

# Food Systems

# 16



## RELATED GOALS

- 16 (A). Nourishing, safe food that supplies most of Victoria's daily needs is sustainably grown, processed and packaged in the city, in surrounding agriculture areas, and on Vancouver Island.
- 16 (B). Victorians have access to skills and knowledge to grow their own food in urban areas.

## OVERVIEW

Food is a basic human need and one that shapes Victoria's urban environment in many different ways. The availability of nutritious, affordable food is critical to the health and well-being of citizens. Markets, restaurants and cafes animate neighbourhoods and bring people together. Food gardens and Capital Region farms provide fresh food and green space. The **food system** has major impacts on transportation patterns, urban employment and waste management. The global food system has expanded Victoria's **foodshed** worldwide, providing both relative abundance and associated environmental, social and economic impacts.

Locally, several issues influence Victoria's move towards **food security** and a more sustainable food system. Vancouver Island imports the vast majority of its food, creating concerns for the stability of the food supply in the face of rising energy costs and climate change. Approximately 22% of Victoria residents live below as defined by Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut-Off for Victoria (2006

figures) and the number of people using local charitable food services, such as food banks, is increasing. Within Victoria, many people grow a portion of their food in home gardens. Demand for allotment gardens exceeds supply due to the high number of people renting or living in multi-unit buildings who lack access to land. Organic matter currently makes up 30% of the volume going to Hartland Landfill. Collecting and processing food waste would return nutrients and structural elements to local soils and extend the life of the landfill. The Capital Region's traditional agricultural sector is declining due to aging farmers, loss of critical **food infrastructure** (such as meat processing facilities) and decreasing economic viability. At the same time, the number of small farms and the diversity of products produced regionally are increasing, capitalizing on the excellent climate and soils and renewed interest in local and artisan food products.

To address these challenges, the plan proposes a coordinated approach to address food-related issues. This requires the City to work in partnership across departments and with senior levels of government, the health authority, other agencies, organizations and individuals to consider the connections among different parts of the food system. Within its mandate, the City's efforts can focus on increasing urban **food production**, strengthening key food system infrastructure, supporting access to healthy foods, and supporting the recycling and re-use of organic waste.

## BROAD OBJECTIVES

The food systems policies of this plan address five broad objectives:

- 16 (a) That planning for the food system is comprehensive and integrated at various scales.
- 16 (b) That the opportunity for **urban food production** is increased on private and public lands.
- 16 (c) That local food system infrastructure is strengthened.
- 16 (d) That citizens have access to affordable, healthy and **local food**.
- 16 (e) That more food waste is recovered and re-used for productive purposes.

## COMPREHENSIVE FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING

- 16.1 Participate in coordinated community and regional efforts to develop a more sustainable food system that:
  - 16.1.1 Contributes to the economic development, environmental management, and social well-being of Victoria and the region;
  - 16.1.2 Encourages local and **regional food** production and protection of productive farmland;
  - 16.1.3 Recognizes access to safe, sufficient, culturally appropriate and nutritious food as a basic need for all citizens; and,
  - 16.1.4 Celebrates local food culture, cuisine, and indigenous and local food traditions.
- 16.2 Advocate that the Capital Regional District works together with partners to develop a Regional Food System Strategy that enhances urban and rural food production, processing, storage, distribution, restaurant and tourism sectors, as a basis for region-wide food system planning and policy development.
- 16.3 Assess neighbourhood food system features and needs as part of local area planning.

## URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION

- 16.4 Review and develop City policy to increase the number of allotment gardens, **community gardens**, edible landscapes, food-bearing trees and other food production activities that considers other uses and identifies:
  - 16.4.1 The land types and potential City-held sites where different food production activities might be supported,;
  - 16.4.2 The roles and responsibilities of participants; and,
  - 16.4.3 Mechanisms to encourage and support food production sites on City-held lands, other publicly-held lands, and on private lands.
  - 16.4.4 Mechanisms to acquire park land for food production purposes, where appropriate.
- 16.5 Consider new and innovative approaches to urban food production that increase food security, in partnership with citizens, community groups and other stakeholders.

