

Urban Growers Collective

ANNUAL IMPACT

REPORT 2021



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

At Urban Growers Collective, we understand that even in neighborhoods where material security is scarce, our community is abundant.

As we conclude the second year of this global pandemic, we recognize what extraordinary times we are in. Not only does COVID-19 exacerbate the generations of health and healthcare inequities in our communities, but it also brings wealth, food, and racial disparities to the forefront of public discourse. Throughout 2021, we found ways to hold space both virtually and in-person with our extended community. Together, we worked through new solutions for generating stronger, healthier, and more sustainable communities, and our conversations were met with action both in and beyond our farms.

Together, we began to move from scarcity to abundance.

We found abundance in our 8 farms throughout Chicago, where new and returning farmers welcomed bountiful harvests and created more community health and wealth.

We found abundance in the families and individuals across the South and West Sides who nourish their minds and bodies through our Fresh Moves mobile markets, CSA boxes, and workshops.

We found abundance in the youth who transformed their interests into new career pathways and business plans in our Youth Corps workshops.



We found abundance in each other.

And this abundance fuels our continued fight for food justice. Our communities are tired of receiving the crumbs of unjust social systems, and we know we can build something more beautiful and more bountiful right in our own neighborhoods. We see the power of our community to do the work that will bring us closer to the future we know is possible. Together, we will continue to create spaces where our UGC community finds refuge in one another, where BIPOC folks can pursue intentional community, and we can create more plentiful resources and opportunities for all.

Whether you are new to our work or have been with us from the beginning, we would not be able to do what we do without your support of our mission. Every dollar donated, every hour volunteered, and every moment engaged in our programs helps us provide life-nourishing foods and holistic services to our communities.

Thank you for being part of our community and helping us create the radical abundance we know is possible.

With gratitude,



**Erika Allen and Laurell Sims
Urban Growers Collective Co-Executive Directors**



ABUNDANCE IN FOOD ACCESS

If we have learned anything through the pandemic, it is that our food systems and supply chains are incredibly vulnerable. For members of our South and West Side communities, limited access to sustainable food sources is not new. That's why our team of farmers, volunteers, and partners work hard to grow, harvest, and distribute nutrient-dense food to those in need as frequently and efficiently as possible. Our Food Access programming remained in relief mode this year, providing emergency food responses during supply chain disruptions, as well as our ongoing nutrition and culinary education and community partnerships with farmers.

Fresh Moves Mobile Market & Vouchers

For our continued COVID-19 Emergency Food Relief efforts, we initially stocked produce boxes for those who needed them. However, we found the \$10 vouchers we distributed to be even more successful, as they allowed recipients more agency over their own food choices at produce stands or the Fresh Moves Mobile Market. Thanks to partnerships with local organizations, Fresh Moves Mobile Market expanded offerings to include staple items like pasta, beans, flour, grits, coffee, and handmade soaps.

CSA Program

Our Collective Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, which directly supports BIPOC farmers and ranchers by providing additional market opportunities, allowed members to receive weekly shares of fresh, seasonal produce grown by UGC and our partners. Shares this year were stocked with vegetables and culinary herbs from UGC, fruit from Seedling Farm, microgreens from Urban Eden, and supplemented with vegetables grown by our Incubator Farmers.

FOOD ACCESS BY THE NUMBERS

FRESH MOVES MOBILE MARKET

36,550
CUSTOMERS
INTERACTIONS

\$169,687
IN FOOD VOUCHERS
DISTRIBUTED

FARM HARVEST

20,465
POUNDS OF PRODUCE
HARVESTED

COVID-19 EMERGENCY FOOD RELIEF

5,250
PRODUCE BOXES
DISTRIBUTED

\$343,819
WORTH OF FOOD
DONATED

706
PRODUCE BOXES
COORDINATED WITH
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

13,626
HOT MEALS DISTRIBUTED



ABUNDANCE IN CONNECTION

Community Gardeners

Empty grocery store shelves and mile-long lines at local food banks are evidence of the need for communal growing spaces. Community gardens have grown in popularity, strengthening the scope of local food production and establishing a more resilient and reliable food system. Growing food isn't the only reason to participate in community gardening; it also serves as a source of connection, social support, and emotional well-being for community residents during a time of crisis.

