



## **ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, APIARIES, AQUAPONICS**

### **What place does animal, bee, and fish raising have in the residential and commercial zones?**

As mentioned in the presentation, the City is looking at revising the Municipal Code and Zoning Code to address animal farming, bee keeping and fish farms.

There are many reasons that the City is addressing the keeping of animals as part of this process. Animal farming has grown along with the urban agriculture movement. Raising animals for food can have the same benefits as raising crops: farmers can be assured that their food is fresh, local, affordable and sustainable. Animals and crops also support each other on a farm. Animal manure is used for fertilizer and helps to maintain healthy soil. Animals, in turn, eat the crops they help to create, including the parts of crops that people cannot eat, like stems and stalks. Animal farming at home is also a tradition that crosses several cultures and reflects Oakland's diversity.

The City's current regulations regarding animals are confusing. Farmers are unsure what type of animal raising is permitted because the regulations are found in at least six titles of the Municipal Code. Furthermore, the rules are often contradictory or vague, addressing some animals or just their location on a lot. Some animals are not regulated at all. These omissions lead to an increase in animals, lack of enforcement of animal related nuisances, deteriorating neighbor relationships and burdens on City staff.

Despite the benefits of animal farming, there are potential nuisances associated with animal husbandry like odor, noise, sanitation, health issues, and insect control. Responsible and knowledgeable farmers generally control these impacts regardless of the number of animals, bees or fish. Less responsible or inexperienced farmers, however, necessitate a clear regulatory framework to maintain livable neighborhoods.

We are interested in hearing your comments on: What place does animal, bee and fish raising have in the City's residential and commercial zones? A couple of questions to get you thinking about this important topic include:

- What kind of animals should be regulated, how many animals should/could be kept on a lot?
- Should there be different regulations for commercial and industrial areas versus residential zones?
- What types of animal related nuisances are of most concern to you?



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## **URBAN FARM MANAGEMENT**

**How should standards, practices and conditions for urban agriculture be developed?**

Urban farmers in the Bay Area have grown into a vibrant community that meet, exchange ideas, and educate one another. Staff would like to educate ourselves on the best practices used in this community to assist us in writing better regulations for urban farming.

As discussed in the Introduction segment of our community meeting, certain impacts can result from urban farming relating to odor, traffic, noise and health. However, this process is not focusing on animal health or food safety issues because they are not the purview of a zoning ordinance. City staff is coordinating with the County Environmental Health Department regarding their regulation of vermin, vectors, and waste (including composting) but cannot change County requirements as part of this process.

Staff does envision zoning regulations that contain certain standards or conditions for the operation of an urban farm. If a proposed farm meets these standards or conditions, the City's permitting process would be relatively quick and inexpensive.

Staff requests your input regarding what sort of conditions or standards should be required of farmers. Please consider the following questions in this discussion:

- What best practices have you used on your farm to reduce impacts?
- What conditions or standards make sense to you?
- Should larger farms have different requirements than smaller farms?
- Should permitting requirements become more stringent as the number of animals on a farm increase?
- What are the rights of urban farmers versus those of non-farming neighbors?



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## **CROP GROWING**

### **How should the City promote healthy crop raising?**

In the Introduction segment of our community meeting, you listened to a description of urban agriculture in Oakland, the benefits of urban farming, and why there are concerns over potential impacts. This segment of our meeting focuses on how the City should promote healthy crop raising.

Crop raising is more than the vegetable garden patch for home consumption. Crop raising may involve a single garden plot, multiple garden plots, a collective of fresh produce patches, or large farm operations. In Oakland, the most common types of urban farms include community gardens and backyard farms. Under our current code, crop raising as a home occupation is proposed to be outright permitted by the end of the year. Farmers will be able sell produce at farmer's markets and farm stands or to stores with the appropriate County issued permits. On a vacant piece of land, crop raising is currently only permitted with a Conditional Use Permit.

