



Urban Agriculture In Process:

Developing a Comprehensive Policy for the City of Cambridge

Public Meeting – March 22, 2017

What is Urban Agriculture?

- Urban agriculture is the practice of **cultivating food** in and around the city



Benefits of Urban Agriculture



- Health
- Social
- Economic
- Ecological

Benefits of Urban Agriculture



- **Health:**

- Access to healthy food
- Raise nutritional awareness
- Moderate physical activity
- Culturally important foods

Benefits of Urban Agriculture



- **Social:**

- Education
- Youth development
- Community life

Benefits of Urban Agriculture



- **Economic:**

- Savings on food costs
- Supplemental income

Benefits of Urban Agriculture



- **Ecological:**

- Pollination contributes to ecological health
- Environmental awareness

Urban Agriculture Task Force

- Composed of:
 - Cambridge Public Health Department staff
 - Community Development Department staff
 - Conservation Commission
 - CitySprouts
 - Community members
- Involved the cooperation of ISD, DPW, Animal Control

Urban Agriculture Task Force

Goals of Policy:

- Allow select agricultural activities in Cambridge within established guidelines
- Establish a clear permitting and enforcement process
- Support of best practices and safe operations
- Being good neighbors

Outreach & Partners

Stakeholder Engagement

- Focus Groups with local experts (beekeepers, chicken keepers, gardeners, farmers, entrepreneurs, academics, epidemiologists, veterinarians, clinicians)
- Nonprofits and Community Organizations, e.g. Cambridge Community Center, City Sprouts, Shady Hill School
- Residents
- Neighborhood organizations, Tenants Association
- State agencies (MDAR, MDPH)
- Local municipal experts (Boston, Somerville, Arlington)

Urban Agriculture in Cambridge Today

Building on what is currently allowed, such as:

- School gardens
- Home gardens
- Community gardens



Urban Agriculture in Cambridge Today

Farmers markets and CSAs:

- Farmers markets are allowed in some districts; in others they need variances
- Rules for CSA drop-off points are unclear



Urban Agriculture in Cambridge Today

Commercial growing operations:

- Innovative approaches to farming in the city: e.g., rooftop farms, container farms
- No comprehensive system for permitting and regulation in Cambridge



Urban Agriculture in Cambridge Today

Currently not allowed:

- Beekeeping
- Henkeeping



Urban Agriculture in Cambridge



Developing a Policy

- **Public health regulations** that support and limit activities to mitigate potential health risks and exposures
- **A zoning ordinance** that explicitly allows agricultural activities

Comprehensive City Policy

Public Health Regulations

- Keeping chickens (hens only)
- Beekeeping
- Soil safety

Zoning Regulations

- Establish allowed districts, criteria and/or review processes for principal agricultural uses

Guidance Documents

- Best management practices
- Easy guide for community members to navigate permit process

Permit Applications and Forms

Regulatory Framework

State regulations

- MA Food Code (105 CMR 590):
 - Sale of processed honey, eggs (temperature), processed/cut produce
- Chickens:
 - State poultry regulations (MDAR), state slaughter regulations (MDPH)
- Bees:
 - State apiary regulations (MDAR)

Regulatory Framework

Local public health jurisdiction:

- Inspectional Services Department:
 - Enforces MA Food Code
- Cambridge Public Health Department
 - Local health department with statutory authority under M.G.L. c.111 §31 to promulgate health regulations
 - Statutory authority under M.G.L. c.111 §122 to regulate public health nuisances and prevent disease conditions

Public Health Regulations

- Three separate regulations (hens, bees, soil)
- Regulatory authority defined
- Logical argument for regulatory need and purpose
- Definitions
- CPHD permit required to keep hens or bees
- Operation and maintenance requirements
 - Covers nuisance, odor, noise, pest prevention, sanitary waste management, and disease prevention
 - Refers to other state/local regulations where applicable
- Establishes inspection frequency
- Clear enforcement mechanisms for violations and due process considerations for compliance

