



Urban Agriculture In Process:

Developing a Comprehensive Policy for the City of Cambridge

Presentation to the Health & Environment Committee - August 23, 2016

What is Urban Agriculture?

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



Urban Ag Task Force

The Cambridge Public Health and Community Development Departments have been working in partnership with the Urban Ag Task Force, a subcommittee of the Food and Fitness Policy Council, to develop a comprehensive urban ag policy for the city.

Goals of Regulations

- Allow limited agricultural activities in Cambridge
- Establish a clear permitting and enforcement process
- Support of best practices, and being good neighbors

Cambridge Outreach & Partners

Stakeholder Engagement

- City agencies and programs (CPHD, CDD, ISD, DPW, Animal Control, Conservation Commission)
- Focus Groups with local experts (beekeepers, chicken keepers, gardeners, 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

- ***What works in Cambridge?***
Examined nearby cities' policies (Boston, Somerville, Arlington) and learned from national leaders (San Francisco, NYC, Austin, TX)
- Policy advising and research support from the Conservation Law Foundation



Urban Ag Task Force Action Items

Drafting a policy that includes:

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



Comprehensive City Policy

Public Health Regulations

- Keeping chickens (hens only)
- Beekeeping
- Soil safety for produce grown for sale

Zoning Ordinance

- Establish what types of agriculture are “accessory” (e.g. home-based activities) and what are “principal uses” (e.g. commercial farms)
- 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

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 (e.g. bee sting allergies)
- 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)

Task Force Next Steps

- Draft soil safety regulations and regulatory review by Cambridge Public Health Subcommittee to vote to promulgate public health regulations on chickens, bees, and soil
- Develop criteria, and review processes for principal agricultural uses for staff review (Zoning, ISD, Law, CPHD)
- Host large public meeting to get input on draft



Agriculture Activities Under Consideration

- Farms – ground level
- Farms – roof level
- Commercial & Institutional (nonprofit) farms & gardens
- Animals (hens, honey bees)
- Hydroponics (roots in water)
- Aquaponics (fish & plants in tanks)
- Aquaculture (cultivation of aquatic animals)
- Aeroponics (roots in air, sprayed w/ water)
- Freight containers
- Vertical Agriculture
- Expanding opportunities for farmers markets & Community Supported Agriculture; CSAs covered by Federal/State SNAP Match financing in Spring 2017



City Council Zoning Petition

- Intent is the same as Urban Ag Task Force draft policy
- Implementation is key – need to ensure a clear, effective permitting and enforcement process
- Planning Board is not the recommended permitting agency – bulk of oversight for some activities would be by CPHD
- Zoning should state what agricultural uses (principal and accessory) are allowed / not allowed in Article 4.000 (Use Regulations), subject to compliance with CPHD regulations
- City Council petition can provide guidance for the final phase of Task Force work



GREEN CITY GROWERS

Birds