

HILLTOP URBAN FARM

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024 - 2028

A Five-Year Plan for Growth and Resiliency



“To the residents of the Hilltop, the Farm can serve as a vehicle addressing real life issues.”

— John Bixler, Executive Director

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028

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**“Every time
I visit, there is
something new.”**

—Hilltop Urban Farm Youth Farmer

From the Executive Director

On behalf of the Hilltop Urban Farm Board of Directors and Staff, I'm proud to present to our friends and supporters, the Hilltop Urban Farm Strategic Plan 2024-2028. This is our first strategic plan since our inception in 2018 and it represents an important milestone for the organization.

When I joined the team in August 2019, I read volumes of plans and documents that guided the creation of the organization. I was impressed with the thoughtful ways the early organizers gathered community input to shape the farm's mission and vision. While consultants and planners assisted, ultimately it was the farm's neighbors who developed the plans. A strong focus on listening to and elevating community wisdom created a solid foundation from which to launch this ambitious venture.

To the casual observer, the farm might appear to be, well, 'just a farm.' But to the residents of the Hilltop, they know the farm can serve as a vehicle, and with the appropriate planning, can directly address real life issues facing the Hilltop communities. This understanding of the farm's potential is reflected in the organizations updated mission statement - "We are a neighborhood resource that grows food, grows farmers and grows community in the Hilltop neighborhoods."

The farm has the potential to serve as a national model for productive reuse of former public housing sites. It will provide a space for the significant immigrant population living in the Hilltop to enjoy, and to develop a deeper connection to the community. It offers the opportunity to honor former residents of the site and to strive to operate in a way to respect procedural, structural, and distributional equity for all stakeholders. It is about growing food, farmers, and community in a purposeful and deliberate manner.

Going through this strategic planning process has reinforced that we are on the right track. Many of the goals originally established for the farm were solid and pointed us in the right direction. This new strategic plan identifies specific challenges and opportunities to reach those goals more effectively and to fulfill the promise and responsibility we have to the citizens of the Hilltop communities.

With the plan 'completed', now comes the real work. We invite all stakeholders and those who believe in the mission and vision of the farm to join us to implement this plan. The leadership of Hilltop Urban Farm is thankful for the incredible support we have received to get us to this point and humbly requests the community's continued engagement to make the dream of the Hilltop Urban Farm a reality.

—John Z. Bixler, Executive Director

The Hilltop Urban Farm means different things to different community members.

For many, the Hilltop Urban Farm demonstrates how to address food insecurity in low and moderate income neighborhoods.

For some, it is a story of the reuse of vacant urban land, conservation, and remediation.

For many, it's an opportunity for youth education and a connection to our food systems.

For others, the farm offers entrepreneurial opportunities for the next generation of farmers.



“I have everything I need here and can focus on growing.”

Natalie Boyan,
Owner of *Moonhawk Makes*
Farmer-Entrepreneur
2023 Incubator Cohort

Our Context

Hilltop Urban Farm has its roots in the Hilltop community and is poised to grow.

In 2018, the Hilltop Urban Farm was created as a regenerative solution for community, housing, and the environment. Planned for the former site of St. Clair Village, the Hilltop Urban Farm is a vision of urban agriculture, complimentary to future on site housing, that builds community in the Hilltop neighborhoods.

In recent years, the organization has invested in the physical infrastructure of the farm. Program participants, and staff have brought new land into cultivation, hand-picking chunks of concrete from the former foundation sites, building soils with organic materials, planting crops and orchards, and celebrating the harvest with the community.

The organization has received funding for essential equipment and facilities and, despite covid challenges, Hilltop Urban Farm has managed to hit most of its establishment milestones.

As any farmer knows, a robust yield requires a long term investment. Similarly, Hilltop Urban Farm’s vision of urban communities sustained by the cultivation of fresh, abundant, and healthy food requires long-term investment in collaborative relationships and commitment towards shared transformation. Hilltop Urban Farm’s next phase will be defined by the growth of established programs and places, powered by stable ecological, human, and financial resources to enable a robust yield.

“Farming is a profession of hope.”
Canadian poet Brett Brian

OUR CHALLENGES

Long-Term Mission

Hilltop Urban Farm needs stable resources to achieve long-term yield. Restoring soil fertility and cultivating plants, like cultivating relationships and positively influencing lives, requires many years of investment, including funding and human resources.

Access

Maintaining presence in Hilltop daily life is difficult when site access is limited with a locked gate. In addition to staff resources required to allow entry, the gate sends a negative message of exclusion—the opposite of what Hilltop Urban Farm wishes to communicate.

Site Conditions

The site has required extensive activities to restore ecological balance and fertility. While significant work has been done, much remains.

OUR STRENGTHS

Our Track Record

After a near shut down of programs for covid-related concerns, Hilltop Urban Farm ensured that the Youth Farm and the Incubator operated with minimal disruption.

Our People

The expertise and nimbleness of Hilltop Urban Farm’s staff and board has allowed us to advance the mission with tangible accomplishments while thinking strategically about growth.

Our Potential

Hilltop Urban Farm’s vision is unique in the region and nation. Urban agriculture at scale, integrated with housing, and woven into the culture of the Hilltop, can provide direct neighborhood benefit and be a national model of community reinvestment.

We've been GROWING since our ribbon cutting in 2017!

PROACTIVE STAFFING

In 2019, Hilltop Urban Farm brought in John Bixler as Executive Director to guide the increasing demand for our programming. John has since created and hired two important positions, the Director of Farm Programs and the Director of Farm Operations and Land Management.

PROGRAM GROWTH

Hilltop Urban Farm's programs change lives by teaching people about agriculture. In addition to the Youth Farm and the Farmer Incubator, the Community Farm grows vegetables and flowers for donation and community events. We donate produce to emergency food outlets, including local food pantries and we donate flowers to youth programs that create and distribute bouquets for the community.

PEOPLE SERVED

Since 2017, Hilltop Urban Farm has served over 1,200 youth in the Pittsburgh area, despite the covid disruption.

PARTNERSHIPS BUILT

Hilltop Urban Farm is seen as trusted and reliable by the community, which is demonstrated by the partnerships with Brashear Association, Abiding Missions, Student Conservation Association, St. Paul's AME, and Adagio Health.

RESTORED ECOLOGY

Staff and volunteers have cleared over 700,000 pound of rocks, concrete, and other material to make the land arable and have enriched the soil with compost. Pollinators have returned to partake of the food and flower crops and over 250 trees in the orchards.