Public Health Opportunities & Considerations

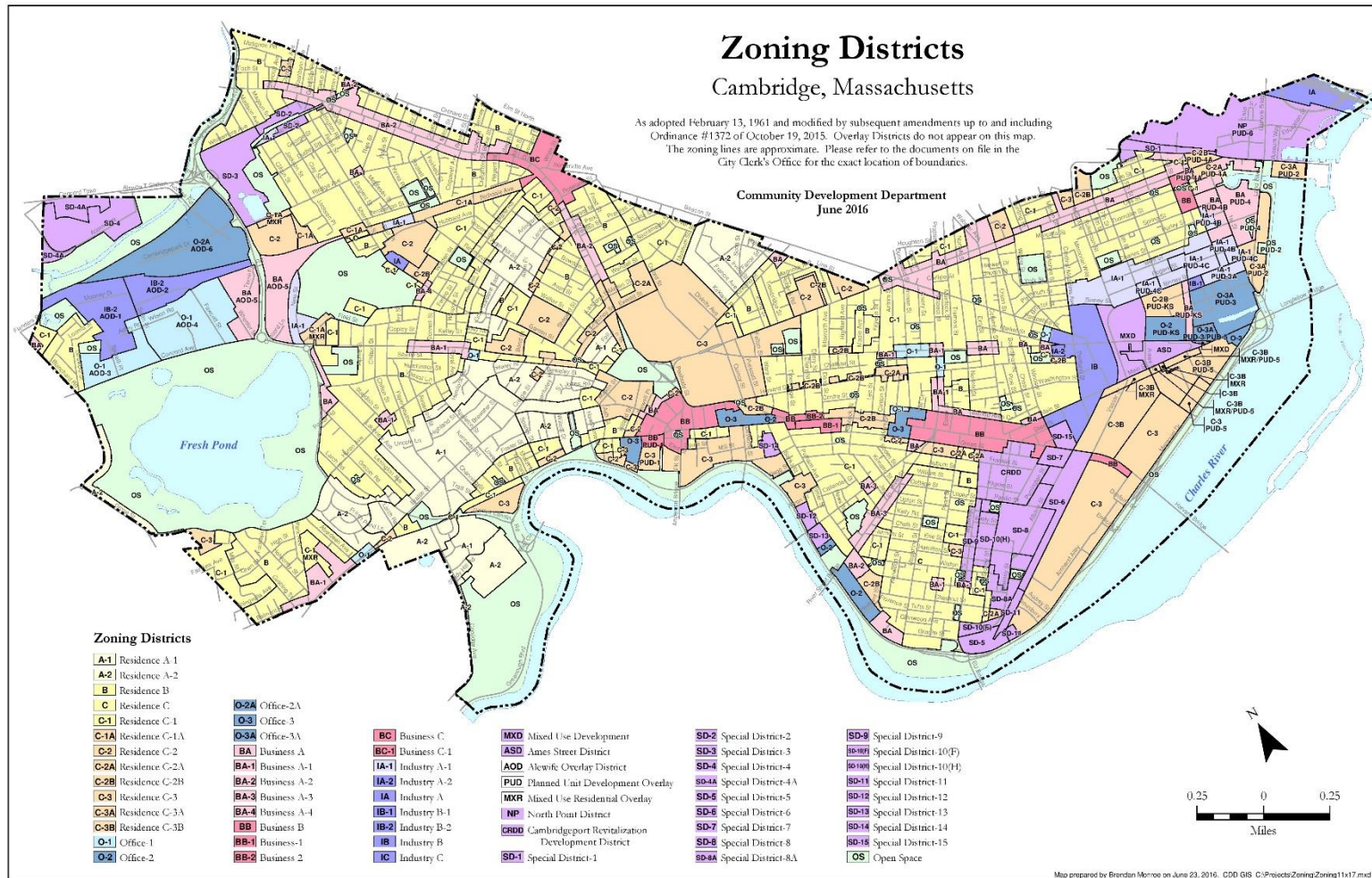
- Permit application plan review phase enables CPHD to flag design or operational plans that can be modified to prevent later complaints or concerns
- Best Management Practices and guidance documents available to educate applicants on protective measures to prevent disease transmission and assure adequate biosecurity measures (e.g., avian influenza)
- Soil safety guidelines and testing requirements to prevent heavy metal exposure (e.g., lead, arsenic)

