

**Urban Agriculture Policy Plan:**  
*A Land Use and Development Plan  
for a Healthy, Sustainable Local Food System*

**Minneapolis, Minnesota**  
Adopted by the Minneapolis City Council  
April 15, 2011



**Prepared by the:**



**The City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development  
Department as an amendment to the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth**

**Funded by:**



# **Urban Agriculture Policy Plan:**

*A Land Use and Development Plan  
for a Healthy, Sustainable Local Food System*

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*Additional thanks to those not mentioned here who gave their time and energy to this effort.*

***The Urban Agriculture Policy Plan:***  
*A Land Use and Development Plan for a Healthy, Sustainable Local Food System*

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## Executive Summary

The Minneapolis City Council adopted *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report* in June 2009. This report contained a variety of recommendations related to improving the growth, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management of healthy, locally grown foods within the city. One of the adopted implementation steps for the next phase of work was to develop a citywide topical plan on community gardens and urban agriculture. This is that topical plan.

A topical plan is a type of plan commonly created as a subcomponent of the City's Comprehensive Plan, *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. The Comprehensive Plan serves as the primary policy document guiding land use and development within the city. The policies and implementation steps of the plan are used to guide the decisions of elected officials and provide a basis for land regulation through the zoning ordinance.

The subject of this plan is how urban agriculture (the local production, processing, distribution, and consumption of food in the urban environment) can be better supported as one of our urban land uses. This 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 Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the steering committee that guided the development of the plan developed eight overarching goals that encompass the land use specific Homegrown Minneapolis recommendations and also relate to more broad topics such as encouraging ecological sustainability. 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 Implementation Chapter.

The plan was developed with the assistance of a steering committee and technical advisory committee. These two committees met approximately monthly throughout 2010. In addition, a series of topical discussions were held in the summer and fall of 2010 to discuss the land use related issues raised during the first phase of Homegrown Minneapolis and to help shape the plan recommendations.

The plan will serve as a policy document to be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan. With the goal of promoting urban agriculture, it examines existing urban agriculture policies and facilities (farmers markets, community gardens, etc.), outlines issues and opportunities (organized by the plan goals outlined by the steering committee), and presents a series of recommendations to be pursued.

Key recommendations include: defining several urban agriculture related activities, such as market gardens and urban farms, in the zoning code and altering some of the existing zoning that related to community gardens and farmers' markets; incorporating urban agriculture into long range planning and encouraging it to be integrated with new construction projects as appropriate; and reviewing the City owned land inventory to make land that is not desirable for development, but well-suited for urban agriculture available.

Implementation of the plan will focus around zoning code amendments that would follow the adoption of the plan. Some recommendations will be addressed as part of ongoing City land management and development review. Others have the potential be address as part of ongoing Homegrown Minneapolis efforts.

## CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This chapter explains the purpose of the plan, provides background on the study effort, and outlines goals and topics to be covered by the plan.

### PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The City of Minneapolis has a role to play in building a strong local food system by supporting residents' efforts to grow, process, distribute, and consume more fresh, sustainably produced and locally grown foods; and this role has been supported by the City Council through the adoption of *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report* and *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*, the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The Urban Agriculture Policy Plan will serve as a policy document and be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan. With the goal of promoting urban agriculture, it will detail City land use policy, present a variety of recommendations and next steps, serve as reference document, and guide future land use decisions.

The Comprehensive Plan contains several goals and policy statements regarding healthy communities out of recognition of the connections between land use, transportation, urban design and community access to food. A healthy community is a sustainable community, and planning and zoning provide us with opportunities to create a healthier population and more sustainable environment. For example, the link between how our environment is designed and how much people walk versus drive is now understood, as is the relationship of open space and health. It is a natural next step to look at how we can plan our cities to better our food sources.

The plan was funded by the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), a statewide, two-year, \$47 million effort to help Minnesota residents live longer, better, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic illnesses. The focus is to reduce obesity and tobacco use and exposure by creating changes in policies, environments and systems that support healthy behaviors in the population. This plan supports these goals by analyzing the locations of healthy food sources and recommending actions that can create more opportunities for growing and purchasing local, healthy food. The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support (MDHFS) received a two-year, \$2.6 million grant to implement 11 SHIP interventions. The funding of this plan was part of these intervention strategies.

