



Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

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Tucson Planning Commission
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August 12, 2015

Dear Planning Commission,

On behalf of the Community Food Bank, we'd like to weigh in on the proposed urban agriculture zoning code amendments, which have been in the works for several years now. Over that time, the City has had ample opportunity for public input, and many of our employees and constituents made their views known, albeit, in their own capacity, unconnected to the food bank. As the Commission receives final input from the public and considers voting to move the proposal forward to mayor and council, we'd like to submit this letter to express our support in an official capacity, along with reasons why.

Here at the food bank, we have been working for four decades to end hunger in our community. Over the past 10 years plus, we have put an increasing focus on supporting our local food system, as a way of building food security from the ground up. As such, we have taken it upon ourselves to teach people to grow food for themselves, and we've helped hundreds of residents and dozens of schools install gardens. We support food entrepreneurs by training them at our commercial kitchen north of downtown, and, just a little further south on the other side of the Santa Cruz River, we run Las Milpitas Community Farm, which serves as a space for food production and training for the community. Our food security work has grown each year, such that during this past year, we trained 13,000 community members and supported the production of 1.34 million servings of fresh, locally grown food.

Much of this food goes towards improving the health of those who grow it, but a significant portion is also channeled into our farmers' market, where backyard gardeners are able to share their produce AND earn revenue through our consignment program, which has a table alongside all the other vendors. Year over year, the sales of this program have grown, such that during past 12 months, our consigners sold nearly \$87,000 worth of food, most of it grown right here within Tucson's city limits.

Our experience validates the economic benefits and positive health outcomes broadly associated with urban agriculture, and specifically detailed in Plan Tucson's section by the same name. Unfortunately, much of Tucson's existing urban agriculture has happened in spite of our local zoning code. A vast number of Tucson's chicken owners are in violation of the setback requirement; growers are unclear on whether they can sell food to their neighbors through a farm stand or a market, and in which zones; the use of mechanized equipment or structures such as

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greenhouses is limited or unclear; and many would-be growers are unclear whether they can grow food in their front yard, or in which zones they could start something larger, like a community garden or an urban farm.

We value and respect a balanced approach that recognizes the quality of life perspectives of those who choose to participate in urban agriculture and those who choose not to do so. After several years of work and ample community input, which has been largely in favor of expanding urban agriculture, we would like to both commend the job the City has done to find middle ground, and officially express our support for the proposed amendments. If adopted, we feel the new code will go a long way towards encouraging current and would-be urban food producers, which will ultimately help further our vision of creating a healthy, hunger-free southern Arizona.

Cordially,



Marco Liu

Director of Advocacy & Outreach