

## Where do you live?

A community can be described as a group of people living together in a particular local area. When we think of where we live, we often talk about a city or a town. A community goes far beyond just a city or a town, it is the area of the country we live in, the type of area we live in. Communities can be categorized into three types: Urban, Suburban, and Rural.

If we think of the areas we live in as a bull's eye, we can think of the center of the bull's eye as an urban community. In urban communities one might see many tall buildings, higher population, homes closer together, and more congestion. Suburban communities would be the areas that surround the urban communities, or the rings that surround the bull's eye. Suburban communities usually refer to more residential districts. While suburban communities, or suburbs as they are often called, usually surround larger cities, they are less populated and single family homes with larger yards are more prevalent. Finally, the outermost rings of the bull's eye are the rural communities. Rural communities are often thought of as the areas outside of the suburbs that are more sparsely populated. For many, rural communities are what most think of when they think of agriculture. Wide open areas, with few homes or businesses, might be the picture that comes to mind when one thinks of a rural community.

What kind of a community do you live in? We often think agriculture only occurs in rural communities, but what about agriculture in the suburban and urban communities? What do each of these types of communities have in common and what makes them different? How does agriculture play a part in each of these communities? Let's take a look and see what we find!

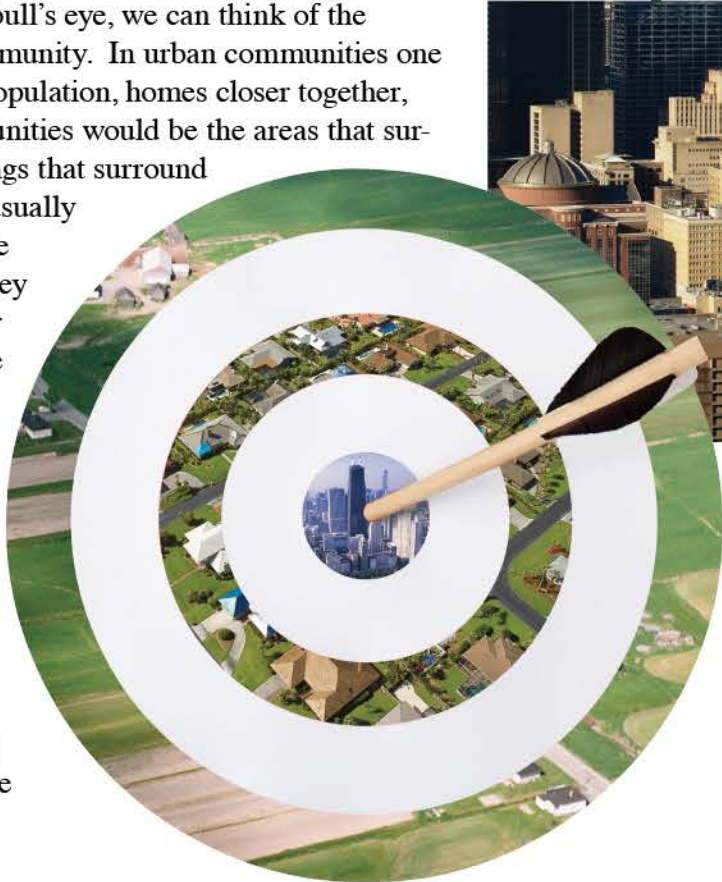
**According to the U.S. Census Bureau,  
 87% of Illinois residents  
 live in urban communities.**

## Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences

Created in 1984, Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS), located in Chicago, IL, was created with the mission to provide opportunities for diverse students from across the city to study agriculture with the goal of developing marketable skills as well as college level competencies. Their goal is to produce technologically proficient graduates who will have the power to change the image of urban agriculture. CHSAS offers a four year college preparatory program that prepares students for professions in one of hundreds of careers within the field of agriculture.

One of the many unique features of the school is that students spend 3 weeks during the summer before their freshman year learning about the college preparatory and agriculture classes. They then spend three weeks after their freshman year working on the farm or with the animals. CHSAS has cows, pigs, chickens, sheep, goats, turkeys, and tilapia in the animal science wing of the school.

They also have a greenhouse and 32 acres of land behind the school where pumpkins, sweet corn, hay, and other typical garden vegetables are grown. The produce that is grown at the school is sold at a farm stand run by the school and at farmers' markets around Chicago. Students who attend CHSAS are exposed to agriculture in a way that most people in the urban setting are not able to experience.