## FOOD PRODUCTION ON PRIVATE LAND

- 16.6 Encourage where possible, the retention of open space suitable for gardens in the design of infill housing.
- 16.7 Encourage the provision of gardens and other food production spaces for the use of residents in new multi-unit housing.
- 16.8 Develop guidelines for food production on private land to support in multi-unit, mixed-use developments and other types of housing, a range of on-site food production activities such as edible landscaping, rooftop gardens and food-bearing trees.
- 16.9 Support the keeping of small livestock in the city by:
  - 16.9.1 Maintaining regulatory support for the keeping of poultry and bees; and,
  - 16.9.2 Reviewing regulations to consider the keeping of other small livestock for food production, appropriate to an urban environment, in collaboration with senior levels of government and the health authority.

- 16.10 Support expanded small-scale commercial urban agriculture through a review of policy and regulations to consider opportunities to:
- 16.10.1 Enable infrastructure and human resources needed to support small-scale commercial urban agriculture as a home occupation;
  - 16.10.2 Use residential accessory buildings for commercial agricultural purposes;
  - 16.10.3 Allow commercial urban agriculture uses, including greenhouses, in commercial and industrial zones.

### FOOD PRODUCTION ON PUBLIC LAND

- 16.11 Encourage food production activities in visible and suitable public places, where appropriate, to foster a connection between people and the process of growing, harvesting and eating fresh produce.
- 16.12 Support the establishment of at least one allotment garden per neighbourhood, co-located with community facilities or services where possible, and more in neighbourhoods that feature a high proportion of rental or attached housing.
- 16.13 Work with community groups to develop pilot projects for the planting, maintenance and harvesting of food-bearing trees on suitable City-held lands.

### FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

- 16.14 Support the achievement of densities sufficient to support food stores and other food retail uses such as bakeries, restaurants and pubs, in town centres and large urban villages.
- 16.15 Explore expanded street food vending opportunities to animate the public realm, including parks, and showcase local cuisine, through the review of existing regulations and the development of a program in partnership with local businesses and the health authority.
- 16.16 Encourage the development of farmers markets in Town Centres and Urban Villages, and a viable year-round [farmers market](#) in the Downtown Core Area, to animate the public and private realm and support local growers and food processors.
- 16.17 Pilot new uses in appropriate locations that enhance urban food production, processing and food waste recycling.

- 16.18 Work with neighbouring municipalities, the Capital Regional District, the provincial government and other food system stakeholders to increase the regional food supply by:
  - 16.18.1 Establishing policies, tools and initiatives to protect and expand working farmland, such as a regional farmland trust; and,
  - 16.18.2 Implementing strategies to support and re-establish key food system infrastructure such as meat processing facilities.

### ACCESS TO FOOD

- 16.19 Support the efforts of community centres, community organizations, the health authority, the school district, senior government and the private sector to establish programs and resources that build knowledge and skills to help people move towards more secure and dignified access to nutritious food.
- 16.20 Collaborate with partners to develop programs and resources that promote healthy eating and enhance the food-related skills and knowledge of citizens.
- 16.21 Encourage schools, community and seniors centres to incorporate features such as food gardens and community composting depots that facilitate the development of food-related skills and knowledge.
- 16.22 Identify short and long-term food supply and infrastructure needs as part of a critical infrastructure assessment in City emergency preparedness planning.
- 16.23 Work with regional partners to enhance the capacity of the regional food system to adapt to climate change impacts, including water shortages, extreme weather events and fluctuations in global food and energy prices.

## FOOD WASTE

- 16.24 Consider establishing community composting, recycling and take-back depots within Town Centres and Urban Villages at scales suitable to a convenient and effective system.
- 16.25 Support the efforts of community organizations and the private sector to establish initiatives that divert recoverable food from the pre-waste stream for redistribution to local food security organizations.
- 16.26 Advocate to senior government and industry for the development and expansion of take-back programs for food and beverage packaging.
- 16.27 Encourage the CRD to undertake a regionally coordinated approach to the recycling of food waste that retains biological nutrients regionally by:
  - 16.27.1 Promoting household composting systems;
  - 16.27.2 Establishing a household organic waste collection program with opportunities for finished compost to be made available for farmers and other food producers within the region; and,
  - 16.27.3 Developing strategies to encourage organic waste diversion from multi-unit housing and commercial properties