

# PZ-SPUSE-23-000014

Menu Reports Help

File Date: [05/04/2023](#)

Application Status: [Pending](#)

Assigned To: [Owen Deutsch](#)

Description of Work: [Hartford Land Bank \(HLB\) & Keney Park Sustainability Project \(KPSP\) are partnering with three respected and established Urban Farm organizations in Hartford, with the goal of revitalizing three separate vacant lots into active urban farms and community gardens. This project will benefit Hartford residents immensely by providing educational opportunities, access to gardening, affordable and healthy fruits and vegetables, and aesthetic improvements to blighted lots. 53 Benton Street is currently blighted and vacant, and this urban farm proposal will aid in creating overall neighborhood change for residents. The proposed new owner of this property will be Aasaaska Foundation LLC's Aarvah Quinonez.](#)

Application Detail: [Detail](#)

Application Type: [Special Permit](#)

Documents:	File Name	Document Group	Category	Description	Type	Document Status	Document Status Date
	<a href="#">53 Benton Street - Har...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Approved Issued...	The following attac...	application/msword	Uploaded	12/20/2022
	<a href="#">53 Benton Letter of In...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Letter of Intent	This updated letter...	application/pdf	Uploaded	03/14/2023
	<a href="#">English Letter to Neig...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Other Support D...	This is a template ...	application/pdf	Uploaded	03/14/2023
	<a href="#">Spanish Letter to Neig...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Other Support D...	This is a template ...	application/pdf	Uploaded	03/14/2023
	<a href="#">53 Benton Narrative fo...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Site Plan	Attached is Aasaask...	application/pdf	Uploaded	03/14/2023
	<a href="#">KPSP LOS 53 Benton Str...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Other Support D...	This is a letter of...	application/pdf	Uploaded	04/19/2023
	<a href="#">53 Benton Street Resid...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Other Support D...	Additional letters ...	application/pdf	Uploaded	04/19/2023
	<a href="#">53 Benton Soil Testing...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Existing Condit...	Soil Testing (Opt O...	image/x-png	Uploaded	04/24/2023
	<a href="#">Letter of Support MARG...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Other Support D...	A signed letter of ...	application/pdf	Uploaded	04/24/2023
	<a href="#">Notarized Letter for P...</a>	PLNG_SITEMIN	Sign Plan	Notarized Letter fo...	image/jpeg	Uploaded	04/25/2023
	<a href="#">5-3-23 Urban Farm Prop...</a>	PLNG_SPUSE			application/pdf	Uploaded	05/05/2023

[Show all](#)

Address: [53 BENTON ST, HARTFORD, CT 06114](#)

Owner Name: [HARTFORD LAND BANK INC](#)

Owner Address: [30 LAUREL ST SUITE 3D, HARTFORD, CT 06106](#)

Application Name:

Parcel No: [251676151](#)

Contact Info:	Name	Organization Name	Contact Type	Contact Primary Address	Status
	<a href="#">HARTFORD LAND BANK INC</a>	<a href="#">HARTFORD LAND B...</a>	Owner	<a href="#">Mailing_30 Laurel Str...</a>	Active
	<a href="#">Aarvah Quinonez</a>	<a href="#">Aasaaska</a>	Authorized Agent	<a href="#">Mailing_34 Branford ...</a>	Active
	<a href="#">HARTFORD LAND BANK INC</a>	<a href="#">HARTFORD LAND B...</a>	Applicant	<a href="#">Mailing_30 Laurel Str...</a>	Active

Licensed Professionals Info:	Primary	License Number	License Type	Name	Business Name	Business License #

Job Value: [\\$0.00](#)

Total Fee Assessed: [\\$600.00](#)

Total Fee Invoiced: [\\$600.00](#)

Balance: [\\$600.00](#)

Custom Fields: [PLNG\\_SITEMJR\\_CF](#)

GIS Information

Zoning District <a href="#">NX-2</a>	Zoning Overlay -	FEMA Flood Zone -	Land Use Per Assessor <a href="#">CITY OF HARTFORD OTHER MUNICIPAL PROPERTY</a>
NRZ <a href="#">MARG NRZ</a>	Neighborhood <a href="#">BARRY SQUARE</a>	Local Historic District -	

Historic District	Historic Landmark/Site	State Historic District
-		<a href="#">Benton Street</a>
Dispersion met?	Identify Dispersion	National Historic District
<a href="#">No</a>	-	-

---

General Project Information

Is this application a result of a violation notice?	Zoning Enforcement Case ID #
<a href="#">No</a>	-
Does this project include a demolition?	Does this project include any tree removal?
<a href="#">No</a>	<a href="#">No</a>
Is there an increase of five or more parking spaces?	Does this project include new construction, including additions to a primary structure?
<a href="#">No</a>	
Does this project include new proposed accessory structures?	Are facade alterations proposed?
<a href="#">No</a>	<a href="#">No</a>
Does this project include any new signage or alteration to existing signage?	
<a href="#">No</a>	
Existing Impervious Surface (Sq. Ft)	Proposed Impervious Surface (Sq. Ft)
-	-
Total Project Area (Sq. Ft)	
-	

---

Site Information

Existing Building Type	Proposed Building Type
<a href="#">N/A</a>	<a href="#">N/A</a>
Existing Use	Proposed Use
<a href="#">Household</a>	<a href="#">Urban Farm</a>
<a href="#">Living One-Unit</a>	
<a href="#">Dwelling</a>	
Fee Use	
<a href="#">Open Space Uses</a>	

---

Recommendations

Consistency with POCD	Adverse Impacts on Neighboring Lands
-	-
Suitability as Presently Zoned	Recommendation
-	-

---

Other Payment Required

Green Infrastructure Fund      Amount  
-

City Tree Fund                      Amount  
-

Complete Streets Fund              Amount  
-

Describe Reason for Payments  
-

---

Reason for Request

Reason for Request

-  
PLNG\_SITEMJR\_DIGEPLAN  
Enhanced Doc List  
[Open](#)

Dates and Notices

Application Received

Open Hearing Deadline

Close Hearing Deadline

-  
Decision Deadline

-  
Extensions Requested?

-  
If yes, describe how the dates above have changed

-  
Notice sent to NRZ/CRCOG

-  
Legal Ad #1

-  
Legal Ad #2

-  
Sign Affidavit Received

-  
Certificate of Mailings Returned

-  
Notice of Decision Published

-  
Recordation Date

-  
Approval Expiration Date

-  
Sign Deposit Check #

-  
Sign Deposit Date Received

-  
Sign Deposit Check Amount

-  
Public Hearing Date

-  
Public Hearing Time

-  
Meeting Link or Location

-  
Document Link

---

Certificate of Compliance

As-Built Drawing Date

Type of Bond

Escrow Account #

-  
Bonding Company Name

-  
Bonding Contact Name

-  
Bonding Primary Phone #

-  
Bonding Email

-  
Drawings Number of Sheets

-  
Drawings Last Revised

---

Prior Approvals

Type of Permit/Authorization    Issued By    Issued Date    Expiration Date

Resolution Clauses

Type    Comment

---

Workflow Status:    Task                      Assigned To                      Status                      Status Date                      Action By

[Application Intake](#)                      Owen Deutsch  
Plans Distribution

Task	Assigned To	Status	Status Date	Action By
Building Review				
Engineering Review				
Police Review				
City Forester Review				
Planning and Zoning Re...				
Utilities Review				
NRZ				
CTDOT Review				
Adjacent Municipalitie...				
Fire Marshal Review				
Staff Report				
Public Notice				
Planning and Zoning Co...				
Notice of Decision				
Appeal Period				
Recordation				
Permit Issuance				
Permit Status				
Certificate of Plannin...				
Case Complete				