We saw a large interest in our garden plots from both community members and teachers this year, and nearly doubled our plots at South Chicago and Jackson Park. A rainy summer prompted our first Master Gardener Community Garden Technical Assistance night where community gardeners engaged with a Master Gardener to learn more about best practices for growing in wet conditions. They also walked through the garden with the Master Gardener and had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss how to overcome challenges.

Workshops

This year's workshops connected our communities to movers and shakers around the world! We were so grateful to welcome the diverse wisdom of our workshop leaders and participants. Some of our workshops included:

Beekeeping Roundtable

Participants from Nigeria, South Africa, the US, Kenya, Ghana, and other countries gathered to discuss key pollinating plants for bees and to share general knowledge on the significance of these special creatures.

The Intentional Medicine Series

We joined Dr. Maker-Clark on Zoom to explore dance as physical, emotional, and mental nourishment for our bodies. Participants got to share their dance moves in a virtual dance party! Rev. Kim Crutcher also led Herb Walks, facilitating participants in examining plants and exchanging knowledge and stories on our South Chicago Farm.



UGC BY THE NUMBERS

53

COMMUNITY GARDNERS

38

WORKSHOPS HOSTED

60

COMMUNITY GARDEN PLOTS

395

TOTAL WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

\$12,000+

WORKSHOP SCHOLARSHIPS PROVIDED

Connect Through Volunteering

We offer a robust volunteer program for folks in or visiting the Chicago area looking to connect with the land and with our communities with intentionality.

ABUNDANCE IN EDUCATION

One of the ways we stay committed to our mission of using food to support community self-reliance is by teaching folks how to grow their own food. We once again welcomed the opportunity to diversify our training and educational offerings in 2021.



Youth Corps

UGC works to create sustainable, multi-generational pathways for transformation within our communities. To do so, we create spaces for our young people to be curious, imaginative, and wildly free.

Our Youth Corps participated in virtual training earlier in the year while starting plants at home to be later transplanted into their respective garden sites. When the temperatures warmed, we witnessed teens at the Roosevelt Square farm operate a completely youth-led farmers market on Saturdays. Through operating these markets, as well as working on the farm, teens were able to take part in nearly all aspects of the food supply chain and gained a clearer understanding of what it takes for food to get from field to table.

Job Training & Incubators

In 2021, 8 farms and 13 individuals participated in our incubator program, receiving hands-on training in urban farming. In 2022, UGC is proudly transitioning to two new training programs: our Grower Apprenticeship and Herbalism Apprenticeship. These new programs fill a critical gap in training, providing growers of all skill levels access to hands-on practice, collective knowledge sharing, community building, and industry best practices—without the financial pressure of starting and maintaining an independent farm business. These programs are an expression of UGC's commitment to accessibility, cultural relevance, and community empowerment.



JOB TRAINING & EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

6 INCUBATOR FARMERS GRADUATED

188 YOUTH CORPS PARTICIPANTS

\$81,610 PAID STIPENDS TO YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

ABUNDANCE IN OUR FUTURE

Green Era Campus

Construction of the Green Era Campus, a green oasis and renewable energy facility (and future UGC headquarters!), is underway!

In partnership with multiple entities, we're transforming 9 acres of brownfield in the Auburn Gresham neighborhood into a vibrant hub for green energy and jobs, fresh produce, small business incubation, educational programming, and community green space. Through this ambitious project, we are strengthening our mission to dismantle systemic racism, build resilience, and heal communities through the power of food.

We are nearing completion of Phase 1 of the Campus construction, the anaerobic digester. Phase 2 construction begins in early 2022, including:

- Community education center
- Outdoor event plaza
- Retail store and nursery
- Urban farm and greenhouse
- Stormwater capture infrastructure
- Community garden plots
- Native plant habitats, butterfly gardens, and flowers
- Edible forest and walking trail



The planning of this project was a collaboration with the whole community. We intentionally formed partnerships with grassroots, community-led organizations alongside citywide entities to create comprehensive solutions benefitting both Auburn Gresham



residents and the environment. In our community-centered design process, we collected and listened to feedback through a large-scale planning effort engaging more than 1,500 local stakeholders. We also hosted hands-on sessions led by TnS Studio architect Taylor Staten for students at Simeon Career Academy to design potential campus layouts and community uses.

