Background

In early 2014, the Boston Redevelopment Authority expects to pass new Urban Agriculture zoning laws meant to streamline the process of establishing a farm within city limits. These new regulations have the potential to increase access to fresh and healthy food throughout the city, particularly in neighborhoods experiencing a disproportionate level of blight. In 2013 a team of Tufts graduate students did a survey of Urban Agriculture opportunities in Boston. For this project, the same methodology and criteria was used, with a few modifications. Rooftop farming is also addressed in Article 89, and a survey of potential rooftops is included in this project. These new regulations have the potential to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables. This highlights public health potential for including an educational element to farms throughout the city, and especially in the neighborhoods experiencing health disparities such as high levels of chronic disease and childhood obesity. When creating plans for neighborhood development, organizations might want to prioritize vacant land plots and eligible rooftops that are within walking distance, or a PedShed, of a Boston Public School.

Schools

It has been shown that involvement in vegetable cultivation can increase children’s acceptance of fruits and vegetables. This highlights public health potential for including an educational element to farms throughout the city, and especially in the neighborhoods experiencing health disparities such as high levels of chronic disease and childhood obesity. When creating plans for neighborhood development, organizations might want to prioritize vacant land plots and eligible rooftops that are within walking distance, or a PedShed, of a Boston Public School.

Earthos Institute and Grove Hall

The Earthos Institute is working with the community of Grove Hall to determine needs for a development project. The Institute hopes to create a mapping program that can help community members prioritize different development options. This project will help inform community members of the potential to harness Grove Hall’s agricultural past to create a safer, healthier community of the future.

Conclusion

There are few parcels that meet the “prime farming” criteria. However, most of these parcels are located in walking distance to a school. Additionally, there are quite a few rooftops that meet the size requirement for profitable agriculture. More research should be done to evaluate the potential for rooftop farming in Boston. These parcels and rooftops, if developed into farms, have the potential to partner with school groups to support healthy initiatives in Boston Schools.