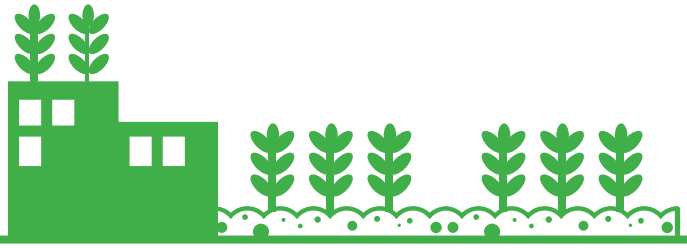
Quick Facts about Article 89 Urban Agriculture Rezoning Initiative



What is it?

Article 89 would set new standards for a variety of urban agriculture activities in Boston. It will apply city-wide. You can find a copy of Article 89 at the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) website.

Why Do We Need Article 89?

Most agricultural activities are not allowed under the current Zoning Code. By addressing a wide range of urban agriculture activities, Article 89 will increase access to healthy food, promote community building, create business opportunities and help beautify neighborhoods.

How was it developed?

In 2010 a local business owner wanted to start a lettuce farm, but couldn't because zoning did not allow it. Wanting to help, Mayor Menino gathered nearly two dozen farming advocates, urban agriculture experts and neighborhood representatives to assist in developing new urban agriculture zoning. Article 89 is the result of that collaboration after 17 open public meetings since January 2012.

Zoning Terms

Allowed - No public hearing required. ***May require special permits.***
Conditional - Public hearing required. Abutters notified.
Primary Use - The main use or activity on a property, occupying the majority of the lot.
Accessory Use - A secondary use of a property, occupying no more than 25% of the lot.

Types of Urban Farms

Ground-level Farms
- Up to 1 acre *allowed** everywhere.
- Over 1 acre allowed in industrial areas and *conditional** everywhere else.

Roof-level Farms
- Up to 5,000 sf allowed everywhere.
- All sizes allowed in the city's industrial, institutional, and large-scale commercial zoning districts.
- Roof-level farms of more than 5,000 sf are conditional in all other zoning districts

Roof-level Greenhouse
- Allowed in institutional, industrial, and large scale commercial zoning districts, and conditional everywhere else.

For more details see Section 89-4 and Section 89-5

**See Zoning Terms*

Comprehensive Farm Review

Comprehensive Farm Review (CFR) is a staff level review conducted by the BRA to make sure farms are designed to be good neighbors.

CFR will be required for:

Ground-level farms larger than 10,000 sf.
Roof-level farms larger than 5,000 sf, with some exceptions for farms in industrial and institutional districts.

CFR will take up to 45 days; abutters will be notified for comment.

For more details see Section 89-6

Boston Redevelopment Authority

URBAN AGRICULTURE
CITY OF BOSTON | MAYOR THOMAS M. MENINO

#UrbanAgBOS

Composting

Composting is an inexpensive and sustainable way to fertilize crops.

Composting may occupy up to 5% of the lot area of a farm.

Accessory composting would be allowed on any urban farm.

Siting of compost operations will be reviewed as part of CFR.

For more details, see Section 89-8

Soil Safety

Boston is a national leader in establishing Soil Safety Protocol for urban farms.

To ensure that crops are grown in safe soil, farmers must place a barrier over existing soil, plant their crops in raised beds, and test the imported soil.

The raised bed method has a proven track record and is endorsed by the US Environmental Protection Agency.

All farms using soil must comply with the Soil Safety Protocol.

Planting in native soil is only allowed by following State protocol.

The Soil Safety Protocol can be found on the BRA website.

Aquaculture, Hydroponics, Aquaponics

Aquaculture is the farming of fish and shellfish
Hydroponics is the growing of plants in nutrient-enriched water
Aquaponics combines aquaculture and hydroponics

Aquaculture and aquaponics facilities as a primary use will be allowed in industrial zoning districts and many waterfront districts, and conditional in all commercial and institutional districts.

Aquaculture and aquaponics facilities up to 750 sf will be allowed in most zoning districts, including residential districts.

Hydroponics facilities will be possible in most zoning districts including small scale facilities in residential subdistricts.

For more details, see Section 89-11 of Article 89.

Backyard Keeping of Hens and Bees

The backyard keeping of hens and bees is already addressed in the existing Zoning Code, and is not allowed in most zoning districts. **Article 89 does not change this.**

Where the keeping of hens and bees is conditional, Article 89 defines the permissible **size** of beehives and coops, **numbers** of allowed hens and beehives, and other size and maintenance requirements.

Whether hens and bees may be kept is a decision left up to individual neighborhoods. Use regulations for the keeping of hens and bees can be changed by petitioning the BRA.

For more details, see Section 89-9 and Section 89-10

Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands

Farmers' markets will be allowed in any area where retail is already allowed by the existing zoning, and conditional everywhere else.

Farm stands would be allowed in any zoning district where retail uses are already allowed in existing zoning, and conditional everywhere else.

For more details, see Section 89-12

For more information, a schedule of neighborhood meetings, or with questions about Article 89, visit the BRA website at bostonredevelopmentauthority.org, call 617-918-4264, or email john.read.bra@cityof-boston.gov