**Condition Status:** Name Short Comments Status Apply Date Severity Action By

**Application Comments:** View ID Comment Date

**Initiated by Product:** AV360

**Scheduled/Pending Inspections:** Inspection Type Scheduled Date Inspector Status Comments

**Resulted Inspections:** Inspection Type Inspection Date Inspector Status Comments



# AASAASKA FOUNDATION

BEE THE CHANGE

January 4, 2023

Aarvah Quinonez

Founder

Aasaaska Foundation LLC

To Whom It May Concern:

Aasaaska Foundation focuses on education and empowerment centered around young men in the community. We inspire them to attain economic motivation through achievement and innovativeness. Ultimately, we practice and teach young people sustainable and regenerative growing practices, and how to install and maintain beehives in locations where there are urban farmers. These urban farmers are able to reap the many benefits of pollination as we use the opportunity to educate our farming community on ways to help protect pollinators such as, but not limited to, the honeybee. As young men learn about the vital roles of bees in the environment and develop better relationships with the land they become increasingly connected and attune to community resiliency. Our initiatives target the communities' young men in order to arm them with a sense of pride and leadership that empowers them to support, take pride in, and be proud of their communities. We have established a solid rapport with other organizations throughout Greater Hartford, the surrounding area and even in some parts of Massachusetts. We continue to collaborate on ideas that increase overall wellbeing and connectedness throughout the farming community and beyond.

This property will be used for cold and dry storage of produce and beekeeping supplies. Ideally kept in current structure on premises with foundation as is. If current structure is not sound, we will erect a 20 x 20 structure no more than 10ft high for storage purposes. Urban Farming and conservation demonstrations will be some activities taking place. Will have at least 2 compact hydroponic systems to grow greens and provide a water sources for bees.

On the exterior of the property we will build and install as many raised beds as possible, with a target of no less than 16. We will not be panting anything directly in the ground at this location, as it is not possible. This will also prevent any run-off of water in any direction. The raised beds will be evenly placed with clear paths between them. There will be some beds that are more handi-capped accessible by being higher off the ground. We will also like to plant raised beds (2 beds) on the exterior of the fence. There will be a food pantry also placed on the exterior. All produce will be organically grown and maintained. No pesticides will be used within operation. I hope to have electricity running to the lot in order to put a refrigerator on

the exterior from an organization in Bridgeport Ct called Fridgeport. If there is no running water set up at this location, that will be a task that I will be looking into obtaining as it is necessary for the success of life of the project.

We would like to install wrought iron fencing at 6 ft or the highest height allowed. All brush will be cleared around the exterior to give clear view of all parts of the property at all times.

We would like to have solar installed preferably on the structure, if not have it installed on the ground as a shield for bees from sun. Will catch rain water and consider all other cost effective, sustainable methods of farming.

Aasaaska will comply with city ordinances, in regards to hours of operation, visibility of and through site (lighting and clear brush), noise ex. (any assembly of raised beds), general cleanliness of tools and equipment, and composting, which will not be done at this site.

# **AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC**

## **Letter of Support For 53 Benton St Hartford, CT**

To Whom it may concern,

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a resident of the Barry Square neighborhood where the proposed urban farm revitalization is located.

I would like to voice my support for the project, because I believe it will add immense value to my neighborhood, and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that myself and my neighbors would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, I can feel that some of my food supply can be safe and can be sourced within my own neighborhood. I can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. I love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long-term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching my family how to get started growing ourselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, I believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and voice my support for this project.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

**FROM THE OFFICE OF**

## **AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC**

February 20, 2023

Dear Neighbor,

My name is Aarvah Quiñonez of Aasaaska Foundation. We are an Indigenous Black Latina Woman owned, young BIPOC Male led Urban Farming and Beekeeping organization within the city of Hartford, who is working with the Hartford Land Bank and the City of Hartford on a vacant lot revitalization project at 53 Benton St.

Our vision for 53 Benton St is to create an urban demonstration farm, growing fresh organic produce and herbs in raised beds, and to host occasional hands-on urban farm trainings, classes, demonstrations, and other events the community may be interested in attending.

I am a Hartford native; my parents were raised in Hartford and my siblings and I grew up in Bowles Park on the other side of town. It means a lot to me personally to be directly involved in bringing agriculture to this area, as something that completely transformed my life. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to revitalize this space with fresh produce and a family-friendly, positive atmosphere in the neighborhood.

I know from experience the need for a security plan. First priority on the development plan is to install 6 ft perimeter fencing around the entire property, with a locked gated access. In addition, we will stay in contact with the local police officer responsible for this neighborhood to ensure the space is not being used for other than what it was intended for. We plan on installing electricity to the lot as well, at which point we will install security cameras and some lights. This is a key business operation for us, and we will be very present in maintaining and protecting the space.

We hope you are excited to have us as neighbors and we pray that you will derive some benefit from our presence here! If you would like to see this urban demonstration farm come to fruition, please sign a letter of support on our behalf.

Aarvah Quinonez - Aasaaska Foundation LLC

DE LA OFICINA DE

20 DE FEBRERO DE 2022

Querido vecino,

Mi nombre es Aarvah Quiñonez de la Fundación Aasaaska. Somos una organización de Agricultura Urbana y Apicultura dirigida por mujeres latinas negras indígenas dentro de la ciudad de Hartford, que está trabajando con el Hartford Land Bank y la Ciudad de Hartford en un proyecto de revitalización de terreno baldíos en 53 Benton St.

Nuestra visión para 53 Benton St es crear una granja de demostración urbana, cultivando productos orgánicos frescos y hierbas en camas elevadas, y organizar capacitaciones prácticas ocasionales en granjas urbanas, clases, demostraciones y otros eventos a los que la comunidad pueda estar interesada en asistir.

Soy nativo de Hartford; mis padres se criaron en Hartford y mis hermanos y yo crecimos en Bowles Park, al otro lado de la ciudad. Significa mucho para mí personalmente estar directamente involucrado en traer la agricultura a esta área, como algo que transformó completamente mi vida. Estamos encantados de tener la oportunidad de revitalizar este espacio con productos frescos y un ambiente familiar y positivo en el vecindario.

Sé por experiencia la necesidad de un plan de seguridad. La primera prioridad en el plan de desarrollo es instalar unas cercas perimetrales de 6 pies alrededor de toda la propiedad, con un acceso cerrado cerrado. Además, nos mantendremos en contacto con el oficial de policía local responsable de este vecindario para garantizar que el espacio no se use para otra cosa que no sea para lo que estaba destinado. También planeamos instalar electricidad en el lote, momento en el que instalaremos cámaras de seguridad y algunas luces. Esta es una operación comercial clave para nosotros, y estaremos muy presentes en el mantenimiento y protección del espacio.

¡Esperamos que estén emocionados de tenernos como vecinos y oramos para que obtengan algún beneficio de nuestra presencia aquí! Si desea que esta granja de demostración urbana llegue a buen término, firme una carta de apoyo en nuestro nombre.

Aarvah Quinonez - Fundación Aasaaska LLC

## FUNDACIÓN ASAASKA LLC

### Carta de apoyo para 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

A quien le interese, Mi nombre es \_\_\_\_\_. Soy residente del vecindario de Barry Square, donde se encuentra la revitalización de la granja urbana propuesta.

Me gustaría expresar mi apoyo al proyecto, porque creo que agregará un inmenso valor a mi vecindario y proporcionará una salida necesaria para los alimentos recién cultivados de los que yo y mis vecinos nos beneficiaríamos.

A medida que los precios de las tiendas de comestibles continúan aumentando y el costo de los alimentos continúa aumentando, puedo sentir que parte de mi suministro de alimentos puede ser seguro y puede obtenerse dentro de mi propio vecindario. Puedo conocer a los agricultores urbanos que cultivan los alimentos y ver de primera mano que se cultivan de la manera correcta, en ausencia de productos químicos. Me encanta que Aasaaska Foundation LLC planea cultivar verduras y hierbas orgánicas que serán una fuente de alimento segura y a largo plazo para la comunidad que vive aquí y serán muy atractivas y aumentarán la calidad del aire y el valor estético del vecindario.

