

Annual Report 2021



MillCityGrows.org

Mill City Grows Board of Directors

John Wooding
Elizabeth "Biz" Campbell
Emma Campbell
Kelly Will
Robert Boley
Jocelyn Bishop
Tara Hong
Jamie Klufts, MPH
Diego Leonardo
Yesenia Maysonet
Jack Moynihan
Vannak Theng

Many thanks to our board members who completed their service in 2021:

Adam Baacke
Kesiah Bascom
Paul Schor



MCG Team Members 2021-2022

Jessica Wilson
Ali Jacobs
Katherine Davis
Enrique Vargas

EXECUTIVE TEAM

Maddie Grant
Anna Marinescu
Brian Mariano
Grace McKay
Randall Violette

FOOD ACCESS

Giuliana Cappucci
Macayla Cote
Charline Xu
Maggie Montoya
Veronique Ok
Maggie Nowak
Basma Alaani
Molly Groulx
Bridget McAndrews

EDUCATION

Chaya Sophon
Trang Dong

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Kerri Keeler
Suzanne Cromwell

DEVELOPMENT

Solimar Berrios
Dai Kim

ADMINISTRATION

Hannah Allard
Karelyn Cardenas
Gabriela Batista Oliveira
Jaspa Urena

SEASONAL CREW

A Message from the Board President and Executive Director

Dear Mill City Grows Friends and Supporters,

At the start of 2021, we were filled with deep gratitude for all our partners, donors, volunteers, and community members. Your support got us through 2020. Thanks to you we were able to continue growing for Lowell and serving our community fresh, local produce throughout the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For MCG, 2021 was a year of growth and sustainability. As the world tried to deal with the new realities of the pandemic and our communities received vaccines, we reopened most of our programming that shut down in 2020. Of course, the pandemic has had a lasting impact on food security, so Mill City Grows has worked hard to expand all food access programs directly serving families in our community.

While our work in 2020 was focused on responding to community needs, 2021 allowed us to look ahead and make plans for a stronger future. We conducted a Community Food Assessment that engaged more than 1,000 residents in nine different languages. We expanded our CSA Veggie Box Program with home delivery, developed a new program to increase the number of small growers in the Merrimack Valley, and built a new community garden.

Local food systems are crucial to our communities' ability to eat and nourish ourselves. We will always support the physical health of all of our residents, work to curb the impacts of climate change, and to ensure food justice. We are so thankful to the community of Lowell for embracing our local food movement, and are honored to partner with growers, chefs, community organizations, philanthropists, and food policy advocates in this work.

In Solidarity,
John and Jessica



Our Mission Statement

Mill City Grows (MCG) fosters food justice by improving physical health, economic independence, and environmental sustainability in Lowell through increased access to land, locally-grown food, and education.

Mill City Grows was founded in 2011 as a catalyst for food justice, ensuring that all people of Lowell have access to culturally connected food, land, and education.

Our vision is a community that understands how to grow and prepare fresh food to support the long-term health of people and the land.

Equitable access to land, knowledge, and fresh, culturally connected food is necessary for positive health outcomes, sustainable food policies, and access to life-giving food for our entire community.



Laying the Groundwork for the Next 10 Years: The Lowell Community Food Assessment

Mill City Grows was founded after a Community Food Assessment (CFA), conducted by our Co-Founder Lydia Sisson, helped to uncover the high levels of food insecurity and the lack of fresh produce available in Lowell. Nearly 10 years later, and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw the need to update our Community Food Assessment.

MCG's Director of Programs, Ali Jacobs, and our Co-Founder and former Executive Director, Francey Slater, worked throughout 2021 to collect public data for this CFA. They engaged a 7-member steering committee; collected 1,004 resident surveys; collected 23 surveys from emergency food providers; collected 19 surveys from local food producers; conducted 7 focus groups with Lowell residents; interviewed 20 key informants; and conducted an in-person inventory of 83 food retailers in Lowell. During the assessment, we worked with over 50 local organizations and partners to do outreach, administer surveys, and organize focus groups. All of our methods were specifically focused on receiving data from communities who have been historically excluded from access to resources, including but not limited to immigrants and refugees, youth, seniors, BIPOC communities, low income families, people experiencing chronic illness, and unhoused people.

