



The Green Coalition of Atlantic City

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

For More Information Contact:

[Virginia Rettig at 609-408-2065, email: green_coalition@cropsnj.org]

RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS ATLANTIC CITY URBAN AGRICULTURE LEGISLATION

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ - The Green Coalition of Atlantic City (GCAC) recently held a press conference at Atlantic City Arts Foundation's ARTeriors to announce a groundbreaking urban agriculture ordinance that is currently under review by the Atlantic City Council. The Urban Agriculture District Overlay establishes a zoning district overlay in residential, commercial, and resort development districts, permitting urban agriculture and ecological resilience, and promoting areas appropriate for development or redevelopment on private and city-owned land that is underutilized and undersized.

The measure was approved in its first vote by the Council in their November meeting. "The overlay will promote urban agriculture and other sustainability objectives, including specifically repurposing vacant lots here in Atlantic City to meet ecological and food security objectives," stated Ayana Plummer, Principal Community Organization Specialist for Atlantic City.

The ordinance is intended to benefit residents, community-based organizations, small urban farmers and growers, and educational institutions in residential, neighborhood, commercial, and resort districts. "There is a strong desire from urban farmers to grow food for their neighbors, and some of the biggest challenges are access to land and water," stated Lisa Newcomb, Executive Director of C.R.O.P.S., a

non-profit organization that focuses on alleviating food insecurity in Atlantic County. “The Overlay will provide easier approval for urban farmers to commercially farm.”

New Jersey State Secretary of Agriculture, Ed Wengryn, provided the following statement ahead of the press conference, “As Secretary of Agriculture for New Jersey, I am excited by the continued success of the efforts by C.R.O.P.S. and the Green Coalition of Atlantic City in furthering development of New Jersey’s food system. The adoption of an Urban Agriculture ordinance by the city is a huge step in bringing the pieces together to promote urban agriculture and expand food access in Atlantic City. By encouraging a diversified portfolio of agriculture systems, from community and rooftop gardens to hydroponics and raised bed production, the ordinance protects those assets, connects them with the State’s agriculture programs, and ensures a future for New Jersey as the Garden State.”

The two-year-old Green Coalition of Atlantic City supports the overlay as it will encourage residents to create spaces to grow food and plant flower gardens that benefit the insects needed to pollinate that food. Green Coalition co-founder Virginia Rettig said, “This forward-thinking legislation will empower community members to reimagine their own yards and balconies to be a part of greening Atlantic City.”

The press conference also drew attention and support to a State Senate bill S4350/A5627, created by Senators Shirley K. Turner and Bob Smith, that would establish a statewide program to acquire and preserve underutilized and vacant urban land across New Jersey for farming, community gardening, and urban forestry. The State Senate bill would empower the Garden State Preservation Trust and local municipalities to purchase or secure development rights on city parcels, lease them to nonprofits, community organizations, and farmers, and offer stewardship grants for soil health, climate resilience, water/erosion control, and workforce/education development. The synergistic nature of the pending local ordinance and State Senate bill is poised to strengthen food access, equity, environmental resilience, and economic opportunity in historically underserved urban communities.

The Urban Agriculture District Overlay is the first of its kind in the State of New Jersey. The second vote will be held on Wednesday, December 17, at 5:00 PM at Council Chambers.

The Green Coalition of Atlantic City was founded in 2023 as a working group of urban gardeners, farmers, conservationists, and community activists dedicated to addressing food equity and sovereignty in Atlantic City. Our goal, through partnership with local government, is to create functional, productive gardens and green spaces throughout our community.