

Planning Commission 02/26/13

NEW BUSINESS: Initiate a Code Amendment – Urban Farms

Background

Discussion and possible action to initiate an ordinance to amend Chapter 25-2 of the City of Austin Land Development code to clarify, update, and revise regulations related to urban farms, livestock, size of farm, employees and dwelling.

Please see attached resolution from the Sustainable Food Policy Board.

On February 19, 2013, the Codes and Ordinances Subcommittee recommended initiation of this code amendment. Vote: 5-0.

Staff contact: Greg Dutton, Greg.Dutton@austintexas.gov; 974-3509



SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD

Paula McDermott,
Chairperson
810 Jessie Street
Austin, TX 78704

Philip Huang, M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Liaison
Austin/Travis County HHSD
P. O. Box 1088



DI
2

Resolution for Urban Farm Definition Update

WHEREAS, two out of three adults in Travis County are overweight or obese and 21 percent of youth are overweight; and

WHEREAS, as recognized in the City of Austin Comprehensive Plan, particularly in the Create a Healthy Austin Program, increasing access to locally raised, healthier foods, strengthens the health of our community; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainable Food Policy Board has been charged by the City of Austin and Travis County Commissioners to increase the production of local, sustainable foods to improve the community's health, economy, and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, the city is currently conducting an economic analysis that will evaluate the multiplier effect of purchasing, processing and distributing more locally produced foods; and

WHEREAS, the number of farmers' markets increased 53 percent from 2008-2011, with a 38 percent jump in Texas, Colorado and New Mexico, according to a national survey by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, major cities, including Chicago, Atlanta, Boston, Minneapolis and Portland, have recently amended zoning codes to encourage greater and more diverse urban agricultural production, acknowledging that urban farms come in different sizes and shapes; and

WHEREAS, new models of intensive urban agriculture including Milwaukee's Growing Power, a nationally acclaimed two-acre farm within the city limits that maintains 14 green houses that provide food to over 10,000 residents, and works extensively with other community groups have successfully increased low income residents' access to fresh food.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED BY THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY BOARD, that

The Sustainable Food Policy Board recommends that the Planning Commission initiate an amendment to clarify, update and revise language in Austin City Code 25-2-863 and 25-2-7 related to urban farms, especially concerning: livestock, size of farm, employees and dwelling.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that

The Sustainable Food Policy Board, which advises the Austin City Council and Travis County Commissioners, will work with the Planning Commission and City staff to review zoning for additional opportunities to increase local food production.