



CITY OF ORLANDO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 15, 2015 Council Meeting
TO: Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Dean Grandin, Jr. – Planning Official
SUBJECT: Urban Chicken Pilot Program Renewal

BACKGROUND

The Council passed a two-year pilot program for urban chickens on May 7, 2012, allowing residents of District 3, 4 and 5 to participate in keeping three hens in their backyard – with an initial clutch of 25 possible households. The program was expanded in April 2013 to include District 6, increase the amount of households to 75, and also increase the amount of hens to four. Three years have passed since the initial pilot program, which allowed the pilot to be extended until May 2015 via Planning Official determination.

ANALYSIS

A total of 53 households have participated in the program to date, receiving an approval letter following the required education component. Households wishing to participate must take a class (such as with the UF/IFAS Ag Extension) in order to learn proper care and teach participants how to incorporate these unique animals into a daily routine. The ceiling of 75 total participating households was never reached, as several families did not continue with the program once learning about backyard chickens.

The participation rate of 53 total approved households by District is the following:

DISTRICT	HOUSEHOLDS
3 - Stuart	26
4 - Sheehan	26
5 - Hill	0
6 - Ings	1

Attached is a map showing the locations of the households that participated in the program. Permits are most heavily concentrated in the Audubon Park neighborhood, followed by the Colonialtown and College Park neighborhoods.

During the program, staff has observed the following:

- The demand for backyard chickens is somewhat limited in Orlando. After a flurry of interest with a wait list when we limited participation to 25 households the first year, we have about one inquiry every other month regarding the program from an actual Orlando resident. The program provides a highly visible indicator that Orlando is a leader in sustainable communities in the southeast by supporting the “locavore” movement (citizens concerned about local food and food systems in a region).
- The staff encountered one out-of-compliance chicken keeper in the Eola Heights neighborhood who kept a rooster that was not a program participant; the neighbor complained to the City and we worked with the resident to bring them into compliance

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with the program (including dispatching with the rooster). The complaining neighbor was placated, wanting to ensure that the offending neighbor followed the rules.

- There has been one household in District 2 that has been taken to the Code Enforcement Board and is running fines for having chickens (including roosters). The fowl are sometimes found running about loose on the property and in the front yard.
- There has been only one request from District 1 and approximately six requests from residents in District 2 to participate in the program.
- There have been no complaints regarding the pilot program of actual participants in the pilot. We have only received a general complaint from a county resident, living near District 2, who dislikes that the City has the pilot program.
- Several jurisdictions have implemented similar programs/ordinances based on the City of Orlando's pilot. Maitland and Apopka are among the local jurisdictions; farther afield Sarasota adopted a similar ordinance and Jacksonville adopted a similar pilot program.
- Winter Park has studied the program in the past through its Sustainability Advisory Board, but has not implemented a similar program to date. Similarly, Orange County was set to adopt a similar ordinance, yet dropped pursuing the program in the summer of 2013.
- The staff did have a single household that quit the program due to the onset of health issues (unrelated to the chickens). Additionally, one household moved within District 4 and checked to ensure that they could continue in the program and update their address.
- All participants are households that own their home with the exception of one – a long-time residential tenant who received notarized permission from the property owner to keep chickens on the property, consistent with the program requirements.
- The UF/IFAS Ag Extension continues to provide classes approximately every other month, in order to accommodate the new programs in the area, rural residents, and the City of Orlando's participants. The Ag Extension looks on the program favorably, since it makes citizens more aware of their services and helps to advance their mission.
- Staff suspects that there may be additional households that are keeping chickens that may not be participating in the program, but are in essence following the guidelines that we have established – which makes them less noticeable to their neighbors.
- In the past, there have been concerns about loose chickens in the Parrmore neighborhood. However, those concerns have subsided during the tenure of the pilot program – as the loose chicken problems that were experienced in past years has largely subsided.

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RECOMMENDATION

Based on the above experiences, the staff recommends that the pilot program be extended by the Council for an additional year, while staff meets with the commissioners and the administration to see if codifying the program should be advanced.

The main points of the program remain the same:

- 1) Up to four hens are allowed in up to 75 participating households.
- 2) Households wishing to participate must take a chicken care class prior to receiving a Planning Official determination approving them for the program.
- 3) Setbacks from a neighboring residential structure is 20-ft, and 5-ft from any property line or principal structure on the site. A 0-ft setback is allowed for accessory structures.
- 4) Potential participants submit a survey of their site showing where the coop and run are to be located on the property in a conforming location, as well as details of the type of coop they are proposing.
- 5) Coops are required to be "tied down" to prevent damage during a wind event.
- 6) Only single family residences are eligible for the program, so that the animals can be incorporated into a daily routine of the household and reduce potential nuisances to close-by neighbors. If the home is not owned by a participant, notarized permission must be obtained from the property owner.

Should a permanent program be adopted in the future, the following additional options should be considered as part of the program:

- 1) Requiring HOA sign-off of any coops or structures prior to Planning Official approval; this is similar to our typical process for permitting re-roofs and swimming pools (and other improvements) on residential properties of those subdivisions with required associations.
- 2) Lifting the cap that limits the total number of participants from 75 to an unlimited amount of potential permits, as staff suspects there are additional households in the City that may have chickens, but would do better going through the educational process of the program. Additionally, the amount of households interested in chicken keeping is not great.

Chicken Program Address

City of Orlando

