

CLARKSTON
CITY
AGRICULTURE
PLAN



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Community Engagement Partner

MISSION

Food Well Alliance provides resources and support to local growers to connect and build healthier communities.

VISION

"Locally Grown, Community Connected."

WHY CITY AGRICULTURE PLANNING?

Food Well Alliance's vision is to bring local governments together with growers and their communities to ensure that cities incorporate local food and agriculture into their plans for development. When municipal leaders and diverse food system stakeholders plan together for inclusive policies and projects, growers can provide greater access to locally grown food across the city, leading to healthier people, environments, and communities.

The City Agriculture Plan initiative was made possible through funding from the James M. Cox Foundation.





Planning Partner

MISSION

The Atlanta Regional Commission advances the national and international standing of the region by leveraging the uniqueness of its evolving communities, anticipating and responding to current realities, and leading a data-driven planning process that provides a high quality of life, balancing social, economic, and environmental needs of all our communities.

VISION

The Atlanta Regional Commission employs shared foresight, expert staff, the ability to convene diverse communities and its reputation as a regional and national leader in order to support local governments, enhancing the lives of all our citizens by providing world-class infrastructure, building a competitive economy, and shaping a regional ecosystem comprised of healthy and livable communities.

WHY CITY AGRICULTURE PLANNING?

In its role as the regional planning agency, ARC develops and updates the Regional Development Plan, a long-range blueprint that documents the region's assets and challenges, goals, and investments needed to ensure metro Atlanta's future success and improve the region's quality of life.

As a part of this long-range plan, ARC develops a Regional Resource Plan to protect and manage metro Atlanta's natural and cultural resources. City Agriculture Planning aligns with two key policies outlined in the adopted Regional Resource Plan. Creating and protecting space for urban farms, gardens, and orchards fulfills the plan's objectives to preserve passive greenspaces as well as to preserve areas for local food production activities.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands tagging a tree branch. The person is wearing a red shirt with white patterns and the words "SOIL" and "FESTIVAL" visible. They are holding a metal tag that has "PAWPAW" engraved on it. The background is filled with large green leaves and a blurred natural setting.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The City Agriculture Plan program was launched in 2018 to address the major findings of Atlanta's Local Food Baseline Report developed by Food Well Alliance (FWA). This comprehensive review of the metro Atlanta regional food system revealed a need for growers and community members to have more meaningful participation in the development and implementation of policies and programs affecting local food and agriculture. FWA and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) partnered in 2019 to develop the region's first City Agriculture Plan for the City of East Point, Georgia. After finalizing East Point's Plan in 2021, the program expanded to the Cities of Alpharetta, Jonesboro,

and Austell. In 2024, after considering applications from cities across FWA's five-county service area, ARC and FWA selected the City of Clarkston to develop the region's fifth City Agriculture Plan.

Clarkston's plan is shaped by extensive community involvement and input from diverse stakeholders. It provides guidelines for integrating local food and agriculture into city policies, programs, and future development efforts. The Clarkston City Agriculture Plan complements existing programs and aligns with the work of local partners and organizations. It serves as a framework for collaborative actions aimed at strengthening the local food system.

What Is A City Agriculture Plan?

A City Agriculture Plan is a set of city policy and community program recommendations to strengthen a city's local food system over the next 3-5 years. A local food system refers to the place-based relationships between producers, processors, distributors, consumers, and post-consumer waste disposal of food. A thriving local food system can support healthy communities, strengthen resilient local economies, and cultivate sustainable practices.

Planning brings structure and strategy to local food system growth. The process provides an opportunity for local governments to co-create a vision and actionable goals alongside community members, growers, and other partners.

Designing a plan that connects communities and strengthens local food systems takes time, collaboration, and investment. The City Agriculture Plan initiative involves a community engagement phase led by Food Well Alliance and a planning phase led by ARC, all supported by committed city staff and enthusiastic community leaders. The plan outlines strategies for achieving community priorities including initial steps and recommended partners for implementation. A City Agriculture Plan is not meant to be just a stand-alone document, but is meant to identify ways in which local food and agriculture can be integrated into city plans and programs.

Why Clarkston?

In the fall of 2024, Food Well Alliance and ARC solicited applications to develop the next City Agriculture Plan from the 5-county metro Atlanta region. Multiple cities across the five county metro Atlanta region applied, but Clarkston's application was selected due to a number of factors:

- » Clarkston has numerous active organizations wholly or partially focused on food that have a demonstrated commitment to Clarkston's residents and local food system through previous work in the Clarkston Food Initiative.
- » Clarkston's City Agriculture Plan is an opportunity to build upon previous research and initiatives conducted by the city and local organizations to better build an integrated and responsive food system plan.
- » The diversity and uniqueness of the City of Clarkston is an opportunity to plan for a local food system in a way that is sustainable and culturally relevant for all residents.



How Can Clarkston Benefit from a City Agriculture Plan?

Clarkston can greatly benefit from the coordinated framework of a City Agriculture Plan. Despite having a strong foundation of community gardens, home growers, and food-focused nonprofits, the city's food system remains somewhat disconnected and difficult to navigate, especially for its diverse population where over 60% of residents are first-generation refugees, immigrants, or asylum seekers. A clear plan outlining community priorities can help unify efforts across municipal, nonprofit, and residential sectors to expand local food system opportunities, while addressing barriers and inequities that currently limit access to healthy, culturally relevant foods. The City Agriculture Plan builds off of the work of many

dedicated community organizations including a 2017 Clarkston Food Needs Assessment conducted by Global Growers. This assessment gathered feedback. This grant was able to fund the Clarkston Food Needs Assessment which gathered feedback from community members to better understand the food needs and preferences of the greater Clarkston community in order to guide local food access priorities and resource allocation. The City Agriculture Plan builds upon this data and knowledge to reinvigorate partnerships with active food organizations, with committed City support, to implement and address community food system needs.





CLARKSTON CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

The Clarkston City Agriculture Plan will cultivate an inclusive and affordable local food system that empowers residents and builds sustainable infrastructure by creating vibrant agricultural spaces, emphasizing shared knowledge, and fostering education.

Process

The Clarkston City Agriculture Plan includes three phases:

1. Community Engagement Phase
2. Planning Phase
3. Implementation Phase

The City Agriculture Plan was developed using a community-driven process that brings together growers, food system advocates, residents, and city officials to identify community priorities. The primary goal for this engagement was to create accessible opportunities for diverse residents to contribute their thoughts on Clarkston's local food system.

The community engagement process included community asset mapping to identify existing local food and agriculture assets, along with focus groups, a community survey, dot voting exercises, presence at community events, and stakeholder interviews to collect feedback.

To lead the planning phase, diverse stakeholders were selected to form a steering committee, facilitated by ARC and Food Well Alliance, which met monthly from May to September 2025 using community priorities to build strategies for the plan. Steering committee members represented multiple city departments, community members, garden advocates, and local non-profit organizations.

This document serves as an outcome of the first two phases and will guide the City of Clarkston in the implementation phase once the plan is adopted by the Clarkston City Council.



FOOD WELL ALLIANCE & ARC SELECT CLARKSTON

DECEMBER 2024



PHASE I: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FEBRUARY - MAY 2025



PHASE II: PLANNING

MAY - SEPTEMBER 2025



PLAN FINALIZED

OCTOBER 2025



CITY COUNCIL ADOPTION

NOVEMBER 2025



PHASE III: IMPLEMENTATION

2026 - 2027



A blurred background of a park with trees and a person, with yellow flowers in the foreground.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a core tenet of the City Agriculture Plan process and provides the basis for the priority areas and recommendations in this document. The City Agriculture Planning process incorporates an intentional community engagement phase to ensure that residents and local food leaders can help identify ways to integrate local food into their city's existing plans and programs.

This phase was led by Food Well Alliance with close collaboration and input from local food leaders and individuals from the former Clarkston Food Initiative. Organizations included the International Rescue Committee, Global Growers, Friends of Refugees, Jolly Ave Community Garden, Clarkston Library, Clarkston Business Association, and

Refuge Coffee. This phase was designed to gather input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including community garden growers, farmers, home growers, parents, teachers, city officials, individual residents, faith-based organization members, and business owners. Engagement methods such as a community survey, community-wide focus groups, individual interviews, and informal conversations at community events are used to incorporate local knowledge and priorities into the planning process.

Over 230 residents were reached through combined engagement efforts, including individual interviews, focus groups, surveys, and tabling opportunities.



Community Conversations

From March to April 2025, Food Well Alliance organized four “Community Conversations” in Clarkston, serving as focus groups to engage residents in discussions on urban agriculture and local food systems. Events were held at accessible, public venues—including the Clarkston Women’s Club, Refuge Coffee Company, and Clarkston High

School—across three weekdays and one weekend to ensure equitable participation. Outreach efforts included multiple promotional campaigns on Facebook and Instagram, networking by local businesses and stakeholders, as well as posts on the City of Clarkston’s official social media channels and Food Well Alliance’s newsletter.



