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AGLANTA GROWS A LOT URBAN FARM APPLICATION

CITY OF ATLANTA'S

Mayor's Office of Resilience



APPLICATION SUMMARY AGLANTA GROWS A LOT URBAN FARM

The City of Atlanta committed to making Atlanta a top-tier city for sustainability, strengthen the local food economy and bring food access within .5 of a mile to 75% of Atlanta residents by 2020. In 2014, Atlanta's City Council amended the zoning ordinance to include an Urban Agriculture Ordinance which defined urban gardens and market gardens as a permitted use, and the conditions by which these gardens are permitted (14-O-1092). In 2015, the City hired an Urban Agriculture Director to help the local urban agriculture community navigate this new policy and permitting process; and alleviate additional barriers to cultivating an equitable, sustainable and resilient local food system. In 2017, the local food system and urban agriculture were incorporated into [Atlanta's Resilient Strategy](#) ([Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2](#)).

Through a series of public forums, Atlanta's urban agriculture community voiced that **access to land is a top barrier** for producing healthy food for themselves and their community. In response, the City of Atlanta is piloting the **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot program**, which will offers 5-year renewable licensures for vacant, city-owned properties to be used for urban garden's & farms. Urban farms will be piloted on Georgia Power **energy right-of-ways** (ROWs). An energy ROW is "the physical land area upon which utility equipment is located" ([Xcelenergy](#), 2007). These spaces represent miles of cleared, arable land that cannot be built upon, thus are more secure. Cities such as Seattle, Toronto, and LA have developed creative agreements with utility companies, non-profits and farmers to transform ROWs into linear farms and trail networks that weave through the urban landscape. In the fall of 2017, the [Mayor's Office of Resilience](#), [Georgia Power](#), [Groundwork Atlanta](#), [Fulton County Soil and Water Conservation District](#) and urban farmers will launch the first AgLanta Grows-A-Lot urban farm on an energy ROW. Please see [AgLanta.org](#) for more information about the pilot site and program.

This document is the **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Urban Farm Application**. The application requirements in this document were vetted by the **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Advisory Committee** (AGAC), comprised of representatives of Atlanta-based urban farmers and food system leaders. The AGAC worked with the Mayor's Office of Resilience to: 1) review best emerging practices of successful municipal adopt-a-lot program in cities throughout the U.S (Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Jersey City etc.); and 2) create application requirements; and 3) a clear, transparent and equitable system by which city-owned properties could be used for urban agriculture. The AGAC will review the applications submitted, interview finalist, and make recommendations as to which candidates are to become a pilot AgLanta Grows-A-Lot urban farmers.

Applicants can include not-for-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, or a partnership between any of these entities. Those selected, will be offered a license for a period of five years, with an option to renew (in three year increments). Licensed land is to be used for sustainable urban agriculture which can be entrepreneurial, educational, or charitable in focus. The finalization of any license is contingent on the availability of land, and on successful negotiations for licensed terms, and is not guaranteed. Qualified applicants will be expected to secure their own insurance, have a bank account, and ensure their own financing. Some City funds, may be available to support infrastructure costs (ex: water meters), but these funds are not guaranteed.

Please read this document thoroughly. If you have further questions, contact **Elizabeth Beak** at ebeak@atlantaGA.gov **843.901.3635**. or **Mario Cambardella** at MCambardella@atlantaGA.gov **(404) 335-1959**. or **Maurice Small**, mrsmall@gmail.com.

To learn more about the City of Atlanta's efforts to support urban agriculture please visit www.aglanta.org

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definitions

The following definitions are provided, for the purpose of this Grows-A-Lot Urban Farm Application. Additional definitions can be found on Aglanta.org

