



Executive Summary

Growing Opportunity: An Action Plan to Unleash the Economic Potential of Urban Agriculture in the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) faces converging pressures; climate volatility, fragile supply chains, accelerating farmland loss, and widening food inequality, that demand a coordinated, systems-level response. This action plan, commissioned by the **Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA)** and developed in partnership with the **Barrett Centre of Innovation in Sustainable Urban Agriculture at Durham College**, presents a framework for scaling commercially viable urban agriculture (UA) across the region.

Drawing on three practitioner case studies (Mighty Harvest (ON), Lufa Farms (QC), and Southlands (BC)), the report identifies eight strategic opportunities spanning zoning reform, infrastructure alignment, property tax classification, workforce development, agrihood-based community design, local supply chain investment, and regional governance. Collectively, these opportunities address the structural barriers that have constrained UA growth and prevented isolated pilots from scaling into a coherent regional food system.

Central to the plan's argument is the concept of the "missing middle" – the processing, aggregation, incubation, and distribution infrastructure that connects producers to urban markets. Without deliberate policy intervention, this connective layer remains underfunded and unplanned, limiting the economic multiplier effect of local food investment.

The GHFFA, through its 2021–2026 Action Plan, provides the collaborative mandate and cross-municipal platform necessary to align policy, advocate for regulatory reform, and coordinate regional implementation. The Barrett Centre serves as a living laboratory and institutional anchor, embedding applied research, technical training, and innovation directly into UA practice.

This report is a call for urgent, coordinated action: aligning zoning with practice, recognizing food systems as essential infrastructure, and embedding reconciliation with Indigenous Nations as a foundational principle. Incremental approaches are insufficient; the GGH possesses the assets, institutions, and networks to lead globally in food-system resilience – but only through deliberate, regional-scale commitment.

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