



WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE ARE ABOUT

I. OUR MISSION *REFRESHED*

Urban Tree Connection's mission is to build a neighborhood rooted food and land system through community leadership development and land based strategies in West Philadelphia.

II. OUR ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

1. **Community Self Determination:** All of our work is based on the belief that people from historically marginalized communities, have the right to determine their own futures. We aim to resist current and historic forces of systematic oppression by developing a self-determination project that builds community power.
2. **Solidarity:** We are part of a greater, global social movement and ecosystem. We stand with other like-minded organizations, formations and people fighting against the destructive forces that are hetero-patriarchy, racism and capitalism.
3. **Mutuality:** As a community, we are bound together by collective values and with a shared vision of a liberated people and planet. We learn from each other and from the land. The more we nourish the land through sustainable practices, the more the land will nourish and support us.
4. **Transformational:** We are committed to self, community, and world/societal transformation. We take care of ourselves and respect one another; and understand that as we aim to shift material conditions and social relations we will have to change ourselves and be emotionally accountable to one another.
5. **Collective Wisdom:** We are a multigenerational organization. We recognize the dignity and wisdom of our entire community, from ancestors and elders, to families and youth. Our work re-members and builds on Black agrarian roots, practices, and traditions.

III. OUR VISION

UTC's work goes beyond food and green space access and towards self-determining practices that engage people in governing resources together to meet the collective needs of the entire community.

"We envision a vibrant community-base in Haddington, West Philadelphia, in which the community stewards its own land, engages in alternative economies, and creates sustainably produced, chemical free, produce."

IV. GUIDING FRAMEWORK(S)

Guiding Framework: *Our aim is to build a people’s food and land system that is sustainable, just, and community-led and governed. As such we adopt an Agroecology framework + Food Sovereignty principles in our work. Agroecology is people-centered agriculture that recognizes a long history of oppression and exploitation in our food/land systems; and aims to repair it through people-centered agriculture that puts us in a better relationship with the earth, our environment, and one another.*

Food Sovereignty Principles:

- **Food for People:** We grow healthy, culturally and regionally appropriate produce for and with our neighbors in West Philly.
- **Values food providers:** We partner with farmers/growers across the city and state committed to sustainable growing practices; we value their labor and uphold their/our dignity.
- **Localizes food systems:** We believe that the primary value of food is sustenance for people and families. We are particularly focused on securing food and land resources for historically marginalized communities, like Haddington, a majority Black, working class neighborhood.
- **Puts control locally:** Food is a valuable local resource that belongs in the hands of those that use them to be used and shared in socially and environmentally sustainable ways which conserve diversity.
- **Builds knowledge & skills:** We are reclaiming agricultural knowledge of our ancestors, and passing down agricultural knowledge and developing skills through multi-generational leadership development.
- **Works with nature:** We are developing production and distribution systems that protect natural resources and reduce harm to the environment.



Figure 1: Refreshed logo by Hibah Rahmani (2018)

Just Transition: We also adopt a [Just Transition](#) framework in our educational programming and approach. Just Transition was born out of labor and environmental movements and is a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy. This means approaching production and consumption cycles holistically and waste-free. The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations. If the process of transition is not just, the outcome will never be. Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there.

**For more on Just Transition visit climatejusticealliance.org and movementgeneration.org*