

Urban Farm Code Update

Austin/Travis County Sustainable Food Policy Board
Code & Metrics Working Group



August 26, 2013
Final Recommendations for Action by SFPB

Context for Recommendations

Imagine Austin

E P18. Develop a sustainable local food system by encouraging all sectors of the local food economy, including production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste recovery.

S A9. Make healthy and local foods accessible, particularly in underserved areas by removing barriers and providing incentives for the establishment of sustainable community gardens, **urban farms**, neighborhood grocery stores, farmers markets, and farm stands and mobile vegetable sales carts.

HN P10. Create complete neighborhoods across Austin that have a mix of housing types and land uses, affordable housing and transportation options, and access to healthy food, schools, retail, employment, community services, and parks and recreation options.

Context for Recommendations

Economic Impact of Austin's Food Sector (3/13)

- **Finding:** Greater consumption of local food will have positive implication for both the community's economic and physical well-being.
- **Finding:** Local production and processing/manufacturing means that more money stays in the region than would otherwise be the case, yielding a larger overall local economic impact (roughly two to one).
- **Recommendation 4:** Investigate resources to provide economic development support to local farmers, including a zoning and regulatory environment that better accommodates urban agriculture and farm stands.

Context for Recommendations

Sustainability Challenge (Lucia Athens, 8/1/13)

“How do we provide reasonable protection of the public health, safety, and welfare specifically for sites adjacent to urban farms, while encouraging more urban food production, thus helping to encourage local small businesses and protect the public health and safety from a broader context of a reliable local supply of fresh and healthy food?”

