

Market Garden Policy Proposals

from the Market Gardeners of Buffalo

Our Vision:

The Buffalo Green Code Unified Development Ordinance represents a major leap forward for city policies on market gardening. And while the city has come a long way, there are still many steps the city can and should take to facilitate healthy food production in our city. This document represents a proposal for additional steps in that direction.

Market gardens represent a new type of urban green space that actively benefits the community by providing healthy foods to underserved markets, creating jobs, and serving as cultural centers that educate and unite communities. They improve soil and air quality, divert waste from landfills, and pilot the green roofs, stormwater retention systems, and alternative energy sources that are the future of sustainable infrastructure in our cities.

We propose that in time, there should be a market garden in proximity to every neighborhood. Healthy communities require access to healthy foods and access to the means to grow that food.

New Policy Proposals:

1. Water Access

- A. Reasonable rates for City Water, through hydrant or other means of access.
- We request free access for non-profit farms, and for-profit farms should have access to lower, more reasonable, rates than the current fee structure provides.

2. Taxes & Fees

- A. User Fee exemption
- Market gardens should be exempt from paying user fees because they actively reduce the city's waste stream, saving the city money.
 - Market gardens do not receive city waste hauling service and serve to reduce the city's waste stream.
 - For scattered market gardens sites comprising non-contiguous lots, each vacant lot incurs its own user fee bill. Eliminating this fee could save market gardeners thousands of dollars in just a year or two.
- B. Agricultural tax rate, or creation of a tax credit for land under the market garden use.
- Tax rates should match the use of these properties.
 - A tax credit would be provided because of the many benefits market gardens provide the city, such as reducing stormwater runoff, reducing the waste stream, and creating vibrant healthy neighborhoods.

3. Land Access

- A. Reform the process to buy vacant city owned lots for people intending to grow agricultural products. This is an issue of city policy widely affecting farmers and gardeners. As market and community gardens become legitimate uses under the Green

Code (UDO), there should be no additional hesitance to sell vacant land for these proposed uses where permitted by the land use plan.

4. Animal Husbandry

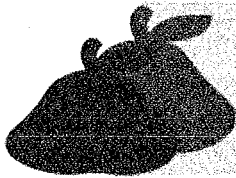
- A. Change the language for the number of beehives permitted per lot, from two per lot, to one bee colony for each 2,500 SF of lot area.
- B. Expansion of the chicken ordinance in the green code to permit a greater variety of fowl including ducks, quail, and pigeons. There is no legitimate distinction between chickens and these other fowl from a policy perspective that we are aware of.
- C. We propose a process to permit hoofed animals (i.e.; goats) based on criteria approved by city hall with consideration for site location and other specific considerations on a case by case basis.

5. Collaboration

- A. We propose that one person or office at city hall be designated as liaison between city government and market gardeners. We request that this entity have an interest in promoting healthy food production in the city, and have an adequate understanding of city policies and ordinances affecting market gardeners.
- B. Assistance in creating a program to provide funding that offsets the cost of soil testing.
 - This could happen through city or state funding, agencies like Cornell Cooperative Extension, the University of Buffalo, or local foundations.
- C. Access to city produced wood chips.
- D. Clarifications of the compost rules in the new green code. Animal bedding manure mix from a source within the city should be allowed to be composted, whereas raw manure should not be allowed. A bedding mix has a different odor profile and consistency and causes no nuisance based on current composting practices in Buffalo.

Urban Growers Coalition:

5 Loaves Farm
Common Roots Farm
Farmer Pirates Cooperative
Grassroots Gardens
Groundwork Market Garden
Massachusetts Avenue Project
West Side Tilth
Wilson Street Urban Farm
Promise Valley
Tyler Street Community Garden



**FOOD POLICY
COUNCIL**
of Buffalo & Erie County

June 1, 2017

Buffalo Common Council
City Hall
Buffalo, NY 14202

Re: Market Garden Policy Proposals

Dear Buffalo Common Council:

On behalf of the Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County (FPC), I encourage the Buffalo Common Council to engage in an open dialogue with the Urban Growers to learn more about their missions, their operations and their proposals regarding Market Gardens.

The FPC was created in May 2013 as a sub-commission of Erie County Board of Health. The mission of the FPC is to build and strengthen a sustainable and just regional food system through policy recommendations, awareness and education. The FPC serves to provide local governments (legislative bodies and executive agencies) with an advisory body that can provide expert information on policies that could improve the local food system.

Food policy councils in other rust-belt cities such as Cleveland and Pittsburgh have worked with local governments to lift up policies related to urban agriculture and can be a resource for government when drafting and adopting policies. The FPC has reviewed the proposed policies set forth before the Buffalo Common Council. While the FPC suggests more research and discussion is needed to figure out how specific policies could be adopted here in Buffalo, as a whole we believe that the proposals have merit and should be given consideration by the Buffalo Common Council. We are also willing to work with the Buffalo Common Council by offering advice and providing answers to any questions you may have regarding specific issues brought to you by the Urban Growers.

Thank you in advance for your support of our city and region. Again, should you have any questions regarding the set of proposals before the council, please contact the FPC at FPC@erie.gov.

Sincerely,

Cheryl B. Thayer
Chair
Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County