Soil Safety

- The aim of the soil safety regulations is to prevent exposure to heavy metals.
- Commercial and institutional farms growing produce in soil must apply for a permit from the Cambridge Public Health Department
- The soil regulations will require use of raised beds and imported (i.e., non-native) soil
- Test results from an accredited lab (e.g., UMass Extension) must be submitted with soil permit application
- The regulation does not apply to residential, backyard gardens for private use

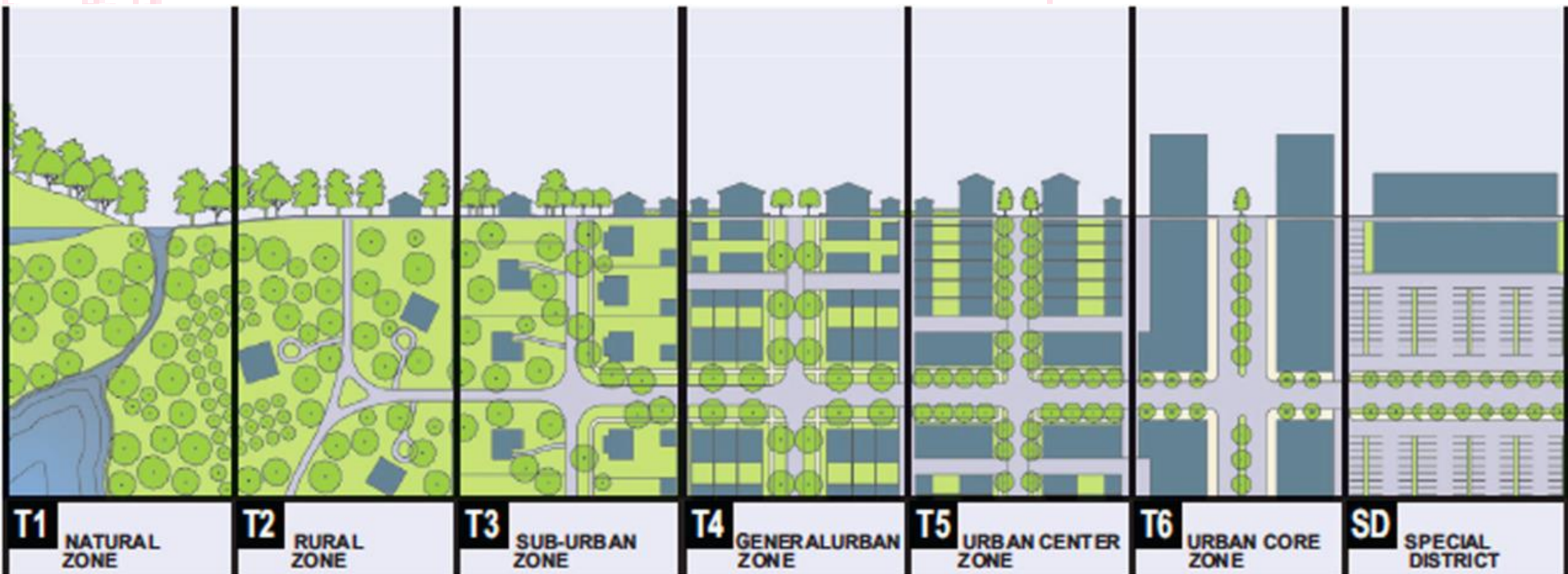


Zoning Considerations



Zoning Considerations

Zoning is a *Land Use Code*



Zoning Considerations

What types of activities are associated with homes, schools, parks, offices, retail?