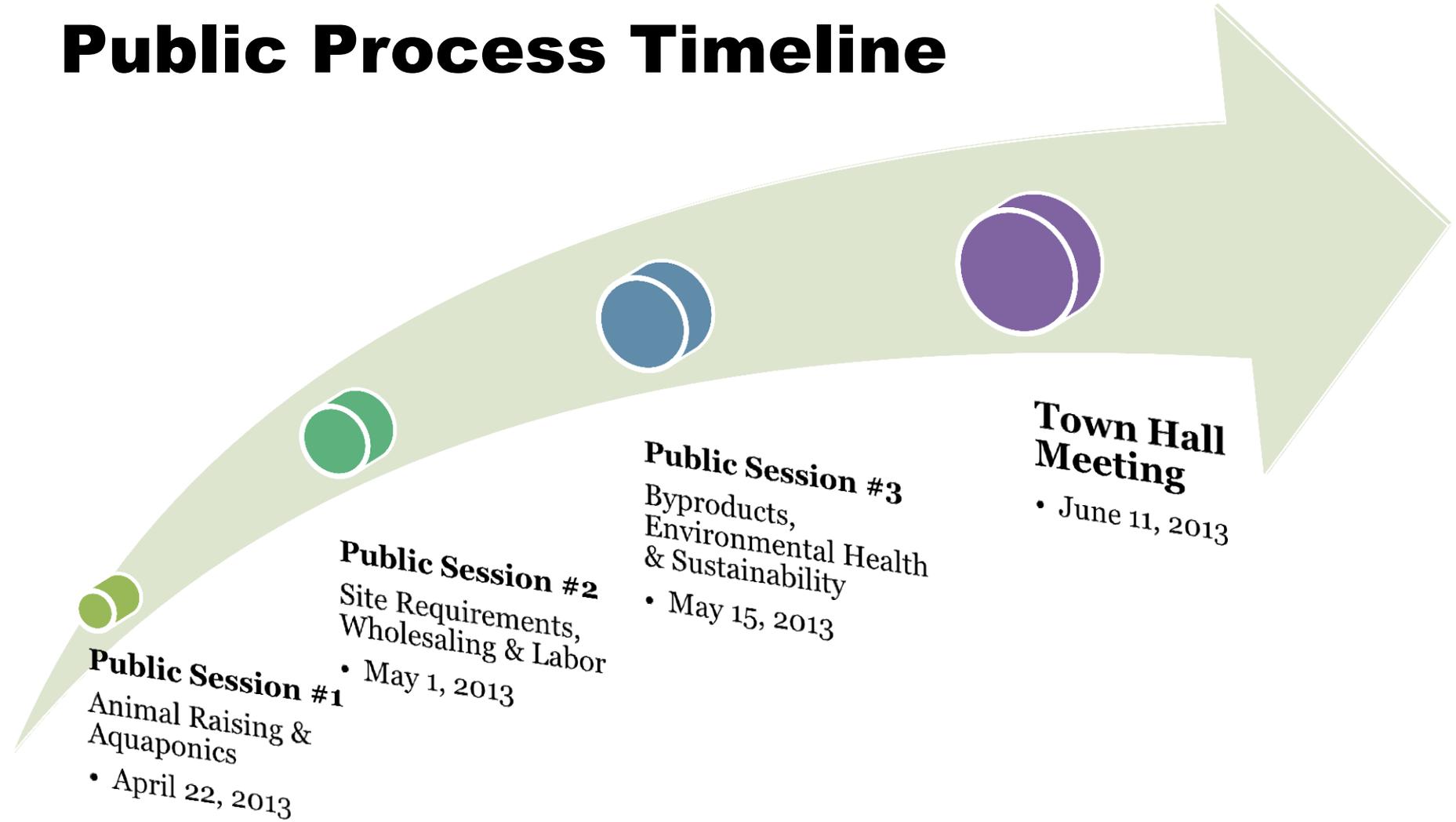
Codes & Metrics Working Group

- **First task:** Urban Farm Code Update
 - February 26, 2013 - Planning Commission charged the SFPB with “initiating 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.”
 - Codes & Metrics WG formed to complete this task and meet the needs of communities, farmers, and regulators in the interest of a healthy, safe, sustainable, and just food system for all of Austin.
- **Methods:** Context Sensitive Solutions and Public Involvement Approach

Project Overview

- **Phase 1**
 - Task 1 – Kick off meeting
 - Task 2 - Communications Tools Development
 - Task 3 – Stakeholder meetings
 - Task 4 - Public Sessions
- **Phase 2**
 - Task 6 – Update Public Information Tools
 - Task 7 – Draft recommendations
 - Task 8 – Host Community Town Hall Meeting
- **Phase 3**
 - Task 9 - Staff Review (July – August)
 - **Task 10 - Final Recommendations to SFPB**
 - Task 11 - Submit to Planning Commission
 - Task 12 - Submit to City Council

