
Urban community gardens (UCGs) are receiving greater attention as an ever-growing body of research documents the economic, environmental and social benefits that community gardens are bringing to urban neighborhoods. However, land insecurity remains one of the critical barriers to the future success of UCGs; loss of land to both private and public entities has frustrated many efforts and has stimulated investigations into alternative strategies for increasing land security.

This thesis explores the diversity of land tenure solutions – with a particular respect to land trusts - that have been implemented to address this issue. Land security is objectively defined by legal property rights and subjectively shaped through the notion of ‘ownership in use’ and by encouraging the formation of mobilized communities. We analyze the variety of organizational modes – differentiated by tenurial arrangement, organizational capacity, political leverage and organizational mission/internal governance relations – and the resulting impacts on the type and level of land security.

Data was collected through transcribed interviews with practitioners from sixteen land trust organizations engaged in urban community gardening and summarized along emergent themes regarding organizational modes and resulting land security implications. We find that major tradeoffs exist between maximizing land tenure security and operating a larger number of UCG sites under less secure tenure arrangements. It concludes that underutilized opportunities exist to increase UCG land security through an increased public sector role and broader cross-sectoral partnerships.