

## Draft Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy Summary

### Summary of key materials from the Draft City Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy - October 1, 2012

The City of Edmonton, through *The Way We Grow* and other municipal plans, has recognized food and urban agriculture as a factor to be considered in its future planning and community development.

Many cities are considering the role and scale of their local food and urban agriculture sectors, and Edmonton can step out among these cities by creating and implementing a food and urban agriculture strategy.

The scope and scale of this strategy is focused at the local level and on what the City of Edmonton can achieve within its jurisdiction together with a range of public, private and community partnerships. Our approaches to how we grow and use land must balance different and divergent needs, values and pressures.

The various components of a food system including food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste are impacted by – land use, urban design, transportation, economic development, waste management, the cost of living, the environment and the health of the population.

Edmonton has a great diversity of areas within its boundaries – from the dense urban core of downtown and mature and developing neighbourhoods, to ecologically significant areas and farms in the more peri-urban areas – where opportunities for food and urban agriculture vary.

The Strategy contains nine strategic directions and recommendations

- Establish the Edmonton Food Council
- Provide food skill education and information
- Expand urban agriculture
- Develop local food infrastructure capacity
- Grow local food supply and demand
- Enliven the public realm through a diversity of food activities
- Treat food waste as a resource
- Support urban farmers and ecological approaches to farming
- Integrate land for agriculture

One of the recommendations is the establishment of a framework to guide future decisions about agricultural land use in the Urban Growth Areas (the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest parts of Edmonton), and to evaluate land use plans and large-scale development proposals. The framework will provide tools to help frame and answer a series of key questions:

- How much - how much agricultural land should be protected within the Urban Growth Areas?
- Where - which lands should be protected and what form (pattern) should this protected agricultural land take?
- How - what are the most appropriate mechanisms that the City should employ to protect lands for agriculture?



Given the complexity of the issues outlined in this strategy and the scope of the goals and recommendations, implementation will occur over time as the Edmonton Food Council is established, partnerships are formed, research is continued, and resources are allocated.

The long-term vision for the strategy: Edmonton has a resilient food and agriculture system that contributes to the local economy and the overall cultural, financial, social and environmental sustainability of the city.

## From the Public Consultation Reports

### Five Consultation Reports

- Public Opinion Survey Report
- Landowner Survey Report
- Stakeholder Group Summary - Round 1
- Stakeholder Group Summary - Round 2
- Citizen Panel Report

The most often-heard themes and ideas during the various consultations were:

- Available urban spaces for food production need to be increased
- Access to local food for consumers must be improved
- Prime agricultural land should be protected wherever possible
- Local food should be celebrated
- Food and community cohesion are closely linked
- Balanced urban growth is vital
- Economic opportunities for local food businesses must be improved
- Education, awareness and promotion around local food need to be increased
- Infrastructure for food and urban agriculture related businesses must be enhanced
- The coordination of resources and information sharing should be strengthened
- The City of Edmonton needs to take a strongly supportive role in all of the above

## From the Agricultural Inventory and Assessment Report

An inventory of agricultural lands and activities within the City, with a specific focus on Edmonton's three Urban Growth Areas (UGAs); the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest parts of Edmonton.

All three of Edmonton's Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) have a high capability for agriculture. A large majority (70.3%) of lands in the UGAs have soils classified as prime agricultural soils (CLI Class 1 to 3) with significant water holding capacity and high fertility. