

Supports Item No. 1  
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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: October 4, 2005  
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TO: Standing Committee on Planning and Environment

FROM: Director of Social Planning in consultation with the Vancouver Food Policy Council

SUBJECT: Food Policy Progress Report

**RECOMMENDATION**

THAT Council receive the following information as an update on the work of the Vancouver Food Policy Council and Food Policy staff, including information on policy development, program innovations, pilots, partnerships and future directions for food policy within the City of Vancouver.

**GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The General Manager of Community Services recommends that Council receive this report for information noting that food policy contributes to various City sustainability initiatives.

**COUNCIL POLICY**

**Food Policy**

On July 8, 2003, Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver. On December 11, 2003, Council approved the proposed Food Action Plan pending 2004 budget decisions. On March 11, 2004 at the Standing Committee Meeting on City Services and Budgets, Vancouver City Council voted to establish a multi-stakeholder Food Policy Council. In order to support the work of the Food Policy Council and other relevant City work, Council also approved funding for the two staff positions proposed in the Food Action Plan.

## Sustainability Policy

In April 2002, the City adopted a formal position, definition and principles on sustainability, which states: A sustainable Vancouver is a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a place where people live, work and prosper in a vibrant community of communities. In such a community, sustainability is achieved through community participation and the reconciliation of short and long term economic, social and ecological well-being. Sustainability is a direction rather than a destination. A sustainable city is one that protects and enhances the immediate and long-term well being of a city and its citizens, while providing the highest quality of life possible. Sustainability requires integrated decision-making that takes into account economic, ecological, and social impacts as a whole. On May 24, 2005, Council further approved a definition of Social Sustainability to be used for developing the social component of the City's sustainability objectives.

## PURPOSE & SUMMARY

This report comprises the annual report back to City Council on the progress of the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) as indicated in the Action Plan for Creating a Just and Sustainable Food System for the City of Vancouver. This progress report includes:

1. Information on the priority work areas identified by the Food Policy Council. The priority areas are: Strategies to increase access to groceries for residents of Vancouver; An institutional Food Purchasing Policy for public facilities; Strategies to recover, reuse, and recycle food; and a Food Charter for the City of Vancouver.
2. Information on concurrent food policy work being undertaken by the Food Policy Staff Team in collaboration with the Vancouver Food Policy Council, other City departments and community partners. These initiatives include City Council endorsement of hobby beekeeping and the accompanying adoption of good management practices for urban beekeepers; the creation of a Downtown Eastside Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden at UBC Farm; creation of a food producing and education garden near the City Hall Child Care Centre; and support to a consortium of researchers in the creation of a city-wide Food System Assessment. These policy and program developments represent a collaborative and innovative approach to food policy involving a citizen advisory body (the Vancouver Food Policy Council), and City staff, who together work to address the recommendations identified in the Food Action Plan.
3. Information on future directions for food policy in the City of Vancouver.

## BACKGROUND

On July 8, 2003, Vancouver City Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver. A just and sustainable food system is defined as one in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place.

To provide leadership in achieving this goal, and to build on the work of the Vancouver Agreement Food Task Group, the Lower Mainland Food Coalition and other community groups, a Food Policy Task Force was initiated. The Food Policy Task Force was made up of Councillors Tim Louis, Fred Bass, and Ellen Woodsworth; Vancouver School Board Trustee, Andrea Reimer; Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Eva Riccius; representatives from Vancouver Coastal Health; the GVRD; and representatives from approximately 70 community groups, many of which have been developing and delivering food-related programs and services in Vancouver for over a decade. The goal of the Food Policy Task Force was to develop recommendations for a plan of action that balanced:

- Specific actionable short term goals;
- Longer term goals; and
- Recommendations on how these actions fit into a larger, long-term food policy framework and governance model.

Once the Council motion was passed in July 2003 and the Food Policy Task Force formed, the first of two consultation processes was initiated. The outcome of the first round of consultation was the formulation of a Food Action Plan that was approved by City Council in December, 2003. The Action Plan focused on areas where City of Vancouver has the jurisdictional power to act in support of identified goals. In recognition of the fact that many food system issues must be addressed on a regional basis (and in many cases beyond), opportunities for collaboration with other municipalities, levels of government, and stakeholders were identified. The Action Plan was made up of three components:

- A recommendation to create a Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC)
- An interim work plan including five action items
- Two full-time dedicated City staff positions to facilitate food system goals (a permanent full-time Food Policy Coordinator and temporary two-year Food System Planner).

On July 14, 2004, the Food Policy Task Force, as its final act, elected members of Vancouver's first municipally-affiliated Food Policy Council. On September 14, 2004, City Council appointed Councillors Tim Louis and Peter Ladner as Official Liaisons to the Food Policy Council.