The poster features a top section with a green background and a close-up of a plant. It includes the 'CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN' logo with a sun icon and the tagline 'GROWN IN CITIES 100% COMMUNITY' with a leaf icon. Below this is a teal box with 'City of Clarkston'. The main title 'COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS' is in bold. A call to action states: 'Attend a community conversation event to discuss what issues and opportunities need to be addressed in Clarkston’s City Agriculture Plan.' A callout bubble says: 'All city residents are invited to share their vision!'. The event schedule lists three events: Wednesday 3.19 at 6 PM at Clarkston Woman's Club, Wednesday 3.26 at 11 AM at Refuge Coffee Co., and Saturday 4.12 at 10 AM at Clarkston Woman's Club. A QR code and a registration link are at the bottom, along with logos for Food Well Alliance, ARC, and the City of Clarkston.

CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN
GROWN IN CITIES 100% COMMUNITY

City of Clarkston

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Attend a community conversation event to discuss what issues and opportunities need to be addressed in Clarkston’s City Agriculture Plan.

All city residents are invited to share their vision!

Wednesday **3.19** 6 PM
CLARKSTON WOMAN’S CLUB
13913 Church Street
Clarkston, GA 30021

Wednesday **3.26** 11 AM
REFUGE COFFEE CO.
4170 East Ponce de Leon Ave NE
Clarkston, GA 30021

Saturday **4.12** 10 AM
CLARKSTON WOMAN’S CLUB
13913 Church Street
Clarkston, GA 30021

Visit the link below to register or scan the QR code!
bit.ly/clarkston-community-conversations

FOODWELL ALLIANCE ARC CITY OF CLARKSTON

Community Survey

Food Well Alliance launched a general public survey in late February 2025 via SurveyMonkey in English, with additional translated versions made available in Nepali, Dari, Amharic, Swahili, Karen, and Burmese through in-person distribution only. To promote participation and accessibility, FWA hosted or tabled at four key events:

- » March 8th Clarkston International Garden Registration Day
- » April 9th and April 11th Fresh Harvest Share the Harvest Markets at Clarkston Oaks and Willow Branch Apartments

» April 10th pop-up survey event at Jolly Ave Community Garden.

QR code flyers were also posted at local restaurants, libraries, parks, and City Hall. The first 100 participants were offered a \$10 incentive, either in cash or via a digital gift card, to encourage engagement. The survey gained 134 total responses.

The survey was developed by FWA with feedback from the Project Management Team (PMT) and a dedicated group of community partners to ensure its relevance and value to Clarkston's local food system. This collaborative group, convened in January and February 2025, included leaders from organizations such as the International Rescue Committee, Global Growers, Friends of Refugees, Refuge Coffee, and Jolly Ave Community Garden. The community group assisted in reviewing the survey's content, distribution strategy, and complementary informal data collection methods. The close-ended survey questions aimed to build a foundational understanding of local food access, identifying gaps to be explored further in focus groups and Steering Committee meetings. For more information on the survey, please visit [Food Well Alliance website](#).



The flyer features a background image of green tomatoes on a vine. At the top, the text 'CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN' is displayed in large, white, sans-serif capital letters. Above 'CITY' is a small orange sunburst icon. Below the main title, the phrase 'GROWN IN CITIES' is on the left and '100% COMMUNITY' is on the right, separated by an orange leaf-like icon. A teal rectangular box contains the text 'City of Clarkston'. Below this, the words 'COMMUNITY SURVEY' are written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The main body of the flyer is orange and contains white text inviting participation. At the bottom, there is a QR code, the SurveyMonkey link, and logos for the Food Well Alliance, ARC, and the City of Clarkston.

CITY AGRICULTURE PLAN

GROWN IN CITIES 100% COMMUNITY

City of Clarkston

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Participate in the City Agriculture Plan process by sharing your experience with accessing and growing local food in Clarkston through the community survey. Tell us about your vision for the future of Clarkston's local food system!

Visit the link below to complete the survey
www.surveymonkey.com/r/RRP36FT

FOOD WELL ALLIANCE ARC CITY OF CLARKSTON

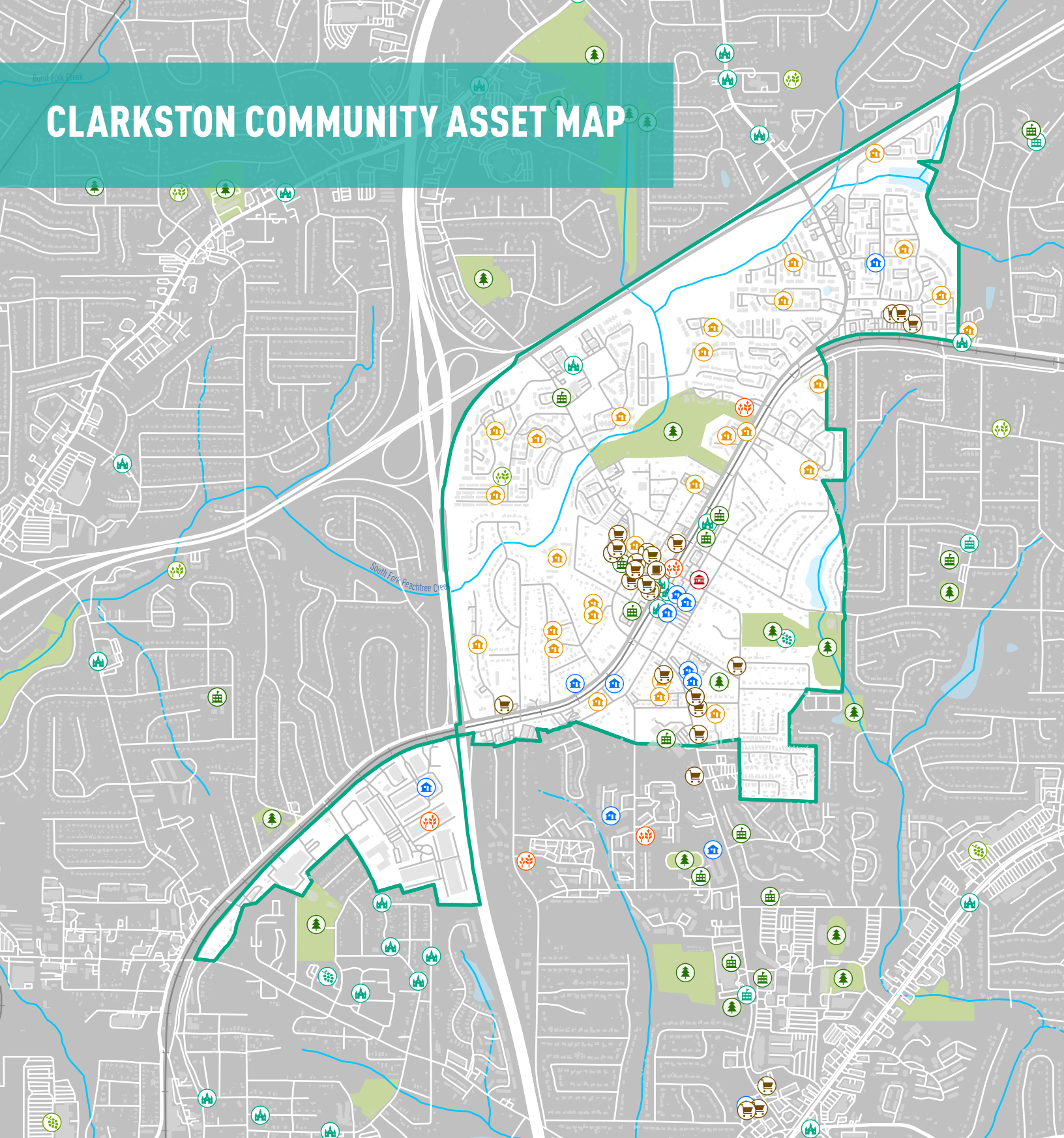
Community Asset Mapping

The Community Asset Map represents a collaborative effort between FWA and ARC, validated by the Steering Committee, to identify and map social and physical food system assets in and around the City of Clarkston. This comprehensive mapping highlights how a diverse network of local markets, community gardens, and food organizations contributes to Clarkston's vibrant local food economy and strengthens food access for residents.

An extensive list of Clarkston's assets was compiled across eight categories: local markets, food and agriculture organizations, schools and school gardens, parks and recreation, community organizations, apartment complexes, community gardens and farms, and farmers markets. Through this process, more than 50 community assets were identified within the City of Clarkston and its surrounding area. The following pages present a map of these assets, along with a categorized list that showcases the community's growing infrastructure for sustainable and equitable food systems.



