

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

**DATE:** 2020 November 10

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

**FILE:** 76500 20  
*Reference: Urban Agriculture*

**SUBJECT:** KEEPING OF BACKYARD CHICKENS

**PURPOSE:** To propose re-examining the keeping of backyard chickens in Burnaby.

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### RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **THAT** the Committee request Council to authorize staff to re-examine the feasibility and advisability of permitting the keeping of backyard chickens, as outlined in *Section 4.0* of this report.
2. **THAT** a copy of this report be forwarded to the Environment Committee for information.

### REPORT

#### 1.0 BACKGROUND

The Social Planning Committee, at its Open meeting held on 2020 June 16, received correspondence seeking a change to the City's current procedures and bylaws to support the keeping of backyard chickens. Arising from discussion, the Committee referred the matter to staff and requested a report outlining ways the City can support residents to produce more of their own food, including backyard chickens (eggs). This report responds to that request. It is noted that further correspondence on this issue has since been received by the Committee and copies provided to staff.

Food Security has many definitions, however it is commonly understood as when all people have ongoing physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, which is grown in an environmentally sensitive manner, and that meets their cultural preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

Access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food is necessary for the well-being of every community resident. Unfortunately, many British Columbians still go hungry. The BC Centre for Disease Control estimates that 12.7% of people across the Province do not have access to adequate food. This experience has become more acute as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Burnaby approximately 3,200 people a week are seeking support via the Greater Vancouver Food Bank and their community affiliates (e.g. Burnaby Neighbourhood House). This number has grown significantly from pre-pandemic numbers (approx. 2,000 people a week), and is expected to further increase as economic impacts of the pandemic persist.

The City has a history of encouraging urban agriculture and in seeking to support the food security of individual residents. An overview is provided in *Section 3.0* below. As such, there is precedent for expanded City efforts to support resident food security.

## 2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

Expanded City efforts to support resident food security is supported by the following policy context:

- ***Official Community Plan*** (1998) includes a ‘Section 9 – Agriculture’.
- ***Burnaby Economic Sustainability Strategy*** (2007) includes a Primary Strategy of ‘Agriculture’, which speaks to the importance of continued viable agricultural operations in Burnaby.
- ***Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy*** (2011) includes the Strategic Priority ‘Meeting Basic Needs’ and Action #26 that outlines the importance of developing a ‘community based’ Food Strategy.
- ***Environmental Sustainability Strategy*** (2016) includes a Primary Goal of ‘Nourish: Food Systems’.

In addition to the policies noted above, advancing food security measures are supported by a number of goals and sub-goals of the *Corporate Strategic Plan*:

- ***An Inclusive Community***
  - Serve a diverse community – Ensure City services fully meet the needs of our dynamic community
  - Create a sense of community – Provide opportunities that encourage and welcome all community members and create a sense of belonging
- ***A Healthy Community***
  - Healthy life – Encourage opportunities for healthy living and well-being
  - Healthy environment – Enhance our environmental health, resilience and sustainability
  - Community involvement – Encourage residents and businesses to give back to and invest in the community

## 3.0 BURNABY CONTEXT

The land on which Burnaby is located has always supported hən̓qəmin̓əm̓ and Skwxwú7mesh speaking people to hunt, fish, harvest and gather. Burnaby also has a history of settler agricultural production that spans 150 years. Given this historical legacy, the City supported the creation and continues to support the ongoing protection of 234 hectares of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) within the Big Bend area of south Burnaby under the A1 and A3 Agricultural Districts. This area accommodates approximately 40 active farms.

Food gardening on residential properties has been ongoing in Burnaby neighbourhoods for decades, and has and continues to be an important part of food security for families. At a household level, Burnaby seeks to support access to food, the ability to grow food, and to support pollinators, through a range of formal and informal supports and initiatives. An overview of these supports are listed below:

- The City partners with Artisan Farmer's Markets to offer a weekly market at Burnaby City Hall from May to October.
- In 2009, City Council approved modifications to the Zoning Bylaw to permit beekeeping (apiculture) in seven R Residential Districts and three A Agricultural Districts.
- The City is a founding member of Burnaby Food First (BFF), which is a local community consortium that was formed in the late 1990's to advocate for affordable access to food for all community residents. BFF has offered free workshops to residents on container food gardening (designed for balconies) and food preservation. BFF is currently on hiatus due to the pandemic.
- The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department has historically offered free or subsidized food as part of many programs. Examples included subsidized seniors luncheons, youth cooking programs, and kid's gardening programs. The continued ability to provide food is being re-examined within current pandemic safety guidelines.
- Burnaby leases City-owned land at no-cost for two community gardens<sup>1</sup>, the Heights Community Garden (3885 and 3897 Pender Street) and the Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden (7528 Meadow Avenue). The latter garden is the largest of its kind in Western Canada. Both gardens are very popular and have long waitlists.
- Gardening plots are increasingly being included, as a result of City requests, within new multi-family developments for the use of building residents. As a result, over 100 new gardening plots have been created in new developments over the past five years.