- **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot** - Vacant, city-owned properties utilized for urban agriculture.
- **Urban Farm** – Land within a city used for the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, plants, flowers, herbs, bees or animals by an individual, organization, or business with the primary purpose of growing food for distribution (including for-profit and non-profit enterprises). The word “farm” is used interchangeably with “urban agriculture” within this document (City of Baltimore, 2017).
- **Energy Right-of-Way** - This is the physical land area upon which the facilities (transmission towers etc.) are located (Xcelenergy, 2007). Energy ROWs represents miles of contiguous, cleared, arable, underutilized land, which cannot be developed. Urban farmers and gardeners in cities such as Seattle, WA.; Los Angeles, Ca.; Toronto, Canada; Irvine, Ca; Athens, Ga; Havana, Cuba; Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania; and Rio De Janeiro have access to this land and have cultivated productive linear farms, gardens, trails, and pollinator habitat in energy ROWs. The AgLanta Grow-A-Lot Urban Farm program will be piloted on Georgia Power Energy Right-of-Ways.
- **Secondary-Land Use** - The primary use of an energy right-of-way is to supply energy to the public. Any additional land use in this space is considered secondary. There are 3 categories of secondary- land uses: 1) an acceptable use; 2) a permitted use via an encroachment agreement; and 3) a prohibited use. Urban farming is a secondary-land use, permitted via an encroachment permit between: the City of Atlanta, Groundwork Atlanta, and Georgia Power. Farmers must adhere to certain guidelines (ex: crop height, size and placement of structures, setbacks etc.) so that the primary use is not compromised.
- **Farmer** – The principal operator of the agriculture site.
- **Applicant** – The individual (s) or organization submitting the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot farm application. Partnerships with other entities, are permitted. However, for the purposes of this application, select one entity to be considered the applicant. This entity must remain consistent throughout the document.

1.2 Goals and Background

In 2014, the City of Atlanta set an ambitious **goal: to bring healthy food within a half-mile of 75% of Atlanta residents by 2020**. In 2010, 53% of the area of the City of Atlanta and 68.8% of the population lived in a food desert. In 2016, the total area of Atlanta’s food desert decreased by 16% to 37% of the total area of the City. Thanks to the [collective efforts of many partners](#), access to healthy food has improved, but there is still work to be done.

Urban agriculture can help the City of Atlanta reach this goal. According to recent studies by the USDA and United Nations, urban farms are feeding 15%, or up to 1/5th of the global population using the nooks, crannies and “wasted spaces” of our cities (Natural Resource Conservation Service 2013, Nierenberg, 2015). Urban agriculture can also help the City of Atlanta meet its goal of becoming a more **equitable and resilient city**. Today, international (ex: United Nations, World Health Organization), national (ex: USDA, American Planning Association), and local (Ex: Seattle, Toronto, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Atlanta etc.) governments and agencies have embraced urban agriculture as a means to meeting their economic, cultural, health and environmental needs. Urban agriculture is being utilized for workforce training, job creation and inspiring entrepreneurship; transforming blighted urban areas into vibrant community spaces which foster a sense of community and place; and a tool to cultivate a healthier community food environment by creating spaces in cities that support active living and healthy eating. Studies indicate that urban agriculture can be strategically woven into the fabric of our cities in a manner that can help with urban planning challenges ranging from

building the local economy, to combating urban water issues, the heat island effect, and climate change (Beak, 2016). For this reason, urban agriculture and the local food system is included in the City of Atlanta's [Resilience Strategy](#), as part of being one of Rockefeller's 100 Resilient City network.

The City of Atlanta's Mayor's Office of Resilience is partnering with local, state and federal partners to reach its current goal, and those in the Resilience Plan. A key partner in these efforts are Atlanta's **urban farmers**: the men and woman operating Atlanta's urban farms. Throughout a series of community engagement events (2015-2017), Atlanta's urban agriculture community has voiced that **access to land** is one of the top barriers for urban farming (Center Civic Innovation, Food Well Alliance, Choice Neighborhood Plan etc.). Constituents continually contact staff at the Office of Resilience to ask if city-owned properties are available for their urban agriculture project.

The Office of Resilience, with the support of the City Planning and many other city departments, and the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Advisory Committee have developed the [AgLanta Grows-A-Lot program](#): a clear, transparent and equitable application process to apply for a property and utilized it for their urban farming endeavor. This application is intended to attract urban farmers with at least two-years' experience, that are ready to operate a viable farm business in a manner which contributes to the economic, social, health, and environmental resilience of Atlanta's neighborhoods.

