

St. Louis, MO

October 22, 2026



## Request for Proposals:

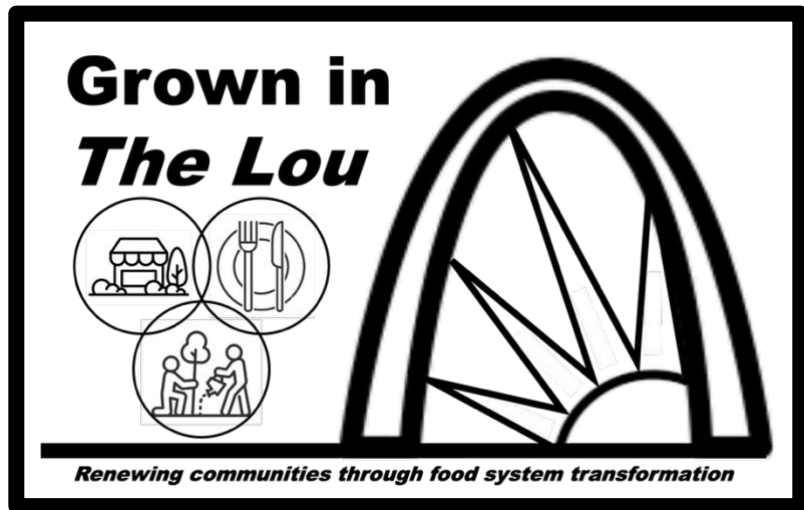
### Project Director for Grown in *The Lou*

The St. Louis Reconciliation Network ([STLRN](#)) was formed in 2012, with a mission to heal the broken race relations of the St. Louis region (STL) by harnessing the potential collective power of its diverse faith communities. Over the subsequent 14+ years, considerable progress has been made in several areas, but one glaring exception is the ongoing regional neglect of STL North City (where most residents are African American), particularly the areas stricken by the May 2025 EF3 tornado. STLRN founder and scientist Dave Gustafson recently organized a pair of workshops seeking to explore the potential for expansion of Urban Ag in North City to serve as a basis to bring revival and renewal to these communities and thereby to all of STL.

Increasing the practice of Urban Ag in STL has the potential to generate socio-economic, environmental, and public health benefits, while addressing management challenges the city faces today. Organizations invested in growing Urban Ag in STL can learn from peers in other cities and regions with active Urban Ag communities, supporting development of an informed, science-based strategy for the expansion of Urban Ag in STL. As explained in its [Executive Summary](#), Dave's July 2026 workshop explored the key factors that underpin thriving Urban Ag programs in the US, how to translate them for STL, and how impacts of a changing climate will influence strategies for STL.

Guided discussions during the workshop identified priorities and generated key recommendations (see page 2) including: increased funding for Extension support of urban ag; strengthened communications mechanisms targeting communities, especially in North City; policy reforms to ease zoning restrictions on LRA parcels; data-driven prioritization of LRA parcels for expansion of Urban Ag; and the creation of a new organization or expansion of an existing one, responsible for expanding Urban Ag. Specific neighborhoods, notably those strongly affected by the May 2025 tornado, were highlighted as priorities for engagement and investment through Urban Ag.

This RFP seeks proposals from individuals interested in leading a broad effort to begin implementing the key recommendations identified in the July 2026 workshop. The proposed name of the effort is **Grown in The Lou**. Qualified individuals are asked to submit a proposal that describes how they would approach this new initiative.



The submitted proposal should include a budget for the first 12 months, with work to begin in January 2027. **Proposals should be submitted by email to Dave Gustafson ([dave.gustafson@STLRN.org](mailto:dave.gustafson@STLRN.org)) and are due no later than 5 pm CST on Thursday, November 19.** All questions about this RFP should be directed to Dave, who can be reached by email or by phone (314-409-7123).

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## Key Recommendations of July 2026 Workshop

### Research:

1. Assess and report on how climate is likely to impact STL Urban Ag through 2050 and beyond, including northward movement of pests and diseases.
2. Evaluate the suitability of WashU's "St. Louis Dashboard" as a provider of demographic and public health data to support STL Urban Ag planning.
3. Facilitate the creation of a gap analysis and ecosystem map for STL Urban Ag, identifying where resources and research are needed.

### Funding:

4. Advocate for the funding of multiple long-term Urban Ag positions in UM/UIUC Extension.

Policy:

5. Advocate for the development or reinstatement of a clear process and program for accessing vacant land managed by the Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) for Urban Ag in STL.
6. Address the massive reforms needed in zoning and other policies to enable successful, rapid expansion of STL Urban Ag.

Community Engagement and Coordination:

7. Use the workshop outcomes and resources to engage a group of current STL urban ag farmers and other key stakeholders to co-develop a multi-phased plan for the conversion of current LRA locations into an expanding network of neighborhood-centered urban farms.
8. Create a new entity (identify optimal host) whose purpose is to facilitate greater cross-sector partnerships on STL Urban Ag, as well as needs in funding and other resources.
  - Determine whether a new member-based organization is needed to represent the collective interests of STL Urban Ag farmers.
9. Launch a centralized website/webpage for STL Urban Ag: e.g., mapping tool presented by Taylor Geospatial, crop desirability, zoning, resources for farmers, etc. ([NYC example](#))
10. Engage groups like City Greens and Local Harvest to understand where new surveys may be needed to learn which crops are of primary interest to STL residents.
11. Encourage farms and farmstands to launch year-round Urban Ag ‘destinations’ in STL, following the practices has Eckert’s pioneered successfully in nearby Illinois. Collaborate with others already in place (e.g., EarthDance) and/or who are currently planning similar initiatives (e.g., Jackie Joyner-Kersey FAN Center).
12. Reconvene the STL-based participants with additional stakeholders working in this space to consolidate interest and broaden participation.

Communications and branding:

13. Develop a branding and marketing strategy to take actions such as creation of a new ‘Grown in *The Lou*’ sticker for foods and beverages produced from crops grown by STL Urban Ag farmers. Sales of such items would include collection of a small fee to provide ongoing and growing financial support to the overall initiative. Collaborate directly with the similar ‘Known and Grown’ initiative, and any others pursuing similar ideas.
14. Develop a communication strategy to advocate for the expansion of Urban Ag as a regional priority for STL, highlighting its benefits in and beyond the metro region.
15. Organize a tour for community leaders and policymakers of existing STL Urban Ag sites to showcase success stories and needs.