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
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 Districts
Cambridge, Massachusetts

As adopted February 15, 1961 and modified by subsequent amendments up to and excluding Ordinance # 725 of October 19, 2015. Overlay Districts do not appear on this map. The zoning lines are approximate. Please refer to the documents or file in the City Clerk’s Office for the exact location of boundaries.

Community Development Department
June 2016
Zoning Considerations

Zoning is a *Land Use Code*
Zoning Considerations

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