Además de la oportunidad de comprar productos frescos, la granja urbana albergaba clases ocasionales orientadas a enseñar a mi familia cómo comenzar a cultivar nosotros mismos. Esto les daría a los jóvenes y personas mayores del vecindario un espacio positivo y una salida en un ambiente pacífico, y la oportunidad de perfeccionar sus habilidades en el cultivo y cuidado de las plantas. Aprender a cuidar y mantener un jardín y verlo llegar a buen término para la temporada de cosecha es algo que genera confianza en estos jóvenes y demuestra sus habilidades innatas. Nuestros jóvenes necesitan este tipo de oportunidades y alternativas positivas.

En conclusión, creo que la granja urbana propuesta en 53 Benton Street sería un activo para la comunidad y expreso mi apoyo a este proyecto.

Sinceramente,

---

2/23/23

**Letter of Intent for the City of Hartford – Aasaaska Foundation LLC To whom it may concern,**

**We at Aasaaska Foundation would like to introduce ourselves and give an overview of our vision and plans for the 53 Benton St property in Hartford, CT, and demonstrate adherence to Town Code and applicable Zoning Laws.**

- 1. Introductions and Vision** Aasaaska foundation LLC is an urban farm and beekeeping collective in the Greater Hartford area founded by Aarvah Quinonez. Aasaaska Foundation offers ongoing education and maintenance services for other farmers/gardeners in urban spaces that have beehives, but may not have the time or training to fully care for them on their own. We organically grow our produce with a focus on serving our BIPOC community. Our produce is grown with our immigrant community in mind. The bulk of this produce is sweet and hot peppers native to the Caribbean, South America, Asia and Africa, a variety of okras and onions. We also grow herbs and other seasonal vegetables. Our vision for 53 Benton St is to create a welcoming educational environment for the community to plan, plant, grow and eat together. We hope that with our demonstrations, support to and from the community we serve, that farming will become the norm as we teach urban residents how to do the same in their own environment. In addition to educational demonstrations, our lot will feature edible fruit trees and shrubs in containers, and raised garden beds with seasonal production of vegetables such as greens, onions, cucumber, tomatoes, peppers, beets and more. Produce grown in this lot will be prioritized to be sold in the direct community - at local bodegas, or direct to neighbors. We aim to make the space a positive, inviting space for the surrounding neighborhood where residents can learn how to grow their own food hands-on and through participation in our classes throughout the season.
- 2. Structures, Purpose & Zoning Adherence**

**Construction/Structures:** We plan on constructing the following accessory structures on the lot.

- i. One 20' x 20' Wooden storage shed, 10' in height in the same exact spot of current structure, only if current structure is not structurally sound.
- ii. One 4'x 4' x 6' wooden food pantry with hard cloth cover to keep from attracting any animals.
- iii. Fourteen to Eighteen wooden raised beds 12'x6' with bottom soil barrier.

### **Water:**

We plan to install a water spigot on site that connects to the yard hydrant that will be installed after MDC taps into the line. This property has not previously had running water. Inside of the storage shed will be the wash station. The wash station will include a graded gravel catchment system that connects to a drain to funnel all excess water to the sewage system.

### **Compost:**

No composting will be done at this site.

### **Fencing:**

Our lot will be enclosed by a 6 ft wrought iron perimeter fence around the total area, with one gated entrance which will be kept locked.

### **Lighting and Security:**

Our lot will be lit by a series of modest 120 lumen solar-powered, motion-detection lights. We will install two by the front gate entrance, one on each corner of storage shed. These lights detect activity up to 35' in range, and serve the purpose of deterring trespassers. That being said we do not anticipate them being in regular use after hours and are a precautionary/security measure. We will install a real-time camera system to monitor the property.



## **Soil Testing, Maintenance, and Suitability for Agriculture Production:**

Soil testing has been conducted and the results provided by NRCS with appropriate recommendations for use. Past use of this lot left it heavily compacted with process and gravel therefore in- ground planting will not be done at 53 Benton St. We will be growing only in raised beds in this lot, with a soil barrier to prevent soil contamination from the soil beneath. We will lay woodchip mulch paths down for walk ways and to keep ground clear of brush and weeds.

The site will be maintained using organic agricultural practices, including the use of organic amendments only

At the end of the growing season (no later than December 1st), all beds will be managed by mowing, maintenance of a winter break.

## **Signage:**

Signage with appropriate contact information for the person responsible for the site will be included and visible.

## **Hours of Operation:**

The Urban Farm activities on 53 Benton Street will be confined to the hours of 7 am - 9 pm daily. When this space is closed for the winter as well as during the growing season, there will be weekly check ins at space. This includes weather related maintenance such as snow and leaf removal.

## **Equipment and Use:**

This lot will be used for small-scale farming production, which precludes the regular use of most agricultural equipment. We do not plan on housing any large-scale equipment on the premises. Use of the push-mower and weed whacker will be only for periodic lawn maintenance, with anticipated use less than one day per month.

All other tools will be hand-scale, including broad forks, spading forks, shovels, hoes, trowels, etc.

## **Odor concerns:**

There will be no displeasing odors produced from agricultural operations that will affect the nearby area. The garden raised beds will be in regular

use on a weekly basis, with attentive care to monitoring temperature, ratio of materials, and to ensure the proper balance of all materials. We foresee no incidence where any area of the property would be unmanaged to the point of producing odors and do not anticipate this being a problem.

We look forward to moving forward with the permit and construction process and are happy to field any supplemental questions that arise from the plans stated above.

**Best Regards, Aarvah Quinonez, Aasaaska Foundation LLC**



March 20, 2023

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP), I am pleased to express my support for the rezoning of 53 Benton Street into an urban farm. KPSP's mission is to connect people to the healing power of nature. We engage thousands of residents, predominantly from the north Hartford region. Some of our core programs include gardening and demonstration projects including composting, hydroponic gardening, and mushroom cultivation. We host activities that include garden kit distribution, broad distribution of fresh and locally-grown food, a mobile teaching kitchen, workforce experience for Hartford youth via our trail maintenance and wood milling, leading a network of urban farmers, and numerous pop-up events.

Recently, we have been collaborating with the Hartford Land Bank on a Vacant Lot Activation Project. Through this project, KPSP is supporting the development of 10 vacant lots over the next 3 years into farmer-owned urban farms. Vacant lots around the City of Hartford will be transferred directly to the ownership of experienced urban farmers of color, all with strong ties to the Hartford community. After receiving positive feedback from neighbors, 53 Benton Street is one of the 3 lots this year that has been slated to be activated into an urban farm. Aarvah Quinonez, founder of Aasaaska Foundation, will develop the vacant lot into an urban farm. KPSP has undergone extensive conversations with Aarvah about her intentions for the lot. We believe that her plan to host training sessions open to the community to teach them how to grow their own food in an urban setting will create increased access to fresh produce. Additionally, Aasaaska Foundation specializes in growing a wide variety of peppers and herbs indigenous to other countries, which will expand neighbors' access to foods that are culturally relevant and difficult to find.

KPSP is committed to supporting the success of the activation of 53 Benton Street. As a community partner, we will:

- Include Aasaaska Foundation as a partner on relevant grants relating to activating vacant lots;
- Provide material support (mulch, soil, woodchips, etc.) that further the revitalization of 53 Benton Street;
- Offer individualized and group meetings to check-in on the progress of activating the lot throughout the entire process;
- Participate in project implementation and evaluation activities including data collection, as appropriate; and
- Spread awareness about projects and community events hosted by Aasaaska Foundation.

KPSP wholeheartedly endorses rezoning 53 Benton Street into an urban farm, which will support community connectivity and wellbeing. Please feel free to contact me to further discuss my support for this project at [herb@keneyarksustainability.org](mailto:herb@keneyarksustainability.org) or (860) 333-8711.

