

Council OKs chicken coops in Duluth

By Michael Kooi

After a decades-long absence, chickens are coming home to roost in Duluth. Last month, the City Council voted to allow residents to raise hens for eggs within city limits – providing a major boon to area locavores.

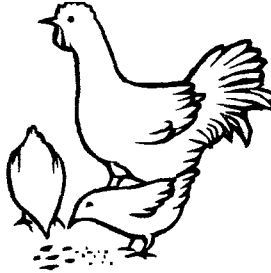
Hillside and Lincoln Park residents shouldn't count their chickens just yet, however. While the ordinance covers the entire city, its stipulations may exclude many residents of the Hillside and Lincoln Park from ownership.

For example, it bars residents of apartments and duplexes from owning the birds. In addition, coops must be at least 25 feet from neighboring houses, at least 10 feet from any other structure on the property, and five feet from the property line (per city zoning laws) – all of which could pose problems for residents with small or narrow lots.

According to City Councilor Sharla Gardner, the primary author and sponsor of the ordinances, these restrictions reflect the realities of raising chickens in a dense urban environment. "If you live in a duplex, and your neighbor wants chickens and you don't, well, that could make life difficult," she explains.

Under the ordinance, residents

of single-family homes with enough space can keep up to five chickens, provided their coops pass a city inspection and they purchase a \$10 license. Other restrictions include bans on roosters and on butchering the birds within city limits. A complete list of rules and regulations can be found on the city's Web site. The city's animal control department will handle enforcement.



Supporters of the ordinance have touted its eco-friendly benefits, which include more efficient land use (coops instead of water-thirsty lawns) and a lower carbon footprint (local eggs don't have to be shipped). According to DCC Web site, www.dulthcitychickens.com, the fresh eggs also taste better than commercially collected eggs.

In passing the ordinance, Duluth joins Minneapolis, Seattle, New York City and Madison, Wis. (among others) in allowing residents to keep chickens. Says Gardner: "I think this is a progressive ordinance that's fair to everyone without ruffling too many feathers."