“Getting the Simeon architecture students integrated into the design team (instead of having them watch from the sidelines) makes the development of Phase 2 that much more special. Their ideas were smart and valuable and will be visible after Phase 2 is constructed. It’s so important for them to have the opportunity to contribute to developments that take place in their neighborhood, to see themselves as designers... because they are. And I am proud to be a visible example of what they can do.”

- Taylor Staten, TnS Studios Design Principal

The result? A dynamic and innovative site for staff, students, neighbors, and volunteers to gather, build community, and create an equitable, sustainable Chicago.

We hope you'll join us in uplifting Chicago as a blueprint for the nation in developing an equitable green economy and sustainable future—all starting on the South Side.

To learn more and get involved, visit www.greenerachicago.org.

ABUNDANCE IN GRATITUDE

To Our Staff, Interns & Volunteers

Each of our staff, interns, and volunteers played vital roles in moving us and our communities through a prosperous year. Thank you to every person who shared their time and labor with us in 2021. Together we weeded, tended, and harvested our way to a bright New Year!

To Our Partners

Food insecurity does not exist in a vacuum. As such, our methods to fully and holistically address it should not as well. Our work would not be possible without the diversity of experience, passion, and expertise gained from our community partners. Thank you for uplifting our work and merging our fights for justice and peace in our communities!

To Our Donors

We could not bring this work into our communities without our supporters and champions. We sincerely thank you – our youth, our farmers and entrepreneurs, and our families all thank you for choosing to fight back against forced scarcity. Thank you for recognizing the abundance in our work and in our communities and choosing to nurture that potential. We are so grateful that you have joined our community, and look forward to the dreams we will grow and transform into reality together.



DONOR & VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

583
VOLUNTEERS

1,781
VOLUNTEER HOURS LOGGED

94
RECURRING VOLUNTEERS

2,500+
INDIVIDUAL DONORS

\$54
AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL GIFT

UGC IN THE NEWS

ABC7

"Chicago group Urban Growers Collective up for award at UN Climate Conference"

TIME MAGAZINE

Time Magazine highlighted Erika, Laurell, and Urban Growers Collective in their recent piece, "How Women Are Addressing Hunger in Their Communities."

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"'We Will Handle It.' An Army of Women Is Taking on the Hunger Crisis in Local Communities" The New York Times featured the Fresh Moves Mobile Market in a recent piece about activists working to remake the food system.

CHICAGO SUN TIMES

"New Food Equity Council to Tackle Food Insecurity in Chicago" The Chicago Sun Times also featured the Chicago Food Equity Council.

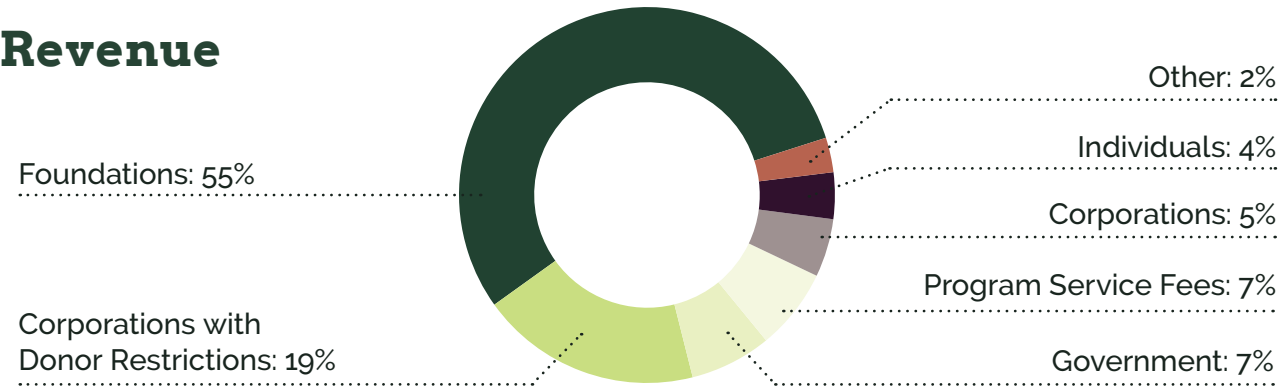
Do you have time, resources, or gifts to share with our community? Build an abundant future with the Urban Growers Collective!

