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Urban Foodlands

City of Victoria Dialogue



Prepared for:



Victoria Report

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Acknowledgments

We acknowledge the southern tip of Vancouver Island (including Victoria and surrounding areas), as the traditional territories of the Lkwungen peoples. We acknowledge and thank the Lkwungen People, also known as the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations Nations, for allowing us to live, work and play on their traditional lands.

While we look to strengthen urban food systems, it is important to acknowledge these current food systems historically and continue to displace Indigenous people and their stewardship of these lands. This displacement is ongoing, which means the role of the urban food system needs to constantly be reflecting on its colonial construct and aligning with Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

FED (Food Eco District) is a Victoria-based non-profit inspiring food-focused communities and systems by connecting people to the food they eat while encouraging compelling solutions to increase climate action on Vancouver Island. FED certifies restaurants and cafes and helps them to increase their sustainability initiatives, installs and maintains over 30 edible gardens throughout Victoria and the surrounding areas, many of which are free for the public to use, and converts under-utilized urban spaces into food-focused areas. In 2020, FED also organized an emergency response to COVID-19 that brought 514 free start up garden kits to those who had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, including close to 1,900 planters, over 10,000 edible plants starts and around 60,000 seeds.

We would like to acknowledge our network of members who contributed to our understanding of policies that support urban agriculture and food lands, city staff who have worked hard to create adopted food policy, and FED involved in the dialogues and report: Holly Dumbarton.

Thank you to all who participated in both dialogues and provided valuable insight into this project.





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October and November 2020, the Food Eco District (FED), facilitated two separate online dialogues on the topic of urban foodlands access. The purpose of these dialogues was to:

- 🍏 Explore and understand different perspectives about the 'why' of land access for urban foodlands
- 🍏 Develop a deeper understanding of why land access for urban foodlands matters
- 🍏 Generate a broad range of ideas about policies to sustain and grow urban foodlands for future generations
- 🍏 Increase understanding and strengthen relationships among urban agriculture advocates

Dialogue participants were asked why access to urban foodlands matters for future generations. Their responses were analyzed and developed into following themes:

- 🍏 Land Use
- 🍏 Advocacy
- 🍏 Community Education
- 🍏 Environmental Stewardship
- 🍏 Equity

The suggestions made by dialogue participants were analyzed according to the themes above. This analysis draws alignment between each outcome and policies that would help achieve these outcomes. The policy recommendations are summarized below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Infrastructure for Growing Food

While the City has begun establishing a strong suite of policies and bylaws that allow for infrastructure there are three areas that require further development, including greenhouse guidelines, re-classifying urban agriculture businesses, and helping to establish more food storage and distribution infrastructure.

Land Access

There are currently many ways that the City is addressing land access, although the majority of this focus is on access to community gardens. A significant impact could be made if there were more incentive to allow for a tenant's right to grow food on rental properties and if more school land could be used to both produce food and educate youth.



New & Existing Developments

While many developers, landowners and strata corporations currently operating throughout Victoria are supportive of incorporating urban agriculture onto their properties, many still see this type of use as risky and require more information and greater incentive from the city to move forward. In order to encourage more food production on urban land it would be beneficial to incentivize landowners and developers by removing or reducing the mill rate, adding a density bonus for agriculture sites, or decreasing the amenity fee.

Skills Development & Vocational Training

The municipal programs developed throughout 2020 were impressive undertakings and were successful, especially considering the challenges presented by the pandemic. As they continue into future years, additional focus on supporting and promoting more skills-based and vocational training will allow for wider advocacy throughout our region. The creation of multi-year funding streams would allow those organizations who provide education and training to focus on programming.

Innovation

Having regional clarity on how the municipality would like to integrate urban foodlands into other agricultural approaches, in addition to municipally led advocacy and action that provides the freedom to explore new ideas will determine how successful and resilient our local food system will become in the future. Encouraging the use of innovative farming techniques through the development of City owned hubs could help in this goal.

Attitudes

The municipality has an opportunity to shift regional attitudes on the benefits of growing food by providing additional information on food growing topics for people who participate in their programs. In order to emphasize the collective benefits of growing food it is suggested that the City petition yearly reports that focus on storytelling of the ancillary and social benefits of food and create social and health metrics for tracking progress in this area.

Food Access & Affordability

Mandating a tenant's right to grow and developing municipal targets to increase the number of affordable grocery stores in our region could contribute to greater access to fresh, healthy food in the community. Without access to affordable options to either grow or purchase food, many communities will continue to buy from international organizations such as Walmart and will not be able to participate fully in local and urban foodlands.



Inclusion

Indigenous, black and people of colour are often not included in city processes and therefore, their voices are not included in city policies and reflected in city practices. To address this issue, it is recommended that the City of Victoria host regular conversations and have intentional engagement with Indigenous, black and communities of colour to ensure any evaluation of existing policies and new policies include and reflect under-represented communities experiences. This could be achieved through the creation of needs assessments with a focus on marginalized communities, and working with community organizations who have already built trust with this demographic.

RECOMMENDATIONS RECAP

- 🍏 Evaluate the City of Victoria's Growing in the City suite of policies including their effectiveness, and level of public awareness
 - Ensure an equity lens is included as part of the evaluation process
- 🍏 Develop a communication strategy to increase public uptake and use of the City policies
- 🍏 Create multi-year granting streams for established organizations to focus their efforts on food system education and engagement
 - Encourage the City of Victoria to work with other food funders to increase and streamline multi-year funding pools for organizations
- 🍏 Mandate a tenant's right to grow without good reason while protecting against damage to property
- 🍏 Engage with Indigenous, black and people of colour within the community in City processes
- 🍏 Support existing organizations by creating new granting streams that enable more food grown on public lands by under-represented communities
- 🍏 Shift awareness by engaging with communities to highlight the social and health benefits of growing and sharing food
- 🍏 Encourage community organizations to create their own outcomes and targets for increasing sustainable food system programming in the city



Project Background

In January 2020, the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) received a Real Estate Foundation BC (REFBC) grant to explore urban municipal food policy and practice. The premise of the application was to work with current and/or previous REFBC-funded food organizations who were undertaking work to strengthen their own municipal urban food policies. Kamloops ([Kamloops Food Policy Council](#)), Vancouver ([Vancouver Urban Farming Society](#)) and Victoria ([Food Eco District](#)) were the three case study municipalities chosen for this project. These locations were chosen due to their strong engagement in food system policy, each regional organization involved in this case study had received or was currently working on a REFBC-funded project on urban food policy and had good working relationships with the city staff members who hold food system portfolios.

The case study for each municipality was to include an in-person dialogue involving urban farmers, community garden leads, food policy councils, and food advocacy non-profit organizations. These dialogues were positioned to provide an in-depth understanding of how people envision urban agriculture's potential role in advancing sustainable food systems and which existent and potential policies could help them achieve these outcomes within their respective municipalities.

Starting in February 2020, monthly meetings were held between the three participating organizations to share their previous or current REFBC funded work, discuss the context of urban agriculture in their municipalities, and brainstorm the structure of their dialogues. On March 11th 2020, the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus a pandemic. In response, Canada, including the province of British Columbia implemented an emergency order restricting travel and in-person gatherings, thereby limiting the ability to host in-person dialogues. As a result, the proposed format for each dialogue was modified to be held virtually; which required a pivot of the dialogue structure and a reduction of the number of participants to ensure the facilitation of in-depth conversations between participants was still possible. Due to the modified plan, there was increased focus to invite participants specifically involved in the broad range of urban agriculture activities occurring in each city. This included community garden coordinators, urban farmers, neighbourhood house representatives, and food policy council members, among others.



