



Community Gardens of Tucson

Building Community through Gardening

Dear Planning Commission, Council Members, and Mayor,

August 24, 2015

I am writing on behalf of the Community Gardens of Tucson to express our support for the Tucson Urban Agricultural Zoning Amendments. Urban agriculture is already happening on a wide scale in our city and we applaud the City in attempting to address this reality in a productive way. We support an updated code that:

- Complies with Plan Tucson's vision for food production and food-based economic development opportunities;
- Recognizes and normalizes the fact that urban agriculture is already happening on a wide scale and has created no major nuisances;
- Recognizes that urban agriculture is not just a form of self-sustenance, but rather, at its best, is a tool to ensure a healthy food supply for *all*;
- Allows for animal husbandry that is scale-appropriate (e.g., is tied to lot size), while ensuring animal rights and neighbor's rights through proper enforcement of nuisance, noise, and animal protection ordinances;
- Seeks to give a number of minimum *rights* to engage in urban agriculture outright (e.g. growing food in the front yard, or having a certain number of chickens);
- In appropriate instances, allows would-be urban farmers to expand beyond the parameters of the code based on a permission-based system from relevant stakeholders (e.g. contacting their neighbors to increase from 24 to 36 chickens);
- Allows exchange of food in both informal and formal ways (e.g. over the fence sales to neighbors AND expansion of neighborhood farm stands and farmers' markets).
- Calls for the inclusion of a website (or webpage) that explains what the new code means for Tucson residents, in a very clear and concise manner.
- Provides clear language on the above-referenced webpage stating what people's rights are with regard to areas not specifically addressed in the code. (That is, does lack of mention mean an activity is allowed or prohibited?)

We understand that this effort has received input through citizen committees, public forums, and study sessions over the past several years. In addition, various institutions such as the University of Arizona's College of Public Health, the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension, the Community Food Bank, the Pima County Food Alliance, and members of Tucson CLUCKS have weighed in. We applaud the City and the Planning Department for their engagement with the community for their commitment to producing a strong proposal.

After many years of work on this, it is the right time for the City of Tucson to codify these changes. Please support the proposed Urban Agricultural Zoning Amendments.

Thank you for your time,

Susanne R. Kaplan
Community Gardens of Tucson
Board Chair