1,200+
neighborhood youth served

4
successful growing seasons
by farm Incubatees

4.5 acres
in cultivation

13,400+
pounds of food distributed to
Hilltop residents

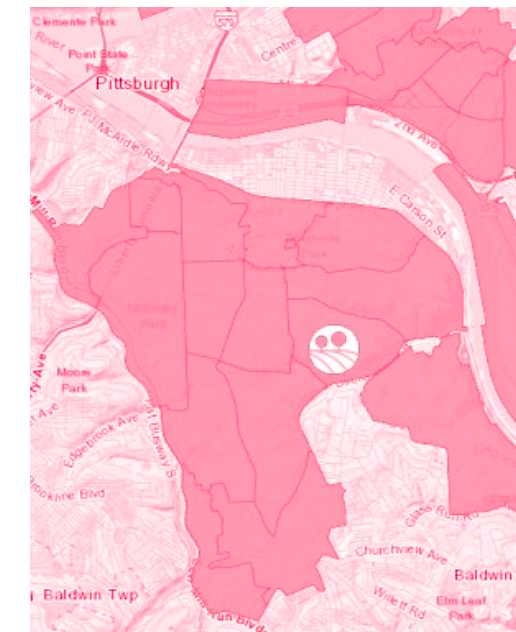
250+
fruit and nut trees planted

1,850
volunteer hours since 2022




Many school, university, and corporate volunteer groups helped Hilltop Urban Farm in the early years but in 2020, volunteer opportunities abruptly ended due to covid.

Since 2022 volunteer hours have grown significantly as Hilltop Urban Farm becomes known as a place where volunteer contributions directly impact the residents of the Hilltop.



**Food Access
Relative to Income (2019)**
Low Income & Low Access
at 1/2 and 10 miles

SOURCE
Economic Research Service
US Department of Agriculture
Food Access Research Atlas



“It’s very gratifying to walk the streets of the farm, to see vegetables, fruits and flowers taking the place of vacant land and buried rubble. To know, as stewards of the land, the Hilltop Urban Farm will continue to grow food, grow farmers and grow community in a place that has such meaning for my family and me.”

—Tom Smith, former St. Clair Village resident and current HUF Board Member

Walking through the Hilltop Urban Farm brings a sense of pride for me not only for the Hilltop Alliance where I’ve served as a long-time Board of Directors member and President, but also as a former resident of St. Clair Village. The Youth Orchard along Cresswell Street will soon bear fruit on the site I lived in with my family in the mid-1960s. The Youth Farm now takes the place of backyards where I played with friends as a child.

The Youth Farm, a short walk from Pittsburgh Arlington school, provides an opportunity for kids to learn not only where their food comes from, but also how it grows in the soil and to sample vegetables they may not be familiar with. As access to the site improves, a Community Garden will draw in Hilltop residents to “farm” their own plot of land, growing what they like to eat and become invested in the success of the farm. Residents’ satisfaction in growing their own food may inspire them to participate in the Farmer Incubator Program and could even lead to a career in urban ag.

Discovery Process

We've learned much through a robust planning process.

What we HEARD:

Over 50 people reached through focus groups, interviews, site visits, and meetings.

What we REVIEWED:

We visited the site and reviewed urban ag research, technical guides, and network guides. We reviewed Hilltop Urban Farm's past plans, including precedent models and programs.

What we IMAGINED:

We imagined future headlines for growing food, growing farmers, and growing community through our visioning exercises.

THINKING ABOUT FOOD

Observations: Staff, farmers, and volunteers spend significant time and energy to create growing conditions.

The original plan is thorough and detailed and contains many resources. It is largely a capital plan with associated programming and is less explicit on the programming outcomes.

Hilltop Urban Farm staff is largely following the plan and the progress to date demonstrates the long-term nature of the work.

Recommendation:

STRIVE FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

The site needs to be managed for long term ecological restoration to regain its fertility.

Consider the entirety of the site and set goals over time for site restoration.

Recommendation:

PLAN FOR SHORT & LONG TERM GROWTH

Develop Hilltop Urban Farm programs with a realistic 3-5 year growth plan nested in longer planning horizons (10+ yrs).

Create a capital improvement plan to focus investment.

Periodically reevaluate the original plan assumptions for site development guidance.

THINKING ABOUT FARMERS

Observations: Incubatees struggled with site conditions and covid restrictions but they made progress. New equipment and staff assistance helped make the plots more manageable.

Incubatees spend time and energy to create growing conditions. They want to stay longer to capture value from their work.

Recommendation:

REFINE THE INCUBATOR PROGRAM FOR DEEPER & LONGER ENGAGEMENT

Develop training programs, staffing support, and other resources for each incubator phase, including: land reclamation, crop establishment, business development, and an entrepreneurial network.

Recommendation:

[RE]DEFINE THE INCUBATOR PROGRAM FOR BROADER ENGAGEMENT

Redefine the program to serve "urban ag entrepreneurs" to include participants beyond farmers. The expanded program would reach people in the neighborhood who might be interested in the making, selling, or other activities within the food system and the diverse cohort would have complementary skills.

THINKING ABOUT COMMUNITY

Observations: The farm is tied to the identity of the Hilltop communities. Past residents of St. Clair Village identify with the site, as do current Hilltop residents.

Despite this, the long period of limited access has distanced Hilltop Urban Farm from residents and that relationship will need to be rebuilt.

Recommendation:

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Urban ag and food have yet to be broadly identified with the Hilltop communities and could become a much stronger element of the neighborhoods' shared identity. The Farm's programs and data collection can quantify community needs, elevate ag and food related businesses and programs, and celebrate how urban ag and food brings the Hilltop communities together.

Recommendation:

EXPAND YOUTH PROGRAMS

The farm should continue to focus on children and teens, their families, and the institutions that serve them, to connect to the broader community. Youth programs also build a pipeline to other farm programs and have transformative potential.

THINKING ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

Observations: The separation from the Hilltop Alliance reduced the organization's capacity, especially in HR, management, fundraising, and with regards to future housing development.

The farm was redefined when housing was dropped from the project. Housing is likely to be a key component in future plans to meet the Housing Authority's mission.

Recommendation:

REBUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Hire part-time staff support for fundraising and development, HR, and other administrative roles, or consider consultants for some functions. Some positions may evolve to full-time positions as the organization grows.

