



Secure Your Location

Checklist for Urban Farmers

There are several considerations when determining whether a site is the right fit for your project. Here is a checklist of some of the main criteria to consider and questions to ask.

Considerations for all sites:

- Size:**
 - Does the size of the site meet the requirements of this potential project (space for cultivation, harvesting, sorting, keeping, cleaning, packaging, & managing compost)
 - Does the vision of what you would like to see match what is possible in the space?

- Sun exposure:**
 - A minimum of six to eight hours of sun a day is required to grow food
 - Are there any proposals for future development that may limit sun exposure?
 - Consider changes in sun exposure throughout seasons

- Site access:**
 - Is there vehicle access at the site and what is the size of the access?
 - Will larger vehicles such as delivery trucks need to access the site?

- Water access:**
 - Is there a reliable source?
 - Is there an opportunity to capture rainwater to minimize water use?
 - Note: If you use an approved rainwater management method on the property, the landowner can apply for 2-50% off of their annual stormwater utility bill. Find out more at the City's [Rainwater Rewards Program](#)

- Slope:**
 - Is the proposed space flat & well drained?

- Accessibility:**
 - Do you have any specific accessibility needs? Will anyone else visiting the site have specific accessibility needs (wheelchair access, senior access, etc)?
 - For more information on making your site more accessible, see the City of Vancouver's [Accessible Community Garden Guidelines](#)

- Farming System:**
 - Container, raised bed, row farming, hydroponics, aeroponics, aquaponics or other?

Seasonality:

- Will you be growing for a portion of the year or full-time?
- Will you need to build a greenhouse? Note: If a structure greater than 10 square meters needs to be built, you will need to obtain a permit. Visit the City of Victoria's [Permits and Inspections page](#), or contact them at permits@victoria.ca or 250.361.0344 for more information

Organic Waste:

- How will this be handled?

Initial Investment:

- There are a range of materials and infrastructure you may need to start your urban farm. While some developers and landowners are willing to help share some of the startup costs, not all of them will. Be sure to have a plan in place to obtain the necessary capital (more information found on pages 14 - 15 under Creating a Business Plan)

Permit Process:

- Will any structures be built that will require a permit?
- See page 26 for more information on permits

Community Engagement:

- It is important to contact the Community & Business Associations in your neighborhood to get their feedback and support. Speak with the lessor of the space to determine whose responsibility this should be for your site. The landowner may wish to lead this process as a part of an overall development plan
- It is also crucial to build relationships with your neighbours and others in the community where you will be working. If the city receives multiple complaints about your site, they could require changes to your operations or even revoke your permit

Appearance of the Site & Odours:

- Consider the aesthetics of the site. Developers and landowners often appreciate their properties being kept tidy and clean. It is your responsibility to adhere to the aesthetics of their development and the surrounding neighbourhood. Expect this to increase labour slightly
- The use of tarps and unkempt material are discouraged

Becoming an Ambassador:

- Urban farms are on the rise in Victoria, but they are still relatively new. As an urban food-grower, you will become an ambassador for agriculture and growing food in general. It is necessary to be patient and open-minded when speaking with the public, as this is an amazing opportunity for community education
- You are on the forefront of the local food movement. You are growing food and demonstrating the importance of food production on a daily basis

Specific considerations for rooftops:

Speak with the landowner to determine:

- Structural integrity of the roof:**
 - How much weight per square foot can be supported?
 - What is the beam and column spacing and strength?
- Roof deck material and membrane:**
 - You will need a durable roof membrane that cannot be easily punctured or damaged, as this will be very costly to repair
 - Some examples of good membranes include cement, raised cement tile and gravel
- Rooftop access:**
 - Elevator access is ideal. Stairs can work, but can add complexities to getting the right infrastructure and materials to the site
- Building codes:**
 - Does the rooftop have an existing railing system or protective wall that meets building codes to allow people to access the area?
 - Does the building require a garden or infrastructure to be set back from the edge of the roof? This could potentially reduce your growing area by a few meters on each side
- Wind exposure:**
 - All farming infrastructure will need to be adequately anchored to the rooftop
 - Crop consideration for windy areas: avoid tall crops or crops that need trellis' or high stakes

Specific considerations for ground sites:

- Fencing:**
 - What type of fencing is required to avoid theft, vandalism and deer?
 - The Fence Bylaw regulates fence height and material in Victoria. For more info on fencing contact Development Services at zoning@victoria.ca or 250.361.0382
- Site Remediation:**
 - What has the site been used for in the past? See the City of Vancouver's Guide for [Planting, Growing and Harvesting Fresh Produce to Reduce Health Risks](#) to determine indicators of concern and best practices to ensure the health and safety of the produce grown on your site
- Aesthetics of the Site:**
 - Because you will be likely working in the public eye, keeping the site looking tidy, organized and well-managed will minimize the visual impact for neighbours and will cause you less headaches (and complaints) in the long run
 - Off-site composting is recommended to reduce smells, pests and to keep things tidy