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Local Coalition Submits Language for an Urban Agriculture Ordinance

Groups Want to Make it Easier to Grow and Sell Produce in Sacramento

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (May 14, 2014) – The Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition has submitted language for a new Urban Agriculture Ordinance to the City of Sacramento. Members of this coalition include Ubuntu Green, Pesticide Watch, Sacramentans for Sustainable Community Agriculture, Soil Born Farms, Alchemist Community Development Corporation, and the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment. This work was developed as an extension of some of above groups' participation in The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative.

The Coalition presented their ideas to members of the Sacramento City Council and received overwhelming support for an ordinance that would create practical economic development opportunities, improve food security, and provide solutions to blight caused by unmaintained vacant lots.

"I'm excited to be a part of the Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition's campaign," said Councilmember Kevin McCarty, representing District 6 in the City of Sacramento. "This ordinance will provide some of the neediest communities in our City greater access to grow and buy healthy foods for their families."

"I support the Urban Agriculture Ordinance and see it's passing as the empowerment of the people to directly impact community building, economic growth and food access in underserved communities," said Chanowk Yisrael of the Yisrael Family Farm in South Oak Park.

By proposing a new ordinance to the City, the Coalition hopes to make it easier for residents to grow and sell produce and engage in low-impact activities that support urban agriculture.

"I am very excited about the expansion of access to locally grown produce," said Sacramento Vice Mayor Jay Schenirer. "The urban agriculture ordinance has the potential to support the growth of a sustainable community food system that opens accessibility for individuals and families to cultivate their own food."

"Urban agriculture is a good and collaborative way for Sacramento residents to reduce their impact on global resources," said Assemblymember Roger Dickinson. "Urban agriculture means less energy consumption and a stronger emphasis on our local economy."

Ordinance language employs best practices from around the nation to achieve the following changes:

- Allow gardens and farms in all zones.

- Improve policies to ease the process of establishing urban farm stands and community markets.
- Allow the raising of animals when the lot size and infrastructure is appropriate.
- Make unused public land available for urban agriculture projects.
- Reduce property tax and water rates for certain lots used for urban agriculture.
- Create a grant program to ease the cost of water meter installation on vacant lots.
- Promote sustainable water and agriculture practices.
- Create an information gateway to make it easier for residents to start urban agriculture projects.

“This urban agriculture proposal builds on the momentum Sacramento has gained around the Farm-to-Fork movement,” said Councilmember Steve Cohn, representing District 3 in the City of Sacramento. “After working to pass the front yard edible landscaping, community garden, and the backyard hen ordinances, I’m excited to support this group’s efforts to make growing and selling local food easier for everyone.”

After passing the ordinance with the City of Sacramento, the Coalition plans to partner with advocacy groups to pass similar legislation throughout the Sacramento Region.

“The Sacramento Regional Food System Collaborative (FSC) applauds the efforts of the Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition,” said Brenda Ruiz, Policy Chair of the FSC. “The adoption and implementation of a comprehensive ordinance, as has been proposed by the coalition, is critical to improving our food system. As a representative partner to the California Food Policy Council, the FSC recognizes the potential of the ordinance to raise the level of food policy education in the city and region and we hope it inspires leaders to get involved in these issues.”

For more information, please visit <http://www.ubuntugreen.org/advocacy-urban-agriculture>.

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