

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Topical Plan/Comprehensive Plan Amendment

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Project Name: Urban Agriculture Policy Plan

Submitted By: CPED Community Planning Division

Planning Staff and Phone: Amanda Arnold, 612-673-3242

Wards: All

Neighborhood and Business Organizations: All

Current Comprehensive Plan Designations: The Plan builds on existing policies but does not change land use designations.

Background

The development of this *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan* is an outgrowth of the Homegrown Minneapolis initiative. Homegrown Minneapolis is an effort of the City of Minneapolis initiated in December 2008 by Mayor RT Rybak to improve the growth, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management of healthy, locally grown foods within the city and the surrounding region. The first phase of Homegrown Minneapolis resulted in the development of the *Homegrown Minneapolis Report* which contains more than 50 recommendations designed to improve the local food system. This report can be found at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp.

On June 26, 2009, the Minneapolis City Council acted on *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report*. The [City Council resolved](#) to implement *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report* by establishing a Homegrown Minneapolis Implementation Task Force. That resolution also specifically called for eight actions related to Homegrown Minneapolis.

One of the eight actions required the Homegrown Implementation Task Force and City departments to pursue development of “a city wide topical plan on community gardens and urban agriculture.” The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED)–Planning Division was tasked with bringing this action forward with funding through the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS) received a \$2.6 million [SHIP grant](#) to implement 11 intervention strategies. This plan is part of one of these strategies.

Plan Summary

The plan focuses on how urban agriculture (the local production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management of food in the urban environment) can be better supported in the urban environment. It suggests that urban agriculture does have a place as one of our many land uses in the city. This concept is supported by the City goals of having locally grown foods available and chosen and making healthy choices easy and economical.

The plan does not outline the full extent of how much urban agriculture should be expected and exactly where it should go. This is because urban agriculture involves a wide variety of uses from growing to processing, and each has unique benefits and impacts. In addition, the future demand of urban agriculture is intriguing but not fully understood. Over time, individuals pursue opportunities incrementally. Thus, this plan is the first step in laying the groundwork for future endeavors that could result in more beautification, growth of local food, and green job creation. The plan suggests ways to remove regulatory barriers and open up possibilities.

The plan explores and builds upon several land use related recommendations found in *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report*. It also expands on several policies found in the *Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. In addition, the plan includes eight overarching goals developed by the steering committee that guided the project. Many issues covered in the plan provide background information and address a variety of topics related to urban agriculture, but the recommendations focus primarily on land use related actions. A table outlining the links between the Homegrown Minneapolis recommendations, the Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and the plan goals can be found in the Recommendations and Implementations Chapter.

The plan was developed with the assistance of a steering committee and technical advisory committee. The steering committee met nine times between January 2010 and February 2011, and the technical advisory committee met eight times. In addition, a series of topical discussions was held in the summer and fall of 2010 to focus in on the land use issues raised during the first phase of Homegrown Minneapolis. Topics discussed included zoning, innovative design, economic development, farmers' markets, rooftop farming, animals, and local foods in restaurants. These discussions revealed a variety of issues and informed many of the recommendations of the plan.

The plan outlines existing conditions related to urban agriculture in order to provide context for issues and opportunities in Minneapolis. The Existing Conditions chapter covers: definitions, examples from other cities, and existing policies in Minneapolis. Locations of existing community gardens, farmers' markets, and other fresh food sources are mapped. In addition, a review of concurrent Homegrown Minneapolis efforts, such as the review of farmers' market licensing and development of a local food policy council, is provided to capture the breadth of efforts underway that could influence current City policy and future conditions.

The planning process included the commissioning of a study of land capacity in Minneapolis. Often development is seen as a threat to urban agriculture, and balancing the need for development and open space is sometimes challenging. The City has strong policy supporting population and job growth as well as dense transit oriented development, but the provision of open space and the promotion of health are also valued. The land capacity analysis helps to address this concern. Community Attributes

International, a land planning firm that specializes in regional and local economics, was hired in the summer of 2010 to examine the demand for land within Minneapolis. They examined forecasted residential and job growth, recent development patterns, and land supply (vacant and under utilized land) and land demand.

Community Attributes Internationals' primary finding was that Minneapolis has more than enough developable land (public and private land) to accommodate forecasted growth for at least the next 20 years. This means that both development and urban agricultural uses can be accommodated without competition. The full land capacity analysis can be found on the project website: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/urban_ag_plan.asp.

The Issues and Opportunities Chapter is organized around the eight goals for the plan outlined by the steering committee. While some of these goals touch issues beyond the scope of land use regulation, they address issues related to the overall well-being of the city and its citizens, such as concentrations of poverty and access to transportation. The analysis of a variety of social factors and the location of existing fresh food sources led to the identification of focus areas where urban agriculture should be a priority.

The recommendations in the plan focus on four areas: land use and zoning, land availability, the community garden pilot program and economic development. The plan also outlines considerations for future Homegrown Minneapolis efforts, such as: marketing and branding, partnerships, animals, land banking, health promotion and design.