1.3 Eligibility

Threshold criteria are the minimum standards that an applicant **MUST** meet in order to be considered.

Threshold criteria for this application include the following items:

- This completed **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Application form** (The last 2 pages of this document).
- **Resume**: demonstrating a minimum of two years' experience in agricultural production.
- **Letters of recommendation** (3): referencing why applicant is a good candidate for farming this land.
- **Farm Narrative**: description of proposed farm and applicant (500-1,500 words).
- **Business Plan** through [AgPlan](#).

Before a Licensure is granted the applicants must submit:

- Proof of [General Liability Insurance](#).
- Completed [Urban Garden Special Administrative Permit \(SAP\)](#): site Plan and management plan that adheres to City of Atlanta code, Georgia Power guidelines for secondary uses, and recommended urban agriculture uses for that site.
- Farm bank account.
- Proof that your farm is formally registered as a non-profit, business, LLC etc.

1.4 Urban Farm Application Review Process

The AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Pilot application process will be announced **May 1, 2018**. The available sites can viewed by applicants via an [interactive map on Aglanta.org](#) along with a copy of this application and links to resources. The **deadline** to submit an application is **June 14th, 2018** (Between **7:00 AM and 11:59 PM**). The **annual cost** of a license for a .5 acre of land is \$50 for the first half acre, then \$45 for each additional ¼ acre. This payment is to be submitted to [Groundwork Atlanta](#) along with a \$50 Administrative Fee.

Between June 15th and June 22, 2018, OoR and the **AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Advisory Committee** will: 1) review applications to ensure that they meet the threshold criteria; 2) applications meeting 100% of the threshold criteria will be reviewed by the AGAC and OoR, based on a set of ranked criteria as described in Section III: Application Evaluation below; and 3) invite finalist to **interview** ([6/18](#), [6/19](#), [6/20](#)). In the case of a tie, preference points will be awarded to

applicants for the following: 1) applicant lives, works, or owns a business within the same zip code, neighborhood, or NPU as that farm site; 2) this will be a minority or women-owned business; and/or 3) applicant graduated from a regional garden training program (Ex: Truly Living Well, HABESHA, Georgia Organics, UGA, Global Growers, apprenticed with a local garden or farm etc.). Applicants selected will be eligible for five-year, renewable, license to use this pilot AgLanta Grows-A-Lot farm site for their urban agriculture venture. In the case that the applicant is not selected this round, they may contact the AGAC for feedback, and reapply in the future as more properties are released into the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot system.

II. APPLICATION CONTENTS

Applications must include all the information described below. (However, applicants are welcome to include additional, relevant, supportive information.) Applications do not need to be expensive or extravagant to prepare. However, they should comply with the format described in a professional manner.

Applications should be submitted electronically to ebeak@atlantaGA.gov on **June 14, 2018 (11:59 PM)**. Print submissions will also be accepted. All applicants must complete a business plan in Agplan electronically. Failure to submit the application in the manner described above may result in the application being rejected. If you do not receive confirmation of receipt within one week of submitting your application, please call **(843) 901-3635** to verify that it was received.

2.1 Farmer Capacity: Applicants must have a minimum of 2 years' experience in agriculture production. (This can include an internship or working on another's farm.)

- a. Provide a **resume** for at least one, and up to five, key team member(s).
- b. Provide a one to two page **farm narrative** describing the farm, applicant's relevant education and experience, as well as that of any major partners. If this farm will be operated with partners, describe or define this partnership.
- c. The financial plan section of the **AgPlan** will be reviewed by the AGAC to confirm that the applicant has a clear idea of expenses and resources needed to start and sustain their urban farm; and a plan as to how to get the resources they need.
- d. The applicant must indicate they are willing and able to submit an Urban Garden Special Administrative Permit (SAP), and show proof of a farm bank account, insurance, and be registered as a business or non-profit structure upon receiving a license to farm this site. These documents must be submitted to [Groundwork Atlanta](#) by **July 13th, 2018**,

2.2 Urban Agriculture Concept: Applicants must have a clear vision for the proposed urban farm. This concept must address urban agriculture restrictions and opportunities for a particular site.