## Grow Your Mind

If you take a walk down any street, in any urban area, you may be surprised, but you will find agriculture at every turn. From farmers' markets to manufacturing plants, not to mention landscaping and distribution centers, agriculture surrounds us even in the most populated areas.

When we think of the words urban and agriculture, what types of things come to mind? For some, it means things like farmers' markets, greenhouses, and rooftop gardening. Others might consider landscaping, processing plants and distribution centers. Fortunately, everyone would be correct because agriculture in the urban setting takes on many different meanings. Most resources define agriculture as the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food in and around a village, town or city. Urban agriculture can also involve animal husbandry, aquaculture, agro-forestry and horticulture.

Let's explore agriculture in the urban setting and shed some light on the places we may not have noticed before.





## ROOFTOP GARDENS



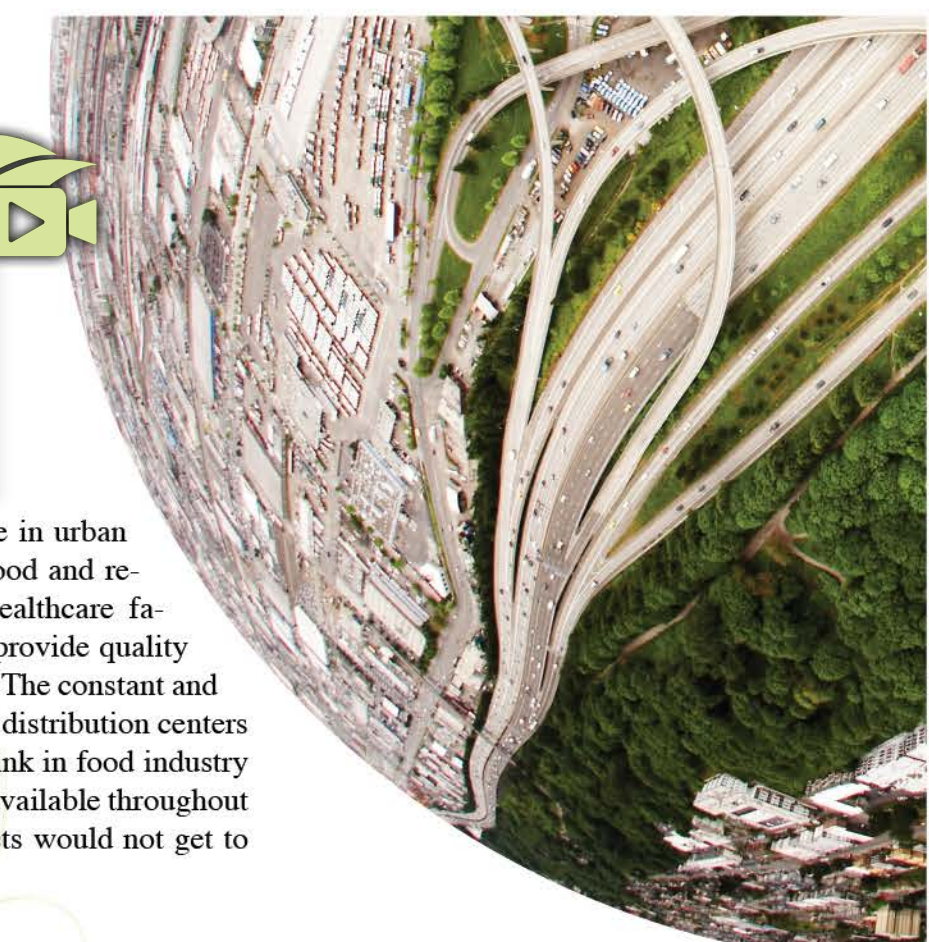
In an effort to promote urban agriculture, many cities are also promoting “green roofs” to help improve climate change issues. Planting vegetation on the roof of a building has many benefits, including providing a place for city dwellers to grow their own food. Green roofs also help to reduce the cost of heating and cooling for the building, help to prolong the life of the roof, and help to improve air quality. Another benefit of a green roof is that the plants and soil on green roofs help to absorb the water that falls during a rainstorm, greatly reducing run off into sewer systems.

