

# Jeffco Farmland Project

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*FloraBee Flowers in Lakewood*

## Project Overview

### Jeffco Farmland Project

Thank you for your interest in the Jeffco Farmland Project (JFP)! Jefferson Conservation District and GoFarm are thrilled to be collaborating on this project to connect landowners and local farmers and help build a more robust local food system. This project aims to identify parcels that have the potential to be used for urban farming within Jefferson County. **The ultimate goal of the JFP is to create a database of farmable land in Jefferson County to help match farmers and landowners** in a way that best meets the needs of both parties, and our community. We are primarily seeking privately owned properties, but are hopeful to work with public land managers as well. All parcel information is gathered using publicly available sources and compiled using Geographic Information System (GIS) software. We will not share personal information without written permission. We look forward to working with you closely to see how the JFP can best suit your needs!

### GoFarm

GoFarm is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen our local food system and build healthier communities. We are a small, passionate team of local food system advocates, who value collaboration and making a positive difference in our community. Our mission is to increase the supply of and access to affordable, fresh, healthy, local food in Colorado. We do this by running three, interdependent programs: Local Food Share, Farmer Assistance, and Community Food Access. Through the Local Food Share program we connect community members to local food by offering seasonal, fresh, local produce, while educating participants on the food they're eating and where it comes from. Our Community Food Access program makes healthy food more affordable and accessible to families facing barriers to food access, increasing food equity and food security in communities. The Farmer Assistance program trains, mentors and supports beginning farmers to build up local, sustainable agriculture.

### Jefferson Conservation District

The Jefferson Conservation District (JCD) is one of 76 Conservation Districts in the state of Colorado. The Jefferson Conservation District extends from the plains to the continental divide, and includes a variety of ecosystems and elevations that range from 3,500 to over 14,000 feet. JCD's ecosystems vary from shortgrass prairie to alpine tundra with many forest types between. JCD utilizes an educational, incentives-based approach as opposed to regulatory approach in working with landowners, cooperators and partners in implementing Federal and State conservation programs. Along with forest restoration, JCD has grown to include specialization in

noxious weed management and urban agriculture. Our energetic staff find implementing real and meaningful conservation projects a rewarding profession.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

GoFarm and JCD are committed to promoting equity through the Jeffco Farmland Project. Please read GoFarm's equity statement [here](#). We are seeking land owners whose values align with ours in order to make sure our farmers are placed on properties where they can feel welcomed and comfortable. For more information email [Katie@gofarm.org](mailto:Katie@gofarm.org).

## **Urban Agriculture**

### **What is Urban Agriculture?**

"Urban Agriculture is part of a local food system where food is produced within an urban area and marketed to consumers within that area. Urban farming can also include animal husbandry (e.g., breeding and raising livestock), beekeeping, aquaculture (e.g., fish farming), aquaponics (e.g., integrating fish farming and agriculture), and non-food products such as producing seeds, cultivating seedlings, and growing flowers. Urban farms can also contribute to the revitalization of abandoned or underutilized urban land, social and economic benefits to urban communities, and beneficial impacts on the urban landscape" ([EPA](#)).

### **Why We Need Urban Agriculture**

Over the past 50+ years, the Denver Metro area has been steadily losing farms and farmland; with only 9 of the original 307 farms that once existed in Denver 100 years ago still in operation today. Meanwhile, our population is growing and the number of food insecure residents in our community is rising as well.

### **Benefits of Urban Agriculture**

Here are some ways that local, urban farms improve our community:

- **Habitat** - Local diversified farms provide habitat for birds, pollinators, and insects that support our entire local ecosystem!
- **Conservation** - Most farms use less water than it would take to maintain a lawn of the same size. Converting irrigated lawns into farms saves water! Our farmers are also careful to only use organic fertilizers in appropriate amounts as indicated by soil tests and crop health to avoid harmful runoff.

- **Soil Health** - Our farmers are dedicated to improving and protecting their soils by adding organic matter, feeding the life in the soil through cover crops and mulches, and minimizing tilling, to name a few.
- **Education** - Many of our local farms host volunteer days, tours, and are always willing to answer questions. Local farms are providing opportunities for kids to see what their food looks like growing in the field and to experience food right out of the ground (once rinsed off of course!).
- **Community** - Farms are great spaces for members of our community to get out and meet each other and support a local business. A lot of our farms have become hubs for their neighbors to get food and to gather.
- **Supporting Local Economy** - These farms are businesses! Some provide supplemental income for families and some are the sole source of income for our farmers. A lot of farms source locally and support other local businesses. Purchasing from local farms keeps money in our community!
- **Food** - Our local farms produce food that is nutrient dense and delicious! The food also passes through fewer hands on the way to your table.

Here are some of the many benefits to landowners from hosting a farmer:

- **Maintenance** - If you have a large piece of land to manage you know how time consuming it can be to mow and manage weeds. A farmer will take care of this for you!
- **Improving the Land** - Farmers will improve the soil health and manage weeds so that over time, your property becomes easier to manage and more aesthetically appealing.
- **Reduced Costs** - If you are currently watering and fertilizing a lawn, having a farmer maintain the land will save you money!
- **Connection to Local Food and Farmers** - Hosting a farmer on your property will give you access to local farm products and can offer an opportunity to connect with the broader farming community if you wish to do so.
- **Rent** - Land rent is typically around \$1,200/ acre for a growing season (9-12 months) and may be increased up or down depending on the available infrastructure. Farmers also typically cover the cost of water unless all parties agree on a different arrangement. Rent can also take the form of a CSA share or other farm products in exchange for the use of the land.
- **You will play an important role in strengthening our local community through urban farming!**

## Is Your Land a Good Fit to Host an Urban Farmer?

In the list below you will see our requirements and preferences for the properties we accept in the database. If you can say yes to the required items in this checklist, as well as any of the preferred items, then you may be a great fit for hosting a farmer!

