



City Council

Discussion and Potential Guidance on the Comprehensive Plan Update including Background Information, Process and Next Steps Regarding Urban Agriculture

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Title

Discussion and Potential Guidance on the Comprehensive Plan Update including Background Information, Process and Next Steps Regarding Urban Agriculture

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive and discuss goals and policies recommended by the Olympia Planning Commission and staff regarding Urban Agriculture. Provide initial guidance on next steps.

Report

Issue:

The Planning Commission has presented Council with recommendations on the Comprehensive Plan Update, currently online. The City Council will hold a public hearing on a draft Plan Update at a date to be determined (most likely in June of 2014.) Guidance is needed on issues and language regarding Urban Agriculture to be included in that draft document.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Amy Buckler, Associate Planner, Community Planning & Development
Carole Richmond, Olympia Planning Commissioner

The Olympia Planning Commission has been notified of the meeting.

Note: The meeting will be set up "study session discussion" style around tables on the main floor of the Council Chambers.

Background and Analysis:

At its February 25 work session on the draft Comprehensive Plan Update recommended by the Olympia Planning Commission, the City Council referred several policy issues to future Council work

sessions. At tonight's work session the Council will consider Urban Agriculture.

"Agriculture" is defined by the **Olympia Municipal Code** as, "the use of land for farming, dairying, pasturing and grazing, horticulture, floriculture, viticulture, apiaries, animal and poultry husbandry, and accessory activities, including, but not limited to, storage, harvesting, feeding or maintenance of equipment, and onsite sales of agricultural products, but excluding stockyards, slaughtering or commercial food processing."

"Urban Agriculture" is a broad term in common vernacular that involves the practice of cultivating, processing and distributing food in and around a city. Examples include: backyard, roof-top and balcony gardening; community gardening in vacant lots and parks; aquaculture; bee keeping; roadside urban fringe agriculture; and farmers markets or stands.

'Urban Agriculture' is a component of a larger food movement that is gaining traction in the United States, including regionally and locally. The movement is based on concern about the negative economic, social and environmental effects of industrial farming and food methods that dominate the U.S. food system. The aim of the food movement is to localize and transform the food system in an effort to improve human health and food security, better care for the environmental and species, improve attractiveness of empty or underused lots, promote social equity and self-sufficiency, support local economies, and improve community life.

Through participation as partners, promoters and administrators of programs and regulations that support local farming and healthy food, local governments are playing an increasing role in enhancing the sustainability of local food systems. The Olympia public has expressed an interest in the City of Olympia playing such a role. Currently, the City of Olympia:

- Allows urban farming in all districts (although commercial greenhouses require a conditional use permit.)
- Relaxed its development code in 2012 to allow for more types and number of permitted animals, deer fences and farm stands.
- Allows gardening on City-owned parcels and rights-of-way with some restrictions and a permit.
- Allows community gardens on private property.
- Operates two community gardens (Sunrise Park and Yauger Park), including low-cost garden plots for rent, work parties and free gardening clinics.

In addition, one of the priority goals of *Creating Places, Preserving Spaces: A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region* is, "Support a local food system to increase community resilience, health, and economic prosperity.

In support of the community vision, the Olympia Planning Commission added several new goals and policies to the draft Comprehensive Plan (Attachment 1.)

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The following community objective, based on public input during the 2010-11 *Imagine Olympia* Focus Meetings, was identified in the *Focus Meeting Series Summary Report*:

- Facilitate the production and purchase of local food supplies, including allowing and encouraging the raising of backyard food-producing animals, residential market stands, and community gardening, reducing the carbon footprint associated with the shipment and relocating of food nationally or internationally (Environmental Track, Community Objective #3.)
- Explore the feasibility of creating local renewable energy via hydro, solar, food waste and other sources (Potential policy issue identified at end report.)
- Facilitate the production and purchase of local food supplies (Potential policy issue identified at end report.)

The Planning Commission also received comments in support of 'Urban Agriculture' during their review of the draft Comprehensive Plan. Since the specific proposed policies were drafted and recommended by the Planning Commission, the public has not yet had the opportunity to comment on the specific goal and policy language proposed.

Options:

Receive and discuss information. Provide initial guidance on next steps.

Financial Impact:

None; this work item is an element of the Comprehensive Plan Update.