Recommendation:

POSITION FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

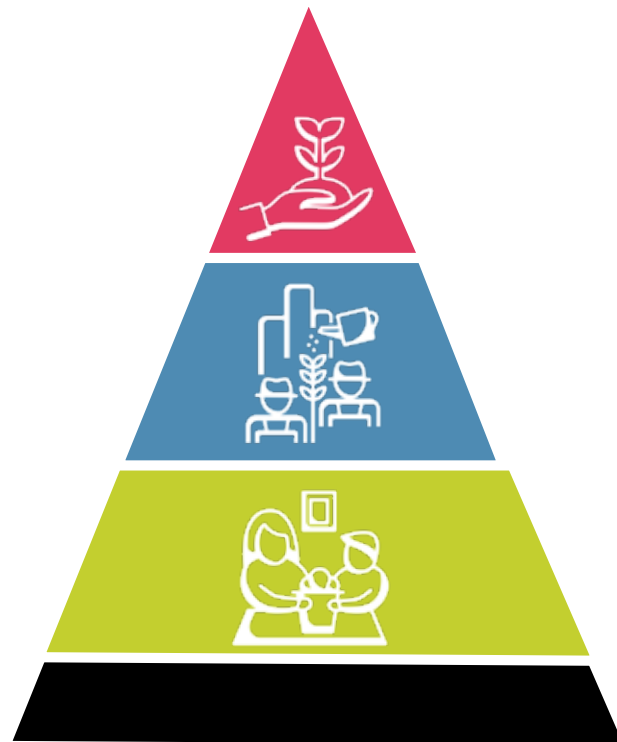
Find internal or external expertise to guide Hilltop Urban Farm through partnership or support of future housing development.

STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

We are Hilltop Urban Farm.

We envision urban neighborhoods where fresh, abundant, healthy food sustains community.

We are a neighborhood resource that grows food, grows farmers, and grows community in the Hilltop neighborhoods.



We **GROW FOOD** to increase community food access and to regenerate the land.

We **GROW FARMERS** to prepare people to make their livelihoods from agricultural enterprises.

We **GROW COMMUNITY** to create a shared history and we collaborate to shape the food system.

We **GROW the ORGANIZATION** to support the work we do.

ACTION ITEM 1

Expand programs to address community needs and capture economies of scale for staffing, site development, and fundraising.

ACTION ITEM 2

Set a 5 or 10 year horizon for programs and projects to allow for the extended establishment period.

ACTION ITEM 3

Hire key staff to enable leadership for strategic tasks. Structure board committees to assist with program expansion and property transition.

ACTION ITEM 4

Develop Hilltop Urban Farm's Equity Vision and Principles to make explicit the organization's values and guide the organization's actions.

Increase farm health and productivity.

Increase the amount and quality of food grown on site, soil productivity, and the ecological health of the entire site, including the non-farmed areas.

Connect food to people.

Increase the amount and quality of food distributed in the community and make Hilltop Urban Farm known as a reliable source. These activities contribute to program growth goals in GROWING COMMUNITY.

Connect people to food.

Increase the number of people growing food and in urban ag related activities on site. These activities contribute to program growth goals in GROWING COMMUNITY.

Cultivate an entrepreneurial community.

Expand from farmers to an entrepreneurial cohort of growers and other food-related enterprises and foster a culture of technical expertise, community support, and creative innovation.

Be a trusted source of information and assistance.

Be known as a clearinghouse for technical support and information, including access to experts, online educational resources, and physical tools and equipment.

Expand programs for increased participation

Create clear and creative opportunities for people to participate, including production and distribution of food and agricultural products, and the celebration of food and ag related practices.

Build a Hilltop community food identity.

Cultivate an inclusive Hilltop narrative about the farm site and food. The identity can be forward-looking, creative, and data-informed, and can honor the history of the community and site.

Encourage shared ownership of success.

[Re]establish relationships and partnerships to increase impact and shared ownership of Hilltop Urban Farm's successes.

Secure access to the property.

Gain full access to the property, whether through a lease renegotiation or through purchase.

Prepare the organization to be an owner.

Organize organizational resources and structure in anticipation of the additional responsibilities of ownership.

Increase staffing and differentiate roles.

Grow the organization and increase management staffing to advance the organization's vision.

FOUNDATION STATEMENTS

We **GROW FOOD** to increase community food access and to regenerate the land.

We **GROW FARMERS** to prepare people to make their livelihoods from agricultural enterprises.

We **GROW COMMUNITY** to create a shared history and we collaborate to shape the food system.

We create change through our **PROGRAMS** and our **PLACE**.

Our **PROGRAMS** enable individuals to live healthier lives and make empowered decisions. They support an entrepreneurial community of practice where people make a living from ag activities. Lastly, our programs encourage a culture of sharing knowledge and practices to grow, make, and celebrate food.

The farm is a welcoming **PLACE** that hosts human and natural communities in regenerated spaces. The farm will be a center of community life as a permanent home for urban agricultural activities.

We are Hilltop Urban Farm.

We envision urban neighborhoods where fresh, abundant, healthy food sustains community.

We are a neighborhood resource that grows food, grows farmers, and grows community in the Hilltop neighborhoods.

Our Vision for the Future

Hilltop Urban Farm revised its vision and mission to reflect how the farm adds value to the Hilltop communities.



We envision urban neighborhoods in Pittsburgh and across the country where fresh abundant, and healthy food sustains community.

When people grow, learn, and connect by working the land and celebrating its yield, they transform themselves and their surroundings together.

Our vision aligns with others across the country who are similarly striving to reconnect city residents to the means and materials of the food systems that sustain us.

We know that people benefit directly from improving food security and health outcomes.

We also believe that bringing food production closer to people's daily lives gives them deeper knowledge and opens up opportunities for careers and passions to which they would not otherwise have had access.

Hilltop Urban Farm is a neighborhood resource that connects residents of the Hilltop communities to place and to food systems.

We serve Hilltop residents and serve as a model for those beyond by growing food to distribute locally, decreasing food insecurity and improving community health.

We teach people the skills to cultivate gardens and grow their own crops, whether on site or in their agency and encourage entrepreneurship by cultivating opportunities to build a business or career in agriculture or food-related businesses.

Lastly, we are physically regenerating the Hilltop and celebrating the culture and shared history of the site and the greater community, including renewing the legacy of the St. Clair Village community.

Hilltop Urban Farm accomplishes our mission through our **PROGRAMS** and our **PLACE**. Our programs strengthen community by celebrating residents' connections to food and the land, building people's knowledge and agency to act in their own lives, and cultivating a community place created by collective action.

We recognize that our connection to food can be a powerful way to build community. The diversity of our programming will engage people in different ways, from those who want to turn a shovel, prune a tree, or prepare or partake in a heritage dish.

When fully open, Hilltop Urban Farm will be a place that is safe and welcoming, hosting both human and natural communities. As a center of community life, the farm will be a permanent home for urban agriculture activities.

We want to expand our programs to create a hive of activity.

We can engage more of the community with expanded programs that celebrate how we produce, consume, and share food.



IMAGE: Instagram, posted 24 Sep 2021.

