

**2020 Annual Report
Regional Environmental Council**

ABOUT US

Our mission is to bring people together to build healthy, sustainable and just communities in Worcester and beyond.

OUR CORE PROGRAMS

YouthGROW

We provide economic opportunity and personal / professional development to Worcester youth through urban agriculture

UGROW

We help the Worcester community grow their own through our network of 60+ urban gardens, including backyard, community and school gardens

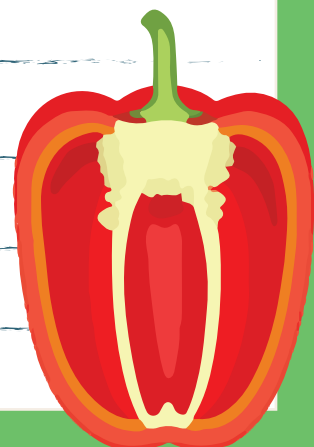
Farmers Markets

We bring fresh, local produce to those who need it most through our Mobile and Standing Community Markets

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MEET THE TEAM

Full Time Staff

Steve Fischer
Grace Sliwoski
Ajayi Harris
Ashley Carter
Stacie Brimmage
Pat Barnosky
Steven Murphy
Tom Trepanier
Eliza Lawrence

Executive Director
Director of Programs
Development Director
Farmers Market Program Coordinator
YouthGROW Coordinator
UGROW Coordinator
Administrative Director
Farm Manager
School Gardens Manager

Farmers Market Managers

Anna Marinescu
Maddy Buchman
Ahna Knudsen
Julia Dowling
Amanda McConnel
Annabel Boateng
Hali Burke
Maggie Cawley
Max Marcotte
Erika Akerson
Lawretta Kankam
Ted Girard
Hannah Romig
Robert Franklin

Board of Directors

Rubin Williams
Ted Hudson
Stephanie Crist
Eve Gilmore
Zach Dyer
Emily Linhares
Alison Bryant Ludden
Jennifer Madson
Francisco Valdes
Judi Kirk
Pablo Hernandez Itriago MD, MS

President
Treasurer
Clerk
Immediate Past President

Junior Staff

Yeimi Ayala
Tevaughn Dixon
Gabriella Guzman Jerry
Kelvyn Pacheco
Jefferson Zziwa

YouthGROW Interns

Aliza Nussbaum Cohen
Sage Halpert
Jesse Kenworthy

Farmers Market Interns

Hali Burke
Brittany Caverretta
Oliver Bugbee
Meghan Silva
Annalena Eckton
Swapnil Mishra

UGROW Interns

Kate O'Donnell
Kaomi Innis

Commonwealth Corps Members

Priyanka Shrestha
Laddy DeLuca Lowell
Tamar Rubin-Calvert
Community Garden Volunteer Specialist
Group Engagement Volunteer Specialist
Youth Farm Engagement Specialist

Americorps VISTAs

Annika Ramona
Gwen Weissinger
Development
Communications



YOUTHGROW

youth growing organics in Worcester



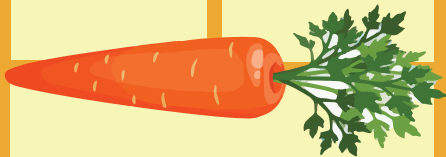
In 2020, the REC celebrated YouthGROW's 17th year providing Worcester teens leadership development and personal growth experiences as well as employment opportunities in urban agriculture. This year learning took place virtually and at our two urban farm campuses in Worcester's Main South and Bell Hill neighborhoods.

42
youth
employed



5
seniors
off to
4 year
colleges!

15
online
workshops
facilitated



4,150
lbs of produce
grown at the
YouthGROW farm

This year we were amazed with our youth's resiliency in the face of extraordinary challenges. In the early months of the pandemic we shifted our youth programming to be fully virtual, connecting solely over Zoom. Youth leaders worked remotely to recruit, interview, and select an incoming cohort of program participants through a 100% online interview process and hiring committee.

As restrictions lifted, we transitioned to a blended summer program. **12 returning youth worked in-person on urban farms in Main South and Bell Hill** (6 at each location) and utilized social distancing, masks and other public health protocols. **30 additional youth earned an hourly wage while completing a remote job- and life-skills and urban agriculture curriculum.** This included peer-led workshops, employment training curriculum, and home gardening (with materials provided by REC for raised bed and container gardening).