## DISTRIBUTION

FOOD



Food distribution plays an important role in urban agriculture. Companies that distribute food and related products work with restaurants, healthcare facilities, hotels, cafeterias and schools to provide quality food grown throughout the United States. The constant and uninterrupted flow of food products from distribution centers to these types of companies is a critical link in food industry operations. Without distribution centers available throughout the world, in urban settings, food products would not get to the consumer in a timely manner.



## COMMUNITY

GARDENS



While community gardens often look very different, they all share one thing in common - people. A community garden is any piece of land that is gardened by a group of people. The garden can be in rural, suburban, or urban communities. Among other things, flowers, vegetables, and relationships can be grown. Gardens can be grown in neighborhoods, at schools, near a business, or anywhere there is land available.

In many cases, the most beneficial reason for a community garden is to help foster relationships within a community while working toward a common goal. This community development helps to stimulate social interaction, to create pride within a neighborhood and has even been found to reduce crime.

Another benefit of a community garden is that it provides nutritious food, helps to reduce family food budgets, and helps to conserve resources. Some community gardens grow fresh produce not only for those who work at the garden, but to be sold at farmers' markets, grocery stores, and farm stands.

# URBAN AGRICULTURE

## FARMERS' MARKETS

MARKETS



In many urban areas, farmers' markets have become more popular. In a farmers' market, a group of farmers sell their products once or twice a week at a designated public place like a park or parking lot. Some farmers' markets even have live entertainment. Shopping at a farmers' market is a great way to meet local farmers and get fresh, flavorful produce. Many urban communities, where fresh, nutritious foods are scarce, gain easy access to food. Farmers' markets also help to promote nutrition education, wholesome eating habits, and better food preparation, as well as boosting the community's economy.

## GREENHOUSE

PRODUCTION



Greenhouses may be used in the urban setting to propagate plants, or grow tender vegetable and fruit seedlings and young nursery crops. Most potted plants are grown in greenhouses. The inside climate of a greenhouse can be controlled to improve growing conditions. Most have computers that automatically open vents or turn on the heating systems. Some may have a weather station that keeps track of the temperature, humidity, light intensity, and wind, both inside and outside the greenhouse, or automatic systems to water and fertilize the plants. Some even have carbon dioxide burners that can be used to increase the amount of the gas so plants grow faster. It's the job of the greenhouse manager to know exactly what a plant needs to grow.

