

1 A RESOLUTION DECLARING THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL SUSTAINABLE FOOD
2 SOURCES BY SUPPORTING THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF URBAN
3 AGRICULTURE, SMALL FARMS, URBAN FARMING AND THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY;
4 DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS TO PROVIDE A RECOMMENDATION FOR
5 EXPANDING THE LAND USE PROVISION IN UNINCORPORATED FULTON COUNTY TO
6 SUPPORT URBAN AGRICULTURE MORE BROADLY; AND A CALL TO ACTION FOR
7 MUNICIPALITIES WITHIN FULTON COUNTY TO SUPPORT URBAN AGRICULTURE AND
8 REMOVE OBSTACLES OR ROADBLOCKS THAT DISCOURAGE OR PREVENT THIS
9 INDUSTRY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

10 WHEREAS, the Metro Atlanta Chamber states that Metropolitan Atlanta is the ninth
11 largest and fourth fastest-growing metro area in the nation and home to 6 million people in
12 2019, and exemplifies the estimate that 81 percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas;
13 and

14 WHEREAS, Gracie Bonds Staples, writing in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, states
15 that the Atlanta metro area contains more than 35 food deserts, and cites experts who see a
16 “direct correlation between food deserts and the state’s high rates of obesity and chronic
17 diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and cancers,” as well as stroke and heart disease; and

18 WHEREAS, the Economic Research service of the USDA states that “limited access
19 to supermarkets, supercenters, grocery stores, or other sources of healthy and affordable food
20 may make it harder for some Americans to eat a healthy diet;” and

21 WHEREAS, according to the National Center for Appropriate Technology (“NCAT”),
22 produce travels 1,500 to 2,000 miles from farm to table, due to outdated food distribution systems;
23 and

24 WHEREAS, Jeanne Peters, writing in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association,
25 describes a local food system as one that “preserves local farmland and fosters community
26 economic viability, requires less energy for transportation, and offers consumers the freshest
27 foods” to help build a sustainable future; and

28 WHEREAS, K. Rashid Nuri writes in his book, *Growing Out Loud*, that the critical
29 importance of agricultural production to national strength and stability, is enshrined in a series of
30 U.S. Homestead Acts, beginning in 1862, which provide for government support of farmers by
31 providing land, education and infrastructure; and

32 WHEREAS, urban agriculture, which is agriculture integrated into the urban economic
33 and ecological system, takes the form of backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening, small farms,
34 community gardening in vacant lots and parks, roadside urban fringe agriculture and livestock

1 grazing in open space; and

2 **WHEREAS**, according to numerous studies by the US Department of Agriculture, when
3 small farms and urban agriculture are supported by local government, the incidence of food
4 deserts decreases, food insecurity decreases, and food systems become inclusive, resilient, and
5 safe, providing healthy and affordable food to all people; and

6 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Zoning Resolution provides at Article V for an Agricultural
7 District allowing urban agricultural uses of property with certain provisions such as property
8 setbacks in order to provide protection from interference on adjacent properties; and

9 **WHEREAS** the Fulton County Zoning Resolution provides at Article XIX, Section 19.4.3
10 for special use permits for more intensive agricultural activities within the Agricultural
11 District, with the stated intent of the article being to allow agricultural activities and to preserve the
12 nature of agricultural areas; and

13 **WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners finds that it is in the best interest of the health,
14 safety, and welfare of the citizens of Fulton County to adopt policies, ordinances, and legislation
15 to expand the support for land conservation, small farming, and urban agriculture in other
16 compatible land use districts throughout Fulton County, Georgia, and to remove barriers to this
17 land by providing for certain activities to be exempt from the special use permitting requirements.

18 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners
19 declares the importance of and significance of Small Farms and Urban Agriculture practices to
20 Fulton County residents and the local food economy.

21 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners hereby
22 encourages Fulton County to partner with organizations that provide technical assistance to
23 farmers and landowners in the implementation of urban agriculture and conservation practices.

24 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners hereby directs its Director
25 of Public Works to assess the compatibility of all existing land uses within unincorporated Fulton
26 County with small farms and urban agricultural uses, and to report to the Board of Commissioners
27 on the viability and wisdom of providing for the overlay of the Agricultural District in unincorporated
28 Fulton County districts.

29 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners hereby directs the
30 Director of Public Works to study the impacts of gardening and small poultry operations in
31 residential communities, and to provide a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for

1 the types and scales of urban agricultural practices that may be conducted without placing an
2 undue burden on neighboring properties, such that a specialuse permit would not be warranted.

3 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Director of the Department of Real Estate and
4 Asset Management is directed to consider partnerships with schools, health care facilities,
5 neighborhood groups, nonprofits, municipalities, and other non-governmental organizations to
6 establish urban agricultural uses on county-owned properties wherever located, and to provide a
7 report to the Board of Commissioners to list those properties with suitable grounds areas to
8 support community gardens, small farms, or other urban agricultural uses.

9 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the efforts made to assist local farmers with program
10 applications, design and layout of urban agriculture, and activities associated with program
11 development and management, shall not be in conflict with any standards and specifications set
12 forth by the statutes, regulations, policies and best practices of local, state, and federal
13 departments and services.

14 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Board of Commissioners hereby urges
15 municipalities located within Fulton County, Georgia, to adopt policies, ordinances, and legislation
16 with the objective of supporting land conservation, small farming, and urban agriculture, and to
17 study their land use and zoning ordinances and permitting processes to determine how to remove
18 roadblocks that seek to discourage or prevent the success of this industry.

19 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Clerk to the Commission is directed to provide a
20 copy of this Resolution to each municipality located within Fulton County, Georgia, with the
21 expectation that adoption of this Resolution will increase community awareness of the
22 significance of local food sources and urge the creation of avenues of support for the local food
23 economy.

24 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this Resolution shall become effective upon its
25 adoption, and that all resolutions and parts of resolutions in conflict with this Resolution are hereby
26 repealed to the extent of the conflict.

27 **SO PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Board of Commissioners of Fulton County,
28 Georgia, this 6th day of October 2021.

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FULTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Sponsored By:

Bob Ellis, Commissioner (District 2)
Fulton County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Tonya R. Grier
Clerk to the Commission

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kaye Woodard Burwell
Interim County Attorney