With the successful establishment of Hilltop Urban Farm's Incubator and Youth Farm programs, Hilltop Urban Farm would like to engage a broader audience and weave the farm more deeply into the community fabric.

Hilltop Urban Farm can leverage its successful Incubator and Youth Farm programs in three ways: defining the incubator as urban ag entrepreneurship; by considering complimentary on-site and off-site engagement strategies; and by doing targeted outreach to new and legacy residents.

The Hilltop communities have grown as immigrants make it their home. Many of the new residents value the opportunity to grow the foods unique to their homeland's recipes.

ACTION ITEM 1

Program expansion can address community needs and capture economies of scale for staffing, site development, and fundraising.

Urban Ag Entrepreneurship

Hilltop Urban Farm could broaden the Farmer Incubator Program to include making and selling, as well as growing. Additional educational resources, staff support, a stronger onboarding process, and a rebranding as *Urban Ag Entrepreneurship* can capture the full extent of Incubator activities, creating a better experience for current participants and possibly inviting others whose interest lies in the making and selling.

On-site & Off-site Activities

In the short term, while Hilltop Urban Farm has limited site access, Hilltop Urban Farm can create branded offsite activities, such as providing plants and partnership support to off-site community gardens, or by adopting a grow-at-home program. This will bring visibility to the farm, establish relationships, and position the farm for activity when full entry is allowed.

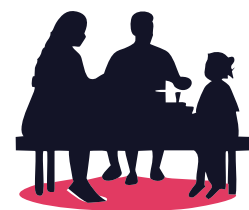
New & Legacy Communities

The communities surrounding Hilltop Urban Farm are rich with cultural legacy as well as activities by new residents. Hilltop Urban Farm can honor the site's past with annual or bi-annual neighborhood festivals that contribute to the site's transformation. Hilltop Urban Farm can also welcome new residents who represent a variety of global cultures. Hilltop Urban Farm can accommodate their needs with targeted outreach and partnerships.



We want to invest in the community for the long-term.

Hilltop Urban Farm can enable transformation at the individual, community, and regional scale, but it will take time.



- ...rebuild the soil
- ...plant a garden at the farm
- ...repairing the landscape
- ...growing my own food



- ...start a food related business
- ...grow unique foods not found elsewhere
- ...grow food to sell to restaurants
- ...connect to agriculture jobs in the region



- ...Youth Farm demonstrations
- ...cooking demonstrations
- ...Hilltop volunteer days
- ...community and reunion celebrations

In its early years, Hilltop Urban Farm has turned the soil and planted the seeds. Our long-term investment will ensure a generous yield.

Farming requires listening to the land, reading the needs of the market, and constant adaptation using the resources at hand. It's long-term investments in the land, equipment, and systems may need years to reach full yield. Similarly, Hilltop Urban Farm is cultivating a robust relationship with individuals and the community. Setting long-term horizons will allow for an extended establishment period needed for understanding community needs, shaping the context, and continual cultivation of partnerships.

ACTION ITEM 2

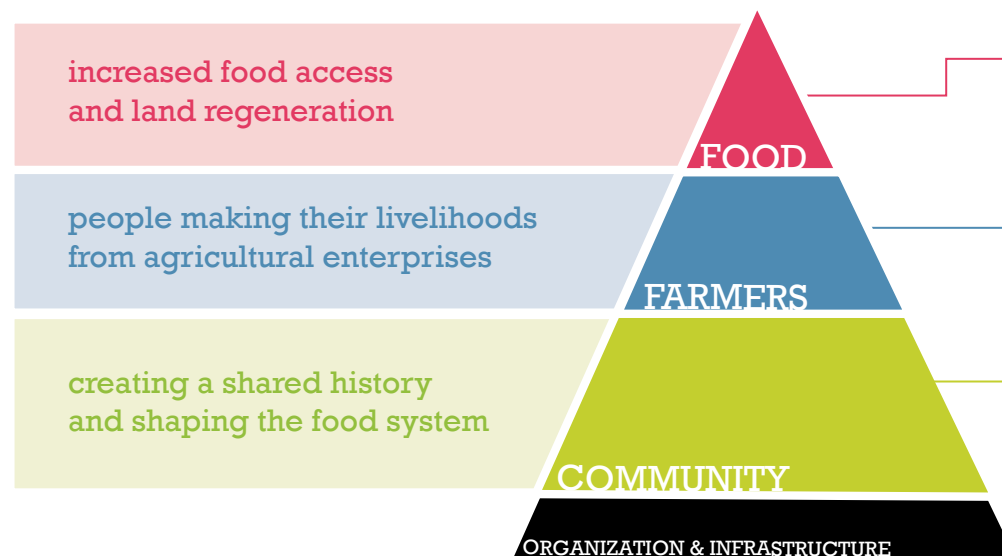
Set a 5 or 10 year horizon for programs and projects to allow for the extended establishment period.

Invest in Programs

Construct programs that nest seasonal engagement within a longer term horizon. Within each program, create multi-stage opportunities to participate, whether by age (primary grade and secondary grade programs) or by activity (pre-incubator interest to startup incubator programs). Construct relationships between programs such as structuring the Youth Farm as a possible funnel for future Incubator participation.

Invest in Place

Farm infrastructure, both ecological and constructed systems, take time to develop. For example, building soil and planting an orchard are activities that will bring future yield and may take years to come to fruition. Similarly, physical infrastructure investments, like site electrification or sidewalk repair, may require years to complete. Consistent investment in place facilitates trust—the core of social infrastructure. Consistent improvements in Hilltop Urban Farm's facilities and site will serve as evidence of its commitment to the Hilltop.