Our findings indicate that affordability and accessibility are major obstacles to food security and that residents value food that is fresh, nutritious, and culturally connected. Recommendations include increasing affordability; improving retail options; more food education; more gardening and urban agriculture; and access to better storage, delivery, and healthy prepared foods that would improve quality of life for households.

This CFA will guide future policy, strategies, and projects at all levels of Lowell's government, economy, and social services. As a direct result of the CFA findings, Mill City Grows will establish two new programs in 2022, the Lowell Food Policy Council and the Merrimack Valley Grower's Aid Program, and expand our Food Is Medicine programming. These programs will strengthen food policy advocacy, increase access to land for growers, and provide more food education for residents with chronic illness.

Read the Lowell Community Food Assessment Report
MillCityGrows.org/lowellcfa-2022

Growing Community: Armory Park Garden

In 2021 we added our 8th community garden in Lowell at Armory Park. With help from staff and a large team of volunteers from **The Mission Continues**, **18 new garden** beds were constructed to serve **15 families** with three serving as shared community plots. In total, we maintained **202 garden beds** with **450+ gardeners** registered in **8 community gardens**.



Supporting Local Growers and Farmers

Three gardeners maintained 100 bed feet of growing space at our Middlesex farm in 2021. **These Market Gardeners focused on natural dye plants, Kenyan cultural crops, and emergency staple crops for Centerville residents.** We provided technical assistance to 8 area growers, and will launch the Merrimack Valley Growers Aid Program at the Rist Urban Agriculture Farm to formalize our offerings to small growers and expand our local food system.



365 Days of Impact

GROW

30,000 pounds of food was grown across all our urban farms and gardens.

463 volunteers served more than **6.131** hours across all our programs.

200 families (over **400** individuals) are utilizing one of our gardens to grow their own food.

EAT

\$97,651 worth of produce was distributed through our Mobile Market, CSA Veggie Box, and School Food Programs. Of this food, **\$75,490 (77%)** was completely free to residents through donations or benefits programs like SNAP/HIP, Farmers Market Coupons, and Flex Services.

LEARN

Educators provided **116** hours of direct education to **1,831** students in public schools.

More than **14,000** students have access to a school garden in Lowell.

MCG hosted **6** Farm to Table cooking classes for youth and adults.

40 adults engaged in garden education classes.

11 growers received training and technical assistance through our Market Garden program.



School-Based Education

Mill City Grows educators were back in schools in 2021, providing professional development for teachers, ongoing school garden maintenance, and in-school, afterschool, and specialty programming for students of all ages.

2021 programs include 18 School Gardens in Lowell Public Schools (LPS), as well as cafeteria-based Lowell Farm to School programming. We collaborate with over 200 district staff, teachers, parents, and 21 paid School Garden Coordinators. MCG staff support LPS teachers through in-school and after school programs using the school gardens to teach nutrition and garden-based education. Staff collaborate to establish a district-wide Middle School Curriculum that aligns with social studies and science standards that can be taught in school gardens.

In summer 2021, realizing that our 2021-22 school programming may continue to be impacted by COVID guidelines, we took a train-the-trainer approach to school gardens to ensure these spaces would be included in the next school year, regardless of where students learn. We offered a 3-day professional development workshop for 24 LPS teachers, introducing ways they can utilize school gardens, nutrition and gardening education, and culturally connected recipes as part of in-person and virtual education to augment their existing curricula and lesson plans.



A group of volunteers is working in a school garden. In the foreground, a woman in a maroon tank top and grey pants is using a yellow-handled rake to spread brown mulch. To her right, a brown wheelbarrow with 'TRUE TEMPER' written on it is partially visible. In the background, other volunteers are working near raised garden beds filled with green plants and orange flowers. A brick building is visible in the distance under a clear blue sky.

Volunteers help spread mulch at the Robinson-McAuliffe School Garden in Lowell.

