



AGRICULTURAL PLANNING

Sustainable Communities

Throughout our region, agriculture and farms are essential to our economy, heritage, and landscapes. Despite their deep value, development pressures are significant on agricultural lands. Agricultural planning seeks ways of sustaining and expanding the current agricultural uses of these irreplaceable lands.



MAGIC COMPREHENSIVE AGRICULTURAL PLANNING PROGRAM

The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) Subregion comprises thirteen municipalities that include the least densely populated areas of our region. These communities are particularly susceptible to encroaching development on farmland.

Through an inclusive planning process, MAPC and its partners developed recommendations for strengthening the agricultural system in the MAGIC subregion. The goal of the Comprehensive Agricultural Planning Program was to increase the economic viability of farming and protect sustainable foodsheds. The project identified solutions to promote increased food production and marketing to areas inside and outside the subregion. Numerous farm service organizations and municipalities were involved in the project.

MAPC and project partners inventoried existing and potential agricultural lands within the subregion, providing a planning tool for municipalities to help guide their decisions on agricultural preservation and enhancement.



Goals

- Ensure Economic Viability of Agricultural Practices
- Protect Sustainable Foodsheds
- Create Positive Relationships Between Farmers/Ranchers & Municipal Officials
- Ensure access to local, healthy food
- Conserve arable land



www.MAPC.org



60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111
617.933.0700

TO DISCUSS HOW MAPC CAN HELP YOUR COMMUNITY

visit www.MAPC.org/environment or contact Julie Conroy, Senior Environmental Planner
jconroy@mapc.org 617.933.0749

What we heard...



Current Work:

After the MAGIC project, MAPC was awarded a contract to facilitate the development of the Massachusetts Food System Plan. This is an 18th month planning process that began in March 2014 and includes a dynamic stakeholder engagement process, analysis of current trends in the food system, and the identification of challenges and opportunities for positive change. One of the primary goals of the Plan is to provide statewide partners with the tools needed to create a socially just, economically viable, and ecologically resilient food system.

MAGIC Planning Outcomes

Comprehensive Planning Findings outlining the challenges and opportunities for agricultural land preservation and enhancement.

Recommendations for change across all municipalities, including:

- CPA adoption in all MAGIC municipalities for agricultural land acquisition
- Partnership with land trusts for management and preservation assistance
- Zoning changes that will allow for additional accessory uses on farms
- Coordinated work plans across municipal Boards/Commissions to effectively advance recommended actions
- Economic assistance programs and equitable land valuation

Municipal Food Systems Planning Toolkit

In addition to the MAGIC Agricultural Planning project, MAPC worked with CLF Ventures to create a toolkit intended to provide municipal officials and community leaders with the information they need to begin or expand efforts to improve their local food systems.

THE TOOLKIT INCLUDES:

- CHAPTER 1: DEFINING THE FOOD SYSTEM
a common vocabulary for municipal food systems projects.
- CHAPTER 2: EXAMINING MASSACHUSETTS
a detailed description of food systems in Massachusetts, including statistics and information about agriculture, food production and consumption, food assistance programs, and waste in the food system.
- CHAPTER 3: CONNECTING FOOD SYSTEMS TO MUNICIPAL PRIORITIES
descriptions of the top municipal priorities and how the food system relates to each.
- CHAPTER 4: GETTING STARTED
a guide to developing food systems groups and conducting food systems assessments.
- CHAPTER 5: COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
a guide to engaging and developing partnerships with individuals and organizations in a community.
- CHAPTER 6: MUNICIPAL TOOLS
a guide to municipal tools that can be used for food systems development, including examples of food systems planning, zoning, and legislation from across the United States.
- CHAPTER 7: PROJECT GUIDES
a series of Project Guides for a variety of food systems initiatives.

The toolkit approaches food systems planning using the five priorities cited by municipal officials in the region: economic development, health, conservation, equity, and education. By implementing the toolkit strategies, local government officials and food system advocates can better connect the food system to their long-term municipal goals.

Available at:
<http://www.mapc.org/sustainable-agriculture>



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