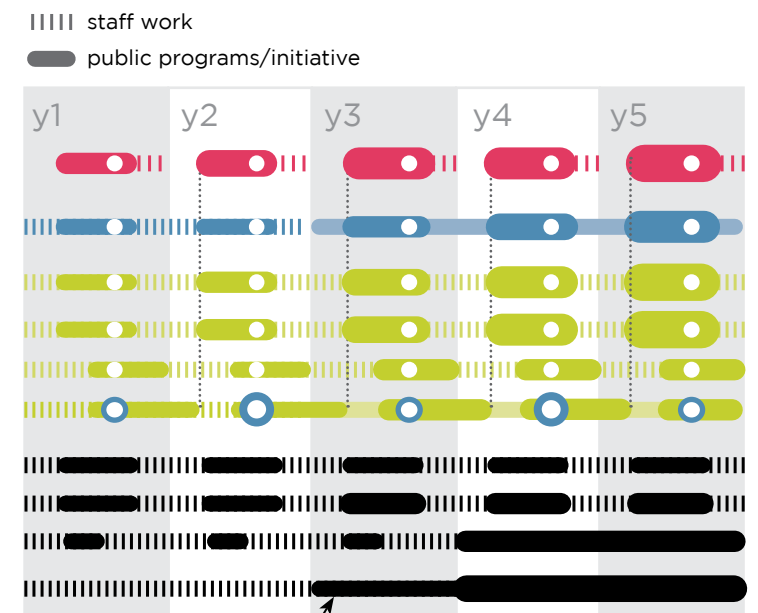
Orchard, Incubator Plots & Gardens

Urban Ag Incubator

Youth Farm

Community Growing
Community Making
Community Food Culture

Soil Building
Ecological Restoration
Infrastructure
Land Control



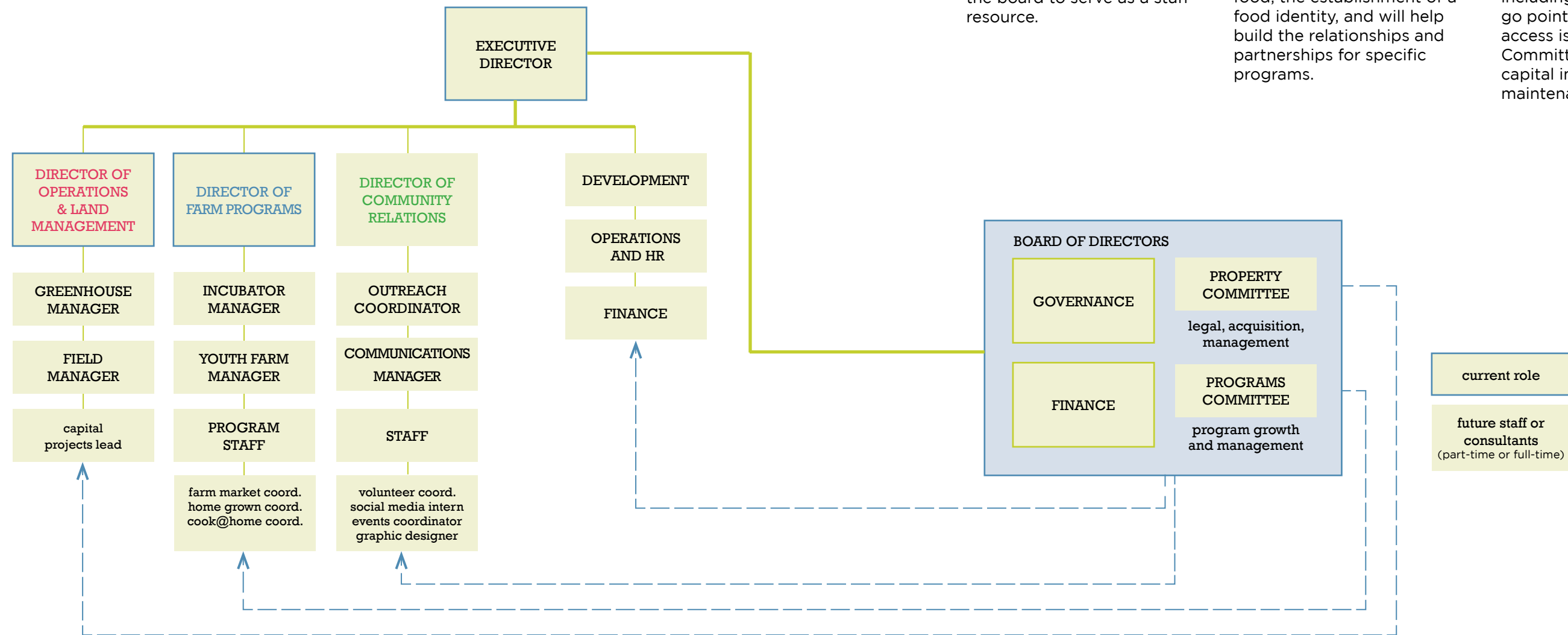
Increased property access or ownership, enables additional investment and growth!

We want to grow our staff and board to fulfill Hilltop Urban Farm's potential.

Differentiated staffing and board growth will enable program growth, community partnerships, and will raise organizational capacity.

Typical of small startup organizations, each person in Hilltop Urban Farm must be capable of doing any task that the organization requires. Flexibility is essential for early stages where resources are limited and roles have yet to be firmly established.

For Hilltop Urban Farm to grow, more formal roles are needed to scale programs and to provide organizational stability. The chart below shows current and future roles. The chart also includes the roles that were provided by Hilltop Alliance prior to the separation of the two organizations.



ACTION ITEM 3

Hire key staff to support leadership and structure board committees to assist with program expansion and property transition.

Hilltop Urban Farm needs to mobilize around property acquisition/access to unlock future infrastructure and ecological investments. In addition, the organization's programs require an infusion of expertise, relationships, and resources to grow. Two board committees, a Facility Committee and a Program Committee, can mobilize the board to serve as a staff resource.

Program Committee

The Program Committee will advise and assist staff as they expand and reshape the Youth Farm and Incubator programs. The Program Committee will also help the staff prioritize the gathering of community data around food, the establishment of a food identity, and will help build the relationships and partnerships for specific programs.

Facility Committee

The Facility Committee will advise and assist staff to gain long-term site access, and to improve and maintain the site. The Facility Committee will consider scenarios for property access before and during negotiations, including defining a go/no go point for acquisition. After access is granted, the Facility Committee will advise on capital improvements and maintenance concerns.

We are committed to equity as a guiding principle.

Three approaches to equity—procedural, structural, and distributional—will guide Hilltop Urban Farm’s equity discernment process.

We are committed to

PROCEDURAL EQUITY

in our process, such as

- inclusive and authentic engagement
- robust, accessible, and consistent community outreach and information sharing
- reflecting community feedback into programming and operations
- procedures that are transparent and unilaterally applied

We are committed to

STRUCTURAL EQUITY

in our decisionmaking, such as...

- including diverse stakeholders who engage in transparent processes
- community involvement in boards, advisory groups and in our workforce
- partnerships with regional organizations that reflect our services and/or those in greatest need for our services

We are committed to

DISTRIBUTIONAL EQUITY

in our outcomes, such as...