Public Process Timeline



Other Outreach Efforts

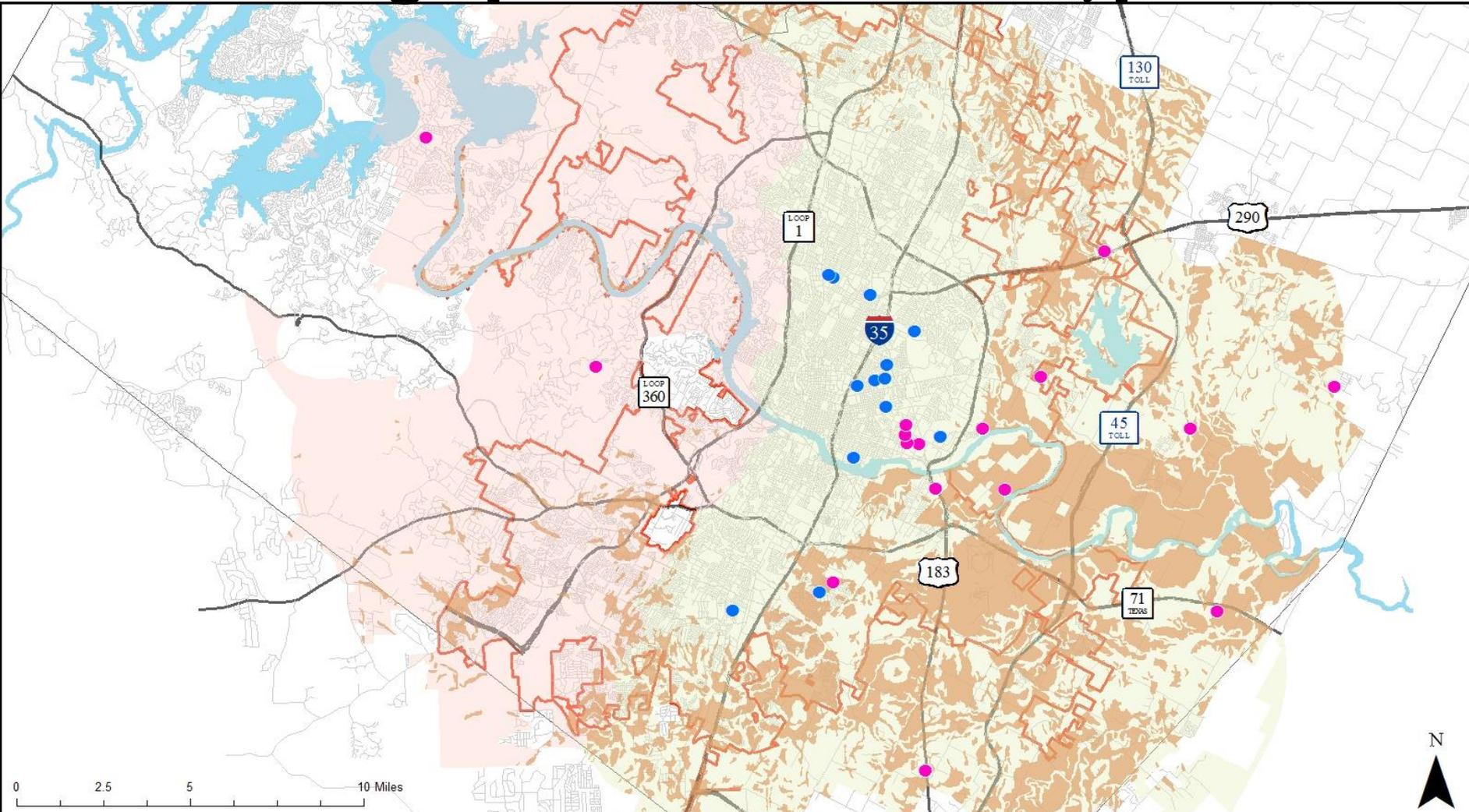
- **Govalle/Johnston Terrance Neighborhood Contact Team (5/13)**
 - Asked WG to attend a team meeting to hear their recommendations.
- **ANC-East (5/14)**
 - Asked SUACG staff to give a brief update and answer questions.
- **Human Rights Commission (6/24)**
 - Considering a resolution to Council (proposed by PODER) that urban farms not be allowed in single-family zones as a way of protecting affordable housing. The WG was asked to present draft recommendations. *Tabled resolution.*
- **Community Development Commission (7/10)**
 - Asked SUACG staff for an update on the process.

Current Code re: Urban Farms

- Urban farm is a permitted use in ALL zones (2011)
- Chapter 25-2-863 URBAN FARMS:
 - 1 to 5 acres in size.
 - Sell agricultural products grown on-site from an on-site farm stand.
 - No more than one dwelling.
 - May have employees (1 per acre).
 - Must use organic fertilizer.
 - Conditional use in the Drinking Water Protection Zone.

Approx. 29 small agricultural operations in City limits have the potential to be affected by these LDC changes.