Sincerely,

Herb Virgo  
Founder/Executive Director

---

**Keney Park Sustainability Project** aims to provide hands-on training, on-site demonstrations, education outreach, and community collaborations that help families become more self-sustainable and environmentally conscious while preserving the historic Keney Park. **Phone:** 860-333-8711 **Fax:** 860-722-6555 **Address:** P.O. Box 1924 Hartford, CT 06114 **Email:** [keneyarksustainability@gmail.com](mailto:keneyarksustainability@gmail.com) **Website:** [www.keneyarksustainability.org](http://www.keneyarksustainability.org)

# AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC

## Letter of Support For

### 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Angel Garcia. I am a resident of the Barry Square neighborhood where the proposed urban farm revitalization is located.

I would like to voice my support for the project, because I believe it will add immense value to my neighborhood, and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that myself and my neighbors would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, I can feel that some of my food supply can be safe and can be sourced within my own neighborhood. I can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. I love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long-term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching my family how to get started growing ourselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, I believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and voice my support for this project.

Sincerely, Angel Gracia



# AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC

## Letter of Support For

### 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Vannessa Pheal. I am a resident of the Barry Square neighborhood where the proposed urban farm revitalization is located.

I would like to voice my support for the project, because I believe it will add immense value to my neighborhood, and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that myself and my neighbors would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, I can feel that some of my food supply can be safe and can be sourced within my own neighborhood. I can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. I love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long-term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching my family how to get started growing ourselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, I believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and voice my support for this project.

Sincerely, Vannessa Pheal

# AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC

## Letter of Support For 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

To Whom it may concern,

My name is ELLA ROGERS. I am a resident of the Barry Square neighborhood where the proposed urban farm revitalization is located.

I would like to voice my support for the project, because I believe it will add immense value to my neighborhood, and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that myself and my neighbors would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, I can feel that some of my food supply can be safe and can be sourced within my own neighborhood. I can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. I love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long-term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching my family how to get started growing ourselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, I believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and voice my support for this project.

Sincerely, ELLA ROGERS



# AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC

## Letter of Support For

### 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

To Whom it may concern,

My name is Anthony Rivera. I am a resident of the Barry Square neighborhood where the proposed urban farm revitalization is located.

I would like to voice my support for the project, because I believe it will add immense value to my neighborhood, and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that myself and my neighbors would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, I can feel that some of my food supply can be safe and can be sourced within my own neighborhood. I can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. I love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long-term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching my family how to get started growing ourselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, I believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and voice my support for this project.

Sincerely,

Anthony Rivera

# AASAASKA FOUNDATION LLC

## Letter of Support For 53 Benton St Hartford, CT

To Whom it may concern,

The Maple Ave Revitalization Group would like to formally support the Aasaaska Foundation's proposed urban farm initiative, which will intel changing the current 53 Benton St zoning usage to an urban farm.

We would like to voice our support for the project, because we believe it will add immense value to our neighborhood and provide a needed outlet for freshly grown food that the community would benefit from.

As grocery store prices continue to rise and the cost of food continues to increase, we can feel that some of our food supply can be safe and can be sourced within our own neighborhood. We can get to know the urban farmers who are growing the food and see firsthand that it's being grown the right way, in the absence of chemicals. We love that Aasaaska Foundation LLC plans to grow organic vegetables and herbs which will be a safe and long- term food source for the community who lives here and will be very attractive and increase the air quality and aesthetic value of the neighborhood.

In addition to the opportunity to purchase fresh produce, the urban farm would host occasional classes geared towards teaching families how to get started growing themselves. This would give the youth and seniors in the neighborhood a positive space and outlet in a peaceful environment, and the opportunity to hone their skills in growing and tending for plants. Learning to care for and maintain a garden and see it come into fruition for harvest season is something that builds confidence in these young people, and demonstrates their innate abilities. Our youth need these kinds of positive opportunities and alternatives.

In conclusion, we believe the 53 Benton Street proposed urban farm would be an asset to the community and we voice our support for this project.

Sincerely,

Chairwoman



Hyacinth Yennie

830 Maple Ave  
Hartford CT 06114



### ***How Does Farming Work in Urban Areas in CT?***

- Farmers in urban and rural areas both use the same farming practices; the difference between urban and rural is simply how they use their space.
  - Tactics such as growing vertically, closely managing soil health, maximizing the natural resources of the area, and growing throughout the entire year are key tenets of farming in urban locations.
  - In urban areas, extensive mapping and planning is required before growing produce, to ensure a substantial yield that meets client needs.
  - Most farmers have experience growing in urban, suburban, and rural locations. Urban farmers adjust their techniques to meet the space they have and to the standards they desire.
  - In urban areas, farmers collaborate, connect and build a network of support with other farmers in their area to ensure everyone's success; this includes the sharing of clients and resources.
  - Hartford is a farming community and is representative of multiple cultures and people. Hartford's farmers provide residents access to culturally relevant foods not typically available in stores. In addition, since Hartford does not have a traditional grocery store, local farmers are the best option for organic and nutrient dense produce.
  - As a result, farmers in Hartford areas have a deep cultural connection with clients they sell to.
  - In Hartford, roughly 10 square feet can provide 10 to 50 pounds of food, depending on the produce. Our farmers, based upon their experience and expertise can expect to be within the following range of production:
    - A minimum of 5,500 pounds of food per growing season.
    - A maximum of 28,000 pounds of food is feasible depending on client need, weather, soil management, and other extenuating factors.
    - Both the minimum and maximum estimations are dependent on the choice of the species of the produce grown (ie: bell peppers vs hot peppers, cherry tomato vs roma tomato, and so on).
    - The use of perennial foods allows for Urban Farmers to maintain consistent plant health. Foods and herbs that come back every year are important for continued success and higher yield over time. This is especially important because it takes time for urban farmers to remediate soil.
      - The health of produce grown also trends upward each year in the same plot of land.
      - Thus, Urban Farmers having their own plots of land will be best to increase soil amendments over time and to grow more produce in years to come. Put simply, the soil will only get better each growing season, leading to a higher yield each year.
  - The Right to Farm Law: "Agricultural or farming operation not deemed a nuisance (Department of Agriculture, 2023)."
-

### ***What Defines an Urban Farm?***

“Urban Farms. A ground or roof-level agricultural operation of any size, excluding agricultural growing (such as aquaculture) occurring in a permanent indoor facility other than a farm structure, which is used for urban agriculture for commercial purposes, whether for profit or non-profit, with a single entity serving as the primary operator (City of Hartford, 2022).”

“Urban Farms play a vital role in our cities, providing access to healthy, local food, green space that benefits both body and mind, and more (CLF, 2021).”

“While the practice of farming in areas outside of what we’d typically consider farmland may seem new, urban farming has a long history (Unity, 2023).”

Urban farming can provide avenues to positive change, such as locally raised products, redevelopment, community/civic pride, and fresh, healthy food for residents (Unity, 2023).

“The city has remained committed to urban farming. A Chicago lawmaker introduced a bill in 2017 to establish urban agriculture zones across the city and the state in an effort to break up food deserts and help underserved communities. It was vetoed by the governor, but in November 2018, the Illinois Senate approved an override by a vote of 49-1. Overall, urban farms in Chicago have ballooned. At the time of publishing, the Chicago Urban Agriculture Mapping Project has identified 871 urban farms around the city (Aurora University, 2019).”

USDA defines a farm as any place that produced and sold—or normally would have produced and sold—at least \$1,000 of agricultural products during a given year (USDA, 2022).

---

### ***Background***

Hartford Land Bank (HLB) & Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP) are partnering with two respected and established Urban Farm organizations in Hartford, with the goal of revitalizing two separate vacant lots into active urban farms. Each community was canvassed three times and positive feedback was received from neighbors. Letters of support are linked in this document.