## LANDSCAPING



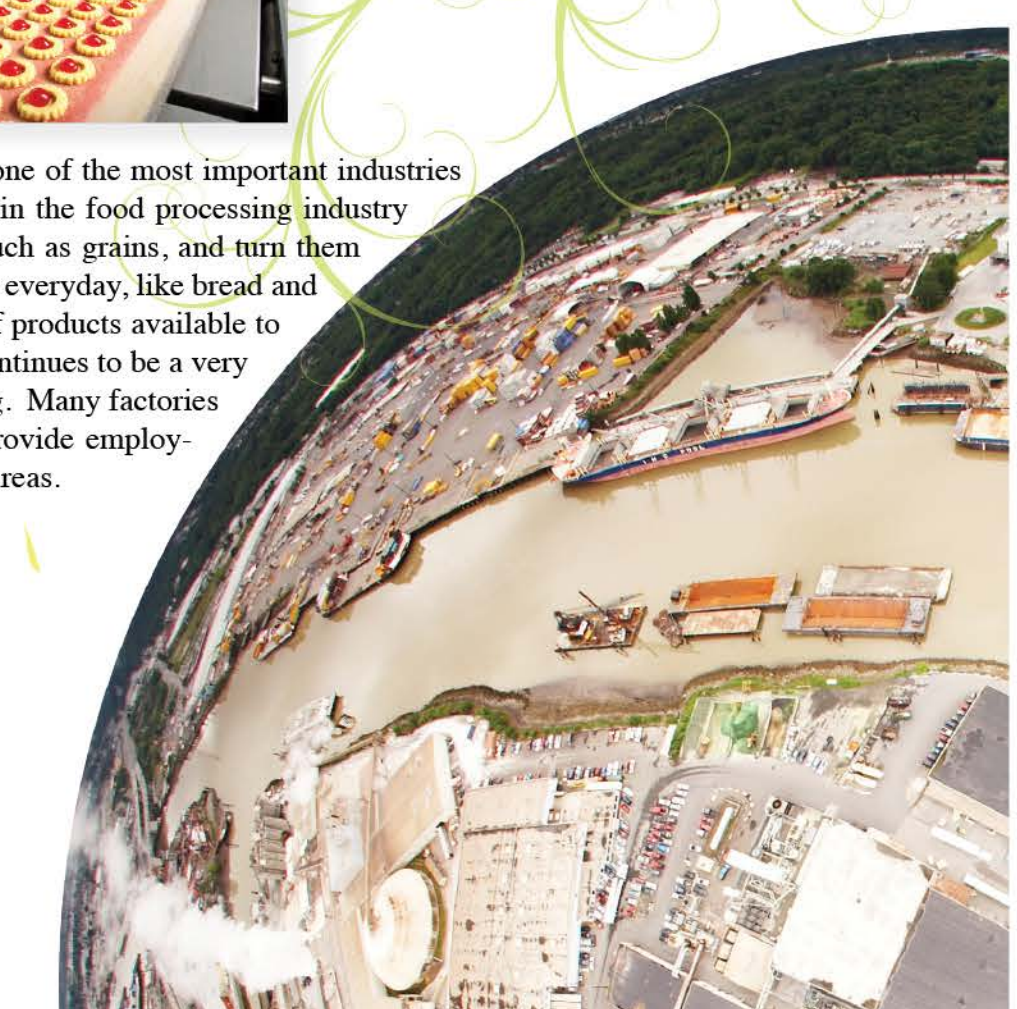
Have you ever really taken the time to think about the use of flowers, shrubs and trees throughout your community? If you take the time to look around the park or as you walk down the major streets in your community, you might be surprised at how much agriculture surrounds you. A landscape architect takes time to create designs for landscapes in public spaces or for individual clients. They use art and science to construct a pleasing, yet functional, space. Landscape architects use their knowledge of design to plan public parks and playgrounds, college campuses, shopping centers, golf courses, parkways, industrial parks, or private lawns. They plan the location of buildings, roads and walkways, and the arrangement of flowers, shrubs, and trees.

## PROCESSING

FOOD



The food processing industry is one of the most important industries to an urban setting. Companies in the food processing industry take raw agricultural products, such as grains, and turn them into the food products that we eat everyday, like bread and cereal. With so many varieties of products available to the consumer, food processing continues to be a very important part of the urban setting. Many factories are located in urban areas and provide employment for those who live in these areas.



# Grow Your Career

**Marc Schulman**  
CEO Eli's Cheesecake  
Chicago, IL



### *What is the history behind your business?*

Eli's Cheesecake was the idea and dream of my dad, Eli Schulman. The cheesecake started as the signature dessert at his restaurant, Eli's the Place for Steak in Chicago. Debuting at the first Taste of Chicago on July 4, 1980, we have worked to develop our business nationally and globally in many channels of trade.

### *How is your business impacted by agriculture?*

Eli's is one of the largest and highest quality specialty cheesecake and cake bakers in the United States. Since we are a food company, quality ingredients mean everything to our business. Eli's is fortunate to have outstanding suppliers with many smaller companies that develop and grow products specially for us.

### *How does being in an urban setting impact your business?*

There are challenges and benefits to having our company located in an urban setting. Currently, many of the challenges our business faces are not unlike those of many businesses. The economy, commodity prices, and food safety are all challenges that keep us very busy.

Our urban setting location in Chicago also affords us opportunities that are very positive. We have many opportunities to have our products at many major sporting events, including the White Sox World Series and the Black Hawks Stanley Cup celebrations, not to mention the big cakes we do for major public celebrations. People see us at the celebrations and then come to Eli's for a tour or to shop our Bakery Café and learn the history of the business.

### **Sheila Fowler**

Master Agriculture Teacher  
Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences  
Chicago, IL



### *What does urban agriculture mean to you?*

Urban agriculture means taking the core concepts of agriculture and applying them to the food, fiber, and natural resources systems in an urban setting. Agriculture affects every facet of life, so urban agriculture is just looking at how agriculture specifically affects life from an urban perspective.

### *Why is it important to teach students about agriculture?*

It's important for everyone to understand where their food comes from, whether they live in a town of 300 or a city of 300 million. The average American is more removed from food production than at any time in history; therefore, it's important to build connections from the farm to the table. There are so many careers in agriculture along that journey from the farm to the table. It's important for urban students to know that they have a future in these careers.