Most Small Ag Operations are in DDZ, prime soils



Small Agricultural Operations in City of Austin ETJ



- Potential Use under Recommendations**
- Potential Market Garden
 - Potential Urban Farm
 - City of Austin

- Watershed Regulation Areas**
- NRCS Prime Agricultural Soils
 - Desired Development Zone
 - Drinking Water Protection Zone

Author: Kate Vickery | August 26, 2013
 Note: All data on this map is dynamic and in a constant state of maintenance, correction and update. Users of this information are encouraged to notify the SJACG program of any inaccuracies.



FINAL Recommendations

- Topics
 - Definitions
 - Dwellings
 - Employees
 - Environmental Protection
 - Animal Raising & Processing
 - Events
 - Sale of Products

Definition

- **Current code:** Urban farms are between 1 and 5 acres
- **Points of concern**
 - Public session attendees heavily in support of removing the 1 acre minimum and increasing opportunities for activities that generate supplemental income for farmers.
 - PODER/Govalle-Johnston Terrace NCT were concerned about the prospect of commercializing single family residential neighborhoods and losing land that could otherwise be used for housing.
 - Most farmers requested no minimum or maximum acreage for urban farms.

Definition, cont.

- **Proposed changes**

- Urban farms: agricultural production and sales on parcels at least 1 acre in size; can have on-site farm stand; 2 employees per acre or partial acre; limited on-site small animal processing; agricultural educational events by right
- Urban Farm with Livestock: agricultural production and sales, including raising (no processing) sheep/goat/pigs on parcels over 1 acre.
- Urban Farm with Facilities for Gatherings: agricultural production and sales; allows special events, incl. weddings, dinners, fundraisers, and cooking classes
- Market Gardens: less than 1 acre; on-site sales that generate no more than three customer trips per day; 1 employee who is not the owner; no on-site animal processing; agricultural educational events by right

Animal Raising & Processing

- **Current code:** Raising (interpreted to also mean processing) of chickens allowed; 50 feet from neighboring structures.
- **Points of concern:**
 - Public session attendees were interested in increasing opportunities for animal raising on urban farms and sustainable processing and waste management.
 - PODER/Govalle-Johnston Terrace NCT requested no animal slaughtering or composting within city limits and appropriate scale for raising animals.
 - Most farmers requested that raising, processing, and sales of animal protein be allowed.

Animal Raising & Processing, cont.

- **Proposed Changes**

- Urban Farms (all types):

- Raising of fowl, rabbits and fish (aquaponics only) allowed
 - Processing and composting waste allowed, limited by metric
 - 1 animal allowed to be processed per 1/10 acre, per week

- Urban Farms with Livestock (conditional use)

- Goats/sheep/pigs allowed to be raised
 - No processing of these animals

- Market Garden

- Raising fowl, rabbits and fish (aquaponics only) allowed
 - No processing or composting

Events

- **Current code:** No clear restrictions in the Urban Farm Ordinance. Temporary Use Permits are the mechanism PDRD uses to control events on non-commercial properties (schools, churches, etc.)
- **Points of concern:**
 - Public session attendees agreed that events are an important source of community-building and farm income.
 - PODER/Govalle-Johnston Terrace NCT pointed out that excessive events and parking spillover is highly disruptive in single family neighborhoods, and expressed concern about evening events where alcohol is served.
 - Most farmers are concerned that it is difficult to anticipate when events will take place and the potential burden of needing to get multiple permits to host events that are part of everyday farm operations; limitations on supplemental income.

Events, cont.

- **Proposed changes:**
 - Agricultural education events allowed by right on all Urban Farms and Market Gardens
 - Volunteer programs, farm tours, youth programs, and farming classes
 - Limitations on Events:
 - Urban Farms with Facilities for Gatherings: new use that would allow special events by right; requires Conditional Use Permit if farm located in residential zones, administered through PC and City Council with public review; one time process
 - Urban Farms & Market Gardens: special events (weddings, dinners, cooking classes, fundraisers) require Temporary Use Permit, evaluated on case-by-case basis by PDRD