Please note: For every property, HLB has a deed restriction set in place. This is arranged in case the buyer of the property does not comply with usage of the property, runs into unforeseen financial issues, and so on. In any of these events, the property will revert back to HLB with a quick claim deed.

---

**Aarvah Quiñonez & The Aasaaska Foundation LLC**

**Proposal for 53 Benton Street**

[aasaaskafoundation@gmail.com](mailto:aasaaskafoundation@gmail.com)

### *About Aarvah & Aasaaska Foundation LLC*

- Aarvah founded Aasaaska Foundation in 2020. Aasaaska Foundation is an Indigenous Black Latina woman owned, young BIPOC male led urban farming and beekeeping organization within the city of Hartford.

### *Aarvah & Aasaaska Foundation LLC Business Goals*

- Aasaaska Foundation directly serves their mirrored community. Aasaaska harnesses the energy, image and personalities of our young people to teach and promote the importance of growing, purchasing and eating locally grown food. The activation of 53 Benton Street will give Aasaaska Foundation a much-needed site to teach others while providing fresh locally-grown produce for our neighbors, friends, and family.

### *Aasaaska Foundation LLC Farming & Business Practices*

- Aasaaska Foundation began as a small-scale growing operation in 2020 and is still in the process of expanding and establishing itself. Since 2020, they have focused on applying the knowledge gained from agricultural and beekeeping coursework and training. The acquisition of 53 Benton Street is an important step in laying the foundation for our LLC. Since they are in the beginning stages of our urban farming business, they do not currently have any contracts to sell food to any organizations or school systems. They are unable to predict the specific, expected amount of produce we will grow or sell.
- In the past, Aasaaska Foundation sold at pop-up events hosted by Keney Park Sustainability Project and donated excess produce to Foodshare. They did not establish any contracts because they were still experimenting with the types of crops they were growing and growing conditions
  - Due to this, they could not promise a set amount of produce at specific intervals to any contractees.
- Their plan with 53 Benton Street is to expand our growing operations to increase the amount of produce grown and sold. They are working to create a curriculum to train others how to grow their own food and care for bees.
- **They will not have any active beehives at 53 Benton Street.**
- More on beehives: Each hive can produce between 60-80 pounds of honey per year, depending on various factors, such as:
  - Hive placement
  - Weather
  - Pests
  - Geographic location
  - Local flora
  - Temperature
  - Pesticide exposure
  - Diseases
  - Competition
  - Aarvah plans to grow appropriately 300 various plants and herbs that vary in weight. It is imperative to understand that they need and can use this space for storage of our materials. A hive starts out at 25% of its size at the beginning of

the season. There is a need for safe clean storage of the other 75% as well as many other materials, such as food, medicine and PPE.

#### *Aasaaska Foundation LLC Materials*

Aarvah's most recent presentation (including site layout) and project narrative can be found here, as well as uploaded on the City of Hartford P & Z Site

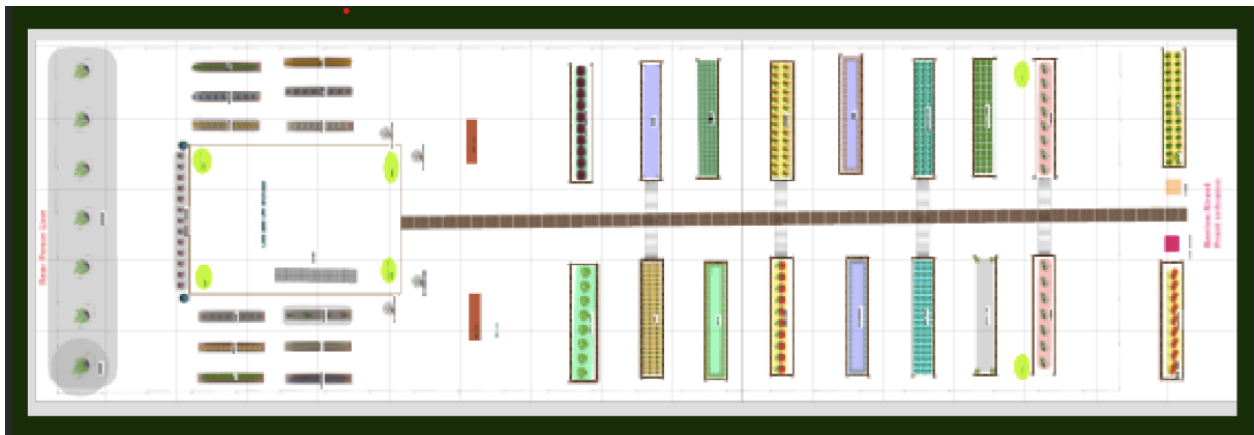
- [Aasaaska Benton St. Presentation \(3.5.23\).pdf](#)
- [53 Benton Narrative for NRZ \(2.23.23\).pdf](#)

#### *Aasaaska Foundation LLC Letters of Support (Including NRZ Letter)*

- [Letter of Support MARG NRZ 53 Benton Street.pdf](#)
- [Letter of Support MARG NRZ 53 Benton Street.pdf](#)
- [KPSP LOS 53 Benton Street \(3.20.23\).pdf](#)
- [53 Benton Street Resident Letters of Support \(4 Total\).pdf](#)

#### *Image of Site Plan:*

The image is a bit distorted but it is up to scale.



---

#### **Lauren Little & Lauren Little Edutainment LLC**

##### **Proposal for 176 Clark Street**

[laurenlittleedutainment@gmail.com](mailto:laurenlittleedutainment@gmail.com)

#### *About Lauren & Lauren Little Edutainment (LLE) LLC*

Lauren Little is the founder of Lauren Little Edutainment. Lauren Little Edutainment specializes in farming, urban agriculture curriculum, and environmental education for all ages. Services are designed to educate and train individuals on how to develop an understanding of the Earth.

#### *Lauren Little Edutainment LLC Business Goals:*

- LLE's role is to work with partners to be able to impact every single student in Hartford and to increase their access to locally grown produce.




- LLE aims to help residents of Hartford, and especially students and their families, develop a relationship with nature through the art of farming.
- All recipients of LLE services increase their understanding of earth science, are motivated and encouraged to pursue a future in agriculture.

#### *Lauren Little Edutainment LLC Farming & Business Practices*







- LLE uses a mix of standard row planting, and uses succession growing to allow for early, mid, and late harvests.
- LLE takes advantage of crop rotation and other intensive farming practices to increase yield and expects to be growing within the standards previously defined above.
- LLE provides produce to the community through direct sales, client contracts, and subsidization from local non profits, schools and organizations.
- To date, Lauren has served roughly 7,000 students and their families in the Greater Hartford area. This includes providing local, organic produce and urban, agricultural educational programming, farm to school training, curriculum development, and assisting in developing school-based teaching gardens.
  - In addition, LLE serves clients through the Tri State Area including Boston, New York City, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Lake Placid, New York.
- LLE anticipates that their soil supplier will be We Care Denali in West Hartford via Keney Park Sustainability Project (KPSP).
  - In the future, LLE anticipates sourcing soil deliveries from Jessica's Garden, We Care Denali and Agway.

