



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Master

File Number: 91152

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File Type: Resolution

Status: Report of Officer

Version: 1

Reference:

Controlling Body: MADISON FOOD
POLICY COUNCIL

File Created Date : 12/05/2025

File Name: Food Production on City-Owned Land

Final Action:

Title: Documenting Policies for Food Production on City-Owned Land

Notes:

Sponsors: Regina M. Vidaver, Tag Evers And Bill Tishler

Effective Date:

Attachments: Public Requests for CGs on City Land_Memo_DRAFT 012326.pdf, SMC Public Comments on Legistar 91125 January 2026.pdf, 012326-012726_CC_public_comments.pdf, Food Production Policy Public Submittal- BPC.pdf, Food on City Land Public Submittal.pdf

Enactment Number:

Author: Ald. Regina Vidaver

Hearing Date:

Entered by: imatthias@cityofmadison.com

Published Date:

History of Legislative File

Ver- sion:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	Council Office	12/05/2025	Referred for Introduction				
	Action Text:		This Resolution was Referred for Introduction				
	Notes:		Madison Food Policy Council (2/18/26), Sustainable Madison Committee (1/26/26), Board of Public Works (1/28/26), Water Utility Board (1/28/26), Board of Park Commissioners (2/11/26), Common Council (2/24/26)				
1	COMMON COUNCIL	12/09/2025	Refer	MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL			Pass
	Action Text:		A motion was made by Vidaver, seconded by Govindarajan, to Refer to the MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL. The motion passed by voice vote/other.				
	Notes:		Additional referrals to Sustainable Madison Committee, Board of Public Works, Water Utility Board, and Board of Park Commissioners				
1	MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL	12/09/2025	Referred	SUSTAINABLE MADISON COMMITTEE		01/26/2026	
	Action Text:		This Resolution was Referred to the SUSTAINABLE MADISON COMMITTEE				
1	MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL	12/09/2025	Referred	BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS			
	Action Text:		This Resolution was Referred to the BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS				
1	MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL	12/09/2025	Referred	WATER UTILITY BOARD			

Action Text: This Resolution was Referred to the WATER UTILITY BOARD

1 MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL 12/09/2025 Referred BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS 02/11/2026

Action Text: This Resolution was Referred to the BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

1 SUSTAINABLE MADISON COMMITTEE 01/26/2026 Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

Action Text: The motion to Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval was made by Alder Lankella, seconded by Alder O'Brien. The motion passes by unanimous approval.

1 BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS 01/28/2026 Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL Pass

Action Text: A motion was made by Ald. Lankella, seconded by Ald. Guequierre, to Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval to the MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL. The motion passed by voice vote/other.

1 BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS 02/11/2026 Return to Lead with the Recommendation for Approval MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL Pass

Action Text: Nick Heckman of Public Health, who staffs the Food Policy Council, provided an overview of the background around goals of using City-owned land for producing food. The resolution is directing staff to gather materials related to policies and best practices to increase this use. Commissioners expressed overall support for continuing to research this matter and interested in follow-up discussion. Heckman answered questions.

Motion made by Glenn, seconded by Williams, to RETURN TO LEAD WITH THE RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL TO THE MADISON FOOD POLICY COUNCIL. Motion passed by voice vote/other.

Text of Legislative File 91152

Fiscal Note

Under this proposed resolution, policies for growing food on City-owned land will be documented and communicated to the public. No City appropriation is required to implement this resolution.

Title

Documenting Policies for Food Production on City-Owned Land

Body

WHEREAS, the City of Madison has demonstrated its commitment to support residents to grow food on City-owned land in many ways over the course of more than 50 years:

- Since 1971 the Parks Department has been working with community organizations to facilitate community gardening on city land and has developed programs for shared land use. Demand for growing plots has always outpaced supply.
- The Community Gardens Committee was established in 2003
- The Madison Food Policy Council was established in 2012
- The Common Council adopted policies on Edible Landscapes and Terrace Planting in 2013 to expand opportunities for residents to grow food in the City.
- 2018 Comp Plan and 2023 update
 - Neighborhoods & Housing: Strategy 8 - Ensure access to food that is affordable, nutritious, and culturally specific.
 - Economy & Opportunity: Strategy 7 - Support efforts for businesses and

- consumers to produce and buy local food, products, and services.
- Green & Resilient: Strategy 9 - Support sustainable farming and gardening practices that protect the ecosystem and public health.
- In the 2023 Update: adding community gardens and urban agriculture to the list of appropriate land uses in the Parks & Open Space category on page 25 and adding a definition of community gardens to the Glossary of Terms.
- In 2024 the Economic Development Division updated its Land Banking policy to state: “The City welcomes urban agriculture as a secondary use alongside the priorities noted above. Urban agriculture could take the form of community and market gardens, greenhouses and hoop houses, vertical farming, and similar urban agriculture initiatives”; and,

WHEREAS, the May 2023 final report of the Farmland Preservation Task Force recommended making city-owned farmland available on a more equitable basis to historically disenfranchised communities, and included recommendations to:

- Develop and implement a transparent process for growers to become aware of and access city-owned land;
- Provide publicly accessible evaluation of the land involved in each lease that takes into consideration location, future use, soils, slopes, and timing;
- Adopt the USEPA Raised Bed Method as a best practice for urban farming on City-owned land. Recommend this Best Practice Method for all growing in potentially contaminated urban soils; and,

WHEREAS, on November 10, 2025, the City of Madison posted a press release including a survey that seeks input from “entrepreneurs, market farmers, and organizations involved in community or market gardening and interested in expanding food access and assisting Madison families with food affordability needs...to gauge interest in utilizing city-owned land for market and community garden spaces”; and,

WHEREAS, existing policies for growing food on City-owned property are not sufficiently documented to provide clear guidance to city staff for making decisions about appropriate use for food production on additional parcels of land under consideration in the proposed new program; and,

WHEREAS, peer cities with strong urban agriculture programs have policies to create greatest possible access to land for food production, including:

- Boston, MA
- Richmond, VA
- Rochester, NY

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, with research and support from the Madison Food Policy Council, the City of Madison document policies that allow for food production on City-owned “brownfield” land, provided that potentially contaminated soil is physically isolated from the growth medium, including but not limited to methods such as raised beds or capping with clean soil.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that policies for both brownfield and greenfield sites should be documented.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that these policies be communicated to the public and potential growers in clear, direct language with specific guidelines that are easy to follow and implement.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that these policies be documented so that staff and potential growers are prepared for the 2026 growing season.