

# San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance

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## Urban Agriculture Alliance Applauds Introduction of Proposed Urban Agriculture Zoning Changes

*New regulations would open more land to community gardens and help city farms be economically viable, but amendments are needed*

San Francisco, CA – Yesterday, Mayor Gavin Newsom and the San Francisco Planning Department introduced an ordinance that would amend the Planning Code to allow for greater food production within the city. The proposal would update San Francisco’s zoning regulations to explicitly permit gardens in all areas of the city and also allow for the sale of produce from those gardens. While the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance applauds the Mayor and Planning Department for introducing this forward-thinking legislation, the group is concerned about a number of provisions that could make garden projects prohibitively expensive and limit their potential.

“The Planning Department’s proposal is a great step forward, but some of the draft provisions could hinder the expansion of gardening that the City wants to encourage,” said Eli Zigas, co-coordinator of the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance (SFUAA). “Community gardens and urban farms operate on slim budgets and expensive fencing requirements and permitting fees can prevent a garden project from breaking ground. We encourage the Planning Commission to ensure that community groups and city farmers across San Francisco can afford to start gardens and urban agriculture projects in their neighborhoods.”

Advocates are specifically calling on the Planning Commission to amend the proposed ordinance to reduce its costs. The proposal requires that any fencing around a garden site must be either wooden or ornamental fencing. The addition of significant start-up costs to meet this requirement could deter a project from turning a vacant lot into a vibrant new greenspace or a project that would provide a source of fresh, nutritious food in a neighborhood lacking access to good produce options. Similarly, the Planning Department’s existing “change of use” fee structure would require urban agriculture projects to pay more than \$300 before they could begin any work. The SFUAA encourages the Planning Commission to remove any mention of a fencing requirement and waive the change of use fees for urban agriculture.

With this legislation, San Francisco will be the first major American city to modify its zoning to encourage the sale of produce from urban gardens and farms. Similar legislation to allow for on-site sales of city-grown produce became law this year in both Seattle and Kansas City and a proposal is currently being considered in Berkeley.

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For city farmers starting small businesses, being able to sell what you grow is critical. Little City Gardens, which cultivates a three-quarter acre garden in the Mission Terrace neighborhood, cannot sell any of the greens or herbs it grows because of restrictions in the current zoning code. “This proposal is crucial for the success of commercial urban farming in San Francisco,” said Little City Garden’s co-owner Caitlyn Galloway. “We want to demonstrate the viability of market gardening here in San Francisco, but we can’t do that until we’re allowed to sell what we grow. And we can’t sell from our farm until this proposal passes.”

For San Francisco to truly position itself at the leading edge of urban agriculture, the SFUAA urges the Planning Commission to amend the proposal to allow gardens and farms to pool together their harvest and also allow them to sell value-added products made from their produce.

“As it’s written now, the proposal would allow an urban farmer to sell their strawberries on the farm, but not their strawberry jam,” Zigas explained. “Expanding the proposal to allow for on-site sales of value-added products as well as produce from multiple sites would help small urban farms make the most of their harvest and make San Francisco’s policy an innovative model for the rest of the country.”

The positive impact of the proposal would stretch beyond creating new greenspace and supporting new urban farming businesses. “This zoning legislation is crucial for the health of San Francisco. Urban farming and community gardens not only provide residents with access to healthy non-toxic produce, but they help engage people in personal nutrition and can improve the health of the entire community. It’s easy for people to become removed from our food sources and those who produce our food,” said Dana Perls, community organizer with Pesticide Watch. “This proposal offers San Franciscans more spaces to produce their own food. With the SFUAA’s proposed amendments, the new zoning code will be an investment in healthy communities.”

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*The San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance (SFUAA) seeks to increase the amount of food grown within San Francisco and promote greater access to and consumption of that food through advocacy, education, and grassroots action. We pursue our mission by leveraging the strengths of our members, building bonds with other organizations and government agencies, and promoting healthy food cultures.*

*More information on the San Francisco Urban Agriculture Alliance can be found at: [www.sfuua.org](http://www.sfuua.org)*