#### *Lauren Little Edutainment LLC Materials*

Lauren's most recent presentation, project narrative, and site layout can be found here, as well as uploaded on the City of Hartford P & Z Site

-  LLE LLC Presentation March 2023.pptx
-  LLE LLC Letter of Intent Narrative March 2023.pdf
-  LLE LLC Property Layout March 2023.pdf

#### *Lauren Lauren Edutainment LLC Letters of Support (Including NRZ Letter)*

-  NERA Letter of Support for 176 Clark Street.pdf
-  NERA Letter of Support for 176 Clark Street.pdf
-  Report. Co-Designing Teen-Adult Environmental Action with Hartford Communities...
-  Letter of Support for 176 Clark Street (4.14.23).pdf
-  Lauren Little Edutainment LOS from The Village 04.25.23.pdf
-  KPSP LOS 176 Clark Street(3.20.23).pdf

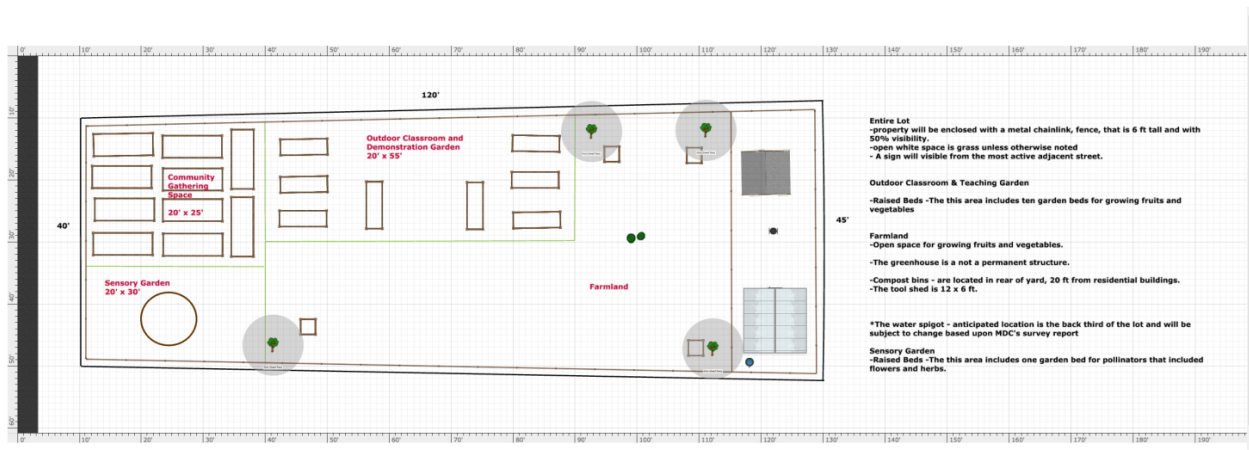
#### *A Snapshot of Lauren Little Edutainment LLC's Partners*

- Community Organizations
  - Public Allies CT (statewide)
- Department of Agriculture
  - Office of Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz

- State of Connecticut
- City of Hartford
- Hartford Public Library
- Educational Institutions/Higher Education
  - Hartford Public Schools
  - Trinity College
  - Community First School
  - UConn
  - Trinity Day Academy
- Nonprofits
  - Boys & Girls Club of Hartford
  - Keney Park Sustainability Project
  - Mutual Aid Hartford
  - The Village
  - Root to Rise
  - Real Artways
  - CT Science Center
- Businesses
  - Bro Doughs Pizza
  - Mercado Popular
  - Local Bodegas

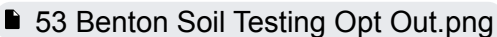

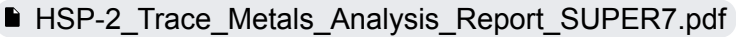
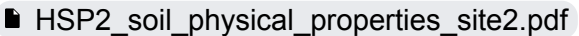
**Image of Site Plan:**

The image is a bit distorted but it is up to scale.



**Points of Emphasis**

- The Urban Farmers will cultivate, process, and sell (distribute) their products to local vendors, including bodegas, schools, businesses, as well as other vendors.
- Being a fully functional farm requires aspects of and training education; this allows for sustainability and ensures that future potential workers have the necessary knowledge and skills.

- Educational training done in these Urban Farms are part of their paid services.
  - Each lot for the Urban Farms plans intends to connect to MDC for water services, but due to prohibitive cost, rain barrels and a water catchment system will be used for now.
    - This innovative water management system will help with water runoff concerns.
    - The farmers will use drought resistant foods and rain gardens to ensure successful food production in this system.
  - The Urban Farmers have established LLC's and a cumulative of 10 years of professional farming and food cultivation experience. Aarvah and Lauren are both providing their own financial, resources, and labor into these endeavors. For each vacant lot, a single entity (Aarvah Quinonez for 53 Benton Street and Lauren Little for 176 Clark Street) is the primary operator.
  - This project will benefit Hartford residents immensely by providing educational opportunities, affordable and healthy fruits and vegetables, and aesthetic improvements to currently blighted lots (that have been vacant for years). More details regarding secondary benefits of these Urban Farms are listed below.
  - Soil testing
    - 53 Benton Street - It was determined by National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that 53 Benton Street should be opted out of for soil testing, due to the amount of concrete on that site. There is a screenshot of that recommendation linked below.
      -  53 Benton Soil Testing Opt Out.png
    - 176 Clark Street - Soil testing was completed by National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on November 22nd, 2023. Results are linked below.
      -  HSP-02\_pXRF\_report\_signed.pdf
      -  HSP-2\_Trace\_Metals\_Analysis\_Report\_SUPER7.pdf
      -  HSP2\_soil\_physical\_properties\_site2.pdf
- 

***Items Needed (as stated by HHS if requested)***

- Compost Plans
    - LLE will have tumblers, which will not contain food scraps and will be secured. This method produces no runoff or odors and prevents infiltration by animals.
    - Aasaaska Foundation LLC will not have any compost on site.
  - DEEP's Integrated Pest Management Plan
  - Organic, Agricultural Chemicals Used
  - Soil remediation plans if needed
- 

**Neighborhood Revitalization Zone (NRZ Support)**

- To reiterate, each Urban Farmer has support from their districts NRZ in this project. Aarvah Quinonez has the support of Maple Avenue Revitalization Group (MARG) and Lauren Little has the support of North East Revitalization (NERA).
    - [Letter of Support MARG NRZ 53 Benton Street.pdf](#)
    - [NERA Letter of Support for 176 Clark Street.pdf](#)
- 

### ***Farming for Commercial Use***

- Each Urban Farmer is the primary operator on their respective lot.
  - Each Urban Farmer will pay property taxes on their lots each year.
  - Hours of operations:
    - Urban Farmers will be on site during normal operating hours as 9:00 AM - 6:00 PM, similar to any other business. During the cold season, they will be on site at least biweekly to ensure the property is secured, provide maintenance (removing snow, salting the side-walk, and any other maintenance as needed).
  - Parking and foot traffic
    - Parking requirements will be adhered to, especially at 176 Clark Street in accordance with the fire station regulations.
    - Training or educational sessions are limited and visitors will adhere to parking restrictions.
  - Any compost plans or water catchment plans are included on site layouts, if necessary.
  - Security:
    - Per current zoning regulations the applicant acknowledges that a 6' fence can not be approved with this application, but to ensure security they will apply for fencing permits. This request will be notated on the site layout and justified in the narrative for the project, for safety purposes.
  - Other Security measures can or may include: solar power for electricity (lights on site), security cameras, and a standing order with HPD for "no loitering" signs at each site.
  - For any educational trainings on vacant lots, there will be a fee associated with this, determined by the Urban Farmers.
- 

### ***Benefits of the Urban Farms for the City of Hartford***

- **Increased Local, Healthy Food Production:** The farmers have established partnerships with Hartford Public Schools, charitable food organizations, and farmers' markets to distribute their crops to Hartford residents. They plan to make crops readily available to neighbors and other community members, an effort that will combat food insecurity.
- **Increased Land Ownership and Stewardship:** The vacant lots were previously owned and maintained by the City of Hartford. As business owners and land stewards, the farmers will take extraordinary care of the lots.