CLARKSTON COMMUNITY ASSET MAP



- | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Clarkston City Hall | Community Gardens | School Garden | Parks and Recreation |
| Clarkston Local Markets | Food and Agriculture Organizations | Farms | Rivers and Streams |
| Refuge Coffee | Community Organizations | Places of Worship | Waterbodies |
| Farmers Markets | Schools | Apartment Complexes | Greenspace |



CLARKSTON COMMUNITY ASSET LIST

CLARKSTON LOCAL MARKETS

-  1 Stop Food Mart
-  A Dong Market
-  A1 Market
-  African Cultural and Injera Groceries
-  Al-Rahman Grocery
-  Awash International Grocery
-  Balagru Food Mart
-  Clarkston Food Market
-  Clarkston Thriftown Inc.
-  Dalmar Market Grocery
-  Deorali Grocery
-  Dollar General
-  Eyrus Food Mart
-  Family Dollar
-  Family Food Mart
-  Fatma Halal Meat & Groceries
-  Food Mart Beer & Wine
-  Grace Oriental Market
-  Gurung Bazaar Inc.
-  Happy Mart Food Store
-  MyaMakka Halal Meat
-  Nepali Bazar
-  Numsock Oriental Market
-  Stop N Save
-  Super Fresh Foods
-  Yeshi Food Mart
-  Refuge Coffee

FOOD & AG ORGANIZATIONS

-  Clarkston Food Initiative
-  Fresh Harvest
-  Friends of Refugees - Jolly Avenue Garden
-  Global Frontiers Mission Community Garden
-  Global Growers Network
-  Roots Down

PLACES OF WORSHIP

-  Clarkston First Baptist
-  Clarkston United Methodist Church
-  First Norman Grove Baptist Church
-  Swahili Evangelical Refugee Fellowship

SCHOOLS / SCHOOL GARDENS

-  Amazing World of Learning
-  Appletree Academy
-  Atlanta Area School for the Deaf
-  Avondale Elementary School
-  Brockett Elementary School
-  Clarkston First Baptist Academy
-  DeKalb Elementary School of the Arts
-  Dunaire Elementary School
-  Early Learning Scholars and Family Services
-  Georgia Piedmont Technical College
-  Georgia State University Perimeter
-  Heartwood Agile Learning Center
-  Indian Creek Elementary School
-  Oasis Daycare
-  Clarkston High School
-  Idlewood Elementary School
-  Jolly Elementary School

PARKS & RECREATION

-  Montreal Park
-  Needham Park
-  Forty Oaks Nature Preserve
-  Tobie Grant Recreation Center
-  Friendship Forest
-  Milam Park
-  John's Homestead
-  Lawrenceville / J. Homestead

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

-  A Reckless Faith Transitional Society Inc.
-  Amani Women's Center
-  Burmese Rohingya Community of GA
-  Clarkston Community Center
-  Clarkston Library
-  Ethiopian Community Association of GA
-  Family Heritage Foundation
-  Friends of Refugees
-  Grace Village
-  Habesha Networks
-  International Rescue Committee (IRC)
-  New American Pathways

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

-  Refugee Career Hub
-  Refugee Sewing Society
-  Tekton Career Training

APARTMENTS

-  The Ellis Apartments
-  1086 on Montreal Apartments
-  Birch Run Apartments
-  Carriage Court Apartments
-  Carriage Oaks Apartments
-  Clarkston Station Apartments
-  Clarkston Townhomes
-  English Oaks
-  FoxTrail Townhomes
-  Highland Village Apartments
-  Indian Creek
-  Parkwood Apts (1000 Smith Street)
-  Mirador at Idlewood Apts
-  The Reserve at Twin Oaks
-  Sage Pointe Apartments
-  Springdale Glen Apartment Homes
-  Wildcreek Apartments
-  Willow Creek Apartments
-  Silver Oak Apartments
-  Twin Oak Apts
-  Peachtree Creek on Ponce Apartments
-  Townes at Clarkston Centre

COMMUNITY GARDENS / FARMS

-  Clarkston International Garden
-  Jackson Garden
-  Clyde Shepherd Nature Preserve
-  Community Center Garden
-  Convivial Landscapes
-  Tobie Grant Community Garden
-  Birch Grove Apartment Garden - Global Growers
-  Northlake Church Garden - Global Growers
-  Southern Place Apartments - Global Growers
-  Steve Millers Farm
-  Springbrook
-  Forty Oaks - Global Growers

FARMERS MARKETS

-  Nam Dea Mun Farmers Market
-  Dekalb Farmers Market
-  Sprouts Farmers Market

Steering Committee

A steering committee was convened to review the key themes and details that emerged during the community engagement phase and generate innovative ideas that would respond to challenges faced by residents in accessing and growing food. The steering committee consisted of city staff, leaders from local food and agriculture organizations, and residents who met monthly at the Clarkston Women's Club for meetings facilitated by ARC. City staff from the City Manager's office, Economic Development, and Parks and Recreation contributed their expertise to discussions about feasible action items that could be outlined in the plan.





PLAN STRUCTURE

PLAN STRUCTURE

PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

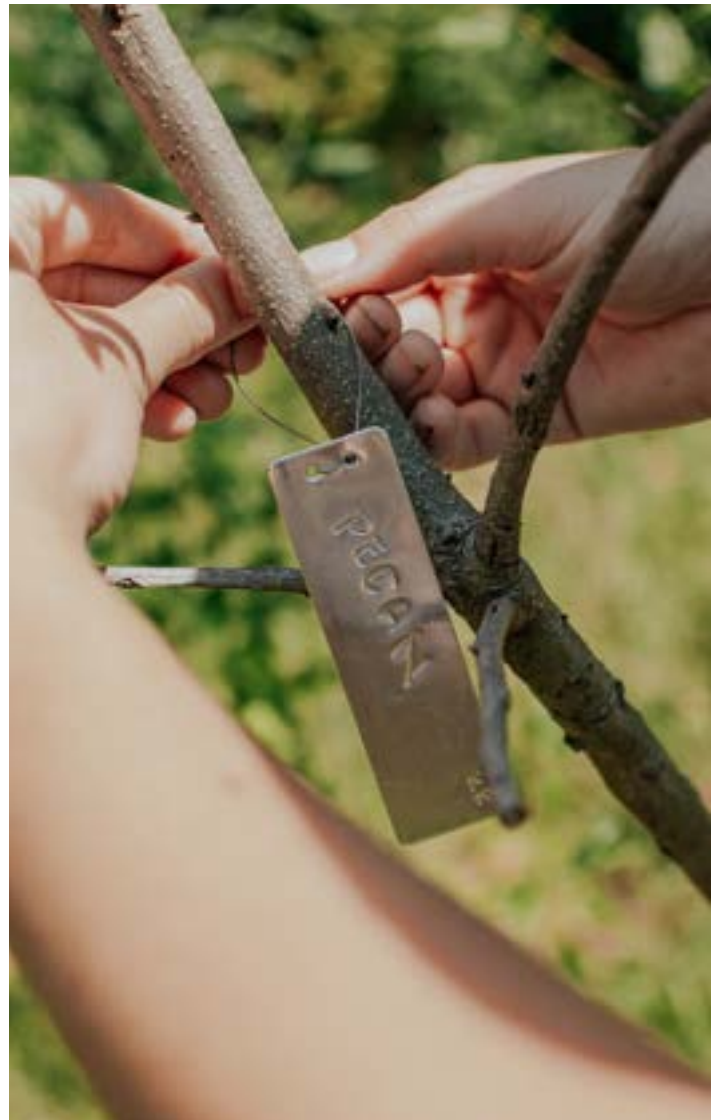
Five key themes emerged from the community engagement phase:

1. Improving Community Agriculture Infrastructure
2. Need for Supportive Zoning and Environmental Policies
3. Overcoming Cultural & Communication Barriers
4. Expanding Food Access & Economic Opportunity
5. Investing in Education & Capacity Building for Growers

These key themes were the basis for discussion at multiple steering committee meetings. Starting broadly, the steering committee members evaluated data from public outreach events and the survey, as well as their own experience in their community, to provide a range of ideas and activities that would address the needs expressed by Clarkson residents. These ideas were condensed into the plan priority areas through group discussion and interactive exercises. The four priority areas for Clarkson's City Agriculture Plan are:

- » **Priority A:** Sustainable Policies and Practices for Healthier Food Systems
- » **Priority B:** Cultivate a Resourceful Community for Growers
- » **Priority C:** Increase Access to Fresh, Local Food
- » **Priority D:** Strengthen Community Outreach and Communication

These categories are not mutually exclusive, and many recommendations address multiple priority areas. Each recommendation includes a projected time frame for implementation. Short-term items are actionable for implementation within the next one to two years following plan adoption. Long term recommendations can be pursued over the next three to five years.



