial Advisors Announces New Leadership

**PS**  
Scottie Pippen and Orange Comet Team Up For Exclusive Metawear Digital Sneakers Collaboration

**P10**  
Trace Austin, Recording Artist/Actor, Grandson of Otis Williams from The Temptations Releases New Single “My Story”

**URBAN GROWERS COLLECTIVE CO-FOUNDER TO RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE**

Erika Allen has been living her Master's Degree Thesis and working in community operated food systems to create agency for 20 years

**P2**

citizennewspapergroup.com

Urban Growers Collective cultivates nourishing environments in Chicago's historically disinvested communities, seeding pathways to freedom while supporting residents' health, economic development, healing and creativity through urban agriculture.

Tackling food systems change is no small task, and our work would not be possible without our collective. To support our work and continue providing land, training, and food access to new BIPOC farmers and community members, please visit [urbangrowerscollective.org/donate](http://urbangrowerscollective.org/donate).

While monetary donations are one form of tangible support, we want to affirm that the many different ways in which our collective shows support—volunteering, participating in programming, providing ideas and input, donating, etc—are all of equal importance. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Community is essential, and we are so grateful to be able to have you as a part of the UGC community!

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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