



**BOSTON  
FARMS**

# STRATEGIC PLAN (2020-22)

Adopted February 20, 2020



**Executive Summary** | By 2022, the Boston Farms Community Land Trust (Boston Farms) will be a model entity for developing and providing access to urban farms. We will achieve this by creating a stable base of operations, founded in a viable system of (1) farm acquisition and development, (2) property management, (3) farmer leasing and support, (4) neighborhood stewardship, and (5) operational sustainability. We will maintain a strong relationship with the Urban Farming Institute (UFI), as our primary partner and lessee. This plan is written as Boston Farms assumes responsibility for the farmsite work initiated by UFI, and sets out principles, goals, and objectives over the next three years.

# Organization Overview

**Mission:** Boston Farms Community Land Trust (Boston Farms) turns vacant urban land into collective opportunity, supporting neighborhood farmers to grow the food that sustains us.

**Vision:** Urban agriculture provides a path of equity for neighborhood residents -- predominantly people of color -- to gain a stake in a thriving, green economy, by transforming underutilized land into anchors of neighborhood vitality and stability. We envision a city full of thriving neighborhood farms, which community members can access as farmers, neighbors, or households seeking fresh food.

**Origin:** Boston Farms was created in 2017 by the Urban Farming Institute (UFI), as an independent organization to develop and manage urban farmland. Whereas UFI focuses on education and farming operations, Boston Farms focuses on property development, management, and stewardship.

## Our Beliefs & Values:

- Urban agriculture creates economic opportunity for neighborhood residents
- Urban farms create access to healthy, locally-grown food
- Farmland availability, farm development, and year-round management are core barriers to entry and operational success for urban farmers
- Local control of land ensures that benefits remain in neighborhoods for the long-term, through changing market and other conditions
- The Community Land Trust is a proven model to achieve these goals

## Our Approach:

- Acquire sites in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan that are appropriate for urban farming, in locations where neighborhood residents desire to have a farm
- Develop land into farming sites
- Lease sites to urban farmers in ways that support farmers' operational and financial success
- Act as long-term stewards of farmsites, preserving productive growing sites
- Partner with the Urban Farming Institute and other organizations to advance our mission

## Key Accomplishments to Date:

- Acquired 5 farmsites totaling 1.3 acres, previously developed in collaboration with partner organizations (Urban Farming Institute, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative/Dudley Neighbors Inc, Trust for Public Land) and acquired with support from pro bono legal counsel (Nixon Peabody)
- Secured \$250,000 in startup funding, which includes \$170K raised by leadership of the Urban Farming Institute, and \$80K from additional private sources
- Established board comprised of local leaders, experienced farmers, and individuals with financial and real estate development expertise -- who predominantly reside in the neighborhoods we serve
- Hired a Community Property Manager (50% of full-time-equivalent (FTE)) to manage sites, support farmers, and steward neighborhood relations, an Advancement Coordinator (13% FTE) to pursue ongoing funding, and an Administrative Coordinator (8% FTE) to support operations
- Initiated development of farm leasing processes and documentation
- Established offices in Mattapan, co-located with the Urban Farming Institute
- Legally incorporated the organization, and received 501(c)3 tax-exempt status
- Actively participated in the founding and growth of the Greater Boston Community Land Trust Network

# Three Year Strategic Plan

By 2022, Boston Farms Community Land Trust (Boston Farms) will be a model entity for developing and providing access to urban farms. We will achieve this by creating a stable base of operations, founded in a viable system of **(1) farm acquisition and development, (2) property management, (3) farmer leasing and support, (4) neighborhood stewardship, and (5) operational sustainability.**

Over the next 3 years, we will concentrate our resources on developing strong systems for managing our existing farmsites. While we will not immediately seek out any addition of new farms, we will simultaneously develop a farmsite acquisition and development strategy, to guide future expansion as funding allows. We believe this approach provides a sustainable pathway to secure the existing assets of the organization and define a strong reputation and brand, while enabling future growth of our capacities and reach.

To measure our success, our primary outcome determinants will be (1) the amount and quality of urban farmland made available to neighborhood farmers, (2) the alignment of our farmer demographics with our mission, (3) the commercial productivity and economic impact of our farms, (4) the engagement level of neighborhood residents, and (5) the sustainability of our operating structure.

## **(1) Acquisition & Development (AD)**

### **Guiding Principles and Priorities:**

- Acquire existing, mission-aligned farm sites which could benefit from unified management
- Acquire and develop new farms in neighborhoods where residents support the use
- Acquire and develop farms in a sustainable manner, and only as organizational resources allow
- Employ environmentally sustainable farm development practices

### **Key Initiatives:**

- Develop a Farmsite Acquisition & Development Plan to steer future growth, including standardization of processes and site design to allow for cost-effectiveness and scale
- Continuously identify prospective farmsites and conduct pre-acquisition due diligence, neighborhood and city relations, site design, resource development, and dialogue with site owners and partners
- Hire an Acquisitions & Development Manager (50% FTE) to oversee growth plan

### **Resources Needed:**

- Farm development partners and vendors
- Staff capacity and board expertise
- Fundraising capacity for capital investment
- Legal support

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## (2) Property Management (PM)

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### Guiding Principles and Priorities:

