**Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing Program: guidelines for community engagement**

May 2021

The City of Baltimore is committed to expanding opportunities for urban agriculture, particularly for those who have been historically excluded from access to land and to fresh, healthy, culturally-appropriate foods, and in doing so in a way that is socially responsible. Through the Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing program, a partnership between the Department of Planning’s Baltimore Office of Sustainability and the Department of Housing & Community Development’s Development Division, we offer leases of 1-6.5 years to qualified urban agriculture practitioners. Before the City enters into an agreement for a new land lease with an urban farm, the Baltimore Office of Sustainability, with assistance from the Department of Planning’s Community Planning & Revitalization division, will:

* Notify the relevant City Council member and the relevant community association, and request that the community association either designate time at a scheduled community meeting or schedule a separate meeting to discuss any questions, concerns, and/or desires that residents may have about the proposed use.
	+ If a specific farmer is proposing to lease the site, the farmer will contact adjacent residents, either by door-knocking or flyering, with notice of the meeting as well as the opportunity to give input via phone or email if unable to attend. Planning staff will provide a template flyer if requested.
	+ If no specific farmer proposed, Planning staff will work with the community association to contact adjacent residents.
* Post a sign on the property two weeks before the community meeting with information about the meeting and on how to give input via phone or email.
* After the meeting, request a letter of support from the community association stating whether they are in agreement that agriculture is an appropriate use for the parcel. If desired, Planning staff will schedule follow-up meetings with community representatives and potential leasees.
* Where there is no active community association, Planning will work with the relevant City Council member to host and publicize a community meeting, and will consider agriculture an appropriate use for the parcel if more than 50% of respondents living adjacent to the site (or who are residents of the neighborhood generally, if no residents living adjacent to the site respond) are in favor.
* Document the outreach process and any feedback received.

When a farmer has been identified and parcel of land has been approved for leasing for a new urban farm, but before a lease is finalized, leasees will be required to sign an agreement with the city agency for the land and, if there is one in existence, the relevant community association, stipulating expectations for maintenance and community engagement, which may include the following:

* Mow grass and weeds (not including intentional plantings) at least every three weeks from April through November, or else engage the Care-a-Lot program or an individual to provide this service.
* Respond to any reasonable complaints from neighbors or other community members regarding high grass, weeds, and/or trash and debris on the property within 10 days
* If growing produce, host at least a monthly on-site farm stand with sales to neighbors from May through November
* If produce is available for donation, work first with any neighborhood-based food pantries and/or with the local community association to distribute produce to local residents in need, before donating to organizations outside of the neighborhood
* Attend relevant community association meetings, if they are being actively held, on at least a quarterly basis to give updates on the farm
* Offer any jobs or training opportunities to the relevant community association to publicize

At least 6 months before any lease renewal under the Homegrown Baltimore Land Leasing program would take effect, the Baltimore Office of Sustainability will notify the relevant City Council member and the relevant community association, and request that the community association, if desired, either designate time at a scheduled community meeting or schedule a separate meeting to discuss any questions, concerns, and/or desires that residents may have about the continuation of farming at the site.