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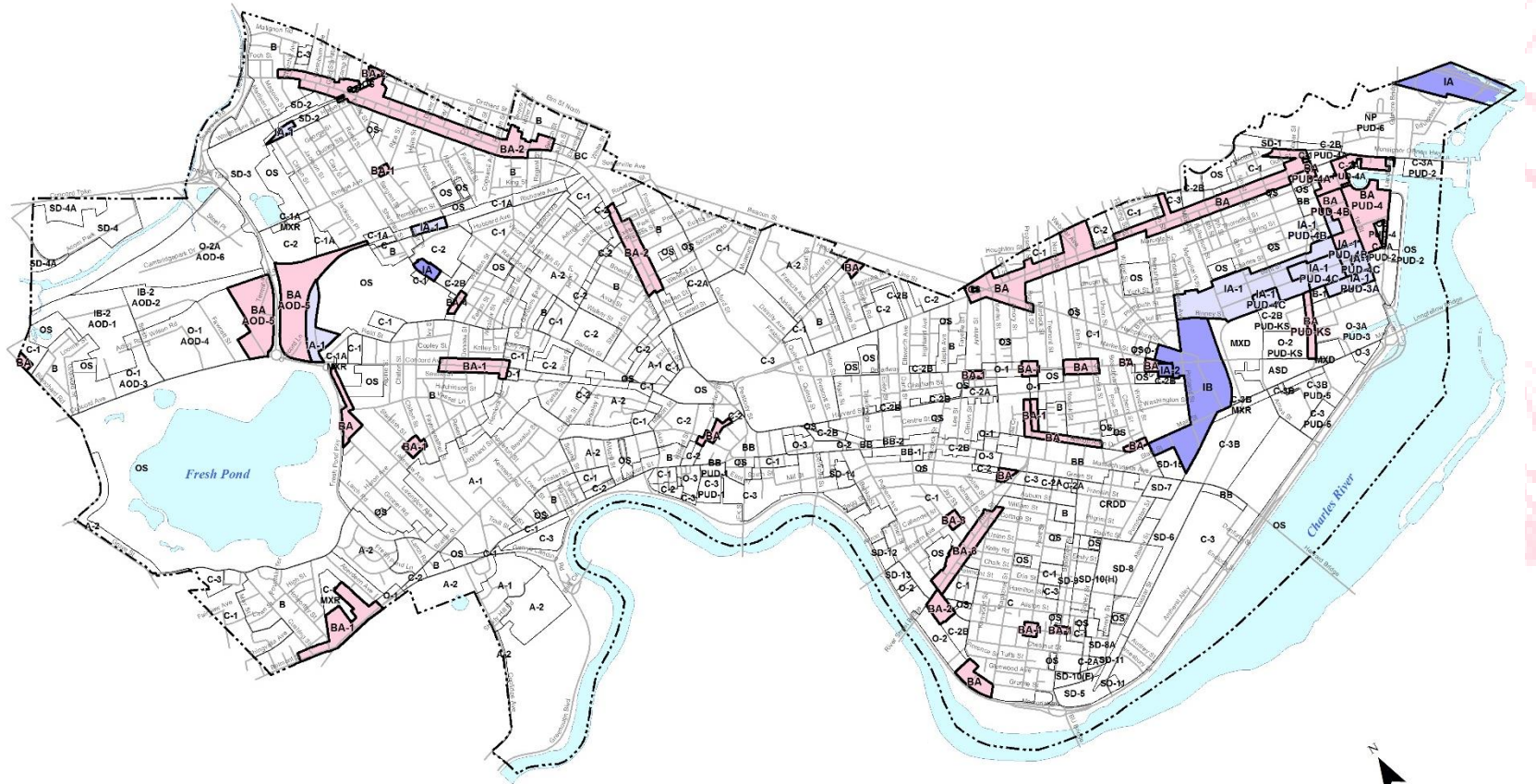
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Zoning Considerations

Where/how might agricultural commerce coexist with other urban uses?



Zoning Considerations



Current Use Classification: 4.36-a. “Sales place for flowers, garden supplies agricultural produce conducted partly or wholly outdoors; commercial greenhouse or garden”

Zoning Considerations

- How do we define and classify these different types of uses?
- Where might (or might not) these types of uses fit with the character of an urban district?
- How do we apply our development standards? (e.g., floor area, height, setbacks)
- What additional standards and review processes are needed?

