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**TO:** CITY MANAGER **DATE:** 2016 January 27

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 2150 01  
*Reference: Metro Vancouver*

**SUBJECT:** REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY ACTION PLAN - DRAFT

**PURPOSE:** To provide staff comment on the Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy (RFSS) Action Plan - Draft.

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** Council approve the submission of this report to Metro Vancouver in response to their request for comment on the Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan - Draft.

**REPORT****1.0 INTRODUCTION**

On 2016 January 4, the City received the draft Metro Vancouver Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> Metro Vancouver has requested feedback on the draft plan. In response to this request, this report provides background and staff comments on the draft plan for submission to Metro Vancouver.

The Regional Food System Strategy (RFSS) was adopted by Metro Vancouver in 2011 February. The Strategy outlines five key goals for the region:

- increased capacity to produce food closer to home;
- improve financial viability of the food sector;
- increased opportunity for healthy and sustainable food choices;
- equal access to healthy, culturally diverse and affordable food; and
- a food system consistent with ecological health.

Each goal area has specific strategies and sample actions to achieve these goals.

At the time of adoption, Metro Vancouver staff were directed to develop an RFSS Action Plan. Accordingly, during the course of 2015, Metro Vancouver staff formed and worked with a Task Force composed of local government staff to develop a draft Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan. The RFSS Action Plan is focused specifically on the role of local government in achieving a sustainable food system. The Task Force was convened for four meetings over the course of 2015. Representatives provided feedback on ongoing and planned actions and commented on proposed actions put forward by Metro Vancouver staff. Burnaby was represented on the Task Force by a staff member from the Planning and Building Department. Burnaby's input into the process was guided by the City's adopted plans and policies.

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the draft plan are available from the Planning and Building Department.

## **2.0 REGULATORY STATUS AND POLICY CONTEXT**

The RFSS was adopted by the Metro Vancouver Board by resolution and is one of a number of regional strategies and plans that contribute towards the development of a sustainable region. The RFSS Action Plan, if approved, would also be adopted by the Metro Vancouver Board by resolution. Under this process, there is no binding effect of the goals, strategies or actions set out in the RFSS Action Plan on local governments. Progress on the Strategy and Action Plan is made as the regional partners undertake them. For the RFSS, the partners are identified as Metro Vancouver, its member municipalities, the non-profit sector and community groups, health authorities, the provincial and federal governments, First Nations, educational institutions and other stakeholders (e.g. consumers).

The City has a policy framework that supports many of the actions and approaches outlined for local governments in the RFSS and draft Action Plan. More specifically, the Social Sustainability Strategy (2011) contains two related actions (#25 and #26), both of which are included in the Social Sustainability Strategy Phase 1 Implementation Plan. In addition, the work completed to date on the Environmental Sustainability Strategy framework includes a draft section called 'Nourish – Food Systems', which contains a wide range of proposed strategies and 'quick start actions' related to food systems and their impact on the health of individuals, the community and the environment.

## **3.0 OVERVIEW OF DRAFT ACTION PLAN**

The RFSS Action Plan is intended as a companion piece to the RFSS and specifically focuses on actions local governments can take to influence local food systems. Overall, the Action Plan focused on:

- ongoing initiatives and those planned for by various local governments over the next five years; and
- new emerging issues/initiatives that are proposed in response to gaps identified by the Task Force.

The intent of the plan is to recognize municipal efforts on agri-food issues and to strengthen collaboration as local governments continue to contribute towards a stronger regional food system.

The Action Plan is structured according to the RFSS goals and strategies. Each goal describes the local government role, summarizes planned actions, identifies gaps and proposes new initiatives. Overall, 175 actions are identified in the draft Action Plan. In addition, three emerging issues not addressed in the RFSS are identified (emergency food planning; poverty, health and food; and strengthened local government collaboration). These issues are described in greater detail in Section 5.0 below.

## **4.0 GENERAL SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK**

Overall, the draft Action Plan provides an inventory of ongoing and planned activities being undertaken by Metro Vancouver member municipalities in relation to food systems, while also identifying select new proposed actions and three emergent issues. Staff comment on all three areas of the draft Action Plan are included in Sections 4.0 and 5.0 below.

A positive element of the draft Action Plan is that it clearly identifies new actions and emerging issues by Agricultural or Non-Agricultural communities. This specific categorization was not

included the 2011 Regional Food System Strategy. In this context the term ‘Agricultural communities’ refers to those Metro Vancouver member municipalities that retain 95% of the region’s agricultural land (Delta, Langley Township, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, and Surrey). The balance of member municipalities are termed “Non-Agricultural communities” and are those that, while they may be stewarding smaller sections of the Agricultural Land Reserve, are on lands mostly within the Urban Containment Boundary, as defined by *Metro Vancouver 2040: Shaping our Future (Metro 2040) Regional Growth Strategy*.