Gratitude To Our Volunteers!

In 2021, we hosted 463 volunteers who completed over 6,131 volunteer hours across all our programs. We welcome both individuals and groups and we match skills-based volunteers with upcoming and ongoing projects that directly support Mill City Grows' mission. We also proactively seek volunteers that have specific skills and/or are subject matter experts in a variety of fields, including fundraising, technical writing, photography, graphic design, and academic research. **Thank you to our dedicated 2021 volunteers!**

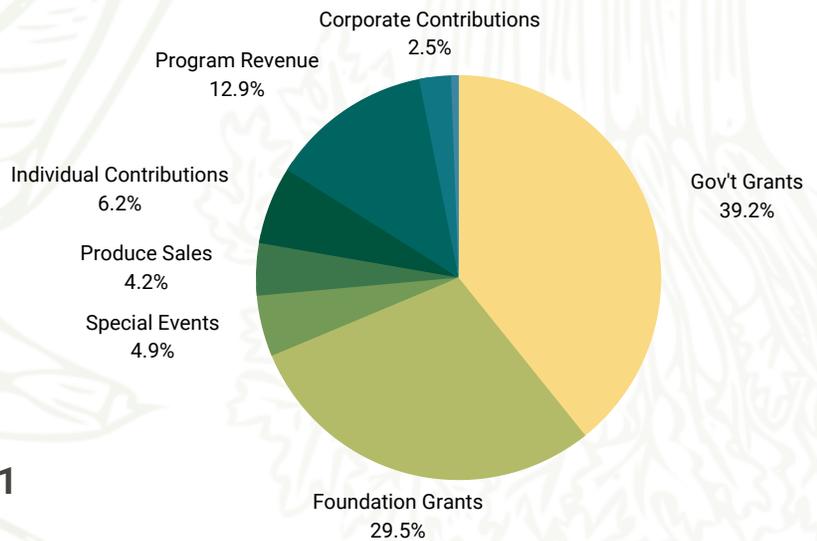


Financial Statements

Mill City Grows is a 501(c)3 non-profit, as recognized by the IRS. The following figures are taken from audited financial statements from calendar year 2021.

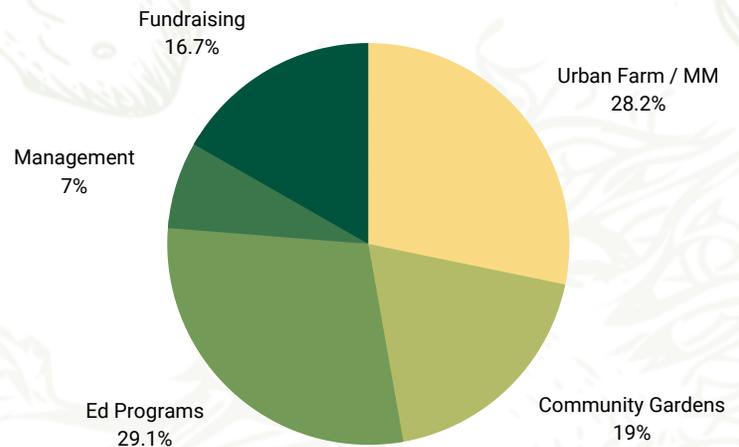
Revenue

Government Grants	\$607,112
Foundation Grants	\$455,799
Special Events	\$75,577
Produce Sales	\$64,653
Individual Contributions	\$95,923
Program Revenue	\$200,008
Corporate Contributions	\$39,116
In-kind/Misc	\$9,103
Total Revenue	\$1,547,291



Expenses

Urban Farm / Mobile Market	\$400,790
Community Gardens	\$269,219
Education Programs	\$413,309
Management & General	\$101,045
Fundraising	\$237,515
Total Expenses	\$1,421,878





MCG Community Gardener, Sreyvan Nget, tends her bed at Rotary Club Park Garden.

Support our healthy food movement, invest in our community, and expand Lowell's food system.

Join us at MillCityGrows.org



Growing for Lowell since 2011

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