

## CASE STUDIES: GARDEN INITIATIVES

*These case studies highlight a variety of projects in which communities and/or organizations have successfully organized to make gardening and healthy food more abundant and accessible on a large scale. They provide a glimpse into the benefits that can result from establishing a supportive culture around gardening, as well as some ideas of how to make that happen.*



**Case Study:** Prairie Crossing

**Type:** Conservation Easement

**Location:** Grayslake, IL

**Description:** Prairie Crossing is a widely acclaimed conservation community designed to combine the preservation of open land, easy commuting by rail, and responsible development practices. It is a national example of how to plan our communities to enhance the environment and support a better way of life.

As a conservation community, Prairie Crossing was developed with less than a quarter of the 1,600 units allowed by local zoning, with more than 60% of the site preserved as open space. During the development, landscape architecture and land planning respected the land in multiple ways to honor the Prairie Crossing guiding principle of environmental protection and enhancement.

One hundred acres was reserved for the Prairie Crossing Farm, a working organic farm which is protected by a conservation easement. The original budget for farm operations was included as part of the marketing expense of the residential development. These funds helped to operate the farm from start-up through the development's build-out. Subsequently, ownership of the Prairie Crossing Farm was donated by Prairie Holdings Corporation to the Liberty Prairie Foundation, a 501(c)(3) private operating foundation.

**Impact:** The Prairie Crossing community and the general public benefits greatly from the Prairie Crossing Farm. The farm is home to educational programs, a Farm Business Development Center, multiple independently operated farm businesses, and more. Prairie Crossing residents and the general public buy vegetables, fruits, eggs, and other farm products – all produced without pesticides or herbicides – from different farm businesses at the Prairie Crossing Farm. The farm also does policy work at the local, regional and national levels, and utilizes strategic grant making to help realize the economic, health, and community-building benefits of a sustainable local food system in the Chicago region.



**Case Study:** The Oakland Avenue Urban Farm

**Type:** Agricultural neighborhood or “agrihood”

**Location:** Detroit, MI

**Description:** The nation’s first "Agri-Cultural" urban landscape in Detroit’s North End. The Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, a program of North End Christian Community Development Corporation, is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to cultivating healthy foods, sustainable economies, and active cultural environments.

**Impact:** The Oakland Avenue Urban Farm has been an important community hub in Detroit's North End neighborhood. The farm not only grows produce for wholesale at its weekly farmers market, but also hosts all kinds of community events, like music performances and workshops, and employs local residents.



**Case Study:** New Haven Land Trust

**Type:** Land Trust

**Location:** New Haven, Connecticut

**Description:** The New Haven Land Trust engages people in stewardship and cultivation of the land for a healthier community and environment through land conservation, community gardening and environmental education. The land trust works with neighborhood residents, tenant associations, block watches, social service agencies, schools, youth groups, and the elderly with a focus on greening urban areas and putting vacant lots to productive use.

**Impact:** The New Haven Land Trust manages 6 nature preserves and over 56 community food gardens in the greater New Haven area. The land trust offers technical assistance, supplies, and training in the establishment of new community gardens on a continual basis. In coordination with the nonprofit, New Haven Farms, the land trust runs a 16-20 week Garden Incubator program, offered to low-income adult patients with chronic disease risk factors, allowing for an in-depth training on how to become resilient community gardeners.





**Case Study:** Planting Justice

**Type:** Nonprofit

**Location:** Oakland, CA

**Description:** Planting Justice is a grassroots organization with a mission to empower people impacted by mass incarceration and other social inequities with the skills and resources to cultivate food sovereignty, economic justice, and community healing. Planting Justice maintains a 4 acre farm, sets up bio-intensive organic gardens for residences, provides food justice education and operates a plant nursery.

**Impact:** Since 2009 Planting Justice has built over 450 edible permaculture gardens in the San Francisco Bay Area, worked with five high-schools to develop food justice curricula and created 40 green jobs in the food justice movement for individuals transitioning from prison.



**Case Study:** North Coast Opportunities (NCO)

**Type:** Nonprofit

**Location:** Ukiah, CA

**Description:** The NCO Gardens Project seeks to relieve hunger and inadequate nutrition throughout Lake and Mendocino Counties by creating access to community-based food production and local, nutritious food. NCO works with local government and private landowners to lease underutilized land around low-income neighborhoods for the creation of new community gardens.

**Impact:** NCO has established more than 55 community gardens, producing around 28,000 pounds of food annually and feeding more than 3,000 people. Additionally, every year they train more than 75 garden leaders and teach over 200 gardeners through free garden production and healthy eating workshops.



**Case Study:** Intervale Center

**Type:** Nonprofit

**Location:** Burlington, VT

**Description:** The Intervale Center manages 360 acres of farmland, trails, and open spaces along the Winooski River in Burlington, VT. The goals of the Intervale Center are to enhance the viability of farming, to promote sustainable land use and stewardship of agricultural lands, and to ensure community engagement in food systems. Until 2018, Intervale operated a Farms Program that leased land, equipment, greenhouses, irrigation and storage facilities to small independent farms. The Farms Program was designed to address some of the start-up barriers that typically challenge new farmers, such as access to land, infrastructure, isolation, knowledge, and business planning.

**Impact:** Since 1988, the Intervale Center has reclaimed over 350 acres of historic agricultural land for vegetable, flower, herb and other food production. The Center provides Vermont's farmers with business development opportunities and guidance, as well as has pioneered initiatives such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), large scale composting, food hubs, and farm incubators. The Center leases land to nine small to medium-sized local organic farms that operate independently of the non-profit. This community of farmers, made up of both mentor farms and incubator farms, provides the Burlington area residents with around \$1.4 million worth of local products every year.