This structure recognizes the particular roles that member municipalities play within the region in relation to agriculture and food and provides opportunity for complementary and collaborative action. Broadly speaking across the included actions, Agricultural municipalities are focused on protecting agricultural land and expanding commercial food production, whereas the Non-Agricultural municipalities are more engaged in the social and educational benefits of urban agriculture.

The Action Plan also contains a section in the body entitled ‘Part 3: Monitoring Progress’. Many of the sample indicators provided in this section are broad in scope and are not tied to specific outcomes or to the goals and actions previously defined in the body of the draft Action Plan. The indicators are tied to identified gaps.

## **5.0 REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM ACTION PLAN – PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

The section below provides staff comment on each of the draft Action Plan’s sections, including ongoing, planned and new actions. A number of text edits have also been identified by staff and have been communicated to Metro Vancouver staff. These include several instances of actions where the City has already completed the work described (e.g. “bylaw changes that support bee keeping in select residential and other zones”) or where the City should be recognized for its ongoing efforts (e.g. “improve water infrastructure upgrades [...] such as dyke and pump upgrades”). Staff anticipate that the text edits will be incorporated into the final draft.

### **Goal 1: Increased Food Capacity Close to Home**

Goal 1 seeks to address the amount of food that can be commercially produced in the region. The five strategies under this goal are:

- protect agricultural land for food production;
- restore fish habitat and protect sustainable sources of seafood;
- enable expansion of agricultural production;
- invest in a new generation of food producers; and
- expand urban commercial food production in urban areas.

**Ongoing/Planned Actions:** The Action Plan recognizes Burnaby’s actions in these areas:

- ongoing commitment to protecting agriculturally zoned lands for farming;
- its work in preserving the Agricultural Land Reserve areas within city boundaries;
- efforts to protect, day-light, preserve and enhance streams and riparian areas; and
- Council’s financial support of the Kwantlen Polytechnic University’s Southwest BC Bio-Region Food System Design Project.

**New Actions:** Three new actions are identified under Goal 1:

- collectively advocate to senior governments for funding programs to expand investments in irrigation and drainage infrastructure necessary to adapt to climate change (Metro Vancouver and Agricultural Municipalities);
- investigate feasibility of regional land trust to enable new farmers to access agricultural land (Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities); and
- expand municipal involvement in programs that enable new farmers to start a business, e.g. City of Surrey's Virtual Incubator Farm Project (all local governments).

Of the three new actions, the third action identified a role for all local governments including non-Agricultural municipalities, such as Burnaby.

Staff Comment: The Provincial Ministry of Agriculture is primarily responsible on a day-to-day basis for agriculture and related economic development policies in British Columbia. However, through the economic development function of local governments, the encouragement of farms as new businesses can have a beneficial impact on the local economy. The Burnaby Economic Development Strategy (EDS) identifies agriculture as an area in Burnaby for sectoral focus and the draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) supports areas to improve local food production overall. As part of EDS and ESS implementation, City staff can work with relevant Burnaby organizations/producers to review how farming can be further encouraged as a business within the local context.

**Goal 2: Improve Financial Viability of the Food Sector**

Goal 2 addresses economic prosperity for farmers and the food industry. The five strategies under this goal are:

- increase the capacity to process, warehouse and distribute local foods;
- include local foods in the purchasing policies of large public institutions;
- increase direct marketing opportunities for local foods;
- further develop value chains within the sector; and
- review government policies and programs to ensure they enable the expansion of the local food sector.

**Ongoing/Planned Actions:** The Action Plan recognizes Burnaby's actions in these areas:

- efforts to integrate healthy and sustainable food options into 'City Catering';
- ongoing support provided to Artisan Markets, which operates the Burnaby Farmer's Market in the City Hall parking lot; and
- planned work to clarify and streamline regulations regarding urban agriculture in the city.

**New Actions:** Four new actions are identified under Goal 2:

- develop policies to expand processing, storage and distribution of local food (all local governments);
- share information on potential opportunities to increase local food purchasing strategies at municipal forums to support farms in the region (Vancouver and University of British Columbia to lead the first event);

- profile and incorporate agri-food business ventures into regional and municipal economic development plans (Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities); and
- work with bulk food purchasers to increase local food purchasing to expand the amount and diversity of local food available to consumers (Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments).

Of the four new actions, the first and last actions identify a role for all local governments including non-Agricultural municipalities, such as Burnaby.

Staff Comment: The first action is supported in the draft Environmental Sustainability Strategy, and as part of an implementation plan, staff can undertake a review of the opportunity to support this action. For the second new applicable action in this section, further review and work would be needed to generate significant buy-in from private sector businesses to an approach. However, staff would propose that Metro Vancouver keep Burnaby informed of developments including how the City could support implementation, within the appropriate scope of local government jurisdiction.

