



# RR-2

## POLICY REPORT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Report Date: January 15, 2013  
Contact: Mary Clare Zak  
Contact No.: 604.871.6643  
RTS No.: 9849  
VanRIMS No.: 08-2000-20  
Meeting Date: January 29, 2013

TO: Vancouver City Council  
FROM: Deputy City Manager  
SUBJECT: Vancouver Food Strategy

### *RECOMMENDATION*

- A. THAT Council adopt the Vancouver Food Strategy, included as Appendix A.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to begin implementing the five priority short term action areas.
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report out on progress every two years starting in 2014.

### *REPORT SUMMARY*

The Vancouver Food Strategy is one of the key deliverables of Goal #10 within the Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP) local food targets. The local food goal of the GCAP states that in order to move further and faster towards the long-term goal of becoming a global leader in urban food systems there must be a higher degree of coordination and action planning between City departments, the Vancouver Food Policy Council, and the various policy programs that currently exist.

The Food Strategy integrates a full spectrum of urban food system issues within a single policy framework, and aligns them with broader social, economic, and ecological sustainability goals and City priorities. The Food Strategy connects with senior government strategies and partners (e.g. Vancouver Coastal Health and Metro Vancouver's Food Strategy), as well as universities and Vancouver School Board.

Vancouver's Food Strategy goals include enabling food friendly neighbourhoods, empowering residents and enhancing participation, improving access to healthy and affordable, culturally diverse food, and advocating for a just and sustainable food system with community, business, and senior governments. The strategy also prioritizes the following focus areas aligned with the food system:

1. Food Production: Increasing opportunities for urban agriculture, including community gardens and urban farms
2. Empowering Residents: Enhancing participation in community-based food programs such as skills development and educational opportunities, particularly for vulnerable and isolated groups
3. Food Access: Improving access to local, affordable, healthy food retail
4. Food Processing and Distribution: Addressing infrastructure gaps in local food processing, storage and distribution; increasing percentage of local food purchased by City facilities
5. Food Waste: Expanding food waste diversion programs

#### ***COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS***

- Farmer's Market Policy (February 29, 2013)
- Grant to support Urban Farming Forum (2011)
- Greenest City Action Plan Local Food Goal (2011)
- Grants to support neighbourhood food networks (2009-2012)
- Greenest City Grants in support of urban agriculture (2009-2011)
- Street food program expansion (2010, 2011)
- Interim farmers' market policy (2010)
- Food scraps collection program (2010)
- Guidelines for keeping backyard hens (2010)
- 2010 Garden Plots by 2010 Initiative (2010)
- Urban agriculture design guidelines for the private realm (2009)
- Vancouver Food Charter (2007)
- Guidelines for urban beekeeping (2005)
- Vancouver Food Policy Council (created in 2004)

#### **CITY MANAGER'S/GENERAL MANAGER'S COMMENTS**

The Vancouver Food Strategy builds on considerable work accomplished over the past decade including significant advances towards achieving local food targets in the Greenest City Action Plan. The Food Strategy consolidates Vancouver's existing food policies and programs, creates efficiencies, identifies gaps, and charts a course for future action. Overall, the Vancouver Food Strategy presents an opportunity for Vancouver to reach the goal of becoming a global leader in urban food systems.

#### ***REPORT***

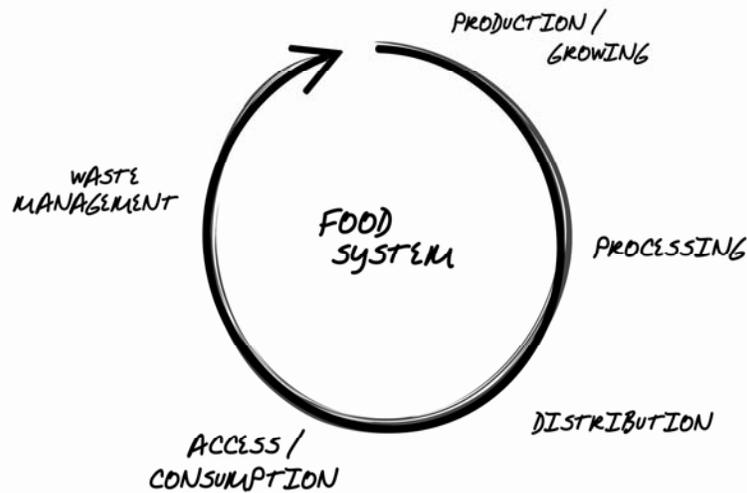
##### **Strategic Analysis**

Food is central to the sustainability and well-being of cities. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, global trends have placed tremendous pressure on cities and their food systems