Recommendations Matrix

Priority Area	Recommended Strategies		Time Frame
Priority A <i>Sustainable Policies and Practices for Healthier Food Systems</i>	A-1	Form a Local Food and Agriculture Committee to guide implementation	Short Term
	A-2	Launch a food waste reduction program at Clarkston High School	Short Term
	A-3	Reevaluate City zoning ordinances to expand market opportunities for locally grown food	Long Term
	A-4	Incorporate food and agriculture programming and infrastructure into ongoing City planning	Long Term
	A-5	Pilot a community compost program	Long Term
Priority B <i>Cultivate a Resourceful Community for Growers</i>	B-1	Launch a home and community growers network to increase connections and share resources	Short Term
	B-2	Improve water access at community gardens	Long Term
	B-3	Increase growing space at accessible locations throughout the City	Long Term
Priority C <i>Increase Access to Fresh, Local Food</i>	C-1	Increase mobile market opportunities in residential and community spaces	Short Term
	C-2	Offer educational programming on nutrition, cooking, and preserving foods	Short Term
	C-3	Manage a sustainable weekly Farmers Market	Long Term
Priority D <i>Strengthen Community Outreach and Communication</i>	D-1	Increase youth food and agriculture programming	Short Term
	D-2	Create a centralized resource sharing plan to disseminate information about food and agricultural programming and events	Short Term
	D-3	Develop and promote cultural and tourism activities that promote the unique qualities of Clarkston's local food system	Long Term
	D-4	Expand workforce development opportunities focused on local food and agriculture	Long Term

CLARKSTON IMPLEMENTATION
PARTNERS

CLARKSTON IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

A key component of a thriving local food system is engaged partnerships between the City of Clarkston and identified organizations whose missions align with plan recommendations. Partners can extend the reach of the local government by taking on the goals and objectives of the City of Clarkston that lie beyond the expertise, capabilities, or time commitment of local officials. In 2018, Clarkston formed the Clarkston Food Initiative (CFI) as a part of a USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Community Food Projects grant through Global Growers. Under the grant, Global Growers

conducted a baseline needs assessment which identified recommendations and outcomes based on consumer practices and grower experiences. Clarkston's City Agriculture Planning process reconvened active and interested members of the 2018 Clarkston Food Initiative to assist in designing community engagement, participate in planning, and ultimately implementing the new Plan.



CLARKSTON IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

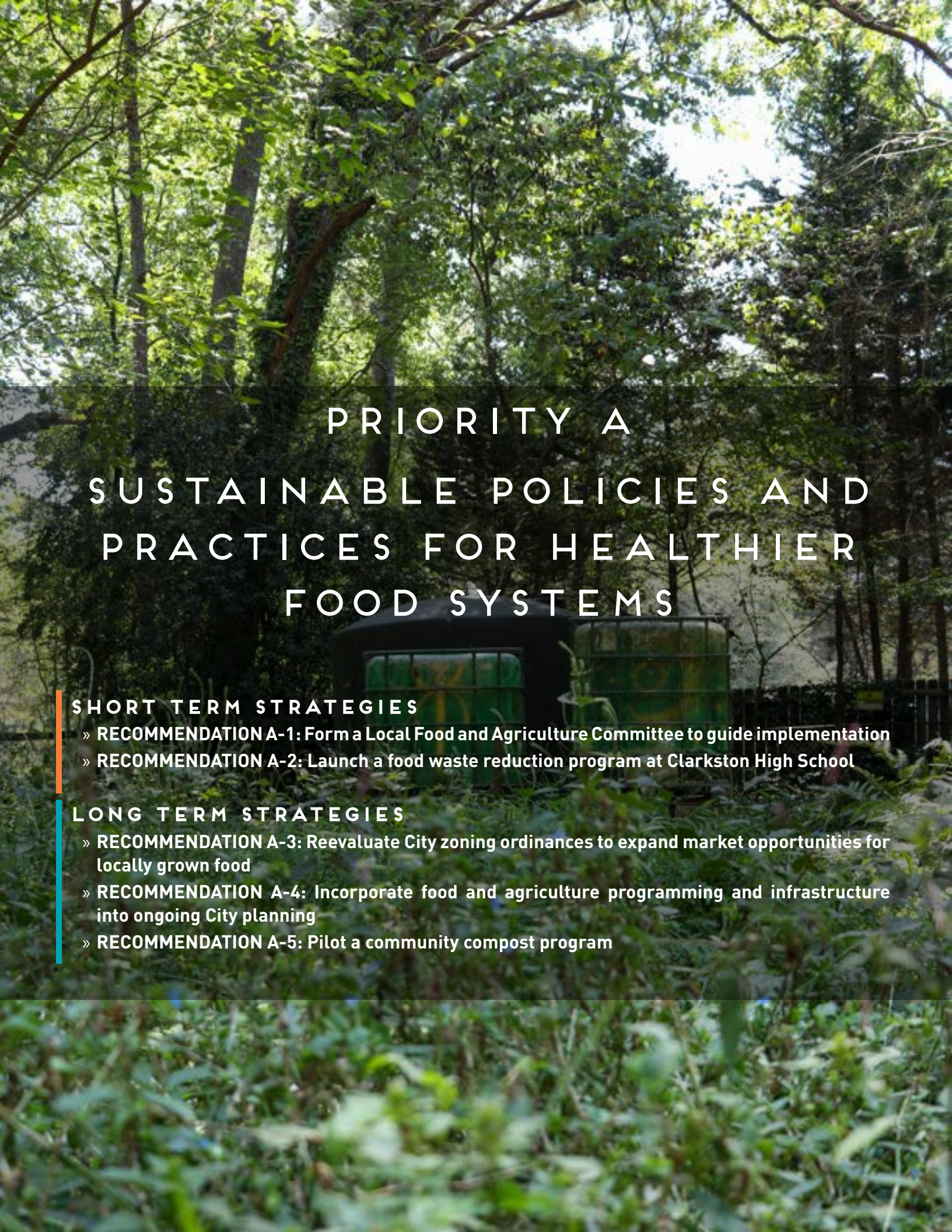
The Clarkston City Agriculture Plan identifies local partners who can help carry out the plan's recommendations. These partners have been identified through their experience in the industry, shared vision and values, access to area resident networks, and innovative programs that will better the environment for food education, access, and community participation. The City of Clarkston can support plan implementation partners by facilitating engagement with the partners identified in the City Agriculture Plan; establishing clear and consistent communication to ensure the city and partners' goals are aligned; and by continuing to

encourage their added value and contribution to the plan implementation. A regular schedule for meetings and feedback through the Local Food and Agriculture Committee will help keep programs and communications on track.

The following page shows some of the key organizations that FWA and ARC identified as potential implementation partners for strategies within this Plan. Suggestions for lead and support partners are included in each strategic recommendation.



Organization	Mission & Key Local Food System Work
Clarkston Community Center	The Clarkston Community Center is a vibrant hub of diversity, collaboration, and growth. Located in one of Georgia's most culturally rich communities, the organization is dedicated to offering valuable services, empowering educational opportunities, and engaging events that support individuals and families.
Clarkston Library	The Clarkston Library is a branch of DeKalb County Public Libraries. Clarkston Library enlightens and enriches the Clarkston community by providing responsive, dynamic services that meet the changing informational, educational, and recreational needs of a diverse population.
Decide DeKalb Development Authority	Decide DeKalb serves as the primary economic development driving force to attract, expand and retain businesses in DeKalb County, Georgia. Their mission is to nourish communities through opportunities and partnerships that foster growth, equity, and innovation.
Fresh Harvest / Share the Harvest	Fresh Harvest is a local food community focused on empowering local farmers through sustainable partnerships, alleviating food waste, reducing packaging and fuel usage for food distribution, expanding career opportunities for new Americans.
Friends of Refugees / Jolly Ave. Community Garden	Friends of Refugees is a faith-based nonprofit helping refugees build new lives in America, providing support in language, health, food, and employment. They provide resources to help refugees build abundant new lives in America.
Georgia Piedmont Technical College	Georgia Piedmont Technical College transforms lives through workforce development. This transformation is driven by high-quality certificate, diploma, and associate degrees; skills training, continuing education, and literacy services; and access to high-demand careers that increase economic mobility.
Global Growers	Global Growers is a network of 200 farmers and local food systems leaders in Georgia who grow fresh food from many agricultural traditions. The organization works to grow fresh food for families and to supply the local markets, all by working together to strengthen the local food economy.
International Rescue Committee - New Roots	The International Rescue Committee's New Roots program helps refugees become food secure and contribute to their new homes and communities. Since 2008, New Roots has helped new Americans to navigate their food resources, facilitated low-income families to enter urban agriculture, developed local food systems and community green space infrastructure, and provided a platform for youth and adults to build job and life skills.
Refuge Coffee	Refuge Coffee is a local community hub and coffee shop that provides community resources. Refuge coffee believes in using a delicious cup of coffee as a platform for job training and personal development of resettled refugees and other immigrants.



PRIORITY A SUSTAINABLE POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR HEALTHIER FOOD SYSTEMS

SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION A-1: Form a Local Food and Agriculture Committee to guide implementation
- » RECOMMENDATION A-2: Launch a food waste reduction program at Clarkston High School

LONG TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION A-3: Reevaluate City zoning ordinances to expand market opportunities for locally grown food
- » RECOMMENDATION A-4: Incorporate food and agriculture programming and infrastructure into ongoing City planning
- » RECOMMENDATION A-5: Pilot a community compost program

RECOMMENDATION A-1:

Form a Local Food and Agriculture Committee to guide implementation

Cultivating and acting upon policies and practices within Clarkston's food system requires strategic collaboration between city officials, growers, community organizations, residents, and other community members. Convening a dedicated multi-stakeholder group will achieve long-term sustainability in Clarkston's City Agriculture Plan implementation while continuing to center community input. Dubbed the "Local Food and Agriculture Committee," this initiative has had proven success in other cities within the Atlanta Metropolitan region. A dedicated group of individuals will be able to guide the Plan's implementation and take ownership of specific initiatives identified by both the Steering Committee and the wider Clarkston community.