Next Steps Timeline

**Sustainable
Food Policy
Board**
Aug. 26th

**Planning
Commission**
Sept. 24th

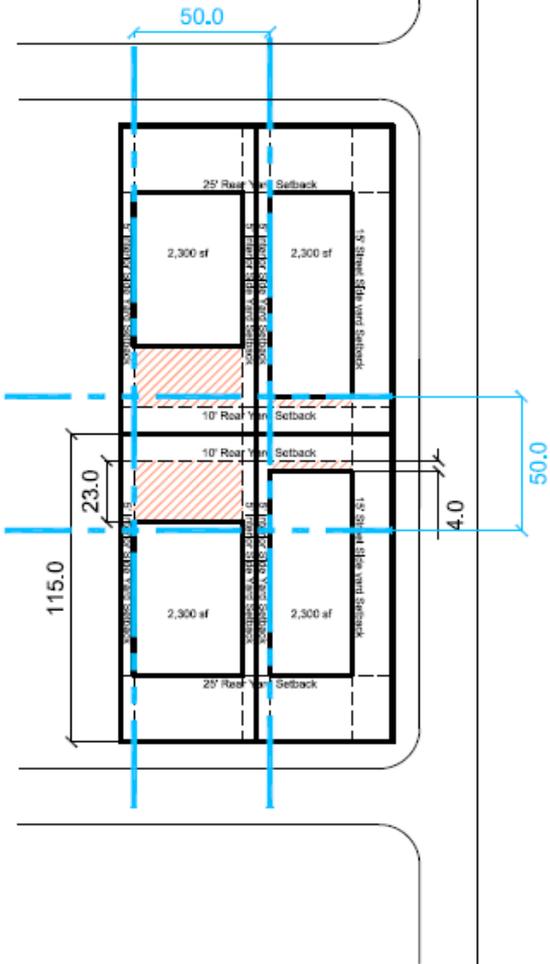
**Adopted
Code**

**Codes &
Ordinances**
Sept. 17th

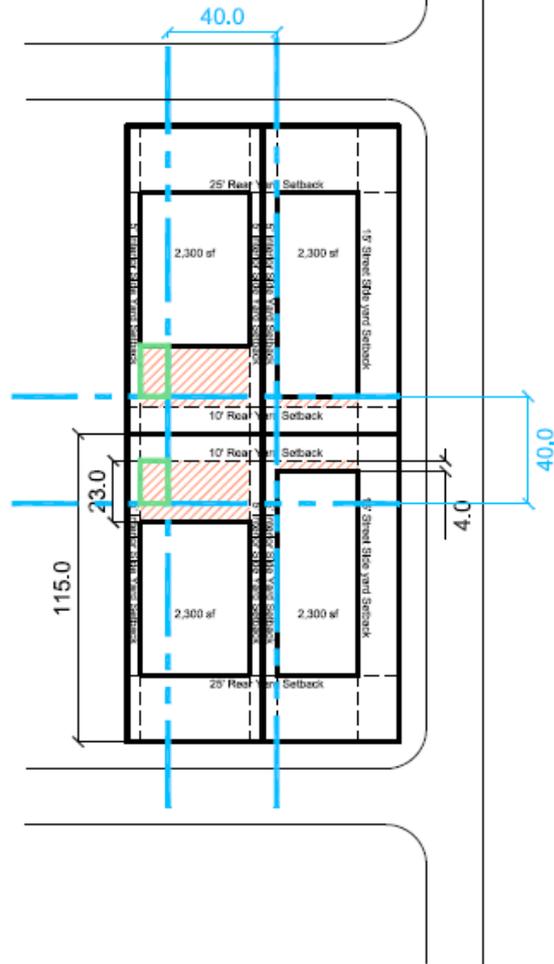
**City
Council**
Oct. 17
(briefing
Oct. 3)



Current Code
SF-2 & SF-3



40' Setback
SF-2 & SF-3



20' Setback
SF-2 & SF-3