Youth also installed a mosaic made of recycled materials by artist Sue Champeny at the Oread Street EAT Center site and helped prepare space at our YouthGROW farm for the installation of a large scale mural, coordinated by POW WOW Worcester and created by artists Travis Duda and Ghrimmx. These pieces were funded by Mass Development and the Barr Foundation as part of the Creative Catalyst Grant Program.

Throughout the year, the REC's Mobile Market program has provided weekly deliveries of fresh fruits and vegetables (and other needs, like toilet paper and sanitary products) to the homes of all YouthGROW families. **We can't wait to see what moments of growth 2021 brings.**

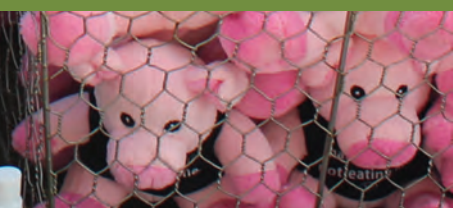
"At YouthGROW, I know people will always have my back. I get encouragement. YouthGROW is an open space where I can put my feelings out there, and I know I will not be judged. I have had a chance to meet people from different backgrounds, learn from them, and get support. I also get to remember what it's like to grow things, especially peppers--my favorite."
Jefferson Zziwa, YouthGROW Leader.



FARMERS MARKETS



With the help of dedicated staff, community supporters and generous sponsors, we offered uninterrupted and safe access to local, farm fresh produce to food insecure areas of our region all year long.



FARMERS MARKETS HIGHLIGHTS

2020 was a year of creative adaptation for our Farmers Markets. As soon as news of the pandemic arrived, we launched a new pilot program we called HIP2Go, offering no/low contact pre-order and pickup of local produce eligible for subsidized purchase through the state funded Healthy Incentives Program.

We simultaneously worked with our local Division of Public Health and were able to successfully open our markets with only a one week delay from our planned start date in June with new COVID safety guidelines and infrastructure. **We were able to serve 10 Mobile Market stops weekly, from June through October, in addition to Monday, Friday, and Saturday markets at Beaver Brook and University Park.** All REC Markets in 2020 remained certified to participate in the Healthy Incentives Program and accepted SNAP, WIC, and Senior Coupons, as well as credit, debit, and cash.

In addition to running markets six days a week, our team worked with local partners to be a part of a community response to pandemic related increased in food insecurity. **Mobile Market staff packed and delivered 970 bags of fresh and local fruits and vegetables for families at the Great Brook Valley and Main South Boys and Girls Clubs** and coordinated 6,000 additional pounds of produce donations to 4 local food pantries over the course of the spring and summer months of 2020. We launched a new pilot program in partnership with Project Bread and Mass Health to provide produce delivery or farmers market coupons to patients with chronic complex care conditions. We also worked to coordinate and promote opportunities at REC markets for residents to donate their P-EBT by purchasing from local farms to donate to local food pantries.



Rounding out 2020 came the launch of our HIP2Go Winter Markets which offer a brand new online storefront, multilingual landing page, and 5 pick up location choices in Worcester and Webster, MA.

>80%
of customers
receiving economic
assistance

14
unique
market
stops

14
local
vendors
supported
at
market



99,375
lbs of produce
sold at market

5,545
unique customers
served

UGROW

urban garden resources of Worcester



REC's UGROW program supported both our network of 60+ community and school gardens and the broader gardening community in Worcester this past year. We saw a tremendous increase in interest and enthusiasm around gardening during the pandemic and had fun thinking of ways to include more people in our growing network.