Key recommendations related to zoning and land use include:

- Defining urban agriculture activities such as market gardens and urban farms in the zoning code;
- Allowing market gardens (small scale commercial growing) in most zones including low density residential areas and on rooftops;
- Allowing urban farms in commercial and industrial districts;
- Allowing residents to have home-based food growing businesses;
- Allowing more flexibility to home growers, community gardeners, and commercial gardeners in the use of trellises, hoop houses, raised beds and other techniques;
- Changing the signage regulations on farmers markets and community gardens to better serve those uses; and
- Considering urban agriculture opportunities in small area plans and transportation plans.

Key recommendations related to land availability include:

- Reviewing the City's land inventory and consider selling or leasing more properties in under-served areas for urban agriculture (The plan stresses that development remains a key priority);
- Altering land sale policies to include criteria for consideration of the sale of land for growing; and
- Ensuring that, when conservation easements are required on parcels sold by the City, the price will reflect the lack of potential for redevelopment.

Key recommendations related to the community garden program include:

- Reassessing the available parcels to make sure they are desirable for gardening and serve more under-served areas; and
- Considering selling some of the current community garden parcels to gardeners.

Key recommendations related to economic development include:

- Supporting the Homegrown Minneapolis Business Development Center; and
- Conducting a market and economic impact analysis to better understand the future role and economic impacts of urban agriculture.

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

There are implementation steps that relate to elements of urban agriculture in several chapters of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. These include:

- Promote nutrition strategies to ensure access to healthy foods for all residents. (5.7.3)
- Educate residents and property owners about the benefits of recycling, and of properly composting and reusing yard wastes and organic plant-based food waste. (6.10.9)
- Support the growth and development of local businesses. (6.15.2)
- Support the creation and improvement of community gardens and food markets which sell locally and regionally grown foods. (7.1.6)
- Where appropriate, support the planting of edible fruit and vegetable plants. (7.1.7)
- Encourage the equitable spatial distribution of community gardens and food markets to provide all Minneapolis communities with access to healthy, locally grown food. (7.3.4)
- Explore opportunities for partnerships linking farmers markets, community gardens and open space. (7.8.5)

The *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan* builds on this direction. The *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan* does not suggest changes to any land use features, but its adoption would result in the augmentation of the Comprehensive Plan with more detailed policy during the next update.

Analysis – Major Considerations and Issues

Zoning and Land Use

The recommendations related to zoning and land use in the *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan* focus on removing the regulatory barriers to the practice of urban agriculture. Currently urban agriculture land uses included in the zoning code are limited to community gardens, farmers' markets and greenhouses. Unique ideas related to growing food in the city are frequently presented to staff, but a framework for allowing many activities, particularly commercial outdoor growing, does not presently exist. The suggested zoning text amendments would address this issue. The plan also suggests that health issues and

opportunities for urban agriculture land uses be considered in long-range planning efforts. Lastly, opportunities exist to incorporate urban agriculture operations into new development projects. The plan does not recommend mandating this, but encourages innovative design. The recently amended Planned Unit Development Chapter of the zoning code provides incentives for on-site food production.

Public Land Availability

Finding land that can be used long term for growing or for permanent farmers' markets is a challenge. During the planning process the role of publicly owned land was discussed frequently. While the City does lease some land for community gardens, the City has other demands on this land that need to be met as well. Much of CPED's land inventory has been purchased with the intent of redevelopment, and much of the land owned by the Public Work Department is not ideally suited for growing. In addition, the City holds a rather small amount of public land. Other public lands are held by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and Hennepin County. The plan attempts to balance needs by suggesting that the City review its land inventory and release more property that is not needed or required for other uses, but the land should be suitable for growing. The plan suggests that for farmers' markets be considered as an option when the City issues Request for Proposals for development if the use is appropriate.

Public Comments

During the public comment period approximately 80 letters were received. The letters were largely supportive of the project but suggested several additions to the plan. Since the close of the comment period, staff has made edits to the document to add clarification and address public comments where feasible within the intent of the original drafting of the document. The comments and a summary of the major themes with a staff response to each are attached.

Future Related Actions

Implementation of the plan's recommendations will take place in a variety of contexts. As mentioned above the goal of the plan is to remove barriers in order to allow individuals and groups to establish urban agriculture uses.

- Implementation of the zoning code text amendments is part of the staffs' work plan for 2011.
- Other elements such as a review of land inventories and refinement of the community garden program will take place as part of regular operations.
- Several recommendations will need to be pursued as part of ongoing Homegrown Minneapolis efforts.

Attachments

- Draft *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan*. The Plan has been edited to reflect some of the comments received during the public review period.
- Summary of comments received. This includes a staff response to each major issue raised.
- Letters, online surveys, and comment cards received.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – PLANNING DIVISION:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends the City Planning Commission and City Council **approve** the *Urban Agriculture Policy Plan*, amending the City’s comprehensive plan to incorporate the policy direction.