- acknowledgement of the land and people across time
- fair distribution of the benefits and burdens
- measurable indicators of success that are tracked and shared for accountability
- commitment to public access of the land, food, training, and services
- reduce barriers to entry with scholarships and simpler intake processes

ACTION ITEM 4

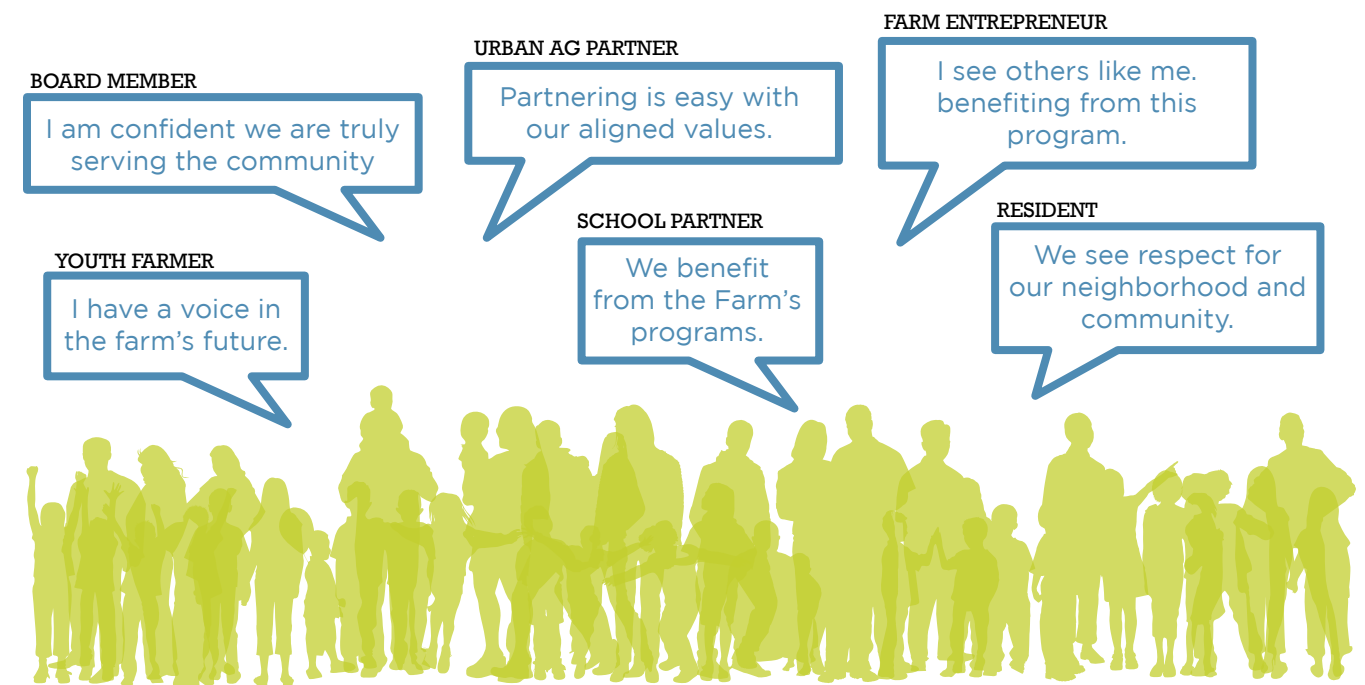
Develop Hilltop Urban Farm’s Equity Vision and Principles to make explicit the organization’s equity values and guide the organization’s actions.

Hilltop Urban Farm’s founding was based on a community commitment, which can be further articulated through an equity vision and principles. An equity vision complements other foundational statements, explicitly stating the organizations commitment to equity. Equity principles guide organizational actions.

Principles translate into practices and Hilltop Urban Farm’s equity statement might inform goals and metrics such as neighborhood wealth building, creating a place for the community to gather, mental health, workforce development, etc.

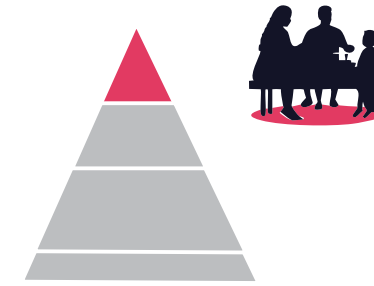
Equity Discernment Process

- Engage the community in a discernment process that honors the organizational and site history. Integrate equity protocols into operations by:
- establishing 1-2 metrics for success for each area
 - including the principles directly into the workplan
 - prioritize 1-5 year actions
 - establish an annual review of the metrics for accountability



We **GROW FOOD** to increase community food access and to regenerate the land.

The health of the farm, the growing of food, and the distribution of food is at the core of Hilltop Urban Farm's mission.



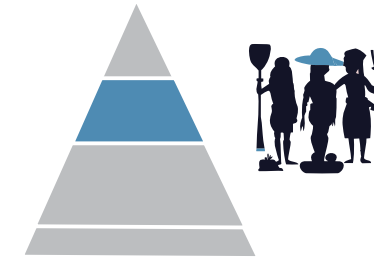
activity	1a Increase farm health and productivity.	
	Increase the amount and quality of food grown on site, soil productivity, and the ecological health of the entire site, including the non-farmed areas.	
strategies	Develop a Facilities Plan (FP) to guide the development and stewardship of the properties.	Engage an economic development and design consultant to create a series of documents (see list) that prioritize projects and the required investment. The document should identify partners and possible funding sources. The document should enable the organization to seek multiyear funding for capital improvements, as well as programmatic funds.
	<i>A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)</i>	Define and prioritize projects and activities that will build farm productivity. Include improvements needed for programmatic functions and ecological restoration. These might include: All season program spaces (classroom, restrooms) Office area Permanent greenhouse structures Improved water infrastructure Sidewalk repair Fencing and other site access improvements
	<i>A Long-term Care & Maintenance Plan (C&M)</i>	This plan identifies activities needed for site stewardship and is the companion document to the CIP. Identify time horizons for ecological restoration areas such as wooded or fallow areas, long-term crop areas like orchards, and areas for rotating or seasonal crops. The C&M also defines the maintenance needs of built infrastructure, such as repaving, service structures, etc.,
	<i>An Investment Prospectus for the CIP and a Financial Instrument for the C&M</i>	Identify possible project packages and funding sources. Structure an ongoing financial instrument and explore options such as institutional partnerships, land trust management, and endowment.
	Develop a short-term improvement framework for low-cost, low-barrier projects.	Define low-cost, low-barrier activities and improvements for immediate action by staff, volunteers, and visitors. Integrate the projects into the programming.
	Develop shovel-ready projects from the prospectus as soon as possible to capture emerging funding sources.	Create investment-ready plans for projects and critical infrastructure such as water, electricity, roads/sidewalks, soil quality, compost, etc.

activity	1b Connect food to people.	
	Increase the amount and quality of food distributed in the community and make Hilltop Urban Farm known as a reliable source. These activities contribute to program growth goals in GROWING COMMUNITY.	
strategies	Increase direct distribution to individuals.	Investigate the viability of: —increased market sales —subscription sales (CSA) —food pantry donations —support or host a farmers market
	Cultivate a community distribution network.	Partner with community groups that would benefit from farm food production (churches, etc.) Cultivate relationships with informal communities, such as the growing immigrant population.

activity	1c Connect people to food.	
	Increase the number of people growing food and in urban ag related activities on site. These activities contribute to program growth goals in GROWING COMMUNITY.	
strategies	Increase programming opportunities for people to grow on site.	Investigate the viability of: —community garden plots (by neighborhood or block) —increased farm volunteers —additional youth programs —home grow boxes and offsite growing —neighborhood grow sites —other offsite programs while the property is inaccessible
	Increase programming opportunities for organizations to grow on site.	Partner with community groups that would benefit from farm food production (churches, etc.) Cultivate relationships with informal communities, such as the growing immigrant population.

