



City of New Haven
Food System Policy Division

March 30, 2021

The Honorable Tyisha Walker-Myers
President, Board of Alders
City of New Haven
165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510

Dear Alder President Walker-Myers,

In accordance with the Order of the Board of Aldermen authorizing the Mayor to apply for and accept all grants on behalf of the City of New Haven, passed on October 17, 1994, I am writing to respectfully advise the Honorable Board of an application by the City of New Haven's Food System Policy Division (FSPD) to the CT Department of Agriculture. The FSPD is applying for up to \$75,000 over a three-year period from the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP).

While New Haven has a vibrant urban agriculture community, like many other cities, limited training and market opportunities have been slow to accommodate its growth. This is especially so for specialty crops, which is defined by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), and nursery crops (including floriculture).

The FSPD would like to better use its close community partnerships and in-house expertise to support local food systems and urban growing in each neighborhood. For example, the FSPD would be able to address specialty crop access and competitiveness by engaging with local partners to provide an urban agricultural education workshop series in parallel with and complementary to the FSPD's development of New Haven's first Urban Agriculture Master Plan. Also, in collaboration with local organizational and business stakeholders the FSPD will connect with both emerging and established food entrepreneurs and culinarians to engage them in (hyper)local urban agricultural efforts. Moreover, in order to better support urban growers - especially Black, Brown, low-income, new, beginning, and otherwise socially disadvantaged farmers - to start or further expand their pursuit of urban specialty crop cultivation, the FSPD, in partnership neighborhood residents and other City agencies such as the public library system, will establish community-led, publicly-accessible seed libraries of culturally-relevant crops throughout New Haven.

Complementary to our USDA grant-funded Urban Agriculture Master Planning process, the SCBGP funding will help us reach a substantially larger population through comprehensive educational opportunities, and the collection and introduction of culturally-appropriate seeds and crops to our local food system. Ultimately, the FSPD is committed to creating a just, equitable local food system in New Haven by identifying root causes of food insecurity and overcoming these obstacles with sustainable, high-impact solutions.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Latha Swamy
Director of Food System Policy
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