

Burnaby 2050 Policy Directions

Agriculture and Food Systems

Overview

Burnaby has a small but productive agricultural area in Big Bend. This includes some land that is in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and a number of farms in the Riverside neighbourhood. This area also has a culturally diverse heritage, with many historic Chinese Canadian small-scale farms that still exist today. Supporting food systems improve the sustainability of food production in Burnaby and helps ensure people in Burnaby have access to the food they need.

Proposed policies in this section will support the [Burnaby Food System Strategy](#) and aim to:

- Protect agricultural land.
- Promote agricultural viability while advancing a sustainable and healthy food system that can withstand and recover quickly from the impacts of climate change.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- Use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes.
- Climate change impacts on farming and food production, including drought, flooding, and new pests and plant diseases.
- The small size of many lots, which limits the options for commercial farming
- Misalignment of City bylaws with the rules for using land in the provincial Agricultural Land Reserve.

Opportunities:

- Update bylaws to follow the Agricultural Land Commission Act and other provincial guidelines.
- Work with host Nations to support Indigenous rights and access to land and marine food systems.
- Create policies and programs to support agri-tourism and other economic opportunities on farms.
- Engage with local farmers and organizations to work together on challenges related to farming.
- Develop a specific plan for the Big Bend agricultural area.

Engagement Findings

- Burnaby residents want:
 - more locally grown produce and opportunities for people to grow and access healthy food.
 - community gardens
- Farmers in Burnaby want:
 - farmland to be protected.

- drainage problems from nearby development to be fixed.
- temporary housing for farm workers.
- more communication between the City and farmers.
- more flexibility over what they can do on their land, such as farm sales and agri-tourism.

Policy Directions

Protect and Expand Agricultural Land Base	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
1. Protect farmland by regulating how the land can be used and assessing and preventing nearby development and other activities from impacting the quality of the land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Development can impact soil quality and drainage, making the land more difficult to farm. ● Burnaby doesn't have a lot of agricultural land, but it's important to protect this valuable local resource. See figure 1. ● Strengthening Burnaby's bylaws to support farming and related uses will help limit the encroachment of other types of development into farming areas.
2. Ensure farming is the main use of agricultural lands by limiting residential development and changing bylaws to match the Agricultural Land Commission rules. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) If the Riverway Golf Course is redeveloped in future, limit the uses to agriculture, parks and conservation. 	

Support Farmers and Farming Activities	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
3. Engage and communicate with farmers in Big Bend and consider developing an Agricultural Plan and an Agricultural Advisory Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farmers want more communication with the City and could help create a plan to support agriculture in Burnaby. ● Allowing farmers to use their farm to generate money in different ways would help them be more successful. ● Economic opportunities related to food could create partnerships with the four host Nations. ● Supporting the four host Nations' rights and access to food systems is an important part of reconciliation. ● We also need to work together to expand traditional food and medicine in gardens in the city.
4. Support more economic opportunities for farmers, such as agri-tourism, farm sales and creating opportunities for food production outside of Big Bend.	
5. Support and strengthen Indigenous food sovereignty and food security and provide access to land-based, freshwater, and marine food sources.	

Agriculture that can Withstand and Recover Quickly from Challenges	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
6. Support the protection of ecosystem services and climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies on agricultural lands in the Big Bend, as the basis for future management strategies, and in collaboration with all levels of government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to understand how climate change will impact food production so we can help protect farmland for the future. • The regional and provincial governments are also interested in supporting farmers and protecting ecosystems in the area and could support new or existing programs for farmers in Burnaby.
7. Reduce food waste by composting organic waste and recovering edible food that would otherwise be thrown out.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing waste and recovering food would help reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from transporting and producing food. • Food that is edible but would be thrown out can be shared with community members who need food instead.

Food Systems	
Policy Directions	Why We Are Proposing These Policies
8. Continue advancing the work of the Burnaby Food System Strategy to increase access to affordable, healthy food and support locally grown, sustainable food production.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Burnaby Food System Strategy will be done in 2024 and will help improve the quality, fairness and sustainability of Burnaby’s food systems. • This Strategy will help protect historic farms and increase opportunities for cultural diversity in Burnaby’s farms, collaborate with other government and community partners, and create policies to support local food production and equitable access to healthy food.

Glossary

Ecosystem services: the benefits people obtain from ecosystems. Ecosystem services provided by farmland include nutrient and organic matter recycling (from food waste), food for pollinators, wildlife habitat, flood control, and carbon sequestration.

Related Plans and Strategies

[Burnaby Food System Strategy](#)