Regional Background

Located on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island, the City of Victoria (the City) is the provincial capital of British Columbia, Canada. The City is situated in the Capital Regional District that includes 13 municipalities and 3 electoral districts with a population of 383,360. The Capital Regional District is made up of urban, semi-urban and rural land and includes the gulf islands. The City of Victoria itself is an urban municipality and has a population of 85,792 people.

Looking at the history of the region's relationship with foodlands, it has changed dramatically in the past 150 years. Previously cared for by Lək̓ʷəŋən (Songhees), Xwsepsum (Esquimalt) Nations, the W̱SÁNEĆ Nations {W̱JOŁEŁP (Tsartlip), BOKÉĆEN (Pauquachin), STÁUTW̱ (Tsawout) W̱SIKEM (Tseycum)}, Sc'ianew (Beecher Bay), T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht, MÁLEXEŁ (Malahat) and Pune'laxutth' (Penelekut) Nations for thousands of years. These lands were an abundance of food and medicine for the communities that stewarded this area. In the late 1800's to the mid 1900' European-based agricultural model and the influx of settlers began their colonization of these lands.¹The past 50 years has seen a significant decline in local food production, and now a greater reliance on foreign imports as roughly 85% of our food comes from outside sources.²

Victoria's Official Community Plan (OCP) was updated in 2017 to include a section dedicated to Food Systems through a community consultation process. From this consultation came a food policy council and advisory body to the City called the Urban Food Table (UFT). This council provides "... advice on the development of policies and programs that support urban food production and pollinators. The [UFT] also offers opportunities to share knowledge, create community connections, and align efforts to implement food system objectives in Greater Victoria."³Along with the Food System chapter in the OCP and the establishment of UFT the city also hired a Food Systems Coordinator, who developed 'Growing in the City,' resulting in the following policies and documents found below.

THE CITY OF VICTORIA POLICIES & GROWING IN THE CITY RESOURCES
Victoria's Official Community Plan for Food Systems
Growing Food and Gardening in Mixed-Use, Multi-Unit Residential Developments
Building a Rooftop Greenhouse
Boulevard Gardening
Community Gardens and Orchards
City Bylaws for Food-Bearing, Pollinator, and Native Plant Landscape Design Guidelines
Urban Food Tree Stewardship Pilot Program
Keeping Bees and Hens
Growing Food to Sell:
Small-Scale Commercial Urban Food Production Handbook
Urban Food Production Fact Sheet
Building and Operating a Food Stand

¹ Vancouver Island Community Research Alliance: Strategies for Increasing Food Security on Vancouver Island

² Vancouver Island Economic Alliance: Lack of security: why Vancouver Island food production is on the decline

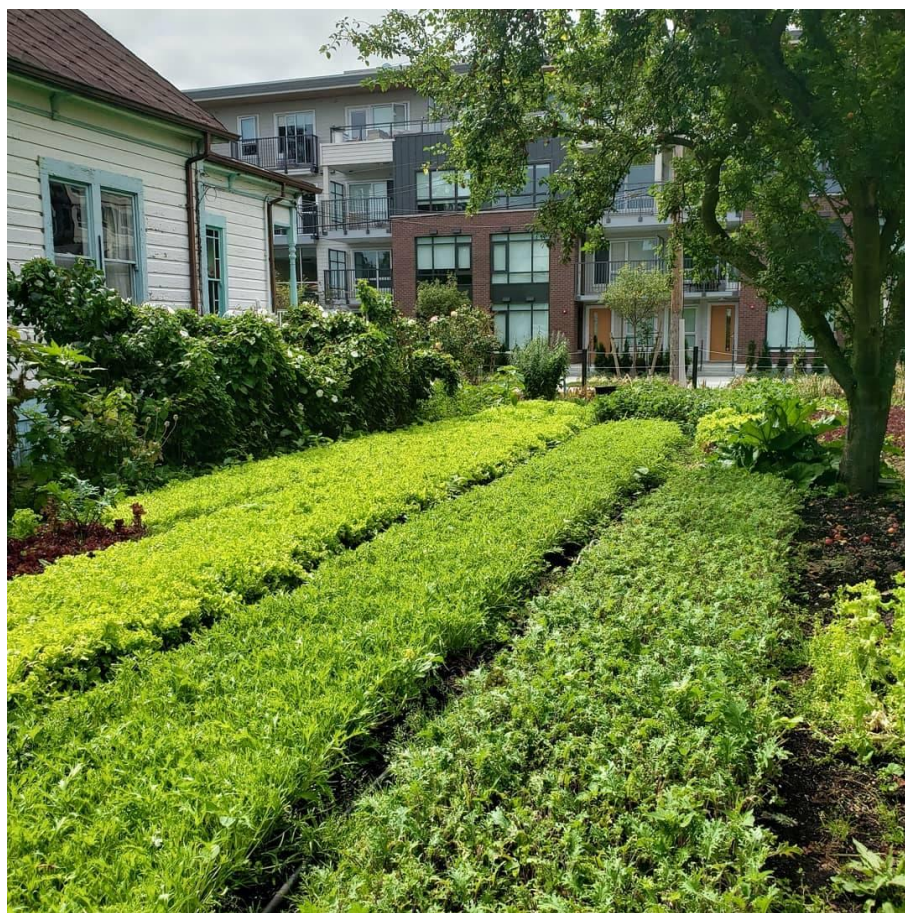
³ The City of Victoria: Urban Food Table





FED Urban Agriculture Society, a Victoria-based non-profit focusing on urban food and sustainability, received a grant from the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia to conduct a project titled *Street to Sky*, which inventoried the top growing sites for urban agriculture in downtown Victoria and the surrounding areas. FED conducted interviews with the landowners and developers of these sites in addition to other interested parties within real estate and urban farmers, both who are established in the community or looking for land to grow. Through the information discovered in these interviews FED is in the process of developing two guides to relay best practices on how these groups can include urban agriculture in the City, what they need to know for the process of working together to run as smoothly as possible and how to work effectively together. These guides will be ready for distribution in March of 2021 and will be followed by a workshop to help teach farmers looking to grow in the City the necessary skills to establish themselves in an urban environment.

PHABC was a consultant in the earlier stages of *Street to Sky* to ensure that the project design and implementation at a regional level feeds into provincial frameworks for coordination and advocacy.



Mason St. City Farm, Victoria, BC

Photo Credit: Aaren Topley



Methods

In October and November 2020, the Food Eco District (FED), facilitated two separate two-hour online dialogues held over Zoom on the topic of urban foodlands access. The purpose of the dialogues was to explore and understand different perspectives about the 'why' of land access for urban foodlands; to come to a deeper understanding of why land access for urban foodlands matters; to generate a broad range of ideas about policies to sustain and grow urban foodlands for future generations; and to increase understanding and strengthen relationships among urban agriculture advocates (dialogue participants).

