



POLICY

Policy No. 2021-085

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Title: Urban Agriculture Policy

Revision Date:

Department: All Departments

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Mayor

Town Manager

Policy Statement:

Calmar Town Council supports the concept of urban agriculture being defined as agricultural plots in urban areas that have people working with animals, insects, and plants to produce food. They are usually community-run gardens seeking to improve community relationships and offer an awareness of agriculture and farming to people who live in urbanized areas. They are important sources of food security for many communities around the globe. City farms vary in size from small plots in private yards to larger farms that occupy a number of acres. The Town views urban agriculture as key to creating healthier neighbourhoods, fostering active living, improving "food access, affordability, and quality," and creating a "sustainable, resilient food system." These goals would be realized by several strategies, including supporting community gardens and urban farms "in select areas in the town."

Urban agriculture plays a small but important role in increasing access to affordable, high-quality fresh food. It also provides opportunities for residents to connect with nature, improve the environment, beautify public open space, learn about growing and preparing nutritious food, and form lasting inter-generational relationships and social bonds within communities.

Reason for Policy:

The Town of Calmar strategically plans to minimize its ecological footprint through a variety of strategies. One key strategy includes 'modelling good environmental stewardship' as a Town.

The primary goal of urban agriculture is to create healthier, livable, more resilient communities, not to produce large amounts of food. Healthy neighbourhoods require spaces and activities for community members to work together to build social capital, gardens and farms fulfill those needs.

Food production is only one of the many benefits of urban agriculture. Many other beneficial activities take place in gardens and farms: formal and informal education, business development, community events, youth development activities, services for older adults, and many ecosystem

services such as composting, rainwater harvesting, beekeeping, and moderation of the urban heat island effect.

Urban farms and gardens may be places to grow vegetables, but policy initiatives need to be better coordinated across conventional bureaucratic silos to ensure that the many benefits of urban agriculture are realized and that existing urban agriculture sites remain protected. For example, urban agriculture policies should be integrated with affordable housing policies and neighbourhood planning and zoning initiatives to design gardens and farms (and other food projects and infrastructure) more systematically into new residential developments and neighborhood land use plans to create healthier affordable communities.

Policy:

The Town of Calmar shall responsibly and practically foster urban agriculture by:

- (1) establishing a community garden program;
- (2) creating a database of additional Town properties suitable for urban agriculture;
- (3) establishing the Town's parameters for what will constitute acceptable urban agriculture in the community;
- (4) supporting rooftop agriculture where applicable; and
- (5) ensuring access to urban farming education and technological development for advanced urban agriculture.
- (6) ensuring urban agriculture is considered in land use planning, such as recreation is, when planning new developments.

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