In Clarkston, this group will be responsible for:

- » Allocating, approving, and finalizing grant funds to identified implementation partners.
- » Driving implementation projects to be achieved within the two-year grant timeline
- » Provide informal feedback to the proposed integration of food & agriculture initiatives into existing and ongoing planning and developments around the city.
- » Coordinating city and local partner communications and collaborations to promote and amplify local food & agriculture resources and events
- » Ensuring long-term support of local food and agriculture organizations and city-led initiatives through identifying sustainable funding sources and policy development.

Clarkston's Local Food & Agriculture committee should comprise 6-8 members. Prospective members will be asked to apply by submitting their involvement in the local food system and rationale for being a part of the committee. This group does not need to be an official city committee, however City representation and involvement will be crucial to maintain transparency and communication throughout the implementation phase. Members of the group may be eligible to receive a stipend of about \$50 per meeting for their involvement. Once formed, the group will meet bi-monthly to address goals, challenges, and ensure sustainable progress on the Plan.



POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » Clarkston Steering Committee
- » City of Clarkston

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Identify and contact potential stakeholder groups and community partners that need representation on the community including city officials, education partners, business partners, garden leaders, and residents.
- » Confirm a quorum of committee members and set a regular meeting schedule including booking a space for in-person meetings or setting virtual meeting.
- » Align on and elect leadership roles to provide structure around meeting agendas, note keeping, promotion, and partner outreach.



RECOMMENDATION A-2:

Launch a food waste reduction program at Clarkston High School

During the community engagement phase, Food Well Alliance held a targeted focus group with students at Clarkston High School. Since the Clarkston community has a large number of home growers, critical feedback from diverse age groups was crucial in understanding the diverse needs of the community from a generational perspective.

Clarkston High School currently participates in the International Rescue Committee (IRC) New Roots Youth Food Justice program. The program seeks to engage students as leaders to address food related issues in their community. The program uses a strengths-based approach to be culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, service-oriented, and focused on skill building. Students in the program participate in the cultivation and care of the school garden. Many of the students in the program expressed dissatisfaction with the level of

food waste at the school and quality of food in the cafeteria. To address this, Clarkston High School should consider launching a food waste reduction program to minimize food waste and build upon the curriculum of the New Roots programming.

A potential program that could be integrated into Clarkston High School is Compost Connectors. Compost Connectors is an innovative grant funded program by Food Well Alliance that provides students K-12, the opportunity to learn about composting practices. This is with the goal to use compost as the connector to engage students and teachers in urban agriculture. The general structure is that a site leader guides students in collecting and composting food scraps typically through clubs, lesson plans, or year-long Project-Based Learning.



The Compost Connectors program is well situated to address the food waste at the high school, as well as connect students who are not formally involved with the New Roots program to the local food system and urban agriculture movement. Clarkston High School leadership should collaborate with staff to identify interest and capacity leading the program at the school.

Alternatively, Clarkston High School could participate in an internal food waste audit. A food waste audit identifies the quantity and types of waste to better plan for waste management systems. The food waste audit could be designed, conducted, and led by students already participating in the New Roots program. From there, students could present recommendations for waste reduction via composting or share table programs. Students involved in this initiative could prepare materials and next steps to replicate food waste management in Freedom Middle School, Jolly Avenue Elementary, and Indian Creek Elementary School.



POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » Clarkston High School
- » IRC New Roots

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » Food Well Alliance
- » Freedom Middle School
- » Indian Creek Elementary

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Convene school leadership and IRC New Roots to meet with Food Well Alliance to discuss feasibility and capacity to manage an external program.
- » Explore considerations for on-site composting, including management, type of composting, and uses for finished compost.
- » Form a student leadership team to manage and implement a food waste audit using best practices from US Environmental Protection Agency's Guide to Conducting Student Food Waste Audits.
- » Conduct outreach to Freedom Middle School, Jolly Avenue Elementary, & Indian Creek Elementary leadership to coordinate a food waste reduction pipeline within the school system

RECOMMENDATION A-3:

Reevaluate City zoning ordinances to expand market opportunities for locally grown food

By developing a City Agriculture Plan, the City has demonstrated their commitment to expanding opportunities for residents to access and grow local food. This progressive vision for a resilient and sustainable community can be further formalized with a review of the City's zoning ordinances to encourage amended language that is supportive of local food and agriculture activity.

Including definitions of common food and agriculture terms within the code of ordinances can add structure and shared understanding to how these practices are regulated. Such terms could include, but would not be limited to: "apiary," "community garden," "farm stand," "farmers market," "market garden," and "urban farm." In addition, activity allowed in front and side yards, accessory structures used in connection with gardening, composting, and points of sale

for local food products should be evaluated to support growers while balancing other community concerns such as nuisance.

Innovative programming that promotes economic activity and is often grounded in City ordinance allowances. One example from neighboring City of Decatur is their Mobile Food Facility (aka food cart) permitting program for non-motorized, non-self propelled vehicles commercially designed to handle food preparation and service. Permitting these food carts creates opportunities to support local businesses in ways that do not require significant start-up costs. The City of Clarkston, with limited commercial real estate space available, should consider allowances for programs such as this to create a pipeline for local food entrepreneurs, encourage creative use of public spaces, and expand food options for residents and tourists.



RECOMMENDATION A-4:

Incorporate food and agriculture programming and infrastructure into ongoing City planning

Many recommendations within this City Agriculture Plan align with the broader vision and ongoing work of the City of Clarkston. To best implement this plan, the City should continue to focus on integration of local food and agriculture programming and infrastructure into current and future city initiatives.

The latest 2021 update of the Clarkston Comprehensive Plan outlines a community vision with top priorities that mirror the City Agriculture Plan vision statement including:

- » Creating community programming centered on family, children, and refugee needs and making community engagement more accessible to underserved groups
- » Protecting local green spaces and ecosystems

Many of the identified opportunities for growth and community investment that can be advanced through the City Agriculture Plan recommendations including:

- » Promoting entrepreneurship and tourism opportunities by celebrating the diversity of food traditions
- » Expanding programming in existing Lake and Milam Park and Friendship Forest
- » Community nature and education programs focused on ecosystems and conservation
- » Promote more pop-ups, food trucks, and mobile market opportunities

Other ongoing planning initiatives at the City include the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the Stone Mountain PATH plan, and the Clarkston Greenway project plan. All of these present opportunities to promote growing opportunities in passive green space and integrate food and agriculture

programming into other planned community uses. The City should consult the map of current and potential growing spaces populated by residents and the Steering Committee when considering an expansion of community gardens, orchards, and other edible plantings.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston



RECOMMENDATION A-5:

Pilot a community compost program

Currently, the City of Clarkston does not have community gardens with active composting operations. During community engagement, residents referenced small-scale composting efforts based on word of mouth or based out of homes, but for the wider community these methods of composting are not accessible or at the scale of the community. Despite the limited access to composting, 42.5% of survey respondents indicated that community composting was a needed program within the city. Additionally, Clarkston's most recent comprehensive plan prioritizes a reduction in the city's overall carbon footprint. To address this, the City of Clarkston can pilot a community composting program that increases access to drop-off sites, composting bins, and finished compost for gardens.

The City can partner with organizations like Friends of Refugees or Global Growers, who already have active community garden spaces, to host compost drop-off totes or active systems. Global Grower's Clarkston International Garden currently has a standing 3-bin composting system that may be utilized as a composting site for properly separated food scraps. Additionally, the City of Clarkston, or a garden partner, could collaborate with active composting organizations like CompostNow or Compost Cowboys to pilot a wider composting operation. The city can host 35 gallon totes at multiple locations within city limits. Toters would be locked with combinations only available to individuals who enroll in the program and are aligned with the perimeters of the process.

Piloting a community composting program can be tailored to the needs of the City of Clarkston and run internally, be outsourced and managed by an external partner. The City can host conversations with identified partners to identify the best course of action for implementing this programming.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » Friends of Refugees
- » Global Growers
- » Compost Cowboys
- » CompostNow



A photograph of a community garden with raised beds, a blue canopy, and people. The image is used as a background for the text.

PRIORITY B CULTIVATE A RESOURCEFUL COMMUNITY FOR GROWERS

SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION B-1: Launch a home and community growers network to increase connections and share resources

LONG TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION B-2: Improve water access at community gardens
- » RECOMMENDATION B-3: Increase growing space at accessible locations throughout the City

RECOMMENDATION B-1:

Launch a home and community growers network to increase connections and share resources

A repeated theme from the community engagement phase was that residents wanted more opportunities to connect with other community and home growers in the city to share knowledge and resources. 30% of survey respondents ranked this networking as a top priority. A home growers network provides an opportunity for new and existing growers to build community around local agriculture. By creating forums to share knowledge and resources, growers can feel empowered and supported as they grow food at home or at community garden locations. This network can be both a physical and a virtual space for collaboration.