The first dialogue had seven participants including:

1. **Ariel Reyes Antuan** and **Jess Reyes Barton**, co-founders of Iyé Creative and Palenke Greens
 - Iyé Creative is a community social enterprise that focuses on supporting oppressed communities and solutions that address systemic issues
 - Palenke Greens is a burlap sack gardens project, provided in priority for people of African descent who are facing food insecurity and were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
2. **Chris Hildreth**, founder and CEO of TOPSOIL
 - TOPSOIL converts under-utilized urban spaces into productive food-growing zones and provides fresh greens for restaurants in Victoria
3. **Joan Stonehocker**, executive director of Lifecycles Project Society
 - Lifecycles Project Society is a community organization focusing on a range of programs that impact urban foodlands, from fruit trees to school gardens
4. **Kayla Siefried**, management team, site manager and community education coordinator at the Compost Education Centre (CEC)
 - The CEC is a non-profit organization providing composting and ecological gardening education
5. **Mike Large**, lawyer and main contributor to the City's [Boulevard Gardening Guidelines](#)
6. **Ruben Anderson**, coordinator for the Good Food Box with the Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group (NRG)
 - The Fernwood NRG is a non-profit that purchases local fruit and vegetables from local farmers and suppliers and packs this up for pick up at various locations throughout Greater Victoria each week



The second dialogue had four participants including:

1. **Cenit Munoz**, Welcome Gardens program coordinator with the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society (VIRCS)
 - VIRCS helps connect newcomers and local residents to create community and learn to grow food
2. **Jesse Brown**, head farmer at the Mason Street City Farm and coordinator for the learning farm at Vic High
 - The Mason Street City Farm is a no-till urban farm nestled in the heart of North Park neighbourhood in Victoria
 - Vic High garden is a 5,000 square foot garden plot situated on the school grounds. The food grown will be used in their weekly salad bar and as a learning opportunity for the students
3. **Kathryn Pankowski**, neighbourhood garden coordinator for the James Bay Neighborhood Association (JBNA)
 - JBNA is an association is committed to involve more James Bay residents in food gardening and to identify food gardening opportunities. They support and encourage food growing across the whole community.
4. **Katie Underwood**, local farmer at Peas n' Carrots Farm and at her home, and Co-chair of the Urban Food Table (UFT)
 - Peas n' Carrots Farm is classic staples done extraordinarily well
 - UFT is a food policy council to the City of Victoria. They provide advice on the development of policies and programs that support urban food production and pollinators



TOPSOIL, Victoria, BC
Photo Credit: Chris Hildreth



Outcomes and Urban Foodlands

Summary of Dialogues

Dialogue participants were asked why access to urban foodlands matters for future generations. Their responses were analyzed and developed into the 5 outcome themes below:

- Land Use
- Advocacy
- Community Education
- Environmental Stewardship
- Equity

Land Use

Although there are many challenges to the development of urban foodlands in Victoria due to the scarcity of available land and competing issues such as affordable housing, the dialogue participants highlighted infrastructure for growing food, land access, and urban agriculture within new and existing developments as being key issues within land use for urban foodlands.

Infrastructure for Growing Food

Currently in our region there is a lack of capacity to process and distribute local food products. The work and support needed to sustain these systems are difficult and expensive to create and maintain, especially when competing with heavily subsidized agricultural organizations such as those in California.

The initial capital needed to set up an urban farm can also be a barrier into entry, with often expensive permits to create simple infrastructure and the need to hire an engineer for approval.

“The systems have to be in place, not just production systems but also distribution systems ... that takes a lot of sustained work over a long period of time, and the ability to compensate people for the time they're putting in.”

- Chris Hildreth, founder and CEO of TOPSOIL



**City of Victoria Nursery Greenhouses
Growing Food Starts for Communities in
Need Through Get Growing, Victoria!**



Land Access

Barriers to land access emphasized by dialogue participants included that there are currently many people living in apartments or renting homes with landlords who are not supportive of converting land for food-growing purposes. Although there are many community programs focusing on backyard sharing and educational resources for beginner food growers, without greater access to community and allotment gardens, or incentives for landlords to enable more food gardens, there will remain a large population of Victorians who will be unable to participate in urban agriculture.

“In Ontario, there was a change to the landlord-tenant act there ... the default position was about the right to have a pet ... so that there had to be a good reason to exclude pets blanketly from a building ... [can we incorporate this so that] when you rent an apartment, that by default you have the right to grow plants within it and on the balcony.”

- Kathryn Pankowski, neighbourhood garden coordinator for JBNA

School farms are gradually being established in Victoria; these farms provide produce for the school's lunch and salad bar programs, while providing educational and vocational opportunities for youth. One model in particular, the Vic High Learning Farm, is a self-funded model that can be easily replicated. In future, using more school land for this purpose could allow for a significant increase in land access for our region. Significant limitations at this time include the slow process of building trust with the school district and the lack of urban farmers who have the experience or capacity to work in this type of model.

Urban Agriculture Within New & Existing Developments

Suggestions were mentioned about how the real estate industry could become more supportive and involved with urban foodlands. The real estate industry includes developers, landowners and strata corporations for new and existing commercial or mixed-use, multi-unit residential developments. Through FED's Street to Sky interviews with urban landowners, developers and strata corporations it was discovered that many of those involved in the real estate industry in Victoria are becoming supportive of including urban agriculture into their properties, however they require more clarity on what that entails and greater incentives and support from the City.

Expensive land and property values in the City's urban cores has often led to an inability to use these spaces for food-growing purposes, which struggle to compete with other more financially viable land use options.

“Developers get the positive side of food production. The problem is that we don't have many organizations who have a super clear understanding of exactly what they're doing and what they're offering to the developer and how it's going to work for both sides.”

- Chris Hildreth, founder and CEO of TOPSOIL



Advocacy

With the increasing trend of urbanization in the City and in other cities around the world, there are a series of questions that must be addressed regarding how we would like to see our urban centres develop into the future. If we hope to bring food to the forefront of community values, there needs to be advocacy for it at every level of government. Dialogue participants listed advocating through and for community mobilization, skills development and vocational training, and innovation as being of specific importance for food in cities.

Community Mobilization

The effects of COVID-19 demonstrated to many the importance of being able to grow more food supply and incentivised people to participate in ways such as converting their lawns into a food garden, starting a boulevard garden or helping to empower others to learn how to grow their own food. Although a hopeful start, it will be crucial to maintain this momentum into the future and advocate for continued community participation and municipal assistance.

“What is the next smallest step you can take? Do it now.”

- Ruben Anderson, Fernwood Good Food Box coordinator

Skills Development and Vocational Training

This region saw the greatest influx of beginner food growers in decades throughout the pandemic, however continued advocacy for skills development around topics such as how to use existing spaces like yards, balconies and boulevards to grow food effectively will be a crucial focus in the coming years.

With urbanization and more people moving to urban centres, farmers are not necessarily coming from rural farm families anymore. A higher number of interested farmers than in recent decades are coming from urban centres, which means there needs to be opportunity to identify these potential farmers at an early age and provide them with the necessary skills to be the next generation of farmers. As one participant mentioned, this is why advocating for the creation of urban foodlands and urban farming to bring growing food into the public realm and everyday lives of people who would not normally see or interact with it is so important. This would bring on a greater opportunity to inspire a deeper understanding of what role growing food plays in urban dwellers lives and stimulate new ideas about how to innovate through the creation of jobs and economic opportunity.

“You don’t need to be a farmer to get into farming. [You] just need to have a passion for it and desire to see a change.”

- Chris Hildreth, founder and CEO of TOPSOIL



Innovation

In determining the best way forward, there must be a greater focus on innovation in the food system and how to break down the areas within it that no longer serve communities. This raises questions of, what are other growing methods or cultural interventions that could work within the City in particular? Perhaps a focus on vertical farming, cellular agriculture or hydroponics could become widely used and successful methods if allowed the ability to be taught and implemented widely. Or other interventions that have not been thought of will become the answer for urban settings.

“We have to explore other solutions, but we need to prove what really works for this city in particular.”

- Ariel Reyes Antuan, co-founder of Iyé Creative and Palenke Greens

Community Education

As mentioned above, maintaining the momentum, especially for beginner food growers, to continue to develop food literacy and the skills necessary to successfully grow food will be essential to help the City of Victoria become more resilient and food secure. Two central topics were brought up as being important to focus on in the coming years including attitudes, and food literacy and skills organizing.

Attitudes

The first step to meaningful community change is through a shift in attitude. Thankfully the social benefits associated with growing food are connecting with neighbours and reducing social isolation, spending time outdoors and receiving the positive effects from the microbes in the soil, in addition to helping people disconnect from their screens and connect with each other are some of the ways to shift a person's mindset and inspire them to take on a garden of their own.

