



KEEP GROWING DETROIT

1445 Adelaide, Detroit, MI 48208 * 313-656-4769 * www.keepingrowingdetroit.org

City Planning Commission
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 208
Detroit, MI 48226

Re: Detroit Animal Husbandry Ordinance Recommendations pertaining to Beekeeping

Dear City Planning Commission and City Council,

Keep Growing Detroit (KGD) is a non-profit organization based in Detroit with a mission to promote a food sovereign city where the majority of fruits and vegetables consumed by Detroiters are grown by residents within the city's limits. To these ends, KGD operates a number of nationally recognized programs including the Garden Resource Program (GRP), which supports a network of more than 2,300 urban gardens and farms in the city and Grown in Detroit (GID), which provides urban growers with low-barrier opportunities to sell their produce and farm products at local market outlets. KGD also operates a 1.38-acre urban farm and teaching facility located in Detroit's historic Eastern Market District.

KGD believes that the practice of beekeeping plays a vital role in pollinating crops cultivated in urban gardens and farms across Detroit. To support new beekeepers, KGD facilitates the [Sweet on Detroit \(SOD\) Beekeeper Training Program](#). Over the last decade, this program has successfully trained more than 250 Detroit residents in responsible and sustainable beekeeping techniques. We also facilitate the SOD Beekeeper Club. With an annual membership exceeding 50 individuals, the Club convenes monthly to enhance beekeeping skills, address pertinent issues, and offer mutual support in the management and upkeep of beehives throughout the city. Moreover, it serves as a platform for local beekeeping entrepreneurs to market honey, wax, pollen, and other hive products, thereby contributing to the local food ecosystem. Notably, in the past decade, no beekeepers affiliated with our programs have faced citations from the city for any nuisance or complaints. While the precise number of beekeepers in Detroit remains untracked, we estimate their count to range between 100 and 200, encompassing SOD program participants and our collaborative partners within the beekeeping community. Together, this network oversees approximately 200-300 beehives throughout the city.

In February 2024, representatives from the City of Detroit Office of Urban Agriculture, BSEED, Planning and Development, Representative from Pro-Tem Tate's Office and Animal Control met with KGD and representatives from the Sweet on Detroit Beekeeping Club to hear concerns

regarding the proposed ordinance. As a result of this discussion, our collective recommendation is that the City:

- Remove beekeeping from Chapter 6 of the Detroit City Code amendments and rely on the State GAAMPS for keeping and maintaining honey bee hives outlined in the [Michigan Apiary Act of 1976](#), [Care of Farm Animals GAAMPS 2024](#) and the [Michigan Right to Farm Act](#).
- Retain language regarding beekeeping in the proposed Chapter 50 amendments of the Detroit City Code regarding set-backs, accessory land use, and special allowances for educational non-profits.

The following is a summary of the feedback and recommendations related to Chapter 6 and Chapter 50 presented at the meeting:

- **Number of Hives (Chapter 6):** The proposed limit of 2 hives for residential and 4 for Urban Farms and Gardens is too low.
 - Most beekeepers maintain at least 3 - 6 hives over the course of the season, which is a generally accepted practice to support the health and reproduction of sustainable hive management.
 - **Recommendation is to follow Michigan GAAMPS, which allows for up to 6 hives on less than an acre. Remove beekeeping from Chapter 6**
 - An alternate recommendation could be to establish a backyard limit of 6 hives and an additional provision which could allow for more hives in larger areas (based on square footage).
 - Example:
 - Six hives for properties with a lot area greater than 22,000 square feet but not greater than 43,450 square feet in area.

Eight hives for properties with a lot area greater than 43,450 square feet (one acre) in area.
 - One additional hive is allowed for each additional acre of land.
- **Hive Care and Tagging (Chapter 6):** Tagging hives would be too difficult to effectively manage. Hives are manipulated constantly and boxes are often exchanged at one site and/or moved to other sites.
 - **Recommendation to remove beekeeping from chapter 6 and require beekeepers follow State GAAMPS**
 - Alternative recommendation would be to require signage that indicates hives are present in lieu of tags.
- **License and Annual Fee (Chapter 6):** An annual fee of \$50 per hive would be cost prohibitive for most beekeepers. This would mean a yard with 4 hives would need to pay \$200 a year. One of our members has over 50 hives divided amongst several sites, which would incur an exorbitant \$2,500 in annual fees.
 - **Recommendation to remove beekeeping from chapter 6 and require beekeepers follow State GAAMPS**
 - Alternative recommendation would be to charge a one time fee per site no more than \$10 to register a “bee yard”

- Beekeeping as accessory land use (Chapter 50): Some members of the club have been maintaining hives at several properties (mowing grass, beautification) with beekeeping as the principal land use.
 - **Recommendation to retain current language for beekeeping as an accessory land use, but consider special cases, as described below.**
 - Recommendation to grandfather in or support change of use for special cases.
- Special allowances for 4H and Educational non-profits (Chapter 50):
 - **Recommendation to retain current language regarding special allowance for 4H and Educational non-profits pursuant of a special land use hearing.**
- Setbacks (Chapter 50): Hives must be set back 25 feet from a neighbors residence OR have a 6' flyway fence around hives that are within 6' of neighboring property.
 - **This is acceptable.**

Sincerely,

Kido Pielack

Beekeeping Program Coordinator / Farmer Infrastructure and Technical Assistance Manager

Keep Growing Detroit