### *What challenges does your school face in taking urban students and teaching primarily rural concepts?*

There are some challenges in teaching urban students about agriculture because many of them have never been asked to reflect on their food, fiber, and natural resource systems. However, once they start thinking about something as seemingly simple as a pizza and soda, and how that food got to them, they tend to get really excited because it's a whole new world of agriculture to think about.

This issue of Ag Mag has been provided by:



### **Todd Reinhart**

CEO Reinhart Grounds Maintenance, Inc.  
Bloomington, IL



### *Please explain your job.*

As the CEO of Reinhart Grounds Maintenance, Inc., I am responsible for all sales and marketing activities as well as upholding our company culture, creating systems, and setting the company vision and strategy.

### *What is the history behind your business?*

My brother Chad and I grew up on a farm just a few miles West of Bloomington-Normal, IL. Growing up, most summers were spent walking beans, baling hay, raising our FFA and 4-H projects, or just helping out around our family farm. However, fairly early in life, we both realized that there was a very limited future in production agriculture. So in 1987, when Chad was 15, he put an advertisement in the local newspaper for lawn mowing and began servicing five or six customers. By the following year, Chad had more work than he could do by himself. I was in my first year of college at Illinois State University looking for a way to make some additional money, so I joined the company. By the time I graduated from college with my Agri-business degree four years later, the company had grown to the point where it could support me full time and Chad part time as he went to college. When Chad graduated several years later with his Fluid and Power Technology degree, he joined the company on a full time basis as well.

We began our business by servicing residential clients, but by 1994 we made a strategic decision to change our focus and primarily service commercial clients. Currently we service all of central Illinois including Bloomington-Normal, Greater Peoria, Champaign, Decatur, and Springfield. We are currently one of the largest landscape management companies in central Illinois.

### *How does being in an urban setting impact your business?*

Our area in central Illinois continues to grow and that growth provides opportunity. Our business is based on urban customers and businesses. Most of our employees are from an agriculture background or a "hard labor" background. As our area has become more urban and the company has grown, it has become more challenging to find employees with the agriculture work ethic.

### *How did you become interested in your career?*

My first experience in entrepreneurship was as a young boy, selling sweet corn from a small road-side stand at our family farm. Ever since then, I have been hooked and knew that I wanted to be an entrepreneur. The landscaping and lawn care industry is probably the closest thing to production agriculture that you can get. Once agriculture gets in your blood, it becomes more than just what you do, it defines who you are.

## Container Gardens

Plants can grow in nearly any kind of container, as long as they have adequate drainage. For this reason, many people use containers that might often be considered something to be thrown in the trash as a container for various types of container gardens. With a little imagination, any object that will hold soil will do! An old soup bowl, a tin tub, a rusty red wagon and even an old bird cage are possible. Not to mention plastic yogurt containers, drinking glasses and even a milk jug. The possibilities are endless. So not only are you planting your own garden, but by using containers that would otherwise be thrown away, you are recycling.

Once you have chosen your container, you must choose what types of plants you would like to grow in the container. Whether you decide to plant vegetables, flowering plants or plants that attract wildlife, the decision is yours. Maybe you want to grow flowering plants that are all the same color. Or perhaps you want to grow your own herb garden. Whatever you decide to grow, you will get to enjoy the benefits of container gardening in your community.



Information in this Ag Mag may be linked to the following Illinois Learning Standards: 1.A.3a; 1.A.3b; 1.B.3d; 1.C.3d; 5.A.2a; 5.A.3b; 11.A.3a; 11.A.3b; 11.A.3d; 11.B.3a; 11.B.3b; 12.B.2a; 13.A.2b; 13.B.2c; 13.B.2d; 13.B.2f; 13.B.3c; 13.B.3f; 27.A.3a

Information in this Ag Mag may be linked to the following Illinois Assessment Frameworks: 1.6.01; 1.7.01; 1.8.01; 1.6.03; 1.7.03; 1.8.03; 1.6.09; 1.8.08; 1.6.15; 1.7.16; 1.6.21; 11.7.01; 11.7.06; 12.7.01; 12.7.15; 12.7.16; 13.7.08; 13.7.09; 13.7.11

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