### BACKGROUND

#### Homegrown Minneapolis

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. Under the leadership of Mayor R.T. Rybak and the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support, Homegrown Minneapolis brought together key partners from local government, area businesses, community organizations, non-profits, and residents to make recommendations and pursue policies to create a healthy, local food system.

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](http://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 citywide 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. CPED manages growth and development in Minneapolis through policy documents and regulations regarding land use. As such, this policy document focuses on identifying existing land use policies and regulations that may inhibit the growth of urban agriculture in Minneapolis and makes recommendations to support the creation of new policies and regulations that remove barriers and provide more opportunities for urban agriculture land uses throughout the city. The other seven actions outlined in the City Council resolution are described in Chapter 3.

Of the more than 50 recommendations that came out of the first phase of Homegrown Minneapolis, the following are connected to the development of this plan:

*Prioritize local food production and distribution when determining the highest and best use of City-owned and private land and when planning new development or redevelopment projects that could potentially affect existing local food resources.*

Other related sub-recommendations found in *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report* and addressed in this plan are:

- *Integrate farmers markets into the City’s development plans, including detailed planning and action steps.*
- *Identify additional policies and incentives to encourage the establishment of new green roofs and the adaptation of existing roofs for food production.*
- *Identify policies and incentives to encourage (or require) developers to include space for food production and distribution and composting in new developments including a) updating codes so that land set aside for Small Enterprise Urban Agriculture (and/or community gardens) that count towards existing green space set-aside requirements, b) updating green building requirements or incentive programs so that dedication of space for gardening and/or agreements to purchase locally grown food count towards green building requirements.*
- *Develop an overarching policy framework that establishes a city-wide vision and support for urban agriculture (i.e. urban food production and distribution); inventories public and private land available and suitable for urban agriculture or food distribution; supports affordable land ownership or long-term leases for urban food growers or farmers’ markets; reduces the burden of liability insurance and property taxes for land used for food production and distribution; and makes readily available land (such as vacant or foreclosed properties) more accessible for these purposes.*
- *Review, and revise when necessary, City zoning codes to support local food production and distribution, including urban agricultural land uses and related infrastructure (i.e. hoop houses, fencing, and storage sheds), possibly using explicit*

*recognition of urban agriculture as a zoning district and provisions to support long-term secured land tenure for food production and distribution purposes.*

- *Improve motorized and non-motorized transportation options to increase utilization of and access to markets.*

### *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*

The 2009 Comprehensive Plan Update also known as *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* is a guide for the future development and redevelopment of the City of Minneapolis. This Plan, which addresses economic and development changes within the City, serves as a reference document to which regional, state, county, and other public or private agencies can relate their respective planning and development discussions. It addresses the development and interrelationship of land uses, transportation, housing, economic development, public services and facilities, environment, parks and open spaces, heritage preservation, arts and culture and urban design.

*The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* contains policies and implementation steps related to healthy foods, gardening, markets, and small business. This plan will further the following implementation steps:

- *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)*

## **GOALS AND SCOPE OF THE PLAN**

While the recommendations from *The Homegrown Minneapolis Report* and the policies found in the Comprehensive Plan establish a purpose for the development of this plan, they don't capture the complete vision and scope of all of the elements that could be explored. To address that, the steering committee (see Chapter 2: Community Involvement for more detail about the steering committee and other input and outreach efforts) undertook a brainstorming session to establish the scope of topics this plan should address. Some of these goals address issues beyond land use, but the exploration of these goals provides a useful framework and background.

Through an exercise of putting ideas on a board and categorizing them, the steering committee established topic areas to be explored which were then translated into goals. These include:

- Promote and support the **local food system**.
- Make more **land available** for urban agriculture.

- Ensure **equal access** to land for growing and to fresh food sources.
- Create **economic opportunity** for growers, processors, and distributors of food.
- Promote **innovative design** for food growing.
- Reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers and encourage better **regulation** where necessary.
- Encourage **ecological sustainability**.
- Explore the role that **animals** play in the urban food system.

The next chapter provides more information about the steering committee and the plan process. Then, the Existing Conditions Chapter provides background and context for the Issues and Opportunities Chapter in which opportunities related to each of the goals listed above are explored. In the final chapter, recommendations are presented that build on the existing policies, the existing conditions, and issues and opportunities.