Or as one of our dialogue participants, Katie Underwood would say, when all of that fails, “Feed them!”

“...more often, people's taste buds are more open than their minds to listen to the reasoning.”

*- Jesse Brown, head farmer at the Mason Street City Farm
and coordinator for the learning farm at Vic High*

In its aesthetic form, urban foodlands can simply make a city beautiful and provide its residents with a greater sense of pride in place and relation to one another. Placing value on agricultural activities in urban areas can also define the overall culture of cities and desire to engage in the production of food.



Food Literacy and Skills Organizing

There are many community organizations in the City that either provide resources, classes or workshops on caring for fruit trees, to using food as medicine, and a wide range of topics for starting food gardens.

Many community-led programs also emerged from the pandemic that provided either free or inexpensive education and food-growing resources for beginners. However, finding more ways to engage with residents to strengthen their food literacy and associated skills will become crucial in the coming years as the City restarts after the COVID-19 pandemic is over.

“[The amount of] people who dug in the soil this year and who grew successfully ... I think that speaks volumes and I think that people feel that in their minds, hearts and families ... If they experienced just one nice salad, perhaps they’ll want to grow another nice salad next year.”

*- Kayla Siefried, site manager
and community education coordinator
at the Compost Education Centre (CEC)*

Environmental Stewardship

There is no denying that there is a climate and biodiversity crisis. The global carbon footprint is increasing at an unprecedented rate and in ways that are unsustainable for future generations. Participants highlighted the importance to focus on moving away from capitalism and colonialism and toward climate resiliency and land healing in the future. Many of the comments made on this topic fell into two categories: emergency preparedness and soil health.

Emergency Preparedness

Urban foodlands, if done at a significant scale in a sustainable way, could become an important piece of the overall solution for helping the City to become more resilient to both climate change and global disruptions such as pandemics like COVID-19. One way this can help is by growing food closer to a greater number of people, diminishing the distance it must travel to reach communities and therefore the carbon impact of this transportation. Another argument made was that through urbanization and densifying certain areas rather than sprawling to other municipalities in the region.

“The pandemic showed us just how fragile our food system is [here on Vancouver Island.]”

- Ruben Anderson, Fernwood Good Food Box coordinator





Soil Health

A significant challenge to urban foodlands in Victoria is the lack of access to high quality compost. Currently the vast majority of food scraps are being shipped off of the Island for composting elsewhere. Regional systems need to be established for converting and distributing this valuable resource.

Composting and reciprocity with the land plays a vital role in soil health and the overall ability to grow high quality food. If the City plans to increase urban agriculture in the future, a lack of high-quality soil will impede the overall success of this goal.

“We’re measuring everything in dollars, we’re not measuring things in happiness, health ... environmental degradation. We need to come up with some new measurements.”

*- Joan Stonehocker,
executive director of Lifecycles Project Society*



City of Victoria Plant Starts for Communities in Need Through Get Growing, Victoria!

Equity

This pandemic has also exposed the already existing injustices in the food system and a greater understanding that food is a human right needs to be considered as such. Topics that emerged from the dialogues include food access and affordability, inclusion and culture.

Food Access and Affordability

There are currently many communities within Victoria that face barriers such as not having access to growing space at their homes in addition to all of our community or allotment gardens having a minimum waitlist of two years. Many people are also working for minimum wage and therefore cannot afford to buy fresh, organic or local foods, and culturally appropriate food.

“I don’t think we can have a conversation about food insecurity without talking about the systems that we have in place to keep people in poverty.”

- Joan Stonehocker, executive director of Lifecycles Project Society



Inclusion

Community needs to be at the centre of planning and policy making. Regional and City based food system needs assessments are an important part of planning for the future without leaving people behind. If policies and plans are created without talking to, working with and centering under-represented voices, the same inequities we are dealing with today will be recreated.

“How can we go to the community, do a needs assessment, and then we can design the system that’s one that includes the conditions and characteristics of those who live there.”

- Ariel Reyes Antuan, co-founder of Iyé Creative and Palenke Greens



Montreal St. Garden, Victoria, BC

Photo Credit: Can You Dig It



Policy Recommendations

This section draws alignment between each outcome and policies that would help achieve these outcomes. Further context and analysis have been provided for each of the policies and practices that were suggested and recommended during the dialogue. The policy and practice suggestions are organized by outcome area, as they are in the list above. For each of the policy suggestions, context is provided as it relates to the City of Victoria and whether the policy has already been adopted, implemented, evaluated and been taken up in the community (or not), and what the policy recommendation is, in terms of moving forward either the adoption or implementation towards this vision.

Policies for Land Use

The City of Victoria already has many policies and resources in place to enable urban foodlands on both public and private land including small scale commercial urban food production, boulevard gardening guidelines, building rooftop greenhouses, creating community gardens and orchards, growing food in mixed use, multi-unit residential developments, and building and operating food stands. However, barriers remain for our city surrounding certain key topics.

Infrastructure for Growing Food

With limited land and an inability to grow outdoors year-round, infrastructure plays an important role in urban growing. The City of Victoria has two guiding documents that outline the type of infrastructure that is allowed to support food growing: '[Growing Food and Gardening in Mixed-Use, Multi-Unit Residential Developments](#)' and '[Building a Rooftop Greenhouse](#).' There are also two documents that support commercial food production and the selling of produce: '[Small-Scale Commercial Urban Food Production Handbook](#)' and '[Building and Operating a Food Stand](#)'.

One consideration brought up in the dialogues was the current limit on the allowable size of greenhouses before needing to bring an engineer onboard is 10 square metres. This is a barrier for urban growers and impacts bumper season growing and limits their quantity of food production. An urban farmer, when applying for infrastructure permits can be classified as a construction company and is required to jump through multiple additional hoops to obtain the necessary permissions, adding another layer of difficulty to establishing an urban farm.

An additional concern mentioned by participants was Southern Vancouver Island's lack of food storage and distribution facilities to support an increase in local food growing and processing in the future.



What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- More reasonable greenhouse construction guidelines:
 - Develop an easily replicable model that urban growers would be allowed to construct without having to consult an engineer
 - Allow for larger structures
 - Re-classify the types of permissions and permits required for simple structures
- Create a distinct classification for urban agriculture businesses
- Partner with the CRD and other local organizations to create more food storage and distribution infrastructure

While the City has begun establishing a strong suite of policies and bylaws that allow for infrastructure there are three areas that require further development, including greenhouse guidelines, re-classifying urban agriculture businesses, and helping to establish more food storage and distribution infrastructure.

Land Access

The City of Victoria has a proposed target for 85% of neighbourhoods to have a community garden (including orchards, commons and allotments) and 75% of neighbourhoods to have an allotment garden by 2022. They have created a [community gardens feature map](#) for residents who are interested in starting this type of garden in their neighbourhood to view an inventory identifying City-owned land with community gardening potential. There are also a series of grants available to aid in the start up costs associated with these gardens. This includes the '[Community Garden Start-Up Grant](#),' available in two phases including up to \$5,000 for the design phase and up to \$10,000 for the build phase; the '[City Micro-Grant](#),' which helps to cover community garden supplies; the '[Community Garden Volunteer Coordinator Grant](#),' for any neighbourhoods that manage and maintain community gardens as defined in their Community Garden Policy; and the '[My Great Neighbourhood Grants](#),' focused on animating under-utilized community spaces.

There is an additional municipal goal for 100% of our neighbourhoods to have community food trees (community orchards, food forests, or food trees introduced with their stewardship program).

While the City has created many resources in recent years to help urban farmers begin small-scale food production businesses, additional resources could be allocated to a communications plan on the topic and more frequent urban farming info-sessions.

