

TO: Sustainable Madison Committee

FROM: Nan Fey

Current Member and Former Chair , Madison Food Policy Council  
Chair, Farmland Preservation Task Force

RE: Documenting Policies for Food Production on City-Owned Land  
Legistar #91152, Agenda Item #2 on 1/26/26

DATE: January 26, 2026

I'm writing to support your review and approval of this Council Resolution. While the SMC does not exercise control over city-owned lands, your policy role is important in supporting efforts to expand opportunities to grow food in our city, and SMC has historically addressed these issues in its plans and efforts by other city entities to advance those goals for which the Madison Food Policy Council is grateful. The following background should be helpful.

In its 2023 report, requested by the Common Council, the Farmland Preservation Task Force recommended the City adopt a policy to provide guidelines for growing food on city-owned lands. Last spring, the Mayor's office began a staff-level discussions on this topic exploring ways to expand food production that could take the form of community gardens, edible landscapes, market gardens, or other forms of urban agriculture. Some of the barriers to increasing production of food could include assessing the demand for new garden or agricultural space by community members, identifying possible soil contamination, and other site suitability factors like slope or shade. Last fall, the Madison Food Policy Council drafted the Resolution you're being asked to review.

On 12/19/2025, Resolution # 91152 was introduced by the Common Council directing staff to compile existing resources from departments that control land, national best practices on food production, and ultimately create a process that all City departments can use to manage requests from interested parties. This Resolution has been referred to SMC as well as Water Utility Board, Board of Public Works, Board of Parks Commissioners, and the Madison Food Policy Council. Approval of this Resolution by the referral agencies will allow City staff to develop and document policies for growing food on City-owned land and communicate to the public. Once developed, these Boards, Committees and Commissions will have an opportunity to review it and provide inputs, if any, before final adoption by the Common Council.

Please vote to **recommend approval** of this Resolution, noting any comments or questions you may have, so other policy-makers can take them into account as this process moves forward. Thank you.