



DAVID CHIU
邱信福
市參事會主席

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Contact: Judson True, Sup. Chiu
Judson.True@sfgov.org
415.554.7451

**San Francisco Board of Supervisors President David Chiu,
Assemblymember Phil Ting and Supporters Announce State's First
Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone Ordinance in San Francisco**
*Ordinance Operates Under Terms of Ting's AB 551 Allowing Tax Breaks for Landowners
Who Dedicate Parcels to Urban Farming*

San Francisco, CA – Today Board of Supervisors President David Chiu and Assemblymember Phil Ting announced legislation that would make San Francisco the first locality in California to implement Ting's Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones Act (AB 551). Supervisor Chiu's proposed legislation, to be introduced at Tuesday's Board of Supervisors meeting, would allow landowners in San Francisco to apply for a property tax reduction in exchange for committing their land to solely urban agricultural use for the following five years. The proposal is intended to encourage property owners to consider urban agriculture as a viable use for their land, when they might have otherwise developed it, or in the case when it is not easily developed, left it blighted and unused.

"The positives of urban farming go far beyond the production of locally-grown, healthy sustainable food," said Board President David Chiu. "Urban farming improves the environment, grows communities, creates beautiful spaces, increases food security, and advances the health of residents. We should be incentivizing more urban agriculture in San Francisco."

A major issue facing the growth of urban agriculture in San Francisco is a lack of adequate space; compounding this is the unfortunate reality that many long-existing gardens are being lost to other uses. Because land is scarce and therefore expensive, the reality is that most landowners choose to develop their properties if they can. The ordinance, crafted in close consultation with numerous community stakeholders, Assemblymember Ting, and City staff, is an important step forward in addressing this issue. Under AB 551, which was authored by Assemblymember Ting (the former Assessor-Recorder of San Francisco) and signed by Governor Brown in 2013, localities in California have the option to implement an urban agriculture tax break and can decide how and where it is best used in their jurisdictions.

"I am thrilled San Francisco is the first community to take advantage of my urban agriculture law," said Assemblymember Phil Ting. "Our action will help expand access to healthy and fresh food by

enabling people to farm in their own neighborhoods. We have a chance to tame the concrete jungle with green spaces that fight blight and provide a local economic boost. The best reward of all may be the pride of sharing what we grow with our friends and family.”

Under Supervisor Chiu’s proposal, parcels must meet a number of requirements in order to be eligible to apply, and landowners must sign a contract committing to the land being used solely for urban agriculture for five years. No structures, other than those that are required to support farming such as greenhouses and tool shed, would be allowed, and the gardens must have some kind of public access or educational program. If a landowner breaks his or her contract or ceases agriculture activities, then the entire value of the property tax reduction received since the start of the agreement must be repaid in full with interest to the city.

"Access to land is one of small scale agriculture's biggest obstacles in our state, both in rural and urban areas," said Caitlyn Galloway, co-founder of Little City Farms. "This legislation is a promising step forward for our city, as it enables mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and property owners."

“I am hopeful that the passage of this new law will inspire other landowners to step back from the search for a way to squeeze out another dollar from each square foot of land and let them lean in to the possibility that land ownership can benefit the community and enhance the enjoyment of urban space,” said Aaron Roland, property owner of the 18th and Rhode Island Permaculture Garden, a property which is a potential applicant should Chiu’s ordinance pass.

Supervisor Chiu’s proposed ordinance is his third major piece of urban agriculture legislation. The first allowed for greater food production within San Francisco by updating zoning regulations to explicitly permit gardens in all areas of the city and allow for the sale of produce from those gardens. The second created an Urban Agriculture program that is tasked with coordinating and augmenting the myriad urban agriculture activities that are undertaken by the city government.

Several other cities in California are considering AB 551 implementation and have been awaiting the release of Supervisor Chiu’s San Francisco ordinance as a potential model for theirs. The ordinance could be heard by the Board of Supervisors as early as mid-July, and if approved, the deadline for parcels to apply for consideration for a reduction in the 2015 tax year will be October 1, 2014.

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Alternate Contact: Anthony Matthews, Assemblymember Ting, 916.319.2019