Recurring topics on land access in the dialogues included that currently, there is no incentive or requirement for landlords to allow tenants to utilize available land to grow food if it is not part of their organizational or personal values. Additionally, while the school farm at Victoria High School has been a successful initiative, as mentioned above, the limitations to replicating this model on more school grounds include the slow process of bureaucracy and again, a lack of urban farmers willing to take on a project like this or with the necessary experience.



What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Create a policy to allow community food production to occur in each municipal park
- A mandate for a tenants right to grow food
- Protect against damage to a landlord's property, however change current policies that allow landlords to restrict tenant access and capability to create their own urban gardens without a good reason

There are currently many ways that the City is addressing land access, although the majority of this focus is on access to community gardens. A significant impact could be made if there were more incentive to allow for a tenant's right to grow food on rental properties and if more school land could be used to both produce food and educate youth.

New and Existing Developments

Municipal resources have been created in recent years to help encourage urban gardening and food production in new and existing developments including '[Growing Food and Gardening in Mixed-Use, Multi-Unit Residential Developments](#)' and '[Building a Rooftop Greenhouse](#).'

A bylaw was passed in 2019 that requires "a minimum of 30% of the required common landscaped areas should include a diverse combination of plants and vegetation that are native to southern Vancouver Island, food-bearing (capable of being harvested for food and medicine) or that provide pollinator habitats,"⁴ however, participants stated that more must be done to encourage buy-in from developers, landowners and strata corporations to use their land for purposes that help to increase our local food security and bring urban foodlands further into the public realm.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Policies that incentivise developers and urban landowners to include long-term (5-year minimum) agricultural sites on their developments:
 - Reducing or removing the mill rate
 - Adding a density bonus for long-term urban agriculture sites with meaningful targets that increase community food production
 - Decreasing the developer's amenity fee
 - Rezoning process:
 - Possibility to provide a preferential timeframe for a developer to have their development permit considered by the City
 - Creating a policy with food assets requirements that is presented as a checklist that developers must consider⁵

⁴ City of Victoria Public Hearing: Proposed amendments to the Official Community Plan: Food-Bearing, Pollinator and Native Landscape Design Guidelines

⁵ Example: Similar to Vancouver's rezoning policy - "The primary deliverable is the demonstration of the delivery of a minimum three food assets... The success of a food asset is determined by effective programming and maintenance. The applicant is encouraged to work with City staff to identify potential users and caretakers well in advance." Choose



- Require agricultural use of vacant lots, waiting to be developed

While many developers, landowners and strata corporations currently operating throughout Victoria are supportive of incorporating urban agriculture onto their properties, many still see this type of use as risky and require more information and greater incentive from the city to move forward.

Policies for Advocacy

There has been a greater focus since the creation of the most recent OCP for food system policies and resources. In the dialogues participants discussed the extent that the City of Victoria has strong food policies in many areas, would need additional policies in others and presented policies that already existed which they were not aware of.

Community Mobilization

It was stated by participants that there are already multiple established local organizations that provide educational resources for the community on many topics relating to growing food, however one area where the City could provide support is through creating additional funding streams to enable more community participation through these programs.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Creating additional funding to be provided for established community organizations already focused on providing free or inexpensive education on urban food-related topics
 - Additionally, providing multi-year funding agreements with these organizations

Many individuals and organizations are already working on community mobilization in our locale and could benefit greatly from additional financial and outreach support to further their mandates.

Skills Development and Vocational Training

Participants identified that there were successful programs either initiated or funded by the City of Victoria to help the influx of beginner growers gain access to necessary materials and skills after COVID-19. One example was the City's '[Get Growing, Victoria!](#)' program, which included some resources on identifying and caring for the plant varieties chosen for distribution, providing 81,000 seedlings to the community, as well as '[Growing Together](#),' a collaboration of multiple food-focused organizations in the region with the purpose to support beginner growers through local education and support. This included a video series that created 25 videos with local experts on a wide range of beginner topics.

In addition to City-led and funded initiatives, many other organizations in the region were able to provide high quality skills development for our communities, however it was stated that further

from a list of food assets: Community gardens / community orchards, Edible landscaping, Community kitchen, Community food market, On-site organics management, Facilities to support neighbourhood food networks. - The City of Vancouver Policy Report





support for these programs would be essential to keep up the momentum created throughout the pandemic.

A focus on disseminating the variety of policies and resources associated with helping new urban farmers begin their own small-scale business was identified as an option to help interested individuals see growing food in the city as a potentially viable career option.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Multi-year (3-year minimum) funding terms with greater financial support for organizations who have established impactful/effective educational and vocational programs for emerging urban farmers

The municipal programs developed throughout 2020 were impressive undertakings and were successful, especially considering the challenges presented by the pandemic. As they continue into future years, additional focus on supporting and promoting more skills-based and vocational training will allow for wider advocacy throughout our region.

Innovation

Participants identified that to allow for more innovation regarding urban agriculture, a greater level of value and importance must be placed at a municipal level on clearly defining the goals and outcomes we would like to achieve as a region within urban foodlands, and how these goals might be able to integrate with other approaches such as rural farming for a greater regional impact. As our urban centres develop in the future, more focus must be placed on setting targets for new and innovative ideas to use smaller spaces to grow an increasing amount and variety of food.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Possibility of the City to lease two or more sites in Victoria to use as innovation hubs.
 - Lease the spaces for a minimum of three or more years and hold a competition for new ideas and technologies pushing the boundaries of growing food in a city. The winners would be provided with startup funding and access to a longer-term lease.
 - Partner with a tech company who can help to fund the initial capital investment for both the innovation hub and winning business ideas.
- Either leasing urban land or providing municipally owned land and investing in shipping containers for rent to individuals or organizations working on more innovative farming techniques such as vertical farming, hydroponics, aeroponics and more.
 - Alternatively investing in the creation of multiple greenhouses to be used for similar purposes.



Having regional clarity on how we would like to integrate urban foodlands into other agricultural approaches, in addition to municipally led advocacy and action that provides the freedom to explore new ideas will determine how successful and resilient our local food system will become in the future.

Policies for Community Education

In 1950's, Vancouver Island grew up to 85% of its own food supply. Today, as little as 5 – 10% is grown⁶. Farming used to engage 50 – 60% of our population, whereas today it is less than 2%, and this has led to a meaningful absence in mainstream understanding of the significance of local food supply.

Many of the current farmers are over the age of 65 and will be retiring soon - if not in the next few years, within the coming decade. Without the knowledge kept by these local food growers being passed down to new minds with the passion to evolve food systems past the 21st century, we will soon experience a great loss of this wisdom and skills needed to develop a food secure region.

Attitudes

It was discussed in the dialogues that Victoria has a culture around growing. Known to many as 'The Garden City,' Victoria's residents are primed for the values surrounding gardening and stewardship for associated themes. Dialogue participants talked about the City's strong disposition towards growing food and pointed to other cities that have strong cultural ties and activities associated with food. For example, one participant talked about the outdoor eating culture in Europe.

The City's 'Get Growing, Victoria!' program is a great example demonstrating widespread support for residents, city staff and council to support food growing in the City. Continued and additional programs like these are an impactful way the City can lower the barriers of entry for many and support positive attitudes towards growing food.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Provide a report each year focusing on storytelling of the ancillary and social benefits of food. Follow the experience a number of individuals and families have from acquiring these services to demonstrate the impact it has had and share this report widely with our communities
- Develop metrics for social and health benefits on growing food to track progress on achieving identified outcomes

The impact from interpersonal relationships created through the sharing of a neighbour's harvest or connecting over a meal cooked with food from one's garden can be one of the most effective

⁶ Vancouver Island Economic Alliance: Lack of security: Why Vancouver Island food production is on the decline



ways to shift attitudes on food growing in a city. The municipality has an opportunity to shift regional attitudes on the benefits of growing food by providing additional information on food growing topics for people who participate in their programs.