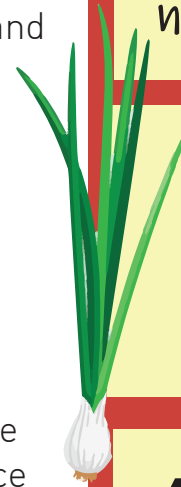
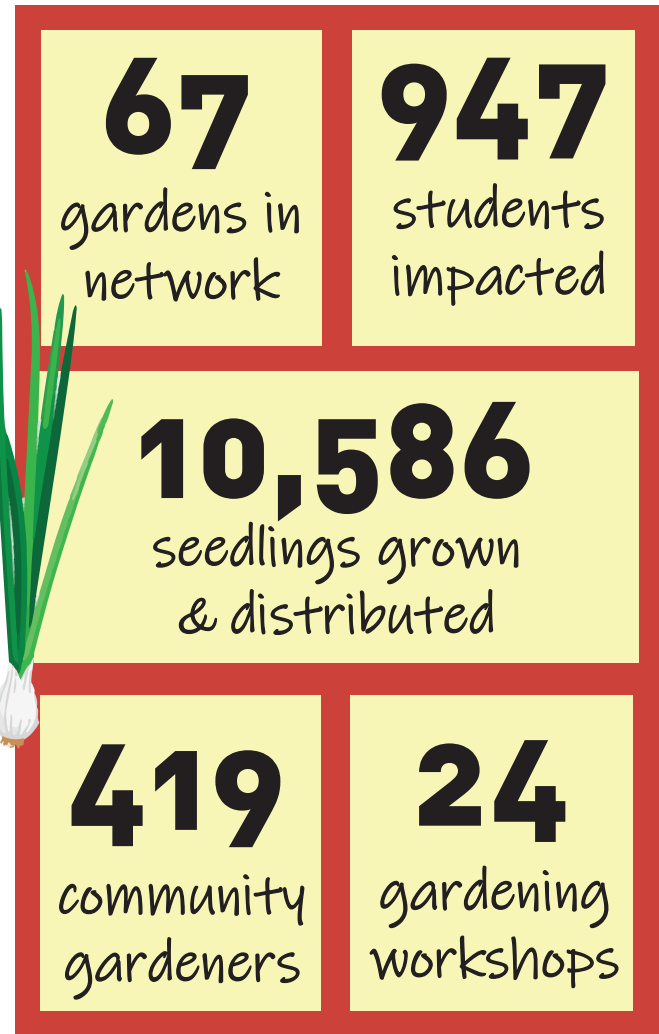
UGROW HIGHLIGHTS

Our UGROW network grew alongside the seedlings in 2020! We launched our UGROW Resource page to share information and resources on safe soil, planting techniques, and local garden businesses. The UGROW team coordinated **construction of 14 backyard gardens and 2 community gardens**, one at Coes Pond Playground/Stearns Tavern through a grant with the Health Foundation and Seven Hills and a second at Lincoln Village.

We were able to develop **a series of virtual workshops and also hosted in-person, socially distanced workshops and work days for garlic planting and cover crops** (in partnership with Worcester County Conservation District).

Our staff visited the Nuestro Huerto EAT Center site weekly for the first half of the season and then twice weekly. With support from Fallon Health, we coordinated wholesale purchase of produce through the Mobile Markets as well as subsidized donations to culturally targeted emergency food distribution programs that were created in response to the pandemic.

We began our contract for a new USDA Farm to School grant in summer of 2020 which provides funding for **more intensive support for three School Garden sites, North High, May Street School, and Vernon Hill School**. With support from WPS District curriculum coaches and input from our school partners, we developed school garden resources for remote learning, including **workshops on soil erosion, student surveys to inform new garden design, and read-aloud garden videos, paired with book distribution to students!**



“I have met many neighbors and community members all of whom are appreciative of the garden's progress in terms of benefitting the neighborhood.”

Ellen, Community Gardener

ANNUAL PLANT SALE

10



We saw a tremendous increase in interest and enthusiasm around gardening this year, beginning with an increased demand for seeds and plants. We made a shift for our annual Spring Garden Festival and Plant Sale to a curbside pickup model and sliding scale, pay what you can pricing system in order to help meet this community need.

We sold the most plants this year in the event's history!

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS

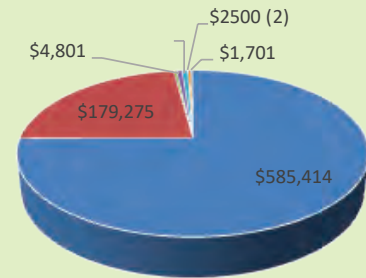
CURRENT ASSETS

Cash	\$	585,414
Contributions & Grants Receivable	\$	181,775
Prepaid Expenses	\$	4,801
Total Current Assets	\$	771,990

Fixed Assets - Net	\$	92,163
---------------------------	-----------	---------------

OTHER ASSETS

Restricted Cash	\$	5,000
LT Contribution Receivable	\$	2,500
Investments	\$	1,701
TOTAL ASSETS	\$	873,354



