



To: Bill Barnes, Project Manager, Office of the City Administrator
Cc: Mayor Ed Lee and Supervisor David Chiu
From: San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance Policy Platform Committee
Date: December 9, 2012
Re: Updated recommendations for Urban Agriculture Legislation Implementation

In the past two months, the SFUAA Policy Platform Committee met with representatives from the San Francisco Parks Alliance, Department of the Environment, and Recreation and Parks Department to discuss the future of the urban agriculture program. Based on these conversations, below is an updated version of the memo we sent in October that includes more thoughts on considerations we feel are important when evaluating where the new program will be housed.

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Thank you for dedicating resources toward the implementation of the 2012 Urban Agriculture legislation. We appreciate the opportunity to continue a dialogue with you as the process moves forward. With this in mind, the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance (SFUAA) has outlined a few issues that deserve special focus throughout the implementation process. We've also identified five early action items that could catalyze the new urban agriculture program.

### **Urban Agriculture Legislation Implementation - Areas Deserving Special Focus**

#### **The coordinating agency or non-profit that houses the program should:**

- **Employ, at minimum, one full-time staff person in charge of the urban ag program.** This person would be accountable, with a clear reporting structure, for reaching the goals of the legislation and any other goals determined by the program and should not have their time split with other duties. The support of additional staff time and resources will also likely be necessary for the program to accomplish its goals.
- **Be willing and ready to support various models of urban agriculture.** City farms and gardens come in many formats: rooftop gardens, market gardens, plot-based, communally-managed, interim use, permanent use, greenhouses, animal husbandry, and more. The program will need to be able to support a wide range of inquiries and needs, ranging from an entrepreneur seeking to start a commercial rooftop farm to an existing community garden volunteer seeking assistance repairing their gardens' beehives. The program coordinator alone will not be able to individually address all these projects needs, but as the front door to the one-stop shop, will be most successful if they know how to support the diverse range of urban agriculture activity in the city.

- **Have experience in initiating and/or maintaining a site on public and/or private land.**
- **Have experience and/or a demonstrated commitment to working with community groups that rely on and are driven by volunteers.** Many urban agriculture groups don't have paid staff or the capacity of funded organizations and these groups could benefit the most from the institutional support or a city-supported urban agriculture program.
- **Have demonstrated support from the top leadership of the organization for housing the program and dedicating resources toward its success**

### **Financial Accountability**

Currently, hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent supporting urban agriculture, much of which is incredibly helpful to city gardeners and farmers. But the impact of some of these funds is unclear. The new urban agriculture program must institute both transparency and accountability in how urban agriculture funds are spent in San Francisco. This will include clear lines of responsibility, accounting for expenses, and goals, including but not limited to the goals written into the legislation.

Should the program be housed in a non-profit, it will also be important to establish a mechanism for public accountability, such as an advisory committee, or periodic hearings before a city commission or Board of Supervisors committee.

### **Support and Cooperation Across Agencies**

The Urban Agriculture Program, whether it is housed in a non-profit or a city agency, will have to work across departments. Therefore, there must be a clear signal of support from the city leadership, including both the City Administrator and Mayor. One important avenue of support is having a designated point person for urban agriculture in the Mayor's Office. This person would provide another line of communication, in addition to those already in place, for practitioners and advocates and help address any issues that arise between agencies.

### **Financial Sustainability**

The strategic plan must include a plan for sustainable funding and a budget for the new urban agriculture program. One outstanding question is whether future funding for the urban agriculture program will come from existing budgets through consolidation or from other sources.

## **Five early action items to catalyze the new urban agriculture program**

- 1 Create a clear, simple application process for activating public land for urban agriculture. The DPW/SF Parks Alliance Street Parks program is a good model.
- 2 Create Garden Resource centers. Resource centers could provide compost, mulch, tool lending and seed libraries as well as seed starts. These centers will benefit community projects and individual backyard gardeners. Pilot projects have already happened – for example, compost has been available for pick up at Garden for the Environment, Alemany Farm, and Hayes Valley Farm. The Clean City Coalition currently operates a tool lending library. A Seed library and seed starts have been available at Hayes Valley

Farm and the Potrero Branch library. And mulch could likely be provided by RPD, DPW, or Bayview Greenwaste.

- 3 Annual or semi-annual convening of community garden and urban ag project coordinators--to accurately identify needs and barriers and create a stronger network of urban ag practitioners.
- 4 An online and paper listing of resources available to community gardeners and urban farmers. The SFUAA, Department of the Environment, and Recreation and Parks Department each have helpful links, but the creation of one expanded portal for information, with continuous updating, would be helpful.
- 5 Contact people on the community garden waiting lists to let them know about existing resources for starting new projects (e.g. Community Opportunity Fund, Community Challenge Grant, other resources)

The issues outlined here are critical to realizing the goals of the legislation: creating a transparent, efficient infrastructure to ensure a vibrant urban agriculture landscape in San Francisco. Please let us know if you have any additional questions, we look forward to continuing the dialogue.