If you have questions or concerns about any of the items on this checklist, we are happy to talk to you about it in more detail! Every farmer is different, and we may be able to match you with someone even if you couldn't say yes to all of the items below.

Checklist Item	Required	Preferred
Do you have a reliable source for irrigation (municipal, ditch, or well)? <i>Without a water source for irrigation we would not be able to match you with a farmer at this time. If irrigation water will be municipal water, please look into backflow requirements with your water district.</i>	x	
Are you willing to give a farmer access to the plot of land they are farming 7 days a week during daylight hours, from March-November?	x	
Is your land free of soil contamination that can harm the farmer or make food unsafe? <i>If you are unsure, we can help you determine if there is reason to suspect contamination.</i>	x	
Are you willing to sign a lease agreement with the farmer? <i>GoFarm can offer lease templates that can be customized to meet your needs and the needs of the farmer.</i>	x	
GoFarm and JCD are committed to working towards a more equitable and just food system, does that align with your values?	x	
Do you have access to potable water for washing crops?		x
Are you open to discussing a longer lease-term of at least 5 years? <i>Some farmers will consider shorter leases, though the resources and time it takes to develop healthy soil is considerable, so we hope farmers can stay for multiple years and reap the benefits from their hard work.</i>		x
Is the land you are considering relatively flat?		x

## How We Match Landowners With Farmers

We are committed to making sure both our land owners and farmers feel comfortable and supported through the Jeffco Farmland Project. Below are the steps we will take to match farmers and landowners:

- 1) Landowners complete this [interest form](#).
- 2) GoFarm and JCD will contact you to further discuss your property and your goals.
- 3) If it seems like a good fit, GoFarm and JCD will conduct a site visit to your property.
- 4) After a successful site visit, we will create a land profile to share with our farmers. We will not share your address or any personal information at this stage, although general location/area will be shared.
- 5) Our farmers will review all available land profiles and if they think one could be a good match, we will send you the farmer's basic profile and farming goals.
- 6) If you think the farmer may be a good fit for your land, we will make an introduction!
- 7) Once an introduction is made, we let you and the farmer work out the details of your lease agreement and partnership. *If you realize that this is not the right match for you or the farmer, we will add your property back into our database of available properties for more farmers to review.*
- 8) We are available to offer some limited support through example leases and answering basic questions. At this point, it is generally the end of the road for GoFarm and JCD's involvement regarding the creation and fulfillment of the lease agreement.

We will schedule a check in at the end of the first season to see how things went with you and the farmer. We encourage feedback on this process to make sure it is a positive experience for everyone involved. Do not hesitate to share any suggestions or concerns you might have!

## How Your Information Is Stored and Shared

All parcel information is gathered using publicly available sources and compiled using Geographic Information System (GIS) software. That being said, we will not share personal information that we have compiled without written permission. Parcel, landowner, and farmer information compiled by us is stored and managed by GoFarm and JCD staff.

## Getting Started

### Interest Form

If you would like to be part of the JFP by exploring the opportunity to lease your land to a local farmer, we would love to know more about you! Our interest form will help us determine if your property is a good fit for the project, and provides us with relevant information that we'll later share with potential farmers (*though we will not share any of your information without your written permission!*)

After you submit the interest form, we will contact you about potentially setting up a site visit! We look forward to hearing from you! If you have any questions about this form, please feel free to contact us.

Interest Form Link:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc0J73cvcx0KWcRL38Z1zrDlaRa4uj3Egu3PwfB7-pxwP8K3g/viewform>

## Other Ways To Get Involved

Not sure if leasing land is right for you? Here are some other ways to be involved in local agriculture:

- Know a friend who might want to lease their land? Help us spread the word about the Jeffco Farmland Project!
- Purchase a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) share from a local farmer. Need help finding one near you? Email [Katie@gofarm.org](mailto:Katie@gofarm.org) for assistance in locating one!
- Volunteer on a local farm or with GoFarm by filling out GoFarm's [volunteer interest form](#).
- Join or support the [Mile High Farmers](#), our local co-chapter of both the [National Young Farmers Coalition](#) and [Rocky Mountain Farmers Union](#).

## Examples of Local Farms

The Urban agriculture scene in the Denver Metro is thriving and full of creative entrepreneurs who are committed to supporting their communities. Urban farmers produce a wide range of products including vegetables, flowers, fruit, eggs, grains, soaps, breads, mushrooms, value added products, and more!



### SoCliff Farm

SoCliff Farm in Lakewood is operated by Anica and Ivan. They produce vegetables and eggs for their farm stand. The SoCliff Farmers own the land on which they operate and rent some of their land to Paper Kite Farm. Ashley at Paper Kite produces vegetables for her Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program.



### FloraBee Flowers

FloraBee Flowers is a small cut flower farm in Lakewood that operates on  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an acre. FloraBee provides flowers for weddings and events, sell at the farmers market with the Lakewood Grower's Collective, provides a flower CSA, and sells wholesale to local florists.



### Netzel Farms

Netzel Farms is a veteran owned farm that operates on leased land in Lakewood. Jessica of Netzel Farms provides produce to her CSA members and to customers at the Golden Triangle Farmers Market. She also sells produce through GoFarm's wholesale market.