We **GROW FARMERS** to prepare people to make their livelihoods from agricultural enterprises.

Hilltop Urban Farm supports entrepreneurs in their intensive ventures growing, processing, and distributing food.



activity	Cultivate an entrepreneurial community.	
2a	Expand from farmers to an entrepreneurial cohort of growers and other food-related enterprises and foster a culture of technical expertise, community support, and creative innovation.	
strategies	Strengthen and grow the Farmer Incubator Program.	<p>Develop a 5-year business plan that outlines goals, scope, costs, and growth strategy.</p> <p>Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the program, including recruitment protocols, intake and exit procedures, ideal cohort size, expected tenure period, and individual engagements/activities.</p> <p>Set targets for local incubatee participation.</p> <p>Plan for a 12 month seasonal cycle and multiyear cycles.</p> <p>Consider accommodations for the first gen farmers given the soil conditions, covid, and startup complications.</p> <p>Increase program staff to allow for dedicated positions for both program administration and field work.</p>
	Increase the pipeline with a diversity of urban ag careers.	<p>Encourage diverse participation by defining a spectrum of urban ag careers, including farmers, but also market managers, chefs, cooks.</p> <p>Commit to launching diverse enterprises from the community. Recruit participants from other Hilltop Urban Farm programs.</p> <p>Develop programs or partner to support alternative ag careers.</p> <p>Share incubatee stories to promote the program, the farm, and the community. Coordinate with Hilltop Urban Farm Communications Plan.</p>
	Increase the pipeline with longitudinal programming.	<p>Develop programming that appeals to a variety of ages to increase the exposure to the incubator program (see COMMUNITY and FOOD).</p> <p>Be explicit about how participants can accumulate expertise and develop certifications, badges, or other acknowledgments of continuous participation.</p>

activity	Be a trusted source of information and assistance.	
2b	Be known as a clearinghouse for technical support and information, including access to experts, online educational resources, and physical tools and equipment.	
strategies	Provide ONBOARDING RESOURCES for people considering urban ag enterprises.	<p>Establish the types of materials needed for early-stage and committed entrepreneurs with focus groups and outreach.</p> <p>Focus on the incubator program to curate the materials, but make the materials available to anyone interested.</p> <p>Use existing materials where possible and create new material only when needed.</p> <p>Curate an online resource center that helps people connect to other informational resources.</p>
	Connect urban ag entrepreneurs to BUSINESS RESOURCES.	<p>Assess current incubatees and potential entrepreneurs for knowledge gaps and resource needs.</p> <p>Partner with education providers for programming and resources.</p> <p>Partner with financial institutions for loan opportunities or financial education.</p> <p>Convene meetings with the entrepreneur cohort to share ongoing work and learning.</p>
	Increase access to TECHNICAL EXPERTISE and resources.	<p>Assess existing internal board and staff expertise and if these resources are available to program participants.</p> <p>Consider programs that promote Hilltop Urban Farm expertise to the community and where access is clearly available (Ask An Expert tabling at events, speakers bureau to send urban ag expertise to organizations and events, etc.).</p> <p>Develop an online reference page. Gather and promote reference materials and create new materials when needed.</p>
	Provide and maintain equipment for participant and community use.	<p>Inventory existing equipment available for participant use and include their upkeep in the Care & Maintenance Plan.</p> <p>Develop an acquisition plan for additional equipment, to be included in the Capital Improvement Plan.</p> <p>Consider creating a Community Tool Lending Library for specific equipment.</p>

We **GROW COMMUNITY** to create a shared history and to shape the food system.

The Hilltop Urban Farm celebrates the community's diverse relationships to food with programming and a shared identity.



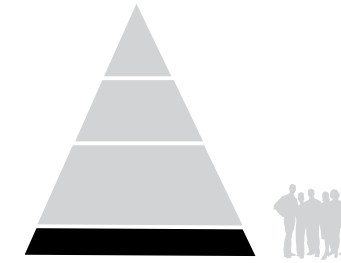
activity	3a Expand programs for increased participation.	
	Create clear and creative opportunities for people to participate, including PRODUCTION and DISTRIBUTION of food and agricultural products, and the celebration of food and ag related PRACTICES.	
strategies	PRODUCTION Consider program expansion in growing food, gardening, farming, and other activities.	Investigate the viability of: —community garden plots (by neighborhood or block) —increased farm volunteers —additional youth programs —home grow boxes and offsite —neighborhood grow sites —other offsite programs while the property is inaccessible
	PRODUCTION Increase programming opportunities for organizations to grow on site.	Partner with community groups that would benefit from farm food production (churches, etc.,) Cultivate relationships with informal communities, such as the growing immigrant population.
	DISTRIBUTION Consider program expansion in sharing food and food related resources.	Investigate the viability of: —increased market sales —subscription sales (CSA) —food pantry donations —support or host a farmers market
	DISTRIBUTION Cultivate a community distribution network.	Partner with community groups that would benefit from farm food production (churches, etc.,) Cultivate relationships with informal communities, such as the growing immigrant population.
	PRACTICES Cultivate a community distribution network.	Investigate the viability of: —nutrition and health lifestyle activities —cooking classes —bakeoffs, cook-offs, competitions, and events —recipe collections and heritage cooking —international cooking and recipes

activity	3b Build a Hilltop community food identity.	
	Cultivate an inclusive Hilltop narrative about the farm site and food. The identity can be forward-looking, creative, and data-informed, and can honor the history of the community and site.	
strategies	Tell the Hilltop's food story in numbers.	Maintain or support the creation of a food scorecard for the community. Measure Hilltop Urban Farm's efforts in distribution and production to contribute data to the scorecard. Map the neighborhood food network and positive or negative changes over time.
	Share experiences of Hilltop Urban Farm.	Develop a Communications Plan and familiarize staff and board with its use. Hire a Communications Manager to create and steward social media content and graphic design. Hire local youth as Community Spokesperson(s) to promote events and raise the visibility (influencers).
	Consider BIG IDEAS for increased visibility.	Investigate the viability of milestone events that can invite the neighborhood to the farm and can serve as a fundraiser, such as: —Hill's Kitchen - a locally (or nationally) produced reality show covering a season —Great Hilltop Grow-Off - a competition to reward the largest produce, best products, etc., —Cookbook Project - an heirloom recipe cookbook with multimedia content

activity	3c Encourage shared ownership of success.	
	[Re]establish relationships and partnerships to increase impact and shared ownership of Hilltop Urban Farm's successes.	
strategies	Welcome previous and future residents to the site and farm activities.	Investigate the viability of an annual or biannual event that becomes a broader community celebration, inviting past and current residents. Promote the event regionally to invite future residents and supporters. —Hilltop Community Fair - host a "county fair" type event that pairs with a St. Clair Village reunion.
	Renew partnerships with community groups, especially youth and schools.	Hire a Community Outreach Coordinator to establish and maintain community partnerships and to serve as an advocate for the organization.