Food Literacy and Skills Organizing

As mentioned previously, there are many long-standing organizations providing inexpensive food literacy and food growing skills education such as Lifecycles Project Society and the Compost Education Centre. However, one barrier demonstrated from a participant working for such an organization was that initiatives are often limited in scope and impact by the amount of time needed to write and report on grants that are often provided only on a project or yearly basis. This participant suggested that the creation of multi-year granting streams could allow for greater impact in delivering programming.

It was highlighted that a focus on creating food literacy around the planting and care for more fruit trees is one way that urban foodlands can have a significant contribution towards overall food security in Victoria. The City has developed initiatives such as '[Urban Food Tree Stewardship Program](#),' where through a community organization, residents can apply to plant and maintain up to five fruit and nut trees in a local green space. The City will work with the organization to find suitable locations and Lifecycles Project Society, a regional non-profit, is able to provide training on how to care for the trees.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Multi-year (3-year minimum) funding terms with greater financial support for organizations who have established impactful/effective educational and vocational programs for emerging urban farmers
- Priority funding through existing grant streams for organizations who developed as a result of the pandemic, or were able to effectively pivot their educational programming to provide high quality videos, classes, webinars or workshops on beginner food growing

School District

- Replicate the school farm at Victoria High School and providing educational opportunities on food literacy and skills for youth
 - Organize field trips for schools without a school farm to ensure a greater number of children have access to these teachings

For many non-profit and community organizations, constant grant application writing and reporting can take staff time away from focusing on educational programming and ultimately be a barrier for carrying out more impactful work.



Policies for Environmental Stewardship

A climate emergency was declared in the City in March of 2019, and a Climate Leadership Plan was created with a “plan to reach an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and transition to 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.”⁷ A large focus of this plan includes improving organic waste management and building a resilient community.

Soil Health

A current issue brought up in the dialogues was a lack of action in regard to reciprocity with the land - specifically through composting. Currently, 21% of the waste seen at Hartland Landfill is from food and yard scraps that could easily be composted (roughly 75 kilograms per person every year).⁸

While the City has goals and plans in place to divert 100% of food and yard waste from the landfill by 2030, including plans to partner with the CRD to deliver a regional, industrial treatment facility for organic waste by 2025, one participant identified that the majority of our current compost is being shipped off of the Island and is not being returned for use in our region. He stated that this valuable resource was also in great need for urban farmers and that high quality soil created from our own compost will be essential to the success of creating more urban foodlands in the future.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Regional, industrial treatment facility:
 - Prioritize the dissemination of compost to local urban farming organizations that provide food directly to our communities
 - Possibility of distributing free soil from the treatment facility bi-annually for urban food growers similarly to the City’s mulch program
 - Policy to ensure the facility produces compost tea that it can sell or provide for our growing communities

It is encouraging to see the targets set by the City to create a regional, industrial treatment facility to decrease the amount of organic waste that goes to our landfill. It will also be paramount to create policies on how the end product from this facility will be incorporated into the wider community and provide greater access to high quality soil for the region.

Policies for Equity

The City is developing a Community Equity Lens that will embed distributional, procedural and structural inter-generational equity into the City’s corporate policies guiding hiring, staff training and professional development, procurement and civic engagement. This equity framework is

⁷ The City of Victoria: Climate Action

⁸ The City of Victoria: Climate Leadership Plan



supported by a Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Lead, who is in the process of being hired at the time this report was written.

The City has also created an Accessibility Advisory Body that helped co-create an [Accessibility Framework](#). The City has expressed that “Accessibility is part of the City’s broader equity and inclusion efforts that contribute to improved social health and well-being. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal benefits and outcomes.”

In late 2020, the City of Victoria and Public Health Association of BC partnered with Agape Inclusion Solutions to host a two-part accessibility workshop with community garden coordinators to build their accessibility confidence in creating more inclusive garden spaces.

Food Access and Affordability

It was discussed in the dialogues that there is a disproportionate number of First Nation and marginalized communities currently renting homes in the City where landlords are not supportive of creating a food garden, or where they do not have access to ideal growing locations on their property. The City of Victoria has proposed targets to provide more community and allotment gardens for each neighbourhood, however with current community garden waitlists at a minimum of two years, as one participant mentioned, it is likely that these new gardens will fill up quickly and additional solutions to provide access for affordable options to grow fresh food will be necessary.

There are also a diminishing number of affordable grocery stores for our communities, with Wellburn’s Market closing down at the end of 2019 - one of the last local options for those looking to buy groceries on a budget.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- A mandate for a tenant’s right to grow food:
 - Protect against damage to a landlord’s property
 - Change current policies that allow landlords to restrict tenant access and capability to create their own urban gardens without a good reason
- Develop municipal targets to increase the number of affordable grocery stores in our region
- Create a granting stream that brings foods grown by under-represented groups to the forefront of our city on municipal lands

Without access to affordable options to either grow or purchase food, many communities will continue to buy from international organizations such as Walmart and will not be able to participate fully in local and urban foodlands.



Inclusion

There are some programs, such as the Victoria Immigrant & Refugee Centre Society's Welcome Gardens, that help connect newcomers and local residents in an effort to create a strong sense of community. One participant highlighted that with the City's new equity and inclusion focus, there is a stronger mandate to work with marginalized communities to assess what they need to participate more fully in urban foodlands.

What are the policy recommendations?

Municipal

- Create a needs assessment that is carried out twice a year, with a greater focus on marginalized communities (First Nations, immigrants and refugees, people experiencing disabilities):
 - Work with community organizations who have already built trust within these demographics
 - Provide honorariums for these groups to help carry out this work
 - Create an evaluation plan to measure targets set from these needs assessments

By designing specific outreach through organizations that have already built trust with these communities who often do not participate in needs assessments, the City will be able design more inclusive policies and practices.



Dr. Bonnie Henry Commemorative Garden, Victoria, BC

Photo Credit: Can You Dig It



Analysis

The policies and practice suggestions that were brought forward by the participants of the dialogue were analyzed according to the level of implementation. There is a continuum of implementation that the policies fit into, and the following categories have been used for the regional reports from Kamloops, Vancouver and Victoria. An additional two components were added to Victoria's continuum due to many of the policy recommendations not fitting within these categories.

Policy Implementation Continuum

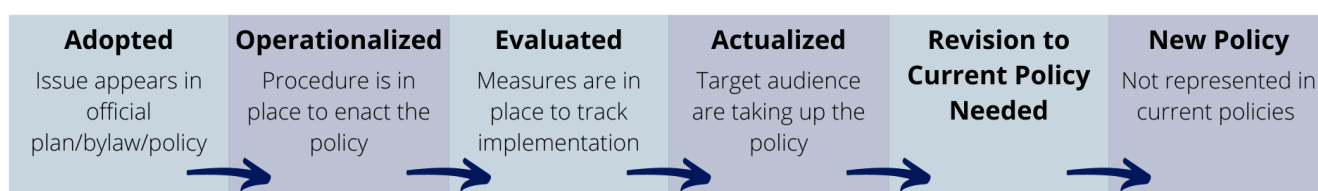


Figure 1. Policy Implementation Continuum

Starting in reverse order, the policies are organized below by level of implementation:

Actualized Policies

- A small number applying to create community gardens on municipal land

Evaluated Policies (but not actualized)

- Targets for number of community gardens installed set

Operationalized Policies (but not evaluated or actualized)

- Allowing community food production to occur in municipal parks

Adopted Policies (but not implemented, evaluated or actualized)

- N/A

Existing policies (but change suggested)

City of Victoria: Growing in the City Policies

- Evaluate the strength of current policies in encouraging food production
- Evaluate the effectiveness of communication efforts in educating the public

