

TO: Madison Food Policy Council

FROM: Farmland Preservation Task Force
Nan Fey, former Chair
Rebecca Kemble, former Secretary

RE: Land Banking Fund Policy Amendment to support urban agriculture

DATE: January 10, 2024

On June 21, 2021, the Common Council adopted a Land Banking Fund Policy to guide “the acquisition of land and buildings that could be used for future economic development, affordable housing projects, and other City uses.” The City has historically maintained a fund for strategic acquisitions and purchased important properties within its boundaries to facilitate orderly development of buildings to revitalize neighborhoods and support related economic development.

In the spring of 2022, Alder Evers of the Task Force on Farmland Preservation – and member of the Madison Food Policy Council – engaged in discussions with Matt Mikolajewski, Director of the city’s Economic Development Division, about adding growing space as an appropriate use of land acquired by the City through this program and policy. Recommendation 3 in the Zoning & Land Use section of the Farmland Preservation Task Force’s Report “implementation matrix” provides the language they developed. *Under Section 2. Priorities for Use of Land Banked Property: “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.”*

The term “secondary use” means land could be acquired and developed primarily to meet the goals of providing affordable housing, supporting neighborhood revitalization and related economic development that are the focus of the Land Banking Policy. While it’s unlikely the City would purchase land solely for growing purposes, including explicit support for urban agriculture in formally adopted policies provides guidance to staff, educates decision-makers about the term, and provides a platform for advocates to hold both staff and elected decision-makers to the terms of the policy.

A resolution to amend the City’s Land Banking Fund Policy will be introduced at Council later this month.