## DISCUSSION

Food policy provides many benefits to our citizens including social, environmental and economic sustainability, community development and environmental health. This progress report highlights these benefits by summarizing the following:

1. An update on the progress of the Vancouver Food Policy Council including their priority work areas;
2. Concurrent food policy work being undertaken by the Food Policy Staff Team in collaboration with the Vancouver Food Policy Council, other City departments and community partners;
3. Future directions for food policy in the City of Vancouver.

## **I. Progress of the Vancouver Food Policy Council**

### **Food Policy Council Vision**

The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) supports the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health.

### **Food Policy Council Mandate**

The Vancouver Food Policy Council acts as an advocacy, advisory and policy development body on food system issues within the City's jurisdiction. The primary goal of the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas and policy recommendations for how it can be improved.

### **Food Policy Council Membership**

The Vancouver Food Policy Council is comprised of individuals from all aspects of our local food system. Using a sectoral approach, membership includes people with a variety of different backgrounds such as nutritionists, food wholesalers and distributors, food retailers and grocers, managers of non-profit organizations and academics engaged in food system issues. This voluntary multi-disciplinary group creates an innovative forum for discussion and action towards building a food system that is ecologically sustainable, economically viable and socially just. It is also built upon collaboration between citizens and government officials to work together on sustainability initiatives. The Vancouver Food Policy Council includes two City Council liaisons (Councillors Tim Louis and Peter Ladner), one Park Board Liaison (Commissioner Eva Riccius) and two Vancouver School Board Liaisons (Trustees Adrienne Montani and Andrea Reimer).

### **Facilitating collaboration between Vancouver citizens and local government**

One of the ways that the Vancouver Food Policy Council facilitates collaboration between citizens and local government on food system issues is by creating venues for communication and information sharing. One such venue was a Public Food Policy Forum held in June 2005. The purpose of the Forum was to educate citizens about the range of local, community-based food initiatives in Vancouver, and provide an opportunity for networking and information-sharing. The Forum was attended by approximately 150 community, non-profit, private sector and governmental representatives. A second Public Food Policy Forum is scheduled for November 2005.

Another example of how the Vancouver Food Policy Council provides advice to local government on enhancing the local food system can be found in the VFPC-initiated recommendation in November 2004, that Vancouver City Council re-affirm its position on protecting farmland for food production in the region's remaining Agricultural Land Reserve.

### **Food Policy Council Priority Work Areas**

In addition to education and awareness-raising strategies, the Vancouver Food Policy Council works on specific projects and goals in support of issues and action items identified in the

Food Action Plan. These work areas are facilitated by food policy staff. Currently, the VPFC has identified four priority work areas including:

- A. Increasing Access to Groceries for residents of Vancouver
- B. Institutional Food Purchasing Policy for public facilities
- C. Recovery, Reuse, and Recycling of Food
- D. Food Charter for the City of Vancouver

The priority work areas build on the expertise of community-based organizations that have been developing and delivering food-related programs and services in Vancouver for over a decade.

#### **A. Increasing Access to Groceries for Residents of Vancouver**

The purpose of this work area is to identify and investigate the barriers to grocery access in Vancouver and provide policy recommendations for future actions that can address gaps in food access. This may include an exploration of food access issues including the effects of restrictive covenants (placed on former grocery store sites) on retail food access in Vancouver. This priority area may also include an examination of broader food access issues including, for example, issues related to the Vancouver School Board's School Meal Program.

**Progress to date:** The Food Policy Council is currently analyzing the findings of a Vancouver Food System Assessment conducted by a consortium of researchers (Forum of Research Connections or FORC). The Food Assessment includes an analysis of the current state of Vancouver's food system, a survey of Vancouver's Emergency Food System and an analysis of opportunities to create and support food-related social enterprises. The Assessment identifies a number of gaps in food access in Vancouver. The Food Policy Council will use the report findings to advise on policies or programs that address identified gaps, and collect needed information on community food programs, and the specific needs of various demographic groups.

#### **B. Institutional Food Purchasing Policy for Public Facilities:**

The purpose of this work area is to provide advice on the possibility of an Institutional Food Purchasing Policy (IFPP) for the City of Vancouver that improves food procurement practices in favour of a more sustainable food system. The development of an Institutional Food Purchasing policy will meet many of the Vancouver Food Policy Council goals such as increasing the supply and consumption of food produced in an environmentally sound manner, and improving the supply and economic viability of locally grown and locally processed foods. The potential benefits of this policy are multi-faceted including more sustainable local economies, increased competitiveness for small and medium sized suppliers, improved animal welfare, enhanced nutrition and a more sustainable environment.