#### **4.0 THE KEEPING OF BACKYARD CHICKENS**

Council adopted a report at its meeting of 2010 June 21 which recommended the restriction of the keeping of chickens on residential properties. The report cited several concerns with the practice, notably concerns regarding the spread of disease and the possibility of resultant pests. Since that time, a number of other local governments with a largely urban land base in the province have adopted regulations which permit the keeping of chickens on residential properties within certain parameters. These include the City and District of North Vancouver, the City of New Westminster, The City of Surrey, the City of Vancouver, and the City of Victoria.

Given this evolving landscape, and a growing interest by Burnaby residents to keep chickens, it is recommended that the Committee request Council to authorize staff to re-examine the feasibility and advisability of permitting the keeping of backyard chickens. This work would include research on neighbouring communities' experiences, and evidence-based best practices on the health, safety and practicability (including impacts to neighbours) of keeping backyard chickens.

Should direction be given, staff will undertake this research and review process and report back to the Committee and Council with recommendations and any corresponding bylaw updates.

#### **5.0 COMMUNITY FOOD GARDENING**

By way of background, the Committee's motion of 2020 June 16 requested staff to report on how residents could be supported to produce more of their own food. This approach is summarized below.

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<sup>1</sup> To the knowledge of staff there are currently 13 community gardens in Burnaby. 11 are on educational institution properties and two are on City property.

## 5.1 Community Gardens

Agriculture is permitted as a principal use in the A1, A2, A3, and M1, M2, M3 and M5 Industrial Districts, and community gardens may be permitted in the P3 Park and Public Use District. The two existing community gardens on City-owned land are zoned CD P3 (Heights Community Garden) and A1 (Burnaby and Region Allotment Garden).

Garden plots also are in place on a number of elementary and secondary school sites. These plots largely function as ‘learning gardens’ for the sole use of the school community, but a few of the plots also include community involvement. As well, gardening plots are increasingly being provided through multi-family developments, either in building courtyards, on roofs, or on podium decks, for the use of residents to grow food.

The development of further community gardens in Burnaby has been hampered by the lack of availability of suitable land. Open space park land in Burnaby has competing demands, and the dedication of open space park land for community gardens could be perceived to benefit only garden plot holders.

Much of the other available lands within the applicable districts are either privately held, are contaminated (e.g. former manufacturing sites), are being held by the City for other purposes (e.g. creation of non-profit housing/parks and greenspace consolidation) or are encumbered with utility rights-of-way.

Given these limitations, staff will prepare a separate report for the Committee outlining further recommendations in order to facilitate the creation of new community gardens.

## 5.2 Back and Front Yard Gardening – Clarification

The Burnaby Zoning Bylaw does not prohibit the construction of raised garden beds for growing of food in front, rear or side yards in all districts. Residents may grow food, both for their own enjoyment and for donation to food banks and food programs in Burnaby.

It is noted that the ability to grow food is also available to those residents living within multi-family developments, either through edible landscaping or in the conversion of previously ornamental beds to food production. Some parameters for CD zoned developments exist, and Planning staff are available to assist residents of these properties understand these regulations, and how food growing can be accommodated within their development.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The richness of the land in Burnaby has always provided sustenance for its hənqəmīnəm and Skwxwú7mesh speaking inhabitants. Since settlers arrived in this area, agriculture – on homesteads, in market gardens, and on small and large-scale farms – has played a central role in the growth of Burnaby, its economic well-being, and in enabling access to food. While the central role of agriculture has changed in the last 150 years, the cultivation of food remains as a core part of Burnaby’s identity. The City has a history of encouraging urban agriculture and in seeking to support the food security of

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It is also recommended that a copy of this report be forwarded to the Environment Committee for information.



E. W. Kozak, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

RM/sa:tn

cc:	City Manager	Director Corporate Services
	Fire Chief	Director Human Resources
	Director Engineering	Chief Librarian
	Director Finance	OIC – RCMP
	Director Public Safety and Community Services	City Solicitor
	City Clerk	