- **Combating Climate Change:** Planting vegetation helps to moderate air temperatures by providing shade and releasing moisture into the air. It also combats the urban heat island effect, a phenomenon where cities are hotter than surrounding rural communities because dark surfaces such as roofs, roads, and buildings that are concentrated in the city absorb and trap heat (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2023).
  - **Improved Mental and Physical Health:** Physical and visual access to natural settings supports human health and well-being. Access to green spaces like urban farms and community gardens have been shown to lower blood pressure, reduce stress, improve concentration, and increase positive emotions (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2020).
  - **Decreased Crime:** A study out of Philadelphia showed that rehabilitating vacant lots reduced crime in the surrounding area, without displacing it to other parts of the city.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the farmers have each considered security measures for their lot in order to protect their business and maintain safety for the neighborhood (Branas and MacDonald, 2019).
- 

### ***City of Hartford Zoning Information***

#### 3.3.3 - Open Space Uses

A. Community Gardens. A space used to grow plants for personal use, education, recreation, community distribution, or beautification by members of the neighboring community. Community gardens may be divided into separate plots for cultivation by one or more individuals or may be farmed collectively by members of the group and may include common areas maintained or used by community group members.

F. Urban Farms. A ground or roof-level **agricultural operation** of any size, excluding agricultural growing (such as aquaculture) occurring in a permanent indoor facility other than a farm structure, which is **used for urban agriculture for commercial purposes**, whether for **profit** or non-profit, with a **single entity** serving as the primary operator.

[https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/zoning\\_regulations?nodeId=n3.0US\\_3.3PRUSDEUECCO](https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/zoning_regulations?nodeId=n3.0US_3.3PRUSDEUECCO)

---

### ***Urban Farms vs. Community Gardens***

“Urban farms typically have the goal of turning a profit whereas community gardens, which are run by residents and non profit organizations, tend to orient themselves toward education and facilitating relationships between people and nature. These divergent goals result in different models of operation. For instance, urban farms have fewer people doing more of the labor and getting paid for it. In community gardens, however, individuals often have their own plots of land and pay a membership fee to garden (Weiss, 2021).”

### *Alternatives to Urban Farms*

- *Community Gardens*
    - SINA
    - At KNOX Community Gardens, gardeners apply for space to grow and pay a small fee each season (KNOX, 2022). This will not happen at each Urban Farm lot.
  - *Miscellaneous Urban Growing/Gathering Spaces*
    - At Kamora's Cultural Center, community gatherings are frequent. This will not be the case at each Urban Farm. The Urban Farms are businesses and are focused on food production; with limited programming and community events.
  - *Edible Landscape/Shared Garden*
  - *Urban Homesteads*
  - *School Based Teaching Gardens*
    - School based gardens - Noah Webster Garden, Garden at Wish
- 

### ***Administrative Notes***

- All of the documents for the Urban Farmers have been uploaded (in chronological order) on the City of Hartford Citizen Access Portal for zoning purposes. When the applicant began uploading documents in December of 2022, some of these presentations were initial. They have since been updated substantially. **Thus, the documents that were uploaded most recently should be the ones used for any public hearing notices.**
-

## References

- Aurora University. (2019). *5 Notable Urban Farms in Chicago*. [5 Notable Urban Farms in Chicago | Aurora University Online](#)
- Branas, C. and MacDonald, J. (2019). *Cleaning Up Vacant Lots Can Curb Urban Crime*. Manhattan Institute. [Cleaning Up Vacant Lots Can Curb Urban Crime | Manhattan Institute](#)
- City of Hartford. (2022). *Open Use Spaces: Urban Farms*. [https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/zoning\\_regulations?nodeId=n3.0US\\_3.3P\\_RUSDEUECCO\\_3.3.3OPSPUS](https://library.municode.com/ct/hartford/codes/zoning_regulations?nodeId=n3.0US_3.3P_RUSDEUECCO_3.3.3OPSPUS)
- Conservation Law Foundation. (2021). *The Power of Urban Agriculture in Transforming a Community*. CLF. [The Power of Urban Agriculture in Transforming a Community](#).
- Department of Agriculture. (2023). *The “Right to Farm” Law*. CT.gov. [The Right to Farm Law \(ct.gov\)](#)
- KNOX. (2022). *Programs: Community Gardens*. [Community Gardens – KNOX](#)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2020). *Mental Health Benefits of Nature*. NAMI California. [Mental Health Benefits of Nature - NAMI California](#)
- United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2023). *Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect*. EPA. [Reduce Urban Heat Island Effect | US EPA](#)
- Unity College: America’s Environmental College. (2023). *What Is Urban Farming? Understanding Urban Agriculture*. [What Is Urban Farming? Understanding Urban Agriculture](#)
- USDA. (2022). *Farm Structure and Contracting*. USDA: Economic Research Center. [USDA ERS - Farm Structure and Contracting](#).
- Weiss, L. (2021). *Community Gardens and Urban Farm: Land Acquisition*. UCLA School of Law, Resnick Center for Food Law and Policy. [Community Gardens and Urban Farm: Land Acquisition – On Food Law](#)





30 Laurel Street • Suite 3D • Hartford • CT • 06106

December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Attention of: City of Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission

Please consider this letter as Hartford Land Bank's authorization to go forth with the urban farming proposal previously submitted for 53 Benton Street, Hartford CT, 06114.

As stated, Hartford Land Bank is the current owner of this property as of October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022. 53 Benton Street's parcel number is 251676151 and is zoned NX-2.

Hartford Land Bank intends to transfer ownership of this property to Aarvah Quinonez and the Aasaaska Foundation LLC once this property is granted a new designation of urban farm zoning via the City of Hartford Planning and Zoning Commission process.

53 Benton Street is one of three vacant lots that Hartford Land Bank, in partnership with Keney Park Sustainability Project and local urban farmers, propose for urban farm zoning. Revitalizing 53 Benton Street and two other vacant lots into active urban farms and community gardens will benefit the community immensely.

These urban farms will provide educational opportunities, access to gardening, affordable and healthy fruits and vegetables, community engagement opportunities, and aesthetic improvements to blighted lots. The Hartford Land Bank is committed to working with our community members to revitalize neighborhoods and build wealth, health, and social benefits for our residents. Turning these lots in urban farms is one avenue in which to do so.

We thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Hartford Land Bank Staff

HartfordLandBank.org • 860.335.0347

[info@hartfordlandbank.org](mailto:info@hartfordlandbank.org)

File **Message** Help**RE: [External Email]RE: [External Email]Soil Testing**

Isleib, Jacob - NRCS, Tolland, CT &lt;jacob.isleib@usda.gov&gt;

To  Felten, Vivian - NRCS, Windsor, CT;  Agresta, Hanako OhtaCc  KPSP;  Tyler Havens

Tue 10/25/2022 4:47 PM

Click here to download pictures. To help protect your privacy, Outlook prevented automatic download of some pictures in this message.

Hi all,

We ended up finishing the soil screening field activities at 437 Garden St and 176 Clark St. Following background searches and site reconnaissance at 68 Bonner St and 53 Benton St we are opting out of conducting soil screening there. I believe we have enough information already at those sites to provide consultation relating to the intended land uses at those two lots. So our field activities are concluded for this week.

We will begin to export and evaluated our data collected today and will be drafting reports for the screened lots that will include results and interpretive information.

I'll be in touch as we finalize those reports.

Thanks again for being in touch about these projects and for all the supplemental information.