The common thread through all of the crop growing models is the efficiency gained by local food production and distribution close to where people live. Transforming consumers to food producers contributes to sustainability, increases affordable access to food, improves health and education, and provides economic resilience to rising food costs.

However, with urban agriculture practices come some issues and concerns. The concerns that need further discussion and your feedback regarding crop growing impacts that could adversely affect neighbors include but are not limited to:

- Soil toxicity, particularly lead contamination;
- Use of pesticides and fertilizers;
- Water quality and soils (i.e. irrigation runoff, sediment and erosion of soils, grading, environmentally critical/sensitive land);
- Noise from farming equipment and activities;
- Odor and flies, particularly in relation to composting; and
- Size of operation.

We are interested in hearing about your experiences and in sharing your knowledge



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## **GENERAL URBAN AGRICULTURE COMMENTS**

**Do you have any additional general comments about urban farming in Oakland that the City should consider?**

As we saw in the presentation, there are many benefits of urban agriculture including increasing food security by producing locally grown food; providing fresh, healthy, and affordable food to residents and neighborhoods that do not otherwise have access to these products; improving and promoting public health; supporting economic development and generating income and jobs. Furthermore, urban agriculture reduces greenhouse gas emissions involved in food production by decreasing the distance that food travels and provides educational and recreational opportunities for residents to learn about and take part in gardening and agricultural activities.

On the other hand, urban agriculture activities can potentially have negative impacts on neighboring properties and the surrounding area, including noise, odors, storage of unsightly things on the premises such as compost piles and farm equipment, and heavier foot and vehicular traffic in the case of on-site sales of farm products. In addition, not everyone agrees on the type and scale of agricultural activities that should be allowed, particularly when it comes to raising animals.

It is the City's responsibility to promote and protect the public interest and to ensure that agricultural practices within the city are done in a responsible manner. Our approach to urban farming is to consider it as a land use issue, i.e. What should be allowed? Where? How much? And what standards need to be put into place to ensure that agricultural activities will not adversely affect neighbors?

We are interested in your comments in response to the following:

- What is urban farming to you?
- Do you have any additional general comments about urban farming in Oakland that the City should consider?



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## SALES

### **How should the City regulate the sale of fruits, vegetables, and animal products within the different Residential and Commercial zones?**

Urban agriculture, in its broadest sense, includes not only the production of local food, but also the distribution, processing, and sale of that food.

How and where an urban farmer can currently sell the agricultural products they produce is affected by existing municipal regulations. In addition to selling agricultural products at such traditional sales outlets as grocery stores, corner stores, and farmers markets, many involved in urban farming have expressed an interest in selling their products directly to the public at the small farms and gardens where the food items are produced.

As mentioned in the presentation, currently the home occupation regulations do not allow the production and sale of crops from one's home. Proposed zoning changes anticipated to be heard before the City Council in September would permit the sale of crops from residences in the same manner as other home-produced products are regulated. Also, urban agriculture as a primary use not associated with a residence or business requires a Conditional Use Permit in all zones as an interim measure.

Increasing opportunities for how and where local food products can be sold is intended to encourage greater access to healthy, affordable food – which is especially important in Oakland neighborhoods underserved by grocery stores, also known as food deserts. Agricultural sales can also serve as an important source of supplemental income for homeowners in challenging economic times like today.

Other benefits to increasing opportunities for the sale of fruits, vegetables, and animal products include: improving public health; encouraging self-employment opportunities; providing a source of culturally significant foods that are not always available in typical grocery stores; and promoting Oakland as a “green” city.

Staff is interested in hearing your input regarding what additional changes you think the City should make in regulating the sale of fruits, vegetables, and animal products within the different Residential and Commercial zones. Please consider the following questions in the discussion:

- What types of impacts, if any, are you concerned with in regards to the sales of agriculture products?
- In Residential zones, do you think the sale of farm products should be regulated any differently than the sale of other home-based product?
- In Commercial zones, how do you think the sale of farm products on a *temporary* basis should be regulated, such as from fruit stands or carts?



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