- a. Carefully review the ["Recommendations for Urban Agriculture Uses"](#) for this site, as well as to
- b. Utilize [AgPlan](#) to describe the concept for your urban farm. This includes a detailed yet concise narrative describing the urban farm, mission statement, goals, and plan summary. The capital request for the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Urban Farm Application is access to land. Please indicate (both) an optimal and acceptable size and condition of land for this operation.
- c. In the "Operations" section of the [AgPlan](#) provide a proposed timeline for establishing the farm. Applicants should be prepared to start farming operations within three months of receiving a license.

- d. **June 4st**, OoR will post DRAFT **site plans** for each farm site (DRAFT site plans will include placement of proposed water lines, road, fences, and fields. This site plan must be approved by Georgia Power.) Farm applicants are encouraged to utilize this as a base to provide a visual representation of the proposed farm that shows the layout of the operation. Any visual aids do not need to be elaborate or expensive, but should offer a picture of the farm being proposed and awareness of [Georgia Power secondary land use guidelines](#) and [“Recommended Urban Agriculture Uses”](#) for this site. During interviews, the farmer can share their ideas, needs, and ask for changes. If selected, OoR and Groundwork Atlanta will assist the applicant with a more formal site plan and ensure that it complies with the Urban Garden SAP and Georgia Power.
- e. Urban agriculture provides multiple cultural, economic, health, and environmental and benefits to the community. In your farm concept and site plan please convey how your farm will contribute to these benefits, and mitigate or prevents challenges in terms of growing amidst neighbors who may or may not be used to urban farming in their backyard.

2.3 Economic Feasibility + Cost Estimate

- a. Utilize [AgPlan](#) to describe the economic feasibility of the proposed farm. Include any market assumptions that support revenue projections (Example: projected sales prices and/or anticipated consumer levels.) If possible, reference supporting documentation for these market assumptions.
- b. Budget: provide estimated costs of capital (ex: infrastructure) and operating (i.e. labor, etc.), as well as anticipated revenues.
- c. If the applicant anticipates receiving financial loans to start up this proposed farm, describe those loans and the terms thereof. If the farm anticipates sources of funding such as corporate gifts, foundation grants, or governmental program funds, please summarize the source of these funds as well as a timetable of when applications become available and awards are granted. Please reference any additional resources that can be utilized to help start this farm (ex: Atlanta Farmers Alliance and other groups listed on the Aglanta.org Grows-A-Lot resource page maybe able to assist with additional resources that can reduce costs.).

2.4 Practices for Sustainability

- a. AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Urban Farmers must be willing to utilize sustainable agriculture practices which comply with the [Certified Naturally Grown Program](#). Applicants are required to become Certified Naturally Grown by the end of year three. Farmers must adhere to the City of Atlanta’s Bee City Resolution.
- b. Farmers must keep site free of garbage and carefully manage organic debris generated by their farm operation on the site. Farmers provide trash and recycling receptacles, as needed. Farmers that compost organic waste, must adhere to City, County, State, and Federal regulations. These practices must be done in a way which minimizes pests, odors, nuisances and/ or health hazards.

III. Application Evaluation

The criteria upon which the application will be evaluated are listed below.

3.1 Farmer Capacity:

- a. The applicant has sufficient (2 years) of education and/or experience in agriculture to run a successful farm, and/or has a strong partnership with an entity that does.

- b. The applicant's resume and narrative demonstrate sufficient experience and/or the ability to be successful in planning, financing, farming, marketing, and managing projects, especially those of similar size and scope as the proposed farm.
- c. The applicant's references and resume indicate successful relations with community partners, government entities and/or other partners.

3.2 Quality of Urban Agriculture Concept

- a. The concept meets or exceeds the requirements of the application.
- b. Quality of farm business/management plan proposed.
- c. The farm concept contributes to the economic, cultural, health and environmental well-being of the immediate community and/or City of Atlanta. The plan acknowledges challenges and offers creative solutions for growing food in an energy ROW, and urban setting with neighbors and partners who may or may not be familiar with urban agriculture.