Urban Agriculture in Cambridge



Henkeeping



Henkeeping

- Home-based use allowed
- Permits from Cambridge Public Health Department



Henkeeping: Enclosure

- Henhouses:
 - Properly ventilated
 - Designed to be easily accessed, cleaned, and maintained
 - Conform to minimum floor surface area and nest box requirements



Henkeeping: Enclosure

- Enclosed run attached to henhouse:
 - Constructed with wire mesh hardware cloth
 - Free ranging of adult hens outside the henhouse or run not permitted



Henkeeping: Enclosure

- Henhouse and run structures:
 - Located on a well drained area such as a pervious surface (grass, dirt, or sand)
 - Should not discharge onto a public way or neighbor's property

Henkeeping: Setbacks

- Henhouses:
 - Subject to accessory structure setback requirements
 - Located at least 3 feet from property line

Henkeeping: Nuisance Control

- Perceptible odor at property boundary not permitted
- Manure composting:
 - With hay, bedding, leaves, or other related material
 - In rodent-proof composter
- Henhouses cleaned on a bi-weekly basis

Beekeeping



Beekeeping

- Home-based use allowed
- Permits from Cambridge Public Health Department



Beekeeping: Hive Size

- Hives up to 5 feet tall or 20 cubic feet of volume
 - *Example: 2' x 2' x 5'*
- Hives at ground level elevated off the ground



Beekeeping: Hive Setbacks

- If existing barrier (wall, fence, dense vegetation, etc.), no setback required
- If no existing barrier, hive entrance is set back minimum of 5 feet from property line

Beekeeping: Flyway Barriers

- Two options for the construction of a flyway path barrier:
 - Cause bees to fly in a upward direction
 - Cause bees to fly in opposite direction from nearby building, public way, etc.

Beekeeping: Flyway Barriers

- If aim is to cause bees to fly in a upward direction, barrier must be:
 - *3 feet in height*
 - Comprised of a wall, fence, dense vegetation, combination thereof, or similar composition
 - Established within 3 feet of the hive entrance(s)
 - Extend at least 2 feet in width on either side of the hive(s)

Beekeeping: Flyway Barriers

- If aim is to cause bees to fly in opposite direction from building, public way, etc., the following two options would be allowed:
 1. Hive entrance must face in opposite direction, or
 2. Flyway barrier must be:
 - *1 foot above hive height*
 - Comprised of a wall, fence, dense vegetation, a combination thereof, or similar composition
 - Established within 3 feet of the hive entrance(s)
 - Extend at least 2 feet in width on either side of the hive(s)

Beekeeping: Water Supply

- Adequate supply of fresh water must be maintained in a location readily available to all bee colonies on a lot

Beekeeping: Signage

- Sign required when hive is within 10 feet of a public street, park, school grounds, walkway, or bikeway



Farming



Farming

- Ground level
- Rooftop
- Greenhouses



Farming: Specialized Techniques

- Hydroponics
- Aquaculture
- Aquaponics



Sales: Farm Stands

- Farm Stand:
 - A temporary stand, table, stall, or tent that sells or donates produce and horticultural products including whole, unprocessed produce, plants, flowers and honey from the site



Sales: Farmers Markets

- Streamlining permit process



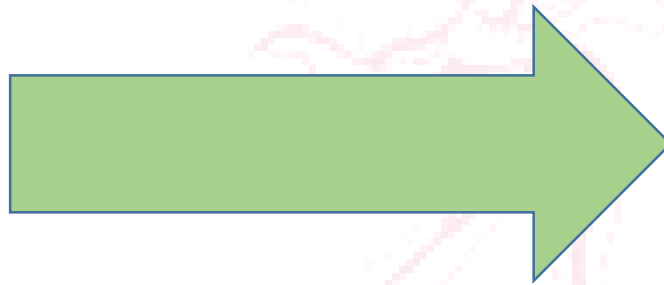
Sales: CSA Dropoff

- Locations
- Deliveries
- Pickup times



Next Steps

- Feedback from the community
- Complete zoning proposal
- Promulgation of Public Health regulations (June)
- Creation of user-friendly guide to urban agriculture in Cambridge



Thank You!

- Email: urbanag@cambridgema.gov