Seasonal gatherings centered around distributing plant starts at the beginning of the spring and fall seasons and sharing harvests at the end of each season would create organic opportunities for networking. Jolly Avenue Community Garden, managed by Friends of Refugees, can serve as a physical hub to host gatherings and house seedlings and tools. In addition to social and educational opportunities garden locations, the network could also have a presence at the planned Clarkston farmers market and potentially partner with Share the Harvest mobile markets. The City could support this network by waving booth fees, allowing home growers a free dedicated space to distribute or sell their excess produce through the season. This would create additional outlets for fresh, hyper-local produce at the markets, allow growers to earn income from their excess harvest, and encourage community conversation around home growing.

The network could also have a physical resource and information hub at the Clarkston Library. Planned regular programming at the Clarkston Library including cookbook clubs and spice of the month

cooking demonstrations are in natural alignment with this network. Members could also create an online community that mirrors and supports the in-person knowledge sharing, making these resources available to a wider audience. This could be tied to the dedicated page on the City's website or established social media groups that could be moderated by garden leaders.

52% of community survey respondents also prioritized increased educational opportunities. Offering mini-workshops and training on topics such as container growing, vermicomposting, and getting community or home gardens market ready would be an ideal way to integrate skill building and knowledge sharing into established network gatherings.



POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » Local Food and Agriculture Committee

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston
- » Clarkston Library
- » Global Growers
- » Fresh Harvest / Share the Harvest
- » Friends of Refugees

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Convene a partnership team to organize and assist in marketing an inaugural event.
- » Create calendar of seasonal gatherings for home and community growers with resource distribution and workshops.
- » Establish physical hubs for information at Library and Jolly Ave. Garden. Maintain sustainable partnerships and updating schedule as needed.
- » Establish a digital communication network such as a Google Group for easy promotion and member communication.
- » Create a plan for establishing a tool lending and seed library.



RECOMMENDATION B-2:

Improve water access at community gardens

During the community engagement phase, focus group discussions frequently touched on residents' desire to increase accessibility of growing space in the city. In addition to identifying new growing spaces, this also encompassed the need to ensure current gardens were as functional as possible. Insufficient water access at certain existing gardens, such as the Clarkston International Garden at the Forty Oaks Nature Preserve, presents a barrier to success. The City should explore the option to install a permanent water source with an irrigation meter from DeKalb County Watershed Management. In the meantime, the City should consider collaborating with Global Growers and

other local partners to install a water reclamation system such as rain barrels or a more permanent cistern. Reliable and easy water access should be a key consideration for any new garden sites for development as identified on the land use asset map.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston
- » Global Growers



RECOMMENDATION B-3:

Increase growing space at accessible locations throughout the City

The incorporated City of Clarkston only has 1.84 square miles of land area. Due to the limited space available within city limits, growers in the community have gotten creative with their growing practices. With only two community garden spaces, home gardens and container gardens are highly popular, particularly among new American residents. Despite the creativity displayed by residents, there is a high demand for increased growing space within the city. During the community engagement phase, 37% of survey takers ranked increased growing space in their top three assets they wished to see expanded in their city. Dedicated residents have also taken the initiative to propose additional spaces, both city and county-owned, that could be dedicated growing spaces that are accessible within the city.

Clarkston currently hosts a variety of passive park and pocket park spaces that are well-positioned to serve as new growing spaces. Potential parcels of land to be allocated to growing space are indicated on the map. There is also the potential for the City to purchase privately owned land or to partner with local organizations to secure land in alignment with community need. For example, purchasing a vacant or underutilized lot, or partnering to secure growing space within the city could provide expanded space for community gardens without encroaching on land dedicated to parks or wildlife sanctuaries within the city.

In fall 2025, the City of Clarkston began the process of updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The Clarkston Steering Committee can provide input on which park spaces they would like to see incorporated into the plan as potential agriculture or growing areas. The planners and the city can partner with the Steering Committee or the Local Food & Agriculture Committee to provide feedback on potential spaces, including location, size, and total number of parcels identified and understand

how these might be best activated in alignment with the City Agriculture Plan.

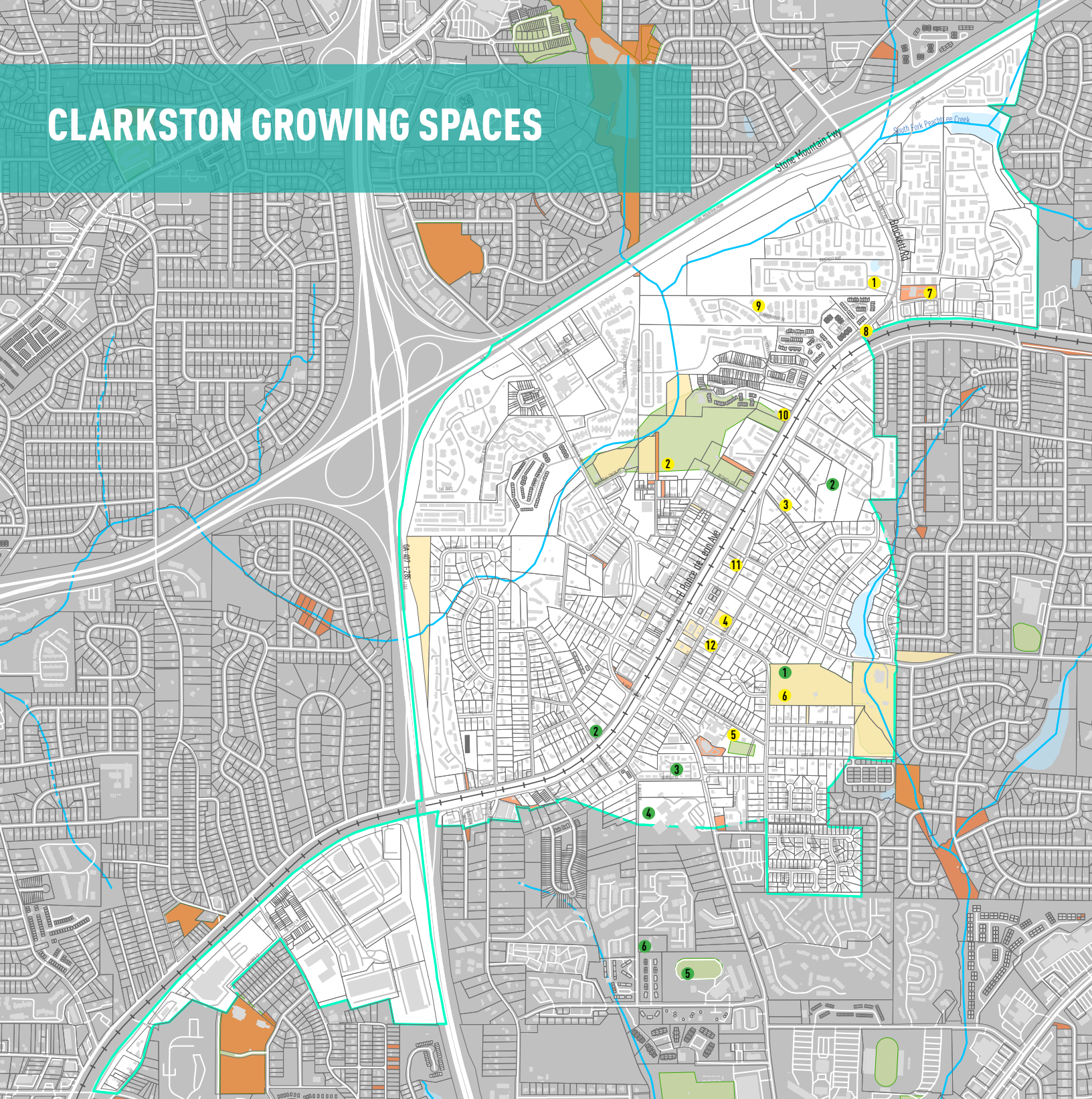
When identifying potential areas to dedicate to growing space, it's important to consider possible land stewards or managers. New garden spaces can be managed by existing organizations within the city, the city itself, or individual residents. The designated individual or organization would be responsible for registering growers, supervising construction or separation of plots, and coordinating general maintenance and upkeep. Dedicated residents have expressed interest in managing the start-up of new growing spaces and assisting with outreach to promote these opportunities.

During focus groups, participants emphasized the importance of ensuring that new growing spaces reflect the diversity of Clarkston. These spaces should be available to all interested growers. Some marketing or promotional materials may need to be translated to fairly reach all residents. The garden steward can work with the City of Clarkston's communications department to source translators for any relevant materials created to promote the new growing spaces.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston
- » Clarkston Steering Committee
- » Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee
- » Perez Planning & Design
- » AtkinsRéalis

CLARKSTON GROWING SPACES



Potential Growing Spaces

1. Brockett Rd Park
2. Friendship Forest - Space on the South
3. Property for Sale - 4071 Church St
4. Green Space - Old City Hall Annex
5. Space behind the Community Center
6. Forty Oak Nature Preserve
7. Fire Department Potential Garden
8. Potential Garden
9. Summerwood Dr Apartments
10. Global Acres Farm
11. Potential Garden
12. Market Site - Potential Garden

Existing Growing Spaces

1. Forty Oak Nature Preserve
2. Clarkston Oaks - Unofficial
3. Existing Growing Area
4. Atlanta Area School for Deaf
5. Jolly Avenue Garden
6. Indian Creek Elementary School

- City-Owned Land
- County-Owned Land
- Green Space





PRIORITY C

INCREASE ACCESS TO FRESH, LOCAL FOOD

SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION C-1: Increase mobile market opportunities in residential and community spaces
- » RECOMMENDATION C-2: Offer educational programming on nutrition, cooking, and preserving foods

LONG TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION C-3: Manage a sustainable weekly Farmers Market



RECOMMENDATION C-1:

Increase mobile market opportunities in residential and community spaces

49% of Community Survey respondents wanted increased mobile market options at residential locations around the city. Markets offering subsidized groceries that are geographically dispersed around the city would help remove economic and transportation barriers to food access.