Jacob

Jacob Isleib, CPSS  
State Soil Scientist, Connecticut and Rhode Island  
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service  
344 Merrow Road, Suite A  
Tolland, CT 06084  
Office: 860-871-4037



# AASAASKA FOUNDATION

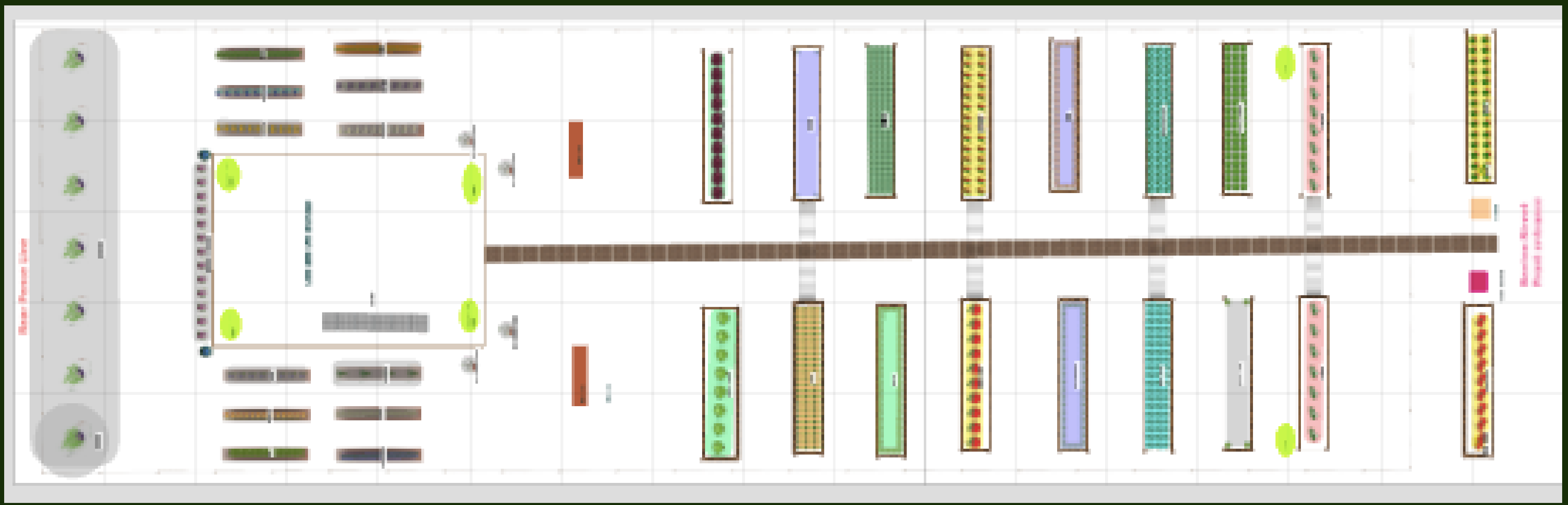
BEE THE CHANGE



# 53 Benton St Hartford







BEE THE CHANGE

# 53 BENTON ST PLOT PLAN

Aasaaska is an Indigenous Black Latina Woman owned, young BIPOC Male led Urban Farming and Beekeeping organization within the city of Hartford. We directly serve our mirrored community. Aasaaska harnesses the energy, image and, personalities of our young people to teach and promote the importance of growing, purchasing and, eating locally grown food. The activation of this lot will give us a much-needed site to teach others while providing fresh locally-grown produce for our neighbors, friends, and family.







# WHAT WE DO

- We Are Urban Farmers
- We Are Beekeepers
- We Are Educators
- We Are Community Advocates

LEAVE THE WORLD  
BETTER THAN YOU  
FOUND IT



# WHY WE DO IT

We feel it is imperative to be able to grow food no matter how little or where you live. Very few understand how important pollination is to our ability to grow food as a nation. We use beekeeping as tool/avenue to educate as many people as we can in our travels. We also learn from the community we serve as we receive feedback on both needs and wants voiced during these times.







**“ ”**

***80 % Of all of our food worldwide is  
dependent on pollination. If the  
bees die, we die***



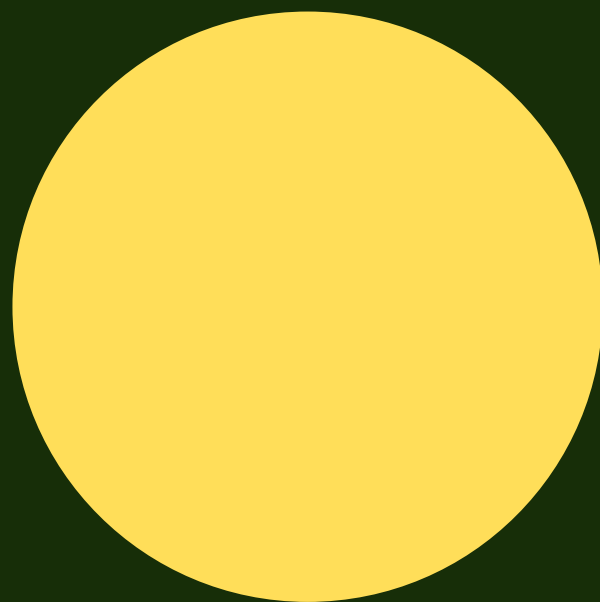


EACH ONE TEACH ONE

## **OUR VISION**

We plan to offer opportunities for as many of our youth as possible to learn farming in urban settings. Nature Deficit Disorder plagues all urban areas naturally with the lack of greenery in these concrete jungles. Aasaaska plans to respond to food insecurities here in our community, using our youth as the growers and educators leading the charge. Healthy food options are a human right we all deserve to experience on a daily basis. Our goal is to be a part of the permanent remedy of food deserts in the city.





SAVE THE BEES

## OUR MISSION

Urban Farming

Aasaaska is a group of urban farmers in the City of Hartford focusing on growing exotic peppers and okra. Our organically grown produce caters to our mirrored immigrant community. Tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs and root vegetables are also grown on our farm.

Beekeeping

Aasaaska offers honeybee hives to our network of urban farms free of charge to assist our community of farmers with pollination. Assaaska offers local hive maintenance services. This helps with operating cost. By offering these services, we are constantly in contact with our local community of urban farmers.

BEE THE CHANGE

# WHAT WILL SPACE BE USED FOR

## Storage

We will use this space for storage of our supplies for our beehives and equipment. We will also clean and store the vegetables we produce

## Education

We will use this site for educational demonstrations for both our beekeeping and gardening operations. We will also open our site to fellow farmers to collaborate on group trainings

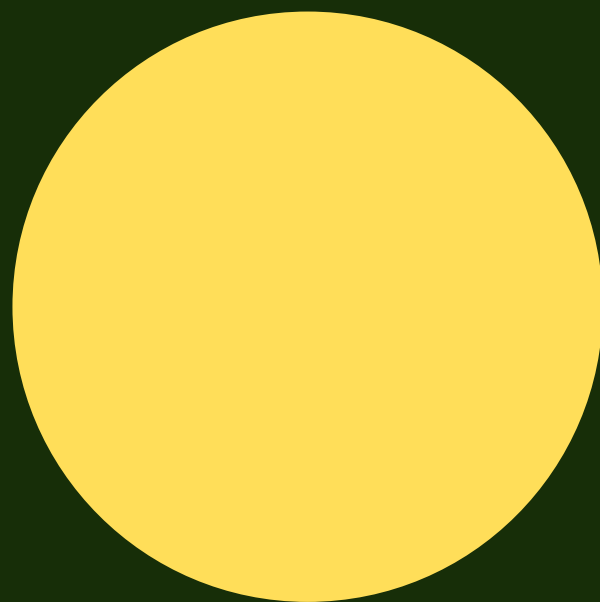
## Community Garden

This site will also serve as a community garden with access to raised beds placed on the exterior of fencing. There will be a food pantry which will contain some of our harvested crops.

## Hydroponics

We will grow food hydroponically to both extend our growing season and maximize our growing space.





# SITE WELFARE

## Lighting and Security

There will be a heat and motion detecting, real-time camera system installed on the premises once electricity is provided to the property. There will be motion lights as well as constant low light to property.

## Maintenance

This will not be a year-round operation in regards to growing food. The crops preferred by the community will determine the months. This will range from March - November. There will be at minimum, weekly checks-in to site as well as during the off-season. As needed check-ins and maintenance will be done in a timely fashion. (shoveling, leaf pick up, possible branches from trees in and around site)



**THANK YOU**

CHANGE STARTS WITH YOU