

SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

SUBJECT: DRAFT BURNABY FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Burnaby Food System Strategy, as presented in Attachment 1 and as outlined in Section 4.0 of the report titled “Draft Burnaby Food System Strategy” dated October 16, 2024, of the Social Planning Committee meeting, be adopted and;

THAT under Theme 1, Action 1.27 be that staff explore partnership with community groups or nonprofits to utilize City land to establish a pilot food forest.”

REPORT

The Social Planning Committee, at its meeting held on October 16, 2024, received and adopted the attached report seeking Council approval of the Burnaby Food System Strategy.

Arising from discussion, the Committee **AMENDED** the Burnaby Food System Strategy to include under Theme 1, Action 1.27 to explore partnership with community groups or nonprofits to utilize City land to establish a pilot food forest.

On behalf of the Social Planning
Committee,

Councillor A. Gu
Chair

Councillor M. Santiago
Vice Chair

TO: SOCIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE (SPC)
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
SUBJECT: **DRAFT BURNABY FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGY**
PURPOSE: To present the draft Burnaby Food System Strategy for adoption by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Burnaby Food System Strategy as presented in Attachment 1, and as outlined in Section 4.0 of the report titled “Draft Burnaby Food System Strategy” dated October 16, 2024, of the Open meeting of the Social Planning Committee, be adopted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food plays a central role in the wellbeing of individuals, and in the collective and economic life of families and communities. The Burnaby Food System Strategy has been developed to outline the ways in which the City of Burnaby can lead and support action towards sustainable food systems and food security for all people in Burnaby.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

The development of a Burnaby Food System Strategy is aligned with the following Council-adopted policies and plans/strategies:

- Equity Policy (1994, updated 2020);
- Economic Development Strategy (2007).
- Social Sustainability Strategy (2011);
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2016);
- Climate Action Framework (2020); and
- Corporate Strategic Plan (2022).

2.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of May 6, 2019, the then-Environment and Social Planning Committee received a delegation from Burnaby Food First¹ requesting the City develop a Food System Strategy (Strategy) for Burnaby. Arising from the discussion, the matter was subsequently referred to staff for further investigation. Staff responded to the Committee in December

¹ Burnaby Food First (BFF) is a local community group that was formed in the late 1990s to advocate for affordable access to food for all community residents. The group is currently on hiatus.

2020, and at its meeting on January 25, 2021, Council directed staff to develop such a Strategy.

A food system is the complex web of activities involving the growing, producing, processing, transporting, distributing, and consuming of food. In developing the Strategy, the levers held by the City and other community partners were examined (including local non-profits, other government entities and the business community) to support such activities, while ensuring that they are conducted in an environmentally sustainable and equitable manner.

The Strategy, as outlined in Section 3.0 below, and as presented in Attachment 1 to this report has been prepared to seek Committee feedback, with the goal of seeking Council endorsement.

2.1 Local Context

As referenced above, a food system includes all the processes involved in keeping people fed. As well as being central to the economies of most communities, food is a basic element of community self-reliance and cultural well-being. It provides jobs, enhances and transmits culture, fosters community, and is crucial for public health. A healthy food system is fundamental to the resiliency of a community.

Access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate and affordable food is necessary for the well-being of every resident. Unfortunately, many British Columbians still go hungry as a result of both economic and physical barriers in accessing food. For example, a low-income senior without access to a vehicle or convenient transit service is unable to physically travel to a grocery store, as well as being limited by income to those goods they can afford to purchase.

The BC Centre for Disease Control estimates that 12.7% of people across the Province do not have access to sufficient and nutritious food. This experience has become more acute as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, approximately 7,000 people a week in Burnaby sought 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 from numbers in 2021 (approx. 3,400 people a week). The number of individuals seeking food access support is expected to further increase as economic impacts of the pandemic persist and food prices continue to escalate.

Metro Vancouver is one of the most important food producing and processing areas in British Columbia. The region's farmers supply over 130 different farm commodities, including a wide array of fruits, vegetables, dairy, poultry and other livestock products. Burnaby has approximately 597 acres of land designated for agricultural use in the Official Community Plan, with 551 of those acres included in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and approximately 40 active farms. Burnaby is also home to a number of food supporting and processing businesses.

Local governments support local and regional food systems primarily through land-use decisions, bylaws and policies that, for example, protect agricultural land and encourage it

to be brought into production, designate appropriate industrial and processing areas for food, and zone for farmer's markets and other food retailers. Local governments often provide a range of both informal and formal community supports that enable access to food for local residents.

It is in the complex context of the above noted factors that the draft Strategy was developed. The purpose is to identify strategies and actions to support the local food system that can be supported by the City of Burnaby.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Developing the Strategy included a range of processes and considerations, as identified below. **Draft Burnaby Food System Strategy** To develop the Strategy, staff worked with a community-based Project Advisory Committee (PAC) and with assistance from Urban Food Strategies and Upland Agricultural Consulting. The Strategy is attached as Attachment 1.

The vision for the Strategy is grounded in the *Burnaby Community Food Charter* and aims for a sustainable food system. The five themes that frame the Strategy include:

- Growing and Harvesting;
- Food Economy;
- Policy and Regulation;
- Community Sector Support; and
- Structural Change.

