



City of Vancouver *Land Use and Development Policies and Guidelines*

Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability Department

453 West 12th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4 | tel: 3-1-1, outside Vancouver 604.873.7000 | fax: 604.873.7100
website: vancouver.ca | email: planning@vancouver.ca | app: VanConnect

URBAN FARM GUIDELINES

*Authority – Director of Planning and Development Service and
Managing Director of Social Policy and Projects*

Adopted by City Council on March 8, 2016

Amended on September 10, 2019

1 Application and Intent

These guidelines have been prepared to assist the development of safe, neighbourly and productive urban farms and create a more sustainable food system for Vancouver. Urban farming will improve the resilience of Vancouver's food systems in accordance with the vision, principles and goals defined in the Vancouver Food Strategy and the Greenest City Action Plan which calls for an increase of urban farms to improve economic, social and environmental objectives. The guidelines are to be used in conjunction with the Zoning and Development By-law and the License By-law.

The purpose of the guidelines is to assist both urban farm applicants to apply as well as City staff to evaluate applications by:

- (a) Providing details on suitability of urban farms in Vancouver; and
- (b) Ensuring that urban farms meet City policy and regulations.

For more information on sustainable food systems and policy, see the Vancouver Food Strategy www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy.

2 Guidelines for Urban Farm Applicant and Operator

Applicant to determine the type of urban farm based on the zoning for the proposed site:

- (a) If the site is in a residential zone, the farm would be considered Urban Farm Class A; and
- (b) If the site is in a commercial, industrial, or historic area zone (Chinatown, Gastown, Yaletown), the farm would be considered Urban Farm Class B.

To determine zoning: <http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/map-of-zoning-districts.aspx>

2.1 Operational management

Urban farm operators must adhere to the following City policies and regulations:

The following applies to all urban farms (Class A and Class B):

- (i) Urban farm operators must obtain an urban farming business license prior to use of the site. All urban farm sites require a separate and individual business license;

- (ii) Urban farm operators are encouraged to obtain liability insurance prior to occupancy of any site;
- (iii) Urban farm operators must adhere to good management practices and maintain the site to reasonably prevent nuisances including offensive noise, odour, light, smoke, or vibration or other objectionable effect;
- (iv) No herbicides, pesticides shall be used; and
- (v) Urban farms are to cultivate only fruits or vegetables.

The following regulations from section 11 of the Zoning and Development By-law apply to urban farms in residential districts (Class A):

- (i) The planting area must not exceed 325 m² on any single parcel unless the primary use of the parcel is Park or Institutional in which case the Director of Planning may permit an increase in planting area to a maximum of 7,000 m²;
- (ii) If operated, in whole or in part, by a person other than a full-time resident or owner of the parcel, the planting area must be subject to a lease authorizing the operation of the farm;
- (iii) If two or more parcels are operated jointly, the combined planting area must not exceed 7000 m²;
- (iv) No on-site processing of fruits and vegetables, or manufacturing of food products is permitted;
- (v) No mechanical equipment may be used other than that designed for household use including lawnmowers, rototillers, garden hoses and pruners;
- (vi) On-site sales are not permitted, unless the primary use of the parcel is Institutional (e.g. school, church) and sales are limited to what is cultivated on the site;
- (vii) If operated on a single parcel or by a single land owner, the farm may not generate revenue exceeding \$9,999 in any calendar year, unless the primary use of the parcel is Park or Institutional;
- (viii) No mechanical equipment may be stored outside; and
- (ix) Any development permit or waiver of a development permit for an Urban Farm Class A is time limited to 1 year.

The following regulations from section 11 of the Zoning and Development By-law apply to urban farms in commercial and industrial districts (Class B):

- (i) The planting area for a single parcel or the combined planting area for all parcels operated jointly, may not exceed 7000 m², unless relaxed by the Director of Planning due to unnecessary hardship associated with the location, shape or size of the parcel or parcels;
- (ii) If located within 30 m of a residence, no mechanical equipment may be used other than that designed for household use including lawnmowers, rototillers, garden hoses and pruners;
- (iii) Onsite sales are limited to what is cultivated on the site; and

- (iv) If operated, in whole or in part, by a person other than an owner or full-time resident of the parcel during the farm operation, the planting area must be subject to a lease authorizing the operation of the farm.

2.2 Business License

Every site operated as either an Urban Farm Class A or Class B requires a separate business license as regulated in the License By-law.

- (i) For Class A, no activities may take place outside the hours of 8am to 9pm;
- (ii) For Class B, if located within 30 m of a residence, no activities may take place outside the hours of 8am to 9pm;
- (iii) An Urban Farm Class A or Urban Farm Class B may only operate on more than one parcel if all the licenses are issued to the same person;
- (iv) If a farm is subject to a lease, the lease must be provided to the City License Inspector;
- (v) A license holder may not operate an Urban Farm – Class A that exceeds a combined planting area of 7,000 m²;
- (vi) A license holder may not operate an Urban Farm Class B that exceeds a combined planting area of 7,000 m², unless approved under section 11 of the Zoning and Development By-law; and
- (vii) The urban farm regulations – such a size limits and requirements for leases - are designed such that an urban farm is not able to attain eligibility criteria for farm status under the BC Assessment Act. However, if a license holder applies for farm class tax status under the BC Assessment Act, the applicant must inform the Chief License Inspector at the time the application is made.

Business licence fees are as follows:

Urban Farm Class A	\$10.00 per year
Urban Farm Class B	\$136.00 per year

2.3 Waste Management

- (i) Location of compost storage shall not be located near a storm drain and not be open to the elements; and
- (ii) Discharge from the site to comply with Sewer and Watercourse By-law.

2.4 Greenhouses and Other Structures

- (i) Greenhouses and sheds less than 10 m² are permitted and do not require a building permit, as outlined in the Vancouver Building By-law; and
- (ii) Greenhouses or other structures that are part of an Urban Farm Class B are required to meet standards in Vancouver Building By-law.

2.5 Food Safety

- (i) Only fruits and vegetables are to be grown on urban farms. Public health concerns are reduced by ensuring that food grown and sold by urban farms is limited to fruits and vegetables, which are lower risk foods;
- (ii) To minimize health risks, no additional food processing is allowed unless in combination with additional appropriate permits;

- (iii) It is the urban farm operator's responsibility to ensure that all products meet health and safety standards; and
- (iv) City of Vancouver, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, has prepared Best Practices to assist farmers in reducing risk in the planting, growing and harvesting of fresh produce. The Best Practices Guide is available here: www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy

2.6 Soil Safety

- (i) All farming operations are encouraged to conduct soil testing on the site before any planting;
- (ii) The use of raised garden plots filled with quality growing medium that do not disturb ground cover is encouraged;
- (iii) It is the urban farming operator's responsibility to ensure that all products, including soil, meet health and safety standards; and
- (iv) City of Vancouver, in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, has prepared Best Practices to assist in farmers in reducing risk in the planting, growing and harvesting of fresh produce. The Best Practices Guide is available here: www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy

3 Outline of Process for Application

- (a) Applicants for an Urban Farm Class A that is less than 325 m² apply to Social Policy and Projects. Staff will review the application in partnership with the Business License Department, to issue a business license. More information and details about how to apply can be found here: www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy
- (b) Applicants for an Urban Farm Class A that is more than 325 m² or an Urban Farm Class B apply to the Enquiry Centre. Staff will assist the application and Development Permit process with the necessary departments. More information and details about how to apply can be found here: www.vancouver.ca/foodpolicy