



PREPARED FOR THE PLAN COMMISSION

Legislative Item: Creation of a Farmland Preservation Task Force (ID # [72997](#))

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Alders Evers (District 13) and Figueroa Cole (District 10) have co-sponsored a resolution (ID # [72997](#)) to create a Farmland Preservation Task Force comprised of 7 voting members, including Alder and Plan Commissioner Erik Paulson, and 2 alternates. As conceived, the Task Force would be self-managed and would complete work by early 2023. The resolution states that the role of the Task Force is to provide decision-makers with *“policy guidelines to help them balance development interests with the strong community values that support local food production, local food businesses and the preservation of farmland as expressed in adopted plans.”*

The Comprehensive Plan (2018) touches on this issue in a few ways, ranging from the City’s main role to commit to compact, efficient urban development as a way to preserve farmland in the broader region to recommendations to support additional community gardens and other sites appropriate for local food production within the city.

For many years, and particularly since the adoption of the City’s zoning code in 2013, Madison has a very permissive regulatory structure to encourage urban agriculture and local food production, and is also a national leader in farmers’ markets and other farmer/consumer connections to support the regional agricultural economy. While a small group of non-profit organizations and a few known for-profit businesses engage in urban agriculture, Madison has few urban agriculture examples that could be replicated and/or built upon.

Should the creation of the Task Force be approved by the Common Council, Planning Division staff can assist by providing data, further information on relevant Comprehensive Plan recommendations, and evaluation of tradeoffs the Task Force may consider in the coming months as they discuss policy and prioritization around local food production and its relationships with overarching city goals around housing, employment, transportation, and efficient utilization of public infrastructure.

The Madison Food Policy Council (on August 17) and the Sustainable Madison Committee (on August 22) voted to recommend that the Council move forward with the creation of the Task Force. Since this issue is so intertwined with adopted policies and plans currently being furthered by the City of Madison, staff recommends that the Plan Commission recommend a small change to the resolution to note that the report ultimately created by the Task Force should be submitted for review by the three BCCs reviewing this resolution prior to submittal to the Common Council for consideration of acceptance. The Sustainable Madison Committee recommended specific language be added as a new clause to a substitute resolution (see below). Planning staff recommend that the Plan Commission support this change.

- "NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Task Force on Farmland Preservation is hereby created and charged with creating guidelines for land use decisions when farmland and open space within City limits are proposed for rezoning and development and writing a final report with supporting data, to be referred for review by the Madison Food Policy Council, Sustainable Madison Committee and Plan Commission prior to consideration of acceptance by the Common Council, and"