resulting in pollution due to long distance transportation of food, a sharp rise in diet-related preventable diseases, spiraling food costs, interruptions in food supply, and dramatic losses of agricultural land needed to feed a growing global population. These changes, coupled with broader challenges related to climate change, environmental degradation, and public health crises, have led city dwellers - now the majority of the world's population - to realize the numerous ways that food affects our communities and our daily lives both globally and locally.

Today, food policies appear on the agenda of dozens of municipal governments across North America and beyond. The City of Vancouver has been working to support a just and sustainable food system since 2003 in partnership with the Vancouver Food Policy Council and many community organizations. The City's commitment to creating a just and sustainable food system builds on food system initiatives and grassroots community development that dates back decades in our city and province. Vancouver takes a systems approach to food policy and planning. This means considering all aspects of the food system from seed to table to compost heap and back again.

Figure 1: Food System



In many ways, Vancouver's food system is robust. Citizen interest in community gardens, farmers markets, urban farms, beekeeping, backyard hens and other community food projects has never been higher. Citizen coalitions include the Vancouver Food Policy Council and numerous organizations that are actively engaging citizens around a wide range of food system projects and activities. Since 2010, a number of notable advances have been made to help achieve targets set out in the local food area of the Greenest City Action Plan. This includes work to meet the GCAP target of increasing Vancouver's food assets by 50%. Examples of select food assets and their associated target are below:

Select Food Assets	2010 Baseline	2012	2020 Target
Community Garden Plots	3260	3913	5000
Farmers Markets	4	9	22
Community Orchards	3	16*	10
Urban Farms	1	18*	5
Community Kitchens	69	69	100
Community Composting Facilities	0	3	5
Community Food Markets (Pocket Markets)	3	4	15

\*numbers have been adjusted to reflect more accurate definition of food asset

### Reasons for creating the Vancouver Food Strategy

In spite of the food system assets that Vancouver enjoys, there are a number of gaps and vulnerabilities including unequal access to healthy, affordable food; environmental impacts due to long distance transportation of food; and creation of excessive food waste. There are gaps in infrastructure and the food supply chain with respect to processing and distribution for local and mid-scale food businesses in the city. Added to these challenges are disturbing socio-economic trends across Canada including a growing income gap, social polarization, child poverty, unaffordable housing, and rising rates of hunger and preventable disease. These issues, coupled with global vulnerabilities including climate change, dramatic losses of agricultural land means that bolstering the resilience of Vancouver's food system is critical.

The importance of creating a coordinated food strategy for Vancouver is not only a response to vulnerabilities and challenges, but equally in response to the recognition of what food brings to the city. Specifically, some notable advances and recent contributions to the city include:

- Land area of urban farms has increased from 2.3 acres to 8.28 acres since 2010
- 103 street food vendors offer a variety of cuisines
- Farmers markets contribute approximately \$15 million/year to the local economy
- In 2011, almost 20,000 Vancouver residents were directly involved with the activities of Neighbourhood Food Networks
- Residential food scraps collection will divert an estimated 25,000 tonnes of organic waste away from landfill each year

The Vancouver Food Strategy is a mechanism to link together existing policies and programs that are within the jurisdiction of the City to address, and take our ability to achieve food system goals to the next level. A food strategy is an official plan or "road map" that helps city governments integrate a full spectrum of urban food system issues within a single policy framework that includes food production (typically referred to as urban agriculture), food processing, distribution, access and food waste management. Not only do food strategies coordinate and integrate stand-alone food policies, they also embed them within broader

sustainability goals and City priorities. City priorities with direct connections to the Food Strategy include:

- *Greenest City 2020 Action Plan*: Targets an increase of 50% local and city wide food assets above 2010 levels;
- *Vancouver Economic Action Strategy*: There are an estimated 3,900 green jobs in the local food industry - the highest number of all sectors;
- *Transportation 2040 Plan*: Supports local food production and distribution to reduce the need for large scale transport;
- *Housing & Homelessness Strategy*: Ensuring that availability of fresh foods are available and meet expected increase to the supply and diversity of affordable housing.
- *Healthy City Strategy (expected: 2013)*: Identifies a healthy, just and sustainable food system as one of 20 Building Blocks of a Healthy City for All;

A food strategy builds upon the work already underway to improve urban food systems, creates links between them, integrates new ideas, addresses gaps, and creates a vision for the future. Local governments including San Francisco, Seattle, Philadelphia, Edmonton, Toronto, and London (UK) have developed such strategies. The results are further reaching than stand-alone food policies, and more in keeping with a multi-functional approach to urban planning and development that aims to increase social, economic, environmental and health outcomes.