**Progress to date:** The Food Policy Council has prepared a background document and a review of food purchasing policies in other jurisdictions in North America. Building on this document, the Food Policy Council, Food Policy Staff and the City Contracting Specialist (Ethical Purchasing) have committed to work collaboratively to discuss key elements of an IFPP policy that would be appropriate for Vancouver. The collaboration will involve discussing opportunities and barriers, and identifying goals. It may also involve offering assistance in the

development of ethical food purchasing policies and procedures for City boards and agencies such as Vancouver School Board.

### **C. Recovery, Reuse, and Recycling of Food**

The purpose of this work area is to identify the opportunities and barriers for recovery, reuse, and recycling of food. The goal is to provide recommendations and advice that would lead to a reduction in food waste. The benefits include an increased utilization of food, and the environmental benefits of reducing land-fill.

**Progress to date:** The Food Policy Council is currently assessing City programs and policies that affect food use and food waste. This includes identifying opportunities for linkages and partnerships with relevant City and non-City organizations. They are identifying opportunities and barriers to reducing food waste with the goal of recommending strategies or policy changes.

### **D. Food Charter for the City of Vancouver**

The purpose of this work area is to consult with the community on the development of a Food Charter for the City of Vancouver. Food charters are statements that express a community's food values and priorities for developing just and sustainable food systems. Typically, food charters combine vision statements, principles, and guidelines or action goals that assist in the development of coordinated municipal food policies, and in reviews of existing policies and programs.

Food charters are most commonly created by food policy councils or other agencies that represent different sectors of the food system. The process of creating a food charter engages individuals and organizations from all aspects of the food system in finding creative solutions to local urban challenges. Municipal governments in Canada that currently have food charters include: Toronto, Sudbury, Ottawa, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Kamloops, and Merritt. The Capital Regional District (Greater Victoria, BC) and the Province of Manitoba are currently exploring the adoption of regional food charters.

**Progress to date:** A draft Vancouver Food Charter and background document have been formulated by the Food Policy Council. The proposed Food Charter presents a community vision for a just and sustainable food system. It provides principles and guidelines that reflect the City of Vancouver's commitment to a sustainable food system. The Food Policy Council is now consulting with relevant community individuals and organizations to ensure that the proposed Charter represents an inclusive vision. The consultation process will also provide an opportunity for public education and engagement of food system issues. The proposed Food Charter, including feedback from the consultation process, is expected to be brought forward to City Council in 2006.

## **II. Concurrent food policy work being undertaken by the Food Policy Staff Team in collaboration with the Vancouver Food Policy Council, the Park Board other City departments and community partners.**

As a complement to the work of the Food Policy Council, a number of additional food policy and program developments are underway. These initiatives are being undertaken by the Food Policy Staff Team in collaboration with the Vancouver Food Policy Council, the Park Board

other City departments and community partners. This work represents a collaborative approach to food policy with priority given to achieving multiple outcomes in food system goals. It is important to note that some of the projects listed below are in early stages of development.

### **Food Production: Urban Agriculture**

- In collaboration with relevant City departments and Boards, development of a city-wide Urban Agriculture Strategy is underway. This includes a review of opportunities to facilitate the creation of community gardens; introduction of edible landscaping into private and public space; inclusion of food policy in the proposed City-Wide Green Building Strategy for the City; and a review of opportunities and ability of under-utilized city-owned properties (other than Park space) to support food growth and community development.
- Continued collaboration with the Park Board to support plans to increase the number of fruit trees planted on park property and review Park Board Community Garden policy. Development of educational pamphlets to coincide with the 2006 Fruit Tree Giveaway. Examination of possibility of fruit trees on Vancouver School Board property.
- Active participation by food policy staff in design strategies for new developments and rezonings to include Urban Agriculture (Southeast False Creek, East Fraserlands and Langara College).
- Creation of a food producing and education garden near the City Hall Childcare Centre with links to Environmental Youth Alliance. The garden is currently planted. The Childcare centre includes the garden as a part of their daily programming for children aged 3 - 5 years old. Food harvested from the garden will be used for snacks.
- Report to City Council to endorse hobby beekeeping in the City of Vancouver through adopted guidelines and good management practices for urban beekeepers (July 21, 2005).
- On September 15, 2005, responding in part to issues identified by the Food Policy Council, City Council voted to approve a recommendation that Council apply an exception to the rezoning and removal of 1835 West 75th Avenue from the Agricultural Land Reserve in exchange for 100% of the Community Amenity Contribution being utilized for urban agriculture amenities across the city.

### **Partnerships and collaborations**

- Partnership established with the Sustainability Group to collaborate on initiatives, coordinate regional partnership activities and identify emerging opportunities to promote local food system development.
- Coordination of "My Own Backyard" (MOBY) Community Garden project at East 11th and Commercial Drive. MOBY is a joint project between TransLink, City of Vancouver and the My Own Backyard Community Association.