We will GROW THE ORGANIZATION for successful programming and farm management.

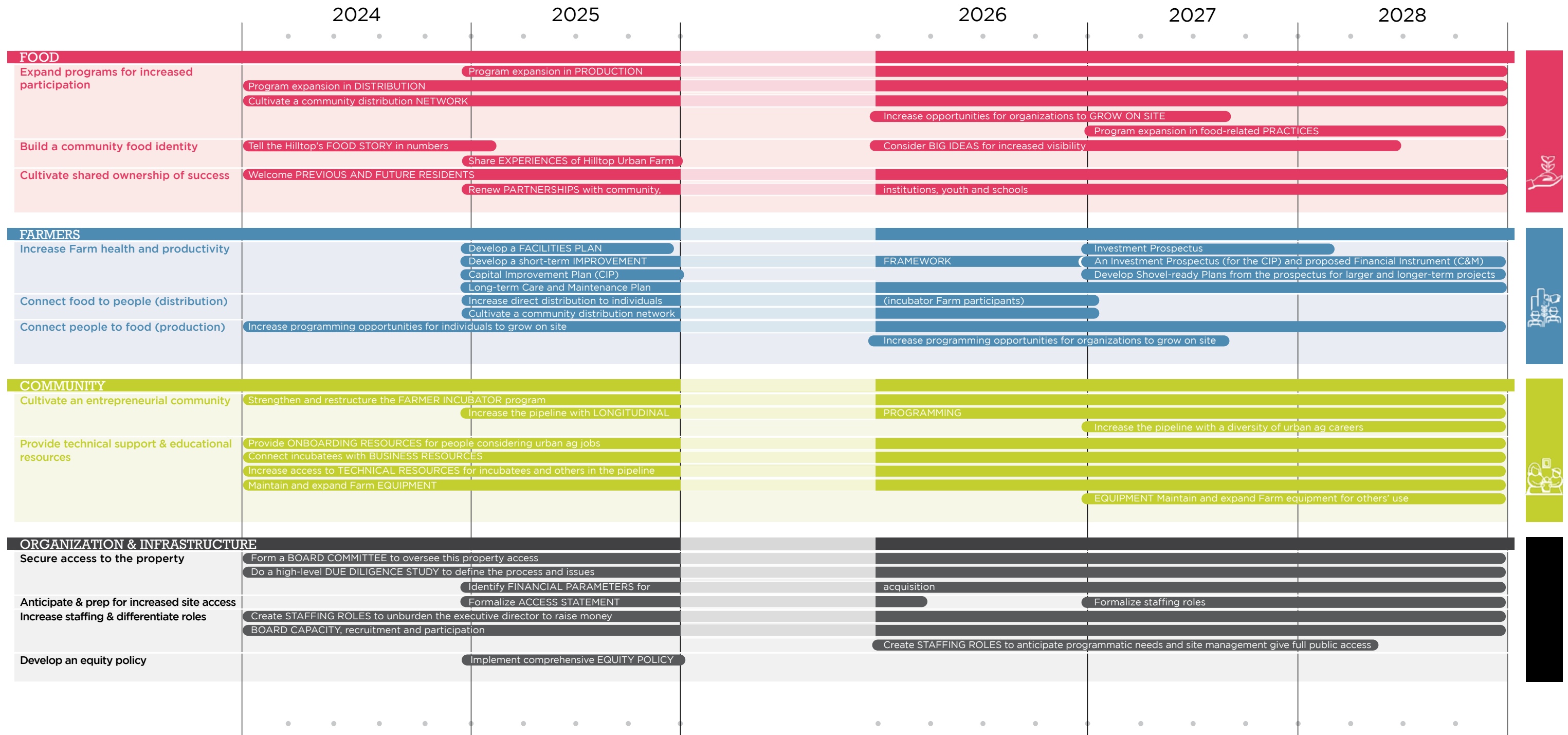
With a strong board and staff, the Hilltop Urban Farm will have a strong foundation to support its ambitious programs and projects.



activity	4a Secure access to the property.	
	Gain full access to the property, whether through a lease renegotiation or through purchase.	
strategies	Form a board committee to oversee the effort to secure access. Make this a top priority.	Identify possible committee members, including those off and on the board. Include expertise in legal, real estate, and agency relations.
	Perform a high-level due diligence study to define the process and issues.	Summarize prior conversations with Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh per the previous participants' experiences. Investigate legal ramifications for ownership or increased control. Define HACP's needs for the deal. Develop strong community advocacy for the project and gather community concerns.
	Identify financial parameters for acquisition.	Identify models for future ownership and presumed responsibilities. Perform financial feasibility studies and seek infrastructure funding jointly with HACP or independently. Develop a stronger negotiating position by bringing resources to the deal.

activity	4b Prepare the organization to control the property.	
	Organize organizational resources and structure in anticipation of the additional responsibilities of land control.	
strategies	Identify resources needed for a short-term transition and long-term stewardship.	Cross reference possible development scenarios with the required technical resources, staffing, and funding. Identify any additional temporary and permanent staffing roles for property acquisition and facility management. Define roles and structure beyond the 5 year horizon for the plan.
activity	4c Increase staffing and differentiate roles.	
	Grow the organization and increase management staffing to advance the organization's vision.	
strategies	Identify staffing roles to anticipate programmatic needs and site management given full access.	Determine how to distribute roles like facilities management, development, communications, outreach, and volunteer coordination.
	Perform a high-level due diligence study to define the process and issues.	Summarize prior conversations with HACP per the previous participants' experiences. Investigate legal ramifications for ownership or increased control. Define HACP's needs for the deal. Develop strong community advocacy for the project and gather community concerns.

We take action to cultivate community.





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