### **Goal 3: People Make Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices**

Goal 3 addresses the knowledge and skills that many citizens desire around local food, healthy eating and the connection to sustainability. The four strategies under this goal are:

- enable residents to make healthy food choices;
- communicate how food choices support sustainability;
- enhance food literacy and skills in schools; and
- celebrate the taste of local foods and diversity of cuisines.

**Ongoing/Planned Actions:** The Action Plan recognizes Burnaby's actions in these areas:

- ongoing support of community groups that provide food related services and programs. This support includes in-kind support to Burnaby Food First, Burnaby's local community-based food security coalition, which offers a wide variety of public programs including free gardening and food preservation workshops;
- support to secondary school learning gardens; and
- Festivals Burnaby granting program, which supports many local community festivals that showcase the wide diversity of cuisines and cultures present in the city.

**New Actions:** Four new actions are identified under Goal 3:

- develop a communication strategy with common messaging for local governments to educate residents about the connection between farmland, food security, climate change and sustainability. (Metro Vancouver to facilitate with participation from all local governments);
- recommend to Health Authorities the types of initiatives desired by municipalities to expand food-related programs in urban communities. (all local governments);
- work with Health Authorities and appropriate agencies to ensure appropriate food safety training for commercial and community food production in urban communities. (all local governments); and
- distribute multi-lingual information on local food to new immigrants through community organizations using resources (all local governments).



To: City Manager  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan - Draft  
2016 January 27..... Page 6

Of the four new actions, all of them identify a role for all local governments including non-Agricultural municipalities such as Burnaby.

Staff Comment: Burnaby, in collaboration with community groups such as Burnaby Food First, regularly participates in activities that currently contribute towards all of these suggested actions. These efforts are planned to continue and could be considered for expansion should these actions be approved as part of the RFSS Action Plan. Any such proposals would be forwarded to Council for approval in a separate report.

#### **Goal 4: Everyone Has Access to Healthy, Cultural Diverse and Affordable Food**

Goal 4 addresses physical and economic access to healthy food for all residents of the region. The three strategies under this goal are:

- improve access to nutritious food among vulnerable groups;
- encourage urban agriculture; and
- enable non-profit organizations to recover nutritious food.

**Ongoing/Planned Actions:** The Action Plan recognizes Burnaby's actions these areas:

- pilot program being operated out of two City of Burnaby Food Services locations to recover usable nutritious food for donation via the Greater Vancouver Food Bank;
- in-kind support of the many free educational programs and workshops offered by Burnaby Food First;
- long-time support for seniors and others with limited mobility to access groceries through Citizen Support Services.

**New Actions:** Three new actions are identified under Goal 4:

- promote the Food Donation Guidelines, developed by BC Centre for Disease Control and other partners, to food distribution and food service sectors (all local governments);
- create and share information on culturally relevant local food availability for refugees and new immigrants (all local governments); and
- identify opportunities and challenges for expanding food preparation and processing in under-utilized community kitchens (all local governments).

Of the three new actions, all of them identify a role for all local governments including non-Agricultural municipalities, such as Burnaby.

Staff Comment: The Burnaby Board of Trade has expressed interest in distributing the information to their relevant members on the subject Food Donation Guidelines. As well, information on culturally appropriate food is shared as possible by City staff and community partners with settlement agencies and newcomers. Should this action be included in the final RFSS Action Plan, it is anticipated that this work could be continued and potentially expanded.

Several community kitchens, operated by local non-profits, currently operate in Burnaby. It should also be noted that all three of the most recent City-owned non-profit office/program spaces obtained through the Community Benefit Bonus Program include kitchen space, with a learning kitchen located at Brentwood Community Resource Centre, a commercial kitchen at Metrotown Community

Resource Centre, and a program support/small workshop kitchen at Pioneer Community Resource Centre. As part of on-going work, staff could monitor the use and needs of community kitchens, and implement any necessary supports via relevant Social Strategy actions and/or the Community Benefit Bonus Program.

### **Goal 5: A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health**

Goal 5 addresses the factors of natural systems, resources and land stewardship that relate to a healthy food environment. The four strategies under this goal are:

- protect and enhance ecosystem goods and services (e.g. fisheries, agricultural land stewardship);
- reduce waste in the food system;
- facilitate adoption of environmentally sustainable practices; and
- prepare for the impacts of climate change.

**Ongoing/Planned Actions:** The Action Plan recognizes Burnaby's actions in these areas:

- continuing initiatives to protect and enhance the local environment, including recent significant work upgrading dykes and other flood protection measures; and
- the 'Integrated Pest Management' program, which has been in place since the early 1990's.