## Education, Outreach, and Civic Engagement

- Collaboration with the City Contracting Specialist (Ethical Purchasing) in the delivery of a City Learn course on ethical purchasing. The purpose of the course is to educate staff involved in the decisions or recommendations as to where their department or Branch should be buying agricultural products, clothing, uniforms, or apparel items. The Food Policy Staff Team will contribute to the food-related aspects of the course.
- Participation in public education events including Sustainability Fair co-hosted by City of Vancouver Sustainability Office and Environment Canada (June 2005), the PNE Urban Change Pavilion (August - September, 2005) and the Office of Sustainability's Car Free Day (September 2005).
- Food Policy materials presented at the opening of Crown Street, Vancouver's first environmentally sustainable street, on July 30, 2005.
- Planning and delivery of World Food Day events including the "100 Mile Diet" Breakfast Challenge for Vancouver City Councillors (October 17). The Breakfast Challenge will ask Councillors to choose between breakfast items grown close to home or those shipped in from thousands of miles away. Equipped with Food Miles "currency," Councillors will be asked to stay within their Food Miles budget.
- Food System & Food Miles displays in City Hall Rotunda (October 17 - 21) to educate City Hall staff and the public about our food system and how far many of our commonly purchased foods travel to get to our plate.

## Food Access

- Support provided to a consortium of researchers (Forum of Research Connections or FORC) in creation of a Vancouver Food System Assessment. The Assessment includes an analysis of the current state of Vancouver's food system, a survey of Vancouver's Emergency Food System and an analysis of opportunities to create and support food related social enterprises. This research responds to a gap in coordinated data on our local food system that will be used by the City, the Food Policy Council, and community organizations to make more informed food policy decisions. Food Assessment data will be made available on Van Map for access by all City Staff.
- Support provided to UBC Farm, Downtown Eastside Community Kitchen Project (DECK) and Aboriginal agencies in the Downtown Eastside to develop an Aboriginal Community Kitchen Garden. The garden is planted, maintained and harvested by clients of the agencies. An on-site Community Kitchen will occur once a month (July - September) engaging First Nation participants to cook and share the proceeds. Food not cooked in the Community Kitchen will be distributed to those participating in the program and their families with excess being distributed in food programs of participating agencies throughout the Downtown Eastside.
- Support provided to the Greater Vancouver Food Bank and nine Vancouver Neighbourhood Houses for the "Plant-A-Row for the Hungry" program. The program encourages urban gardeners to plant extra food and donate it. Garden fresh produce donated to Neighbourhood Houses will go directly into their pre-school, after-school,



youth, single parent, immigrant and senior programs. Food donated to the Food Bank will be distributed in food hampers or sent to agencies preparing meals for the hungry throughout the City.

### International Linkages

- Working with the International Development Research Centre on plans to feature Vancouver's urban agriculture in the World Urban Forum 2006. The City of Vancouver is represented in the proposed session entitled, "Green and Productive Cities: Innovative Municipal Governance Contributing to Millennium Development Goals." The City will also participate in the coordination of an urban agriculture tour.

### III. Future directions for food policy in Vancouver

A number of opportunities exist to continue to enhance the City's existing and potential food policy initiatives, many of which build upon current workplan objectives. In keeping with the underlying goal of sustainability, priority will be given to those projects that can result in multiple benefits in the social, environmental and economic realms. Future directions include:

- Conduct analyses of the benefits derived from local food economies, especially related to direct purchases for restaurant and institutional food service operations.
- Coordinate recommendations for the Ethical Purchasing Policy in relation to food products. Furthermore, in keeping with the City Council recommendation that the City of Vancouver encourage other stakeholders to adopt ethical purchasing policies of their own, offer assistance (when requested) in the development of ethical food purchasing procedures and policies.
- Formulate strategies to expand the links between food policy, community building and civic engagement. This may include education and outreach initiatives including additional events such as the June 2005 public Food Policy Forum. It may also include enhancing the web presence of the Food Policy Council as an education and networking resource.
- Continue to pursue collaborations and partnerships both internally and externally.
- Continue to explore opportunities to support or facilitate responses to food access issues including, for example, School Meal Programs.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

## CONCLUSION

Since the approval of the Food Action Plan in December 2003, progress has been made on a number of fronts that have resulted in benefits to our citizens. Benefits include improvements in the areas of social, environmental and economic sustainability, community development and environmental health. Reflecting these advances, the City of Vancouver has begun to emerge as a national leader in municipal food system planning as an extension of the City's commitment to sustainable development.

The work of the Vancouver Food Policy Council has been instrumental in the success of this policy area. Overall, the City of Vancouver's leadership in food policy reflects a growing trend towards recognizing food policy and food policy councils as among the more dynamic areas of innovation in city governments across North America.

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