- Maintain sites in strong operational condition and physical appearance
- Pursue financially sustainable models of farm maintenance and capital improvement
- Ensure long-term soil health through sustainable farm maintenance and management practices

### Key Initiatives:

- Create and implement a Maintenance & Management Plan, including capital investment plan
- Ensure ongoing farm readiness, for use by a range of neighborhood farmers
- Monitor and maintain compliance with public regulations
- Conduct risk analysis and pursue risk mitigation strategies

### Resources Needed:

- Farm maintenance partner and vendors
- Staff capacity and board expertise
- Fundraising capacity for programs, operations, and risk mitigation

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## (3) Farmer Leasing & Support (LS)

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### Guiding Principles and Priorities:

- Make urban farms accessible to neighborhood farmers ready to sustain a commercial operation
- Prioritize access for neighborhood residents and farmers of color
- Provide the Urban Farming Institute with access to farmland to support its programming
- Support farmers with knowledge and resources to be operationally and economically successful
- Leverage the Urban Farming Institute training program as a pipeline of mission-aligned farmers

### Key Initiatives:

- Develop leasing process and documentation, and develop implementation timeline
- Create memorandum of understanding with Urban Farming Institute regarding organizational relationship and commitments
- Cultivate pipeline of interested neighborhood farmers
- Create Farmer Success Plan to create and implement strategies for farmer support, including technical assistance, equipment access, startup lending, and access to commercial markets

### Resources Needed:

- Farmer support partners and vendors
- Staff capacity and board expertise
- Fundraising capacity for farm support tools
- Legal support

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## (4) Neighborhood Stewardship (NS)

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### Guiding Principles and Priorities:

- Create and cultivate local control of our farmsites
- Engage local neighbors and organizations in our mission, and provide access to the farmsites
- Ensure that sites are neighborhood assets which enhance the quality of life for local residents
- Support farmers as neighborhood ambassadors

### Key Initiatives:

- Codify and refine existing neighborhood outreach efforts into Neighborhood Engagement Plan, including creating neighborhood advisory groups, and maintaining relations with neighborhood organizations

### Resources Needed:

- Partnerships and ongoing engagement with community organizations in farmsite neighborhoods
- Staff capacity and board expertise
- Fundraising capacity for neighbor engagement

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## (5) Operational Sustainability (OS)

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### Guiding Principles and Priorities:

- Develop a strong, working board with strong neighborhood representation, to oversee governance, pursue funding, and build the core processes of the organization
- Hire staff, as able, to build operational capacity
- Pursue funding growth, with a focus on the long-term sustainability of the organization

### Key Initiatives:

- Create and implement Board Composition Plan to assess board needs and set targets for representation by people of color, local residents, and farmers
- Hire an Executive Director (50% FTE) to oversee operations and pursue funding
- Cultivate connections with a range of funding entities, including individual donors, foundations, and government agencies
- Evaluate strategic plan outcomes and create new 3-Year Strategic Plan (2023-2026)

### Resources Needed:

- Engaged board, and ongoing board development training
- Staff capacity and board expertise
- Supportive funding partnerships

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Farmsite Acquisition & Development Plan
- Farmsite Maintenance & Management Plan
- Neighborhood Engagement Plan
- Board Composition Plan
- 2020-22 Fundraising Plan & Budget
- Memorandum of Understanding - Urban Farming Institute

# STRATEGIC PLAN (2020-22) - OPERATIONAL TIMELINE

Actions		Resources & Partnerships
Year 1 (2020)		
AD	Complete integration of 4 existing farm sites and 1 donated vacant parcel	Legal services
AD	Create Acquisition & Development Plan	
PM	Create and launch Maintenance & Management Plan, including capital investment plan, and vendor qualifications and processes	Contract services
LS	Develop leasing process and documents, including farmer selection committee	Stakeholder input/ Legal services
LS	Lease 4 existing farm sites to Urban Farming Institute	
LS	Identify and prepare 1 site to lease to a new entity in Year 2	
LS	Release RFQ for site, select farmer, enter into lease	Legal services
LS	Create and launch Farmer Success Plan	Stakeholder input
NS	Create and implement Neighborhood Engagement Plan, including creation of neighborhood advisory committees	Stakeholder input
OS	Create Board Composition Plan	
Year 2 (2021)		
AD	Hire Acquisition & Development Manager (50% FTE)	
AD	Pursue site control and funding for 1 new site	Pre-development partners
PM	Maintain, measure, and improve Maintenance & Management Plan	Contract services
LS	Evaluate, improve, and conduct farm re-leasing	Stakeholder input/ Legal services
LS	Implement, measure, and increase farmer support services	Farmers input
NS	Maintain, measure, and improve Neighborhood Engagement Plan	Stakeholder input
OS	Hire Executive Director (50% FTE)	
Year 3 (2022)		
AD	Acquire and develop 1 site into lease-ready farm	Development partners
AD	Pursue site control and funding for 1 additional new site	Pre-development partners
PM	Maintain, measure, and improve Maintenance & Management Plan	Contract services
LS	Evaluate, improve, and conduct farm re-leasing	Stakeholder input/ Legal services
LS	Implement, measure, and increase farmer support services	Farmers input
NS	Maintain, measure, and improve Neighborhood Engagement Plan	Stakeholder input
OS	Evaluate outcomes and create new 3-Year Strategic Plan	