**New Actions:** Two new actions are identified under Goal 5:

- prepare a climate adaptation strategy for agriculture and coordinate implementation of the priority actions with senior governments (Metro Vancouver and Agricultural municipalities); and
- expand pollinator habitat through new policies and field projects based on results from Metro Vancouver, North Vancouver District and Richmond (all local governments).

Of the two new actions, the latter action identifies a role for all local governments including non-Agricultural municipalities such as Burnaby.

Staff Comment: Since 2009, the City has permitted urban bee-keeping (apiculture) in select residential zoning districts and all agricultural zoning districts. As well, the City works to enhance local pollinator habitat by installing mason bee 'condos' (clean, safe, dry spaces for bees to live) in City parks and by working with local community groups, including seniors' centres and schools, to maintain and take care of the homes. Plantings that attract pollinators are also included in City parks. Should this action be included in the final RFSS Action Plan, staff could research the best practices mentioned to determine supportable actions for further implementation.

## **6.0 EMERGING ISSUES IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM**

The emergent actions identified in the draft RFSS Action Plan are new proposed actions for all local governments, including Burnaby, that were not included in the adopted 2011 Regional Food System Strategy, but have since been identified as food system related issues for consideration. Each of the three emergent proposed actions are itemized and discussed below.

To: City Manager  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan - Draft  
2016 January 27..... Page 8

**Emergent Issue #1: Food Access and Safety in Emergency Planning:** Identify how food security and emergency food issues are being addressed in each local government's emergency management plans and processes.

Staff Comment: As required by Provincial law, the City of Burnaby maintains an Emergency Program and develops emergency plans for different possible emergency scenarios. These efforts are supported and guided by Emergency Management BC (EMBC). EMBC was formed to be the lead coordinating agency in the provincial government for all emergency management activities in B.C. EMBC provides executive organization, strategic planning, and multi-agency facilitation including coordinating efforts across all levels of government and with partner organizations.

As such, should this action be approved at part of the final RFSS Action Plan, Burnaby would look to EMBC to facilitate provincial wide discussions on the issue and to recommend appropriate related content for local emergency plans. Provincial wide discussions are recommended by staff as the adopted 2011 Regional Food Systems Strategy identified 'local food', for the purposes of the Strategy, as that which is grown or harvested in B.C.

**Emergent Issue #2: Recognizing the Linkages Among Poverty, Health and Food:** Recommend policies and programs to address health outcomes of poverty and food insecurity to senior governments.

Staff Comment: The City of Burnaby is participating in a 'Healthier Communities Partnership' with Fraser Health and the Burnaby School District. The goal of the partnership is to promote health and prevent chronic disease through community based initiatives and to move the focus of health from treatment and remediation to promotion and prevention. A key component of preventative well-being is access to adequate and nutritious foods for all segments of the population and the City would look to Fraser Health to provide direction in this area.

As well, supported by the Healthy Community Partnership, Fraser Health and City staff provide in-kind support, including research and assistance with strategic planning, to Burnaby Food First the city's local food security coalition. This body regularly advocates to the appropriate bodies for broader more inclusive poverty, food and agriculture policy. The City also regularly advocates to higher levels of government through the Union of BC Municipalities and other avenues on social equity related issues. As such, staff are supportive of this action in the final RFSS Action Plan and would seek to identify advocacy topics within the wider issue(s).

**Emergent Issue #3: Strengthen Local Government Collaboration to Address Agri-Food Issues:** assign a staff member to be the local government contact person for agriculture and food related actions and to participate in meetings on the Regional Food System Action Plan twice a year. Working groups may be struck to advance collaborative items.

Staff Comment: The City participated in the Task Force that provided comment to Metro Vancouver staff on the draft RFSS Action Plan. The network developed amongst present local government representatives and Metro Vancouver was beneficial in sharing pertinent information and advancing in-process and ongoing action items. Overall staff work collaboratively on regional issues in a number of disciplines, and as such would recommend that staff support the RFSS Action Plan by participating in policy development and programs that support implantation of these actions, as resources allow.



To: City Manager  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan - Draft  
2016 January 27..... Page 9

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, the draft Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan provides an inventory of ongoing and planned actions being undertaken by local governments in the region. As well, a basic 'outline' of new proposed actions are included including three issues emergent since 2011 when the Food System Strategy was adopted by the Metro Vancouver Board. Staff comment on all sections of the draft Action Plan are outlined above in Sections 5.0 and 6.0.

The draft Action Plan takes the approach this it is the collective actions of all local governments in the region that will advance the goals of having a sustainable food system. Burnaby has a policy framework that supports many of the actions outlined for local governments. Accordingly it is recommended that Council approve submission of this report to Metro Vancouver and the Greater Vancouver Regional District Board in response to their request for comment on the Regional Food System Strategy Action Plan – Draft.



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PLANNING AND BUILDING

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