The overall purpose of the Strategy and Charter is to determine an aspirational but practical vision and set of themes, objections, and actions for strengthening the local food system, improving sustainability in the food system, and increasing household food security.

The process to develop the Strategy occurred in two main phases:

Phase 1 – Food Charter development, and

Phase 2 – Food System Strategy development.

The Strategy development process has included completing food system research, engaging community groups for feedback on the Charter and Strategy, developing strategies and actions to support the local food system that can be primarily undertaken by the City, and considering how the City can work with other sectors and partners to achieve food system goals.

3.2 Burnaby Community Food Charter

With feedback from community organizations, the development of the Strategy began with a process to articulate a vision and values for a food system in Burnaby through a *Burnaby Community Food Charter*. The Charter outlines a vision of a sustainable, just food system and includes values to guide decision-making around food systems and food security. The Charter serves as a commitment to creating sustainable food systems in Burnaby and food security for all community members.

The process to create the Charter was intentionally community-led. The Charter was created by the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) with input from other key community members and organizations, with stewardship from Burnaby Neighbourhood House under the umbrella of their Food Hub and related community programs. A full version of the Charter is included as Attachment 2. In order to animate the Charter in the community, signatories are being sought to express their commitment to its vision and values.

3.3 Implementation

The Strategy proposes a number of actions to address food insecurity and strengthen Burnaby's food system. Actions have been identified for implementation in the short-term (0-3 years), medium-term (4-6 years), long-term (7-10 years) and as ongoing. It should be noted that many of the actions have already been initiated and/or incorporated into existing work programs (e.g. Burnaby 2050 Official Community Plan Update).

While the Strategy is directed towards the City and the role it can play in local food systems, it is important to note that the City cannot address these complex systems on its own. The City needs the support and cooperation of many partners – the Province, businesses, the non-profit community, community members and others.

The Strategy would also be utilized as a piece of community-informed research as an input for the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw update processes, particularly in relation to those actions which make recommendations related to food focused (Agricultural and Industrial) land-uses and development patterns.

Upon adoption by Council, it is proposed that Community Planning assume a coordinating role to develop an annual or two-year work plans with relevant City departments to implement the Strategy's actions based on each department's priorities and resources. The first such work plan would be presented to the Committee and Council early in 2025.

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The following provides an overview of the community engagement process used to develop the Strategy. In addition to reviewing relevant data and literature, several methods were used to develop the Strategy including a consultation process with key stakeholders.

- **Project Advisory Committee (PAC):** Development of the Strategy has been guided by a community-based PAC, whose membership includes key public partners, community members, and representatives from a range of local non-profits. For a full list of PAC members please see Appendix 5 of the Strategy.
- **Key Informant Interviews:** The consulting team reached out to numerous community stakeholders (30+) in order to understand their views and gain feedback. These individuals largely included those who indicated that they did not have the capacity to join the PAC, particularly farmers and those in the business community (e.g. small grocery store owners/operators).
- **Community Engagement Specialist:** To ensure diverse perspectives were included in development of the Strategy, a local community engagement specialist was retained to join the consulting team. This community member was formerly a member of Burnaby Food First and is well-connected and respected in

the local food community. This individual speaks multiple languages and spent several months visiting in-person (as public health restrictions permitted) and through phone calls to make direct connection with cultural food assets² in the community and obtain feedback.

- **Community Survey:** An online survey was posted on the City website in March/April 2022 to elicit the views of community members on the framework and direction of the Strategy. 185 responses were received. The questions covered community and household experiences with food insecurity, and gauged community perspectives on possible interventions in the local food system.
- **Stakeholder Workshops:** Upon development of a mid-point draft Strategy, a stakeholder workshop was organized with representation from a variety of community groups to review and gain feedback on the Strategy framework and its goals and objectives. While the opportunity to attend was open to all, specific invitations were pursued with those engaged in the wider food system in Burnaby. Due to public health restrictions at the time, this workshop was conducted virtually with over 40 participants. Additionally, the Social Planning Committee was also engaged at key points in the process, with two presentations and opportunities for feedback led by the project consulting team.

The feedback received through the community engagement process outlined above, along with the review of relevant data and literature, helped shape the five themes and numerous actions in the Strategy.

5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial considerations related to City budgets at this time. Further analysis on the City's role and potential financial support of the local food system will be undertaken as part of the detailed implementation process, and subject to further Council approval.

Respectfully submitted,

E.W. Kozak, General Manager Planning and Development

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Draft Burnaby Food System Strategy

Attachment 2 – Burnaby Community Food Charter

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

² For the purposes of this report, cultural food assets are understood as the resources, facilities, services or spaces which provide access to fresh, often local, culturally appropriate food for particular cultural groups, while also providing spaces that support the maintenance and transmission of culture (e.g. halal, kosher butchers, some greengrocers, barbeque meat shops, some dried goods shops, etc.).

This report was prepared by Helen Garbiec-Ho, Planner 1, and reviewed by Margaret Manifold, Planner 3, Rebekah Mahaffey, Executive Director Civic Innovation Lab, Johannes Schumann, Director Community Planning, Andre Isakov, Director Parks, Recreation and Culture Planning, Emmaline Hill, Director Cultural Services, Carmen Gonazalez, Deputy General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture, Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture, and Lee-Ann Garnett, Deputy General Manager Planning and Development.