- Cash & Cash Equivalents
- Contributions Receivable
- Restricted Cash
- Investments
- Grants and Contracts Receivable
- Prepaid Expenses
- LT Contribution Receivable

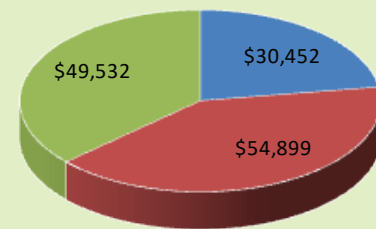
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

CURRENT LIABILITIES

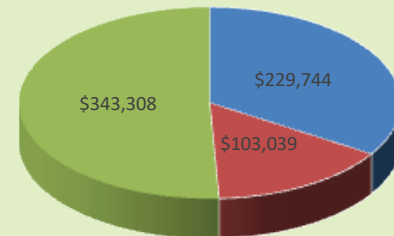
Accounts Payable	\$	30,452
Accrued Expenses	\$	54,899
Current Portion of Notes Payable	\$	49,532
Total Current Liabilities	\$	134,883

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$	229,744
Restricted Net Assets	\$	343,308
Board Designated Assets	\$	103,039
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$	676,091
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$	873,354



- Accounts Payable
- Accrued Expenses
- Current Portion of Notes Payable



- Unrestricted Net Assets
- Board Designated Assets
- Restricted Net Assets



THANK YOU

to our supporters

We are so grateful to thank the over 525+ individual donors and supporters who make our mission possible throughout Worcester and Central Massachusetts. Thank you! In addition, we'd like to thank the foundations, government agencies, and businesses listed below that also provide essential support.



Our Funders

Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, Hermann Foundation, DCU for Kids, Hoche Scofield Foundation, Howard E. Stark Charitable, J. Irving England & Jane L. England Charitable Trust, Merck Family Fund, Lawson Valentine Foundation, Mabel Louise Riley Foundation, Frank W. and Carl S. Adams Memorial Fund, Green Leaf Foundation, Hanover Insurance Group Foundation, A.J. Letourneau, Inc., AbbVie Bioresearch Center, Albert W. Rice Charitable Foundation, Alice Willard Dorr Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Blue Hive, Boston Mutual Life, City of Worcester, Corporate Environmental Advisors, Davis Publications,, E. L. Harvey & Sons, E4TheFuture, EcoTec, Inc., Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Fallon Health, Farm Credit East, First Unitarian Church of Worcester, Fred Harris Daniels Foundation, George I. Alden Trust, Foundation, IC Federal Credit Union, Main South Community Development Corporation, Mass Audubon, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Melvin S. Cutler Charitable Foundation, National Grid, People's United Community Foundation, Plourde Family Charitable Trust, Reliant Foundation, Rockwell Foundation, Salmon Family Foundation, Sap Castle, Seven Hills Foundation, St. Pierre Manufacturing Corporation, Stoddard Charitable Trust, Sustainable Comfort, Inc., Bancroft School, The Fletcher Foundation, The Philanthropic Initiative, The Schwartz Charitable Foundation, Sudbury Foundation, Tighe & Bond, UMass Medical School, UMass Memorial Health Care, UNFI Foundation, United States Department of Agriculture, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Worcester Common Ground, Worcester Garden Club

THANK YOU

to our supporters

COVID-19 Response Funders

Fred Harris Daniels Foundation, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, Reliant Foundation, The Sudbury Foundation, United Way of Central Massachusetts, Worcester Together.

Farmers' Market

Clark University, Cornerstone Bank, Country Bank, Farm Credit East, Massachusetts Food Trust, Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Mass Cultural Council, Mass in Motion, Organic Valley, Farm Credit East, Project Bread, Rollstone Bank, UniBank, Wegmans

Plant Sale

Bay State Savings Bank, College of the Holy Cross, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, Open Sky Community Services, Park Print, Redemption Rock Brewing, Reliant Medical Group, Tufts Public Health Plans, Whole Foods Market, Workers Credit Union



Farm to Your Table

Miller Fence, Newbury Investment Partners, Redemption Rock Brewing Co., Worcester County Food Bank

Our Partners

AmeriCorps VISTA, Commonwealth Corporation



The Regional Environmental Council

We're bringing people together to create a just food system and to build healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities in Worcester, MA and beyond.