### **The Vancouver Food Strategy consultation process**

Vancouver has a long history of community involvement and activism on food system issues dating back decades. The evolution of the City of Vancouver's food policy mandate has depended on strong stakeholder partnerships at every step along the process. The Vancouver Food Policy Council in particular, is a key partner in all of the City's food system activities.

From 2011 to 2012, City staff worked in close partnership with the Vancouver Food Policy Council on a public engagement process called "talk food with us." A number of creative formats and social media forums were used to generate ideas and gather feedback that shaped the Vancouver Food Strategy. These included roundtable discussions, storytelling and dialogue events, toolkits and exercises, workshops and focus groups specifically targeting various ethno-cultural communities. An estimated 2,200 individuals were engaged to generate ideas for the Strategy. The Food Strategy consultation process was based on four principles.

### **Principle 1: Engage ethno-culturally diverse communities**

Recognizing the rich ethno-cultural diversity of our city, specific engagement techniques and formats were used that focused on multicultural communities and the organizations and non-profits that serve them. This outreach ranged from convening small roundtable meetings with immigrant settlement organizations, neighbourhood houses, front-line staff, and religious institutions, to events and dialogues with multicultural youth and the general public. These dialogues provided a much fuller and more nuanced picture of cultural communities' food system needs and aspirations. Outreach materials were translated into seven languages (Chinese, Punjabi, Farsi, Japanese, Vietnamese, Spanish, and French). Applying a cultural diversity lens continues to be a high priority in all aspects of food policy in Vancouver.

## **Principle 2: Engage socio-economically diverse, age-diverse, and harder-to-reach communities through storytelling**

A second principle was to ensure that a number of groups were provided the opportunity to communicate their lived experiences. The importance of emphasizing personal “food stories” was prioritized during community consultation with socio-economically diverse, age-diverse, and harder-to-reach communities. Storytelling was used as a means of engaging groups and organizations, highlighting community priorities and personal connections with food. This included a public blog and a food-themed storytelling night that drew in over 400 attendees. Age-friendly youth events were held in partnership with various organizations, along with a focus on partnering with non-profit organizations to ensure that seniors were consulted throughout the process. These forms of outreach all emphasized stories to reflect the diverse ways that food shapes one’s experience of the city, while encouraging attendees to contribute their own food stories.

## **Principle 3: Emphasize collaboration and partnerships**

The food strategy consultation was based on the principle that food system goals can only be achieved collaboratively by working closely with governmental and non-governmental partners. This includes Metro Vancouver, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Vancouver School Board, as well as the numerous community coalitions that have arisen in recent years. Examples include the Vancouver Food Policy Council, Vancouver Urban Farming Society, Neighbourhood Food Networks, and many other food-related non-profit organizations. The number and diversity of groups involved in food system activities is a strong indicator that no single level of government or community organization is responsible sustainable food system. Success can only be achieved through a collaborative approach.

## **Principle 4: Create tools and resources that can be used beyond the consultation process**

A second principle was to build a legacy of tools and resources that Vancouver residents can use towards achieving the food system goals identified in the food strategy. For example, a community-driven “Community Food Animator” program was launched with a toolkit and exercises to take engagement into people’s neighbourhoods, community centres, organizations, and kitchens.

