

Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

Project Name: *Lots of Hope Urban Greenhouse*

- **Year Complete:** 2018
- **Local Government:** City of Providence, RI
- **Local Foundation:** Rhode Island Foundation

Project Purpose

To support urban agriculture season extension, linkages to food service procurement, and school-based composting through conversion of vacant, city-owned properties into the Lots of Hope Urban Greenhouse.

Key Lessons Learned

Lessons learned about tools and tactics through the project that other sustainability directors could use to advance their work.

- Note the importance of buy-in from local elected officials and the neighborhood. The Greenhouse was supported by the ward's councilmember who was able to advocate for the farm and hold community meetings. At the same time, some members of the city council seemed to express frustration that they had not been engaged in discussions about leasing the land earlier in the process for the project.
- Make sure to establish clear expectations with all constituencies about cost and time.
- Design the program for low resource growers in order to minimize pushback for use of city property as a for-profit market farm.
- Design a garden for both market production and school garden use in order to minimize pushback from neighbors.
- Season extension facility infrastructure is more time-consuming and costly to execute than a traditional farm with raised or mounded beds, but served a specific need in the community.
- It is important to designate time and personnel for school engagement and curriculum development.
- The project team had difficulty of integrating local sourcing into school food service purchasing when school food service is run by a contracted vendor; this process required patience and ongoing conversation.
- Engage other city departments in the development and implementation of the proposal. This helped to solidify the program in the city. It also helped to build the relationship with the Rhode

Island Foundation beyond just the Directors of the Healthy Communities and Sustainability Offices.

Lessons for developing a collaborative process between a local government sustainability director and local place-based foundation(s).

Be sure to engage as many interested parties as possible in discussions about the project, and don't be too quick to assume your list is complete. Be clear on expectations for cost and time. Be sensitive to existing processes, and patient with implementing change as it may effect more entities than you realize.

Additional Information and Resources

These efforts built on work completed in Round 2. In June 2015, the City of Providence was awarded an RI Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) grant to produce a Farmer's Guide to conducting on-site farm sales in Providence. More information on the Lots of Hope Initiative can be found [here](#).