urbangrowerscollective.org/donate

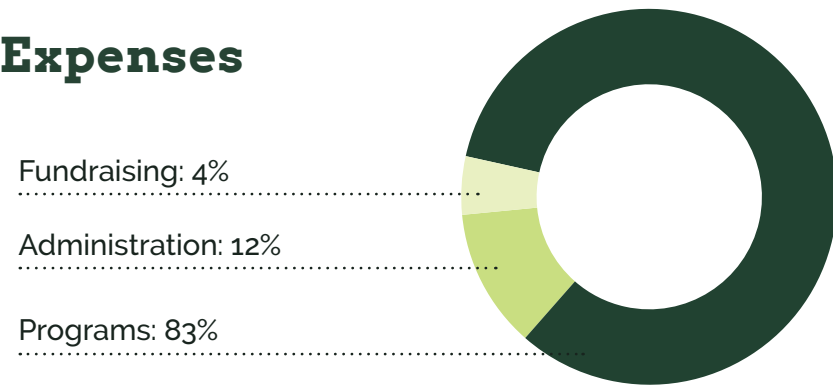


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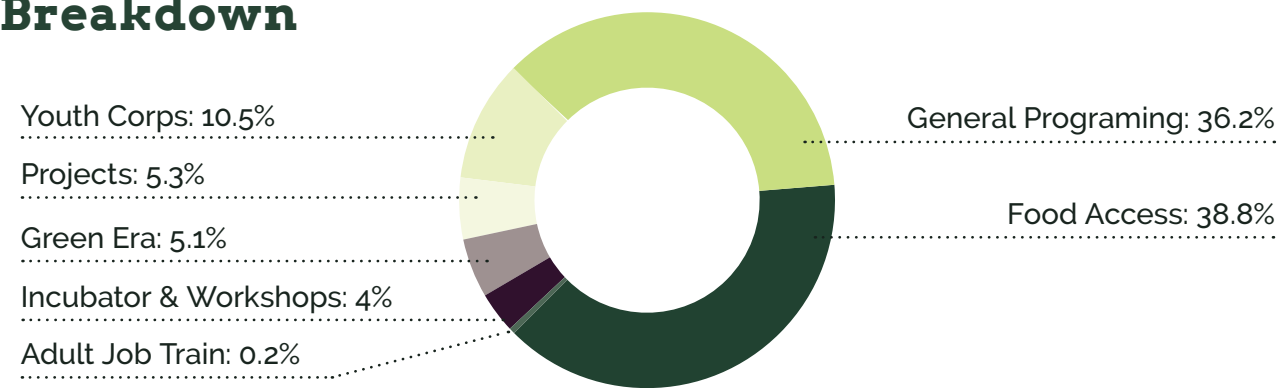
Revenue



Expenses



Program Breakdown



Revenue

Foundations	2,457,023
Individuals	181,921
Corporations	243,204
Corps w/ Donor Restrictions	837,733
Government	315,729
Program Service Fees	294,422
Earned Income (less cost of goods sold)	(3889)
Other Income	108,749
Total Revenue	4,434,892

Assets

Current Assets	
Cash & Equivalents	2,845,200
Accounts Receivable, Current	1,467,852
Prepaid Expenses	24,369
Total Current Assets	4,337,421
Other Assets	
Property & Equipment	356,150
Investment in Green Era	500,000
Accounts Receivable, Non Current	30,000
Security Deposits	1,400
Total Other Assets	887,550
TOTAL ASSETS	5,224,971

Expenses

Programs	1,734,117
Administration	251,241
Fundraising	92,041
Total Expenses	2,077,399

Liabilities & Equity

Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	101,784
Accrued Payroll & Related	51,458
Note Payable	30,000
Capital Lease	39,322
Total Liabilities	222,564
Equity	
Without Donor Restrictions	3,017,241
With Donor Restrictions	1,985,166
Total Equity	5,002,407
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	5,224,971



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Urban Growers Collective
1200 W 35th St #118, Chicago, IL 60609