City of Victoria: Greenhouse Structures

- Develop more reasonable greenhouse construction guidelines



- Develop an easily-replicable model that urban growers would be allowed to construct without having to consult an engineer
- Allow for larger structures
- Re-classify the types of permissions and permits required for simple structures

City of Victoria: Business Classification

- Create a distinct classification for urban agriculture businesses

City of Victoria: Property Taxes

- Reduce or remove the mill rate

City of Victoria: Development and Planning

- Require agricultural use of vacant lots waiting to be developed

City of Victoria: Grants and Funding

- Create additional funding for established community organizations focused on providing free or inexpensive education on urban food-related topics
 - Provide multi-year funding agreements (3-year minimum)
- Priority funding through existing grant streams for organizations who developed as a result of COVID-19 or effectively pivoted their educational programming on urban agriculture

Capital Regional District (CRD): Waste Management

- Create regional, industrial treatment facility:
 - Prioritize the dissemination of compost to local urban farming organizations
 - Distribute free soil from this site bi-annually for urban food growers (similarly to the City's mulch program)
 - Policy to ensure the site also produces compost tea that it can sell or provide for our growing communities

City of Victoria: Community Needs Assessments and Partnerships

- Conduct bi-annual needs assessment with a greater focus on marginalized communities (First Nations, immigrants and refugees, people with physical and mental impairments):
 - Work with community organizations who have already built trust within these demographics
 - Provide honorariums for these groups to help carry out this work
 - Create an evaluation plan to measure targets set from these needs assessments

School District: School Farms and Gardens

- Replicate the school farm at Victoria High School and provide educational opportunities on food literacy and skills for youth



Policies that have not been Adopted:

- Mandate for a tenant's right to grow
- Partner with CRD and other local organizations to create more food storage and distribution infrastructure
- Add a density bonus for long-term (minimum 5 years) urban agriculture sites
- Decrease developer's amenity fee
- Create innovation hubs on City-owned land:
 - Lease the spaces and hold a contest for new ideas and technologies pushing the boundaries of growing food in a city. The winners are provided with startup funding and access to a longer term lease
 - Partner with a tech company who can help to fund the initial capital investments
- Provide annual report focusing on storytelling of the ancillary and social benefits of food
- Develop metrics for the social and health benefits of growing food
- Develop municipal targets to increase the number of affordable grocery stores in our region
- Create a granting stream that brings foods grown by under-represented groups to the forefront of our city on municipal lands
- School District: Organize field trips for schools to Vic High School farm



Mason St. City Farm, Victoria, BC

Photo Credit: Mason St. Farm



Discussion

The City of Victoria has already implemented a wide variety of policies to encourage urban foodlands in the city. There are a number of supportive food growing policies already in place in the City of Victoria through the Growing in the City program, however, this suite of policies has not yet been evaluated. As such, it would be worthwhile to assess the strength of these policies in their ability to encourage more food production within City boundaries to determine their effectiveness. Furthermore, an evaluation of current communication strategies around these policies is recommended. Dialogue participants, who represented highly engaged food system organizations, business and community members were unaware of many of the current city policies. If these dialogue participants do not fully understand what is possible based on the current city policies, then the public is certainly unaware of such policies that aim to enable and facilitate more food growing.

Another suite of policies that could be expanded upon is the granting stream. Dialogue participants made mention of the number of hours needed when applying for grants on a yearly basis. This process could be stream-lined by the creation of multi-year granting streams that support established non-profits in the delivery of education around growing food and the establishment of a local, resilient food system. While the dialogue focused on the City of Victoria, there may be opportunities to explore philanthropic organizations working with cities to support multi-year funding projects that align with both community and city goals. This type of support could be through a food funders table.

This report also presents new and tangible policy recommendations that would continue to build on the City's current areas of focus around food systems, community assessments, and engagement. First, is the suggestion of a tenant's right to grow. This would require a shift in the landlord-tenant act whereby the default would be the right to grow plants within the unit and on the balconies. There is precedent for such a change in Ontario where the default position was changed to include the right to have a pet. This policy could be revised to reflect food growing (instead of pets). It is suggested that the City should change the current policies and not allow landlords to restrict a tenant's access and capability to create urban gardens without a good reason while protecting against potential damage to the property.

The City has publicly released an accessibility framework and is in the process of developing an equity framework that will embed distributional, procedural and structural inter-generational equity into the City's policies. With this new equity and inclusion focus, there will be a stronger mandate to work with under-represented communities to assess what is needed to participate more fully as community members of Victoria. It is suggested that this framework be applied to urban foodlands. Furthermore, Indigenous, black and people of colour are often not included in city processes and therefore, voices are not included in city policies and reflected in city practices. To address this issue it is recommended that the City of Victoria host regular conversations and have intentional engagement with Indigenous, black and communities of colour to ensure any evaluation of existing policies and new policies include and reflect under-represented



communities experiences. Dialogue participants also suggested that the City of Victoria create new granting streams that bring food grown by under-represented groups to the forefront of public land. There are existing projects and organizations that could assist in facilitating this process that help connect newcomers and local residents through growing.

The impact from interpersonal relationships created through the sharing of a neighbour's harvest, or connecting over a meal cooked with food from one's garden can be one of the most effective ways to shift attitudes on food growing in a city. The municipality has an opportunity to shift local attitudes on the benefits of growing food by providing additional information on food growing topics for people who participate in their programs. In order to emphasize the collective benefits of growing food it is suggested that the City petition yearly reports that focus on storytelling of the ancillary and social benefits of food. This could involve following the experience of community members in participating in these programs and reporting this information to the broader population. It would be advisable to develop metrics for social and health benefits in tandem with these efforts to track progress in this area.

It is recommended that the themes discussed in the section Outcomes and Urban Foodlands, be further developed and re-framed to enable policymakers to identify tangible outcomes. However, while the City of Victoria may set its outcomes and targets, it is also important for community members to organize and create their own community outcomes and targets. Dialogue participants expressed that community-mobilization and advocacy is a central function for developing strong foodlands policies at a city level. Furthermore, there were a number of issues highlighted by dialogue participants that will require on the ground development through community-based initiatives. There are opportunities for engagement that could result in real progress within our food system based on the goals set by community members and organizations.



Spring Ridge Commons, Victoria, BC

Photo Credit: Can You Dig It



Recommendations Recap

- 🍏 Evaluate the City of Victoria's Growing in the City suite of policies including their effectiveness, and level of public awareness
 - Ensure an equity lens is included as part of the evaluation process
- 🍏 Develop a communication strategy to increase public uptake and use of the City policies
- 🍏 Create multi-year granting streams for established organizations to focus their efforts on food system education and engagement
 - Encourage the City of Victoria to work with other food funders to increase and streamline multi-year funding pools for organizations
- 🍏 Mandate a tenant's right to grow without good reason while protecting against damage to property
- 🍏 Engage with Indigenous, black and people of colour within the community in City processes
- 🍏 Support existing organizations by creating new granting streams that enable more food grown on public lands by under-represented communities
- 🍏 Shift awareness by engaging with communities to highlight the social and health benefits of growing and sharing food
- 🍏 Encourage community organizations to create their own outcomes and targets for increasing sustainable food system programming in the city



Conclusion

The dialogues, hosted by FED Urban Agriculture Society, in partnership with the Public Health Association of BC, engaged with 11 participants working within the City of Victoria on food systems, including urban farmers, community social enterprise and non-profit professionals, neighbourhood garden coordinators, and educators. Various perspectives were explored to determine why access to urban foodlands is important for the dialogue participants and their communities, the impacts of these lands to local residents and what policies would be needed to actualize those ideas at a municipal level. The main themes that emerged throughout the discussions surrounded land use, advocacy, community education, environmental stewardship and equity.

