



## Urban Agriculture for Community Food Security

**Urban agriculture** involves growing and harvesting food in urban areas, and sometimes involves processing and sharing the food in retail settings, such as farmers markets. Growing vegetables and fruit is a common urban agriculture practice, such as through community and backyard gardens or edible landscaping. Other foods we can produce in cities include: keeping chickens for eggs, tapping maple trees for syrup, keeping bees for honey, and even sustainable aquaculture for fish <sup>i</sup>.

Urban agriculture can help create good jobs and grow local food businesses. It provides opportunities for communities to learn about how food is grown and how our food choices impact our health and the environment. It also has the potential to improve access to local, healthy foods for residents <sup>i,ii</sup> and slow climate change by reducing the distance food travels to reach our plates and by creating more green spaces.

### How can Halifax support Urban Agriculture?

Many residents of the region are already growing or harvesting their own food. In 2015, Statistic Canada found that 64% of Halifax residents grew fruit, herbs, vegetables or flowers for themselves <sup>iii</sup>. In 2013, the Halifax area had:

- 41 community gardens.
- 3 urban farms that collectively encompass approximately 9.5 acres of land.
- Approximately 40 beekeepers and 250 colonies of bees.
- An estimated 3 chicken keepers on the Halifax peninsula and dozens more in more rural areas of the Halifax region.
- 4 community-run and 2 city-run greenhouses <sup>ii</sup>.

Some municipal strategies and plans are also starting to consider urban agriculture:

- [Halifax Municipality's Draft Centre Plan](#) recommends supporting urban agriculture in the form of community gardens, edible landscaping, greenhouses, domestic fowl, and bees.
- The [Draft Halifax Region Green Network Plan](#) also promotes urban agriculture through protecting agricultural lands and open spaces for food protection and harvesting.
- The municipality also supports "food hubs" in our communities, such as [Halifax's Mobile Food Market](#) and other food and cooking programs, which give communities convenient places to access fresh food and eat together.

These steps are helping to build support for urban agriculture at the municipal level. To strengthen efforts and remove barriers to urban agriculture, the Halifax Food Policy Alliance recommends:



### **RECOMMENDATION #1: Assess factors that promote or discourage urban agriculture in the Halifax area**

- 1.1 Scan existing municipal policies and plans and document factors that positively or negatively affect urban agriculture
- 1.2 Gather community perspectives on urban agriculture through public consultation to understand barriers and opportunities

### **RECOMMENDATION#2: Work with the Halifax Food Policy Alliance and other stakeholders to create and implement a municipal Urban Agriculture policy**

- 2.1 Create and implement an Urban Agriculture policy coordinating the actions and strategies mentioned in other municipal plans and policies (e.g. Green Network Plan, Centre Plan)
- 2.2 Ensure the Urban Agriculture policy also includes the following revisions to zoning policies:
  - Allow urban farms in all zones at a scale compatible with existing land use in the area.
  - Allow rooftop gardens in all zones, subject to building code requirements.
  - Allow greenhouses in all zones at a scale compatible with the existing uses in the area.
  - Allow small animals, domestic fowl and beekeeping with controls to reduce nuisance impacts.
  - Allow food production and farmers markets in park, institutional and open space zones.
  - Encourage edible landscaping by amending landscaping provisions to require a percentage of edible landscaping.
  - Provide opportunities for processing, manufacturing, warehousing, and other more intense food activities in industrial zones, alongside compatible uses.

### **RECOMMENDATION #3: Integrate and raise awareness of Urban Agriculture Policy**

- 3.1 Integrate recommendations from the policy into future revisions of municipal plans
- 3.2 Raise awareness of residents and encourage them to get involved in urban agriculture
  - Create a “how to” guide explaining policies and regulations around growing, processing and distributing food in Halifax, and provide links to other resources and regulations on urban agriculture, such as Provincial food safety regulations.

#### **REFERENCES**

- i. GrowTO. (2012). An urban agriculture action plan for Toronto. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2012/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-51558.pdf>
- ii. Halifax Food Policy Alliance. (2014). Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment. pp. 72-73
- iii. Statistic Canada. Table 153-0156 *Households and the environment survey, homegrown fruit, herbs, vegetables and flowers, Canada, provinces and census metropolitan areas (CMA), every 2 years (percent)*, CANSIM (database). (accessed: July 6, 2017).