Share the Harvest is a non-profit born out of Fresh Harvest's mission to connect communities through food. Every week, they host three neighborhood markets at apartment complexes that provide organic produce to over 100 refugee families in Clarkston that lack access to fresh, local food.

These markets are hosted at the same locations and times each week to offer consistent access to produce, especially for families that lack reliable transportation. In 2023 alone, Share the Harvest distributed over \$145,000 worth of organic produce and other groceries to Clarkston residents. Goods are sold at about 50% of their market value, with small grants and donations making up the balance. Share the Harvest is working on securing approval to accept EBT at market sites and could also partner with Wholesome Wave Georgia to administer their Fresh for Less program that matches EBT dollars spent to increase shoppers' purchasing power.



Currently about 70% of patrons at each market come from the host apartment complex, with 30% travelling to reach the market. Share the Harvest is looking to expand locations for their weekly markets to identify other areas of interest and low food access within Clarkston. Potential expansion sites include English Oaks Apartments, Parc 1000 Apartments, and other locations on Brockett Road.

These hyper local markets offer a centralized location for other community services such as public health screenings and workshops on preparing and preserving food. These markets not only offer expanded food distribution, they provide an opportunity to track their success and program reach as well. They can also serve as hubs for the proposed home growers network within Clarkston, hosting opportunities for connection and distribution of resources such as seedlings and tools. The markets require staff support on a weekly basis and are also an opportunity to connect with youth interns from organizations such as IRC New Roots and Friends of Refugees for opportunities to build skills around community engagement, sales and marketing, and program facilitation.

POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » Fresh Harvest / Share the Harvest

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » IRC New Roots
- » Friends of Refugees
- » Wholesome Wave Georgia

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Identify available funds for expansion of subsidized markets under Share the Harvest
- » Identify priority expansion locations at additional apartment complexes geographically dispersed throughout the city
- » Establish evaluation framework for program success and data tracking to drive future expansion and inform additional funding opportunities
- » Incorporate public health and education partners on a regular basis to expand resources available at markets
- » Secure approval to process EBT benefits at Share the Harvest markets and partner with Wholesome Wave Georgia to match EBT dollars spent



RECOMMENDATION C-2:

Offer educational programming on nutrition, cooking, and preserving foods

An equitable, sustainable, and thriving food system requires strong partnerships and holistic approaches to food access, production, preparation, and consumption. To accomplish the vision of an inclusive and affordable food system, the City of Clarkston can build upon existing programming and leverage new partnerships with local organizations to focus on culturally responsive, accessible, and affordable nutrition and cooking programming.

The Clarkston Library currently hosts a “Spice of the Month” program through the Dekalb Library Foundation. Each month, the library provides a kit that contains a new spice or spice blend, its history, and cookbooks or sample recipes that

utilize the spice. This program can be bolstered by partnering with local restaurants or chefs who can host cooking demonstrations utilizing the spice. Additionally, “Spice of the Month” spices could be featured in recipes, and participants may be given fresh ingredients to complete recipes on their own. Fresh Harvest and Share the Harvest markets could host on-site cooking demonstrations in partnership with the Library. Participants could pay a low fee to receive a bag of ingredients to remake the demonstrated dish at home. By sourcing local chefs, the programming can ensure it remains culturally responsive to the needs of Clarkston residents and inclusive to the wider community.



Cooking demonstrations at the Share the Harvest mobile markets could be scheduled on a quarterly basis, with 4 total demonstrations per year focusing on seasonal ingredients. Clarkston Library staff can assist in facilitating and sourcing leaders for cooking demonstrations and bolstering programming outside of the mobile markets. Share the Harvest can increase programming at its markets by including programming on nutrition, portion control, and healthy eating.

The City of Clarkston can pursue partnerships with commercial kitchen spaces around the city to host classes on preserving and cooking foods. Multiple organizations and institutions based in Clarkston currently host cooking and nutrition programming and have access to commercial kitchen spaces. Send Relief has a modern commercial kitchen space well situated for classes or demonstrations. Additionally, Georgia Piedmont Technical College (GPTC) currently has multiple programs in nutrition and healthy food. The Local Food & Agriculture Committee can assist the city in facilitating partnerships with GPTC and commercial kitchen spaces to source educators for a series of cooking classes or additional demonstrations.

POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » Clarkston Library
- » Fresh Harvest

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » Friends of Refugees
- » City of Clarkston
- » Send Relief
- » Georgia Piedmont Technical College

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Clarkston's Local Food & Agriculture Committee can facilitate connections between Clarkston Library and Share the Harvest.
- » Align on a programming schedule for mobile markets and pilot a series of four cooking demonstrations with the Spice of the Month club for the first year.
- » Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee can explore outreach and partnership agreements with commercial kitchen spaces and Georgia Piedmont Technical College to expand programming.



RECOMMENDATION C-3:

Manage a sustainable weekly Farmers Market

61% of community survey respondents prioritized a weekly, open-air farmers market as a key solution to increasing fresh food access in Clarkston. The market could also serve as a hub for the home growers network and an opportunity for sale of excess produce from home and community gardeners.

Clarkston has several pop-up markets that include local produce in addition to crafts and other small business products each year. These are hosted by various organizations including Refuge Coffee's Spring and Holiday markets. In September of 2025, the City of Clarkston is partnering with Event HelperZ to launch the inaugural Clarkston Farmers Market. The market will feature 20–40 vendors offering fresh produce, artisan foods, handmade goods, and wellness-focused products. This market opportunity intends to support small business development and encourage healthy lifestyles. In addition to vendors, it will also include community resource booths, nutrition education, and local nonprofit partners committed to creating a healthier, more connected Clarkston. The market will be held monthly on Saturday mornings at the Clarkston Woman's Club.

The City should focus on gathering data around vendor participation and community attendance and engagement at the inaugural and first several markets through brief surveys. This data would drive decisions on whether to increase the frequency of the market, modify date/time offering of the market, expand certain vendor categories, and independently manage vendor curation and event logistics. Once a regular market has been established, the City should also prioritize accepting SNAP/EBT and eventually partnering with Wholesome Wave Georgia's Fresh for Less program to match EBT dollars spent at the market to increase community purchasing power for produce and seedlings.



POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston
- » Event HelperZ
- » Fresh Harvest
- » Wholesome Wave Georgia



PRIORITY D

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

SHORT TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION D-1: Increase youth food and agriculture programming
- » RECOMMENDATION D-2: Create a centralized resource sharing plan to disseminate information about food and agricultural programming and events

LONG TERM STRATEGIES

- » RECOMMENDATION D-3: Develop and promote cultural and tourism activities that promote the unique qualities of Clarkston's local food system
- » RECOMMENDATION D-4: Expand workforce development opportunities focused on local food and agriculture

RECOMMENDATION D-1:

Increase youth food and agriculture programming

Clarkston is a younger city with a median age of 27, and around half the population is under 18 years of age. Census data attributes this to the city being a popular destination for resettlement and new Americans. During community engagement, youth were often present at surveying events, either accompanied by their parents or attending with peers. As a response to the demographics of the City, Food Well Alliance hosted a targeted focus group at Clarkston High School with students who are a part of the New Roots program. The program allows students to serve as leaders to address food-related issues in their community.

The existing programming at Clarkston High School offers a strong opportunity to expand youth-focused garden, nutrition, and agriculture activities. With school leadership already supportive of bringing the garden into classrooms, New Roots can build on this momentum by assessing the feasibility and timeline for replacing aging garden beds, purchasing new tools for student use, and incorporating accessible or standing beds to increase participation. If the school pursues Recommendation A-2, launching a food waste reduction program, New Roots can also explore installing an enclosed composting system to support both classroom learning and hands-on waste reduction.

The New Roots Youth Food Justice program is already open to all youth in Clarkston, not just those enrolled at the high school. To broaden reach, New Roots can strengthen partnerships with Freedom Middle School, Friends of Refugees, and Global Growers to recruit students and market the program across the community. Expanding the program could include additional workshops, lessons, and nutrition education, as well as

internships and entrepreneurial opportunities that connect youth to agriculture and food careers.