The City of Victoria has made many advancements within policies and access to resources for urban agriculture in recent years. As a result, many of the policy recommendations included revisions to a current policy, bylaw or plan already in place, with new ideas being put forward focusing on further innovation, food access and affordability, changing attitudes, enabling more urban agriculture within new and existing developments and land access. Because Growing in the City is a relatively new initiative, participants identified that meaningful next steps for the City and community, beyond revising current policies, could be to provide funding to implement a public awareness communications plan and create additional multi-year funding streams to enable long standing community organizations working on these topics to have greater impact.



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Appendix 1

Analysis Rubric for Policy Recommendations

Theme	Sub-theme	Policy, Plan or Bylaw Recommendations	Does the policy exist in a plan/ bylaw/ policy?	Is this a new plan/ bylaw / policy suggestion?	New Policy from Dialogue or Suggested by Policy	Have implementation procedures been put in place to enable the policy to happen?	Is there an evaluation or target or reporting process attached to this policy?	Is it being taken up by residents at a reasonable pace?	Is this a current policy, plan, or bylaw but needs to be revised based on the regional dialogue report?
Outcome or vision	If there is a subtheme to this outcome	As stated in your report	Mark with an X if it exists or leave blank if it doesn't exist		Three options: 100% new policy, alluded to in dialogue, Directly from dialogue	Something written down so people know how to do the thing in the policy	Some way of tracking progress - This could also be funding resources to it		Did you suggest a revision to the policy, plan or bylaw in your report
Land Use	Infrastructure for Growing Food	More reasonable greenhouse construction guidelines			Directly from dialogue				Yes - Develop an easily-replicable model that urban growers would be allowed to construct without having to consult an engineer - Allow for larger structures
	Infrastructure for Growing Food	Create a distinct classification for urban agriculture businesses			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Infrastructure for Growing Food	Re-classify the types of permissions and permits required for simple structures			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Infrastructure for Growing Food	Partner with the CRD and other local organizations to create more food storage and distribution infrastructure		Yes	Alluded to in dialogue				
	Land Access	Create a policy to allow community food production to occur in each municipal park	X		Alluded to in dialogue	Yes - community	Yes - # of community	No	



						garden policy, guidelines and grants created in addition to a community gardens land inventory map	gardens installed		
	Land Access	A mandate for a tenants right to grow food: - Protect against damage to a landlords property, however create policies that allow landlords to restrict tenant access and capability to create their own urban gardens without a good reason		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	New & Existing Developments	Reducing or removing the mill rate			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	New & Existing Developments	Adding a density bonus for long-term urban agriculture sites with meaningful targets that increase community food production		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	New & Existing Developments	Decreasing the developer's amenity fee		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	New & Existing Developments	Rezoning process: - Possibility to provide a preferential timeframe for a developer to have their development permit considered by the City - Possibility for the City to incorporate a meaningful food-growing lens as a necessary consideration - Creating a policy with food assets requirements that is presented as a checklist that developers must consider - Similar to Vancouver's rezoning policy: "The primary deliverable is the demonstration of the delivery of a minimum three food assets... The success of a food asset is determined by effective programming and maintenance. The applicant is encouraged to work with City staff to identify potential users and caretakers well in advance." Choose from a list of food assets: Community gardens / community orchards, Edible landscaping, Community kitchen, Community food market, On-site organics management, Facilities to support neighbourhood food networks			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	New & Existing Developments	Require agricultural use of vacant lots, waiting to be developed			Directly from dialogue				Yes
Advocacy	Community Mobilization	Creating additional funding to be provided for established community organizations already focused on providing free or inexpensive education on urban food-related topics			Alluded to in dialogue				Yes - redirection of granting funds
	Community Mobilization	Additionally, providing multi-year funding agreements			Directly from dialogue				Yes



	Skills Development & Vocational Training	Multi-year (3-year minimum) funding terms with greater financial support for organizations who have established impactful/effective educational and vocational programs for emerging urban farmers			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Innovation	Possibility of the city to lease two or more sites in Victoria to use as innovation hubs: Lease the spaces for a minimum of three or more years and hold a contest for new ideas and technologies pushing the boundaries of growing food in a city. The winners are provided with startup funding and access to a longer term lease.		Yes	100% new policy				
	Innovation	Partner with a tech company who can help to fund the initial capital investment for both the innovation hub and winning business ideas.		Yes	100% new policy				
	Innovation	Either leasing urban land or providing municipally owned land and investing in shipping containers for rent to individuals or organizations working on more innovative farming techniques such as vertical farming, hydroponics, aeroponics and more		Yes	100% new policy				
	Innovation	Investing in the creation of multiple greenhouses for rent to individuals or organizations working on more innovative farming techniques such as vertical farming, hydroponics, aeroponics and more		Yes	100% new policy				
Community Education	Attitudes	Provide a report each year focusing on storytelling of the ancillary and social benefits of food. Follow the experience a number of individuals and families have from acquiring these services to demonstrate the impact it has had and share this report widely with our communities.		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	Attitudes	Develop metrics that demonstrate the social and health benefits of growing food available for use in policy proposals to translate this information into more official terms		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	Attitudes	Develop metrics for social and health benefits on growing food to track progress on achieving identified outcomes		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	Food Literacy & Skills Organizing	Multi-year (3-year minimum) funding terms with greater financial support for organizations who have established impactful/effective educational and vocational programs for emerging urban farmers			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Food Literacy & Skills Organizing	Priority funding through existing grant streams for organizations who developed as a result of the pandemic or were able to effectively pivot their educational programming to provide high quality videos, classes, webinars or workshops on beginner food growing			Alluded to in dialogue				Yes - redirection of granting funds
	Food Literacy & Skills Organizing	School District: Replicate the school farm at Victoria High School and providing educational opportunities on food literacy and skills for youth			Directly from dialogue				Yes



	Food Literacy & Skills Organizing	School District: Organize field trips for schools without a school farm to ensure a greater number of children have access to these teachings		Yes	100% new policy				
	Soil Health	Regional, industrial treatment facility: Prioritize the dissemination of compost to local urban farming organizations that provide food directly to our communities			Directly from dialogue				Yes - idea for facility a City target, but additional meaningful goals need to be set
	Soil Health	Regional, industrial treatment facility: Possibility of distributing free soil from this site bi-annually for urban food growers similarly to the City's mulch program			Directly from dialogue				Yes - idea for facility a City target, but additional meaningful goals need to be set
	Soil Health	Regional, industrial treatment facility: Policy to ensure the site also produces compost tea that it can sell or provide for our growing communities			Alluded to in dialogue				Yes - idea for facility a City target, but additional meaningful goals need to be set
Policies for Equity	Food Access & Affordability	A mandate for a tenants right to grow food: Protect against damage to a landlords property, however change current policies that allow landlords to restrict tenant access and capability to create their own urban gardens without a good reason		Yes	Directly from dialogue				
	Food Access & Affordability	Develop municipal targets to increase the number of affordable grocery stores in our region		Yes	100% new policy				
	Food Access & Affordability	Create a granting stream that brings foods grown by under-represented groups to the forefront of our city on municipal lands		Yes	100% new policy				
	Inclusion	Create a needs assessment that is carried out twice a year, with a greater focus on marginalized communities (First Nations, immigrants and refugees, people with physical and mental impairments):			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Inclusion	Needs assessment: Work with community organizations who have already built trust within these demographics			Directly from dialogue				Yes
	Inclusion	Needs assessment: Provide honorariums for these groups to help carry out this work			Alluded to in dialogue				Yes
	Inclusion	Needs assessment: Create an evaluation plan to measure targets set from these needs assessments			Directly from dialogue				Yes - targets set from previous needs assessments carried out, but no follow up