3.3 Economic Feasibility

- a. Farm plan incorporates sound, sustainable practices that fully consider economic factors for long-term growth.
- b. The farm business plan (AgPlan) indicates an ability to utilize other in-kind and/ or community resources to start and manage the farm as proposed.

3.4 Practices for Sustainability

- a. AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Urban Farmers indicate a willingness and ability to utilize sustainable agriculture practices which comply with the Certified Naturally Grown Program and become Certified Naturally Grown by the end of year three.
- b. Farmer's concept and plan comply with the City of Atlanta's Bee City Resolution.
- c. Farmers plan and concept demonstrate a willingness to manage waste, garbage and organic debris and utilize practices which minimizes pests, odors, nuisances and/ or health hazards.

IV. REVIEW PROCESS

- 4.1 Applications that meet 100% of the threshold requirements will be reviewed by the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Advisory Committee.
 - a. OoR and the AgLanta Grows-A-Lot Advisory Committee will invite select finalist to interview for the pilot site.
 - b. It is the intention of OoR to award licenses to all qualified urban farm applicants. Over time, more land will be released into the system.
 - c. OoR reserves the right to require additional training or documentation before offering a license, and to end negotiations with any applicant at any point in the adoption process.
 - d. The selected applicant(s) shall indemnify, or exempt from liability, the City of Atlanta, Groundwork Atlanta, and all partners.

4.2 In the case of a tie, the following additional preference points will be awarded to applicants for the following:

- a. *Applicant lives, works, or owns a business within the same zip code, neighborhood, or NPU as that farm site.*
- b. *Minority or women-owned business.*
- c. *Applicants graduated from a regional garden training program (Ex: Truly Living Well, HABESHA, Georgia Organics, UGA, Global Growers, apprenticed with a local garden or farm etc.)*

4.3 If established criteria do not produce a clear candidate, CoA will hold a lottery to assign site.

4.4 License and Approval

Applicant will be notified if they have been selected by **June 22, 2018**. **By July 13, 2018** applicants must have submitted an Urban Garden SAP, Licensure Agreement, Proof of Insurance, proof of a Farm Bank Account, and proof of an organizational structure for the farm (ex: non-profit, LLC, etc.)

Those selected will be granted a 5-year license with a potential 3-year extension(s) to utilize this land for their proposed farm. Applicants will work closely with Groundwork Atlanta to launch their farm.

V. Administrative Information

5.1 *Submit applications to:* Elizabeth Beak ebeak@atlantaGA.gov or deliver to:

City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Resilience
ATTN: Elizabeth Beak
55 Trinity Ave, Suite 3450
Atlanta, GA 30303

Applicants will be notified by **June 22, 2018** of the status of their application. Applicants may request notes or feedback on their rejected application. An applicant that was not selected for the pilot may reapply to adopt a future site. However, the applicant must update their application in areas that needed improvement in order to be considered again.

5.2 *Obtaining the Application*

The application may be picked up at the **Mayor's Office of Resilience: Suite 3450 Atlanta City Hall: 55 Trinity Ave. Atlanta, GA 30303** between 9:00am and 5:00pm, weekdays. It will also be downloadable at the AgLanta website: www.aglanta.org.

5.3 *Revisions*

This is the pilot season urban farm application. This application may be revised from time to time. OoR recommends that applicants review subsequent postings of this application on Aglanta.org periodically to maintain current information about the program and application process.

5.4 *Rights Reserved by OoR*

OoR reserves the right to:

- Accept or reject any applications, at their sole discretion, to waive minor irregularities, and to conduct discussions with all responsible applicants, in any manner necessary, to serve the best interest of the City of Atlanta.
- Request additional information from any or all applicants if necessary to clarify statements or data contained in the proposals.
- Reject any proposal as a result of misrepresentation of any information contained in the proposal.

5.5 Public Information Act Notice

OoR commits to handling all information of applicants in strictest confidence. Applicants should give specific attention to identifying any additional portions of their proposals that they deem to be confidential, proprietary information.

5.6 Compliance with the Law

By submitting this application, applicants agree to comply with all laws, rules, and regulations, and ordinances applicable to their activities and obligations (Federal, State, and City) if awarded a license.