Friends of Refugees in particular presents a strong partner opportunity. They currently host a year-round middle school program (after school twice per week and evenings once per week) that emphasizes long-term, project-based work. This year, the program is focusing on neighborhood violence reduction and peacemaking through the garden space, which is especially relevant given frequent violence and vandalism activity in the neighborhood and within the garden itself. Friends of Refugees also employs four paid high school interns (~10 hours/week) who support both garden and operations work. While this program once functioned as a pipeline into the Growing Leaders program, that connection has weakened and could be revitalized through stronger integration with New Roots' internship opportunities. Aligning these programs would create a clearer pathway for students from middle school through high school, with opportunities to grow into leadership and paid work experiences.



One specific opportunity is to partner with the Share the Harvest Market to launch a seedling pipeline program. Youth enrolled in the New Roots program could grow seedlings at Clarkston High School and sell them at Share the Harvest markets in the spring and fall. Students participating in this effort would earn a stipend, providing a mini-agrobusiness internship experience. To support the program, New Roots can explore funding for seed-starting infrastructure if it is not already available at the school, with Food Well Alliance positioned to provide grant writing support to secure these resources.

Additionally, Clarkston High School can partner with Decide Dekalb Development Authority, the leading economic development authority in the county, to introduce new career-focused programming. Currently, Decide Dekalb has a program that connects partners from diverse STEM career pathways to expose students to new career options. Decide Dekalb can connect Clarkston High School to Georgia Piedmont Technical College, which has nutrition and culinary certifications and programming. GPTC can partner with Decide Dekalb and Clarkston High School to discuss the feasibility of introducing nutrition education/culinary arts programming into the high school curriculum. Alternatively, in conjunction with Recommendation C-2, cooking & nutrition classes hosted in the city can be open to older students aged 16 and up to promote exposure to new concepts and careers.

POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » IRC New Roots
- » Clarkston High School
- » Fresh Harvest / Share the Harvest

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » Friends of Refugees
- » Decide DeKalb Development Authority

KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Convene, strengthen and expand partnerships with Freedom Middle School, Friends of Refugees, and Global Growers to recruit students and expand outreach for the New Roots program.
- » Initiate conversations with Decide Dekalb and GPTC to explore opportunities for nutrition, culinary, and food systems education within the high school curriculum or through city-based programs for older youth.
- » Map opportunities for additional workshops, nutrition education, internships, and entrepreneurial training



RECOMMENDATION D-2:

Create a centralized resource sharing plan to disseminate information about food and agricultural programming and events

Residents and community members reported that it was difficult to find out about new events or programming, or that they found out about them too late and were not able to participate. To prevent this, the city can dedicate a page on the city website to a calendar of food & agriculture-related events. 36.6% of survey respondents reported getting their information through online resources, while another 28.4% of participants reported getting information from local business bulletins or in-person flyers. The calendar can be updated quarterly by the Local Food & Agriculture Committee. The calendar can also be printed and distributed to central locations around the city, including the Clarkston Library, Clarkston Community Center, and Refuge Coffee. The city can work with the Downtown Business Association to source other locations to host flyers.

With over 60 different languages spoken in the city and differing literacy levels, community engagement feedback highlighted the need for centralized and accessible communication for all community members. 50.7% of survey respondents reported getting their information primarily through word of mouth. Engaging community members as ambassadors for City Agriculture Plan programming will also be key. Information hosted on the central website can also be distributed at outreach activities including mobile markets, the Farmers Market, and other events.



KEY INITIAL STEPS

- » Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee can compile a list of upcoming food and agriculture-related events in and around the city.
- » The compiled list can be shared with the City of Clarkston communications department to be uploaded to the city website.
- » The compiled list can be formatted into a flyer to be printed by city staff and distributed to prominent businesses in the community quarterly.

POTENTIAL LEAD PARTNERS

- » City of Clarkston
- » Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee

POTENTIAL SUPPORT PARTNERS

- » Refuge Coffee, Clarkston Library
- » Clarkston Community Center
- » Downtown Business Association

RECOMMENDATION D-3:

Develop and promote cultural and tourism activities that promote the unique qualities of Clarkston's local food system

Clarkston's cultural and culinary diversity is a unique asset held by the community. Leveraging this diversity into an external attraction can increase travel to Clarkston while highlighting the unique qualities of the community. The City of Clarkston can partner with ongoing festivals like Refuge Coffee's semi-annual markets and the new Clarkston Maker's Market to strengthen festival offerings, increase turnout, and assist in marketing efforts. Yearly or bi-yearly events can bring together collaborative partners across the food system, including growers, restaurateurs, food processors, composters, youth groups, health and wellness organizations, and more. The event can be hosted at Send Relief's green space, Refuge Coffee, or city-owned land such as the old City Hall annex. All three locations are accessible, central, and visible. The event can serve as a showcase for local food and recipes from prominent cultural groups, offer agriculture education workshops, host a mini-farmers market, and offer an open house/tabling area for local organizations. The Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee can facilitate partnership coordination and scheduling events with city input.

Additionally, smaller scale programming can be developed through partnerships with non-profit and community organizations. Developing culturally relevant and focused activities is well situated to form longer-term partnerships between Clarkston Library and local organizations. The Library can explore the feasibility of launching a "Clarkston Food System Passport" program. This would be structured similar to a scavenger hunt. Participants who visit or participate in different aspects of the food system (e.g. attend an event, visit or volunteer at a community garden, purchase produce from a local vendor) are eligible for a prize upon completion. Friends of Refugees can provide demonstration garden space as one of the destinations on the "passport" and launch a "New American Trail" which highlights the diversity of the Clarkston Community. This program could work to engage youth and families interested in learning about the local food system.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » Refuge Coffee
- » Edwin Jarvis
- » Send Relief
- » City of Clarkston
- » Clarkston Library
- » Clarkston Local Food & Agriculture Committee
- » Friends of Refugees



RECOMMENDATION D-4:

Expand workforce development opportunities focused on local food and agriculture

Expanding food and agricultural programming and infrastructure includes supporting opportunities for local entrepreneurs and growers. There are several organizations working in and around Clarkston with experience and resources to support workforce development programs. Increasing collaboration amongst these partners and increasing direct support with centralized resources could help job seekers interested in food and agriculture find local opportunities.

Potential partners include Georgia Piedmont Technical College who can facilitate their Hospitality and Kitchen Fundamentals program and adapt it for a culinary skills focus. Decide DeKalb is an experienced workforce development partner with strong ties to county academic and industry partners. They are looking to expand their project-based Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education partnership with DeKalb County schools to support new clusters of schools creating pipelines to agricultural careers through STEAM curriculum. Send Relief in downtown Clarkston has a modern commercial kitchen available to serve their vision of culinary education and local food business incubation. Additional local organizations such as Fresh Harvest and Global Growers focus on hyper local hiring, especially within the local refugee community. Refugees make up over 75% of Fresh Harvest team, with many progressing into leadership or managerial roles. Global Growers connects over 200 growers with access to land at 7 sites, including many who are starting their own agribusinesses.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

- » Georgia Piedmont Technical College
- » Decide DeKalb Development Authority
- » Send Relief
- » Fresh Harvest
- » Global Growers



A photograph of a garden. In the foreground, a wooden sign with the word 'Herbs' written in yellow cursive is stuck in the ground. The sign is made of two pieces of wood. Behind it, there are several plants, including some with long, thin leaves and others with small, white flowers. The background is a dense, out-of-focus green bush. The text 'NEXT STEPS' is overlaid in white, uppercase letters across the middle of the image.

NEXT STEPS

NEXT STEPS

This plan will be submitted to the City of Clarkston's City Council for their review, approval, and adoption. Upon adoption of the City Agriculture Plan, the implementation phase will begin. FWA will award a \$75,000 implementation grant to fund the process, while the City is providing matching in-kind support. FWA will remain a partner during the implementation phase, as the steering committee and relevant City departments confirm prioritized projects and take key initial steps towards the recommendations in this plan.

This plan's recommendations are categorized within each priority area by their status as a short-term or long-term prospect for implementation. At the end of the planning process, the steering committee indicated their priorities for initial funding or action below.

The recommendations for implementation range from expansion of current food and agriculture work to substantial new projects serving the community. New programmatic activity will require additional administrative capacity. Key considerations for furthering implementation include:

- » Formation of the Local Food and Agriculture Committee to direct implementation project activity
- » Coordination of implementation partners to allocate implementation grant budget and track impact metrics across projects
- » Leveraging the full in-kind commitment of the City including resources such as land for growing space, staff time, and communications support

Top Identified Short-Term Recommendations *In order of Steering Committee priority*

Recommendation

- A-1 Form a Local Food and Agriculture Committee to guide implementation
- A-2 Launch a food waste reduction program at Clarkston High School
- B-1 Launch a home and community growers network to increase connections and share resources
- C-1 Increase mobile market opportunities in residential and community spaces
- C-2 Offer educational programming on nutrition, cooking, and preserving foods
- D-1 Increase youth food and agriculture programming
- D-2 Create a centralized resource sharing plan to disseminate information about food and agricultural programming and events

» TO LEARN MORE

For more information on the planning process in Clarkston, including the resources below, please visit [Food Well Alliance website](#).

- » Community Food and Agriculture Asset Map and List
- » Community Survey
- » Community Engagement Analysis Report

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