

Reducing Regulatory Barriers to Local Foods:

Municipal Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa Guidebook

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LEOPOLD CENTER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

History

Popularity of local foods has increased significantly in the last few decades

Heightened interest of consumers in buying local and sustainably-grown foods.

Leopold Center funded 2010 project:

“Advance the understanding of both local foods stakeholders and community planners of the barriers, opportunities, and strategies for the integration of local food systems into the plans and policies of local governments.”

Key Finding: Address local regulatory barriers to agriculture: Smart Growth and other zoning practices of Iowa municipalities

Barriers in Zoning Code

- Many codes simply have been in place, unchanged, since zoning and land use ordinances were first created for the purpose of separating and isolating incompatible residential uses from agricultural uses.
- Neighborhood uniformity and aesthetic demands.
- Conscious policy choice to exclude agricultural activities from municipalities



Objectives

- 2013 - Leopold Center funded:
**Reducing Barriers to Local Foods: “Municipal Zoning for Local Foods In Iowa”
Guidebook**
- Increased understanding of valid scientific concerns vs. “urban myths” about urban agriculture
- Increased awareness and knowledge of the common code barriers to urban agriculture and the legal/policy solutions to those barriers
- Change in the policies and practices of Iowa municipalities
 - Encourage adoption of zoning code provisions that eliminate barriers to, and encourage common practices associated with urban agriculture

Example communities in Iowa

Fairfield, IA

A city under 10,000 population

Allows some uses:

- Chickens
- Composting
- Farmers markets
- Front-yard gardening

Identified issues:

- Planting in right-of-way
- On-site sales
- Beekeeping



Cedar Rapids, IA

A city over 100,000 population
Urban agriculture ordinances in response to flooding.

Allows:

- Urban farms
- Chickens

Issues Addressed

Bees

Urban Farms

Food Trucks and
Pushcarts

Chickens

Community Gardens

Farm Stands

Goats

Farming on Vacant Lots

Farmers Markets

Aquaponics

Front-yard Gardening

Compost

Season Extenders

CSA Drop-Sites



Zoning Codes

80+ sample zoning codes from around nation

- Initial review of literature on zoning & urban agriculture
- Collected codes using keywords in search engines and Municode



Source: Matthew 25 Urban Farm

Guidebook (chapter) Overview

- (1) A statement of the nature of urban agriculture activity
- (2) A summary of the primary land use concerns associated with each activity
- (3) A survey of commonalities of existing municipal regulations
Relevant Iowa state law or administrative rules (if they exist)
- (4) Sample zoning code provisions for use by Iowa cities.

Scientific research can inform some challenges...

Are chickens noisy?

Won't my neighbor's bees be likely to sting me and my children?

Don't hens need a rooster to lay eggs?

Doesn't compost smell bad and attract rodents?

What kind of shelter does a goat need to live in an urban area?

Informed Regulations

Backed by science

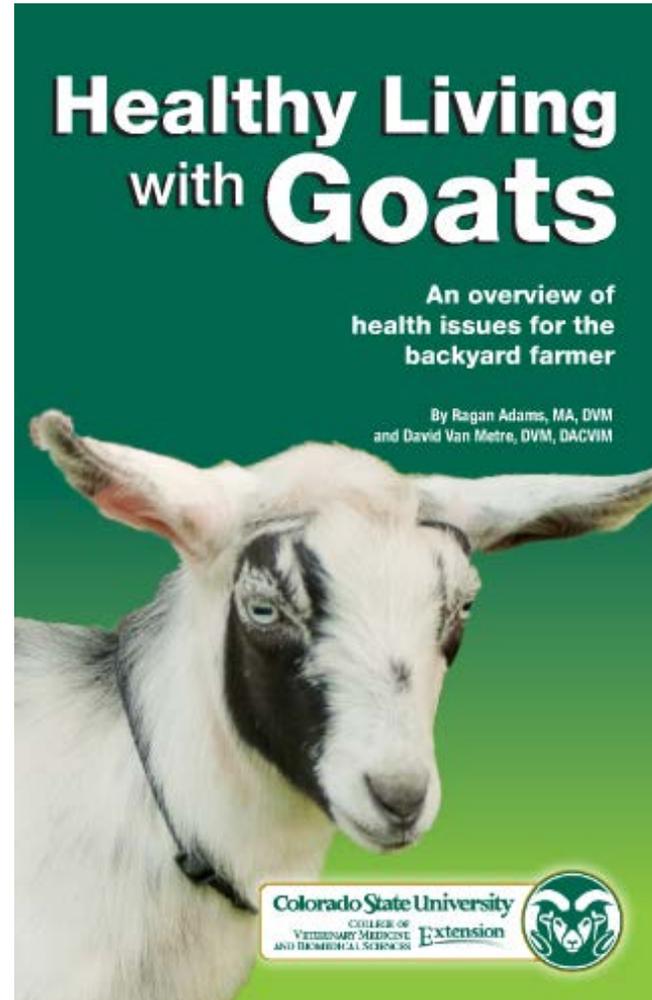
University extension publications

EPA recommendations

Conforms to state regulations

IDALS

Fact-checked by an expert in each field



Source: Colorado State University Extension

For others it cannot...

Should there be a height restriction on edible plants in front yards?

Should community gardens be a permitted or conditional use?

Will farmers markets be allowed in any location or only locations specifically designated by the city?

Are season extenders subject to commercial building code standards?

Are farm stands allowed to operate seasonally or year-round?

Should a permit be required to keep bees?

Zoning Code Provisions: Chicken example

About

- Breeds
- Behavior
- Living environment

Land-use Concerns

- Nuisance (odor, noise, roosters, pests)
- Structures
- Setbacks

Existing Regulations Survey

Code Language

- Definitions
- General Restrictions
- Licensing
- Lot Size / Animal Numbers / Setbacks / Enclosures
- Miscellaneous

Next Steps...

The guidebook will be published as an Extension publication and posted at <http://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/planningBLUZ>

Follow up webinar to discuss guidebook and address questions

Next Steps...

Second Leopold Center grant:

Publication addressing county zoning and local foods.

On-farm sales and processing, festival activities, CSAs

Must address unique aspects of Iowa county zoning law (“the agricultural exemption”)

Questions?

