

Reducing local regulatory barriers to local foods: The “Municipal Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa” guidebook

Abstract: A guidebook was created to help municipal officials navigate the legal, political and economic challenges of encouraging urban agriculture in their communities.

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Through discussion of agricultural best practices and sample zoning code language from over 80 municipalities across the country, guidebook readers are given the tools to make well-informed policies choices about local land use regulations.

What was done and why?

Municipal officials are increasingly acknowledging the multiple benefits of urban agriculture. As the urban agriculture movement advances, many city leaders have recognized the role that local government policies and regulations play in either stifling or facilitating the production, processing and distribution of local foods. Land use regulations can intentionally or unintentionally hamper the activities necessary for a local foods system to develop and thrive.

Objectives of the project were to:

- Create greater awareness and knowledge of Iowa municipal officials of the common code barriers to urban agriculture and the legal/policy solutions to those barriers and
- Encourage changes in the policies and practices of Iowa municipalities; specifically, the adoption of zoning code provisions that eliminate barriers to, and encourage common practices associated with urban agriculture. costs and returns of conventional and alternative management systems.

What did we learn?

The authors ultimately produced a guidebook with chapters that address the following common urban agriculture uses: aquaculture, bees, chickens, goats, front-yard gardens, community and market gardens, gardening on vacant lots, urban farms, season extenders, composting, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop-sites, farm stands, farmers markets, food trucks and pushcarts, and urban agriculture districts.

Each chapter provides a general description of the activity, and the science-based information on standards and best practices associated with the activity; the public health, safety and welfare concerns commonly associated with the activity; a summary of the commonalities found among municipalities' codes; and sample code language taken from municipalities that vary both in size and location.

The guidebook is available on the PI's website for free download:
<http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/planningBLUZ>.



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