## **Structure of the Vancouver Food Strategy**

Vancouver’s Food Strategy has been created as a result of community consultation, analyses, and applying best practices from other municipal food strategies (for the complete Food Strategy, see Appendix A). To plan and engage in purposeful action towards creating a just and sustainable food system, the food strategy lays out a vision and principles, goals, a comprehensive list of actions, and targets to measure our progress towards the goals. The Strategy re-affirms the vision and principles already embodied in the Vancouver Food Charter (2007). It then presents five mid-level goals that delve deeper into the vision and principles, and shows what a resilient food system contributes to creating a just and sustainable city. The five goals of the Vancouver Food strategy are:

1. Support food-friendly neighbourhoods
2. Empower residents to take action in their own neighbourhoods
3. Increase access to healthy, affordable, culturally diverse food
4. Make food a centrepiece of Vancouver's green economy
5. Advocate for a just and sustainable food system with partners and all levels of government

Lastly, the Food Strategy outlines specific actions necessary to achieve the vision, principles and goals. Each of these actions - 71 in total - is accompanied by its priority, timeframe, lead department(s), and key partners. Implementation and evaluation and monitoring are also included to track progress. Like other municipal food strategies, Vancouver's strategy focuses on the tools and levers that the City has direct ability to influence as illustrated in the arrow below.

*City of Vancouver's roles and responsibilities*



For food system areas that fall outside of the City's jurisdiction, partnerships and collaborations will be sought to achieve our goals.

### Five priority focus areas

The comprehensive list of 71 actions identified in the Food Strategy will serve to integrate *individual* food policies into a more coordinated food systems approach, and *align* food system goals within broader City plans and processes. Among the full list of actions are five focus areas that have been identified as priorities over the next three years. These five focus areas are where Vancouver has the biggest ability to significantly advance our food system goals. This does not mean that other actions will not be undertaken. Rather, the priority areas will provide a first focus, while still moving other food system actions forward. Table 1 outlines the five focus areas and their accompanying priority action areas. The full list of actions (short, medium and long-term) appears in the Food Strategy (Appendix A).

Table 1: Five priority action areas of the Vancouver Food Strategy

Focus Area	Priority Action Areas
1. Food production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support and enable all forms of urban agriculture (especially community gardens and urban farms), and make stronger connections with all parts of the food system</li> </ul>
2. Empower residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enhance access to participation in community-based food programs, particularly for vulnerable and isolated groups</li> </ul>
3. Food access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improve access to healthy, local, affordable food for all by increasing the number of farmers markets and community food markets, and piloting healthy food retail programs</li> </ul>
4. Food processing and distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Address gaps in local and sustainable food processing, storage and distribution infrastructure by exploring possibilities that might include a food business incubator or food hub</li> <li>○ Increase the percentage of local and sustainable food purchased by City facilities</li> </ul>
5. Food waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduce food waste going to landfill or incinerator by expanding food waste disposal programs</li> <li>○ Expand local collection and composting options</li> </ul>

### Implementation

Accountability is essential to successful implementation of the Vancouver Food Strategy. Because of the many issues and stakeholder groups involved in creating a just and sustainable food system, collective responsibility is key. This means active participation not only by local governments, but equally by individual citizens, community groups, institutions, agencies, businesses, governmental partners and other stakeholders. Only by working together will we achieve our food system and sustainability goals. To ensure successful implementation of the Food Strategy, a number of City entities have been identified:

- Greenest City Action Plan Steering Committee
- City of Vancouver Food Systems Steering Committee
- City of Vancouver inter-departmental technical teams
- Vancouver Park Board Local Food Asset Task Force

In addition to City of Vancouver implementation entities, a number of existing and emerging coalitions and stakeholder groups will continue to play an important role in implementing the goals and actions expressed in the Food Strategy; including Vancouver Coastal Health and the Vancouver School Board. The Vancouver Food Policy Council will play an integral part of implementation and provide direction and support to various actions. Additionally, strengthening alliances and partnerships with other municipalities in Metro Vancouver and Fraser Valley regions will be a key component.

## Financial implications

The Vancouver Food Strategy has limited financial implications. Staff will work to implement the priority actions using existing financial and staff resources, and within the current capital and/or operating budget. Where possible, staff will look to leverage its own investments through partnerships and access external funding. Staff will seek Council approval for projects and programs that require significant financial investment, and cannot be accommodated within current operating and/or capital budgets.

## CONCLUSION

This report recommends adoption in principle of the Vancouver Food Strategy, and outlines the five focus areas identified in the strategy. The Vancouver Food Strategy is one of the key deliverables of Greenest City Action Plan (GCAP) Local Food Goal. This strategy integrates a full spectrum of urban food system issues within a single policy framework, and aligns them within broader sustainability goals and City priorities. The results are further reaching than stand-alone food policies, and more in keeping with a multi-functional approach to urban planning and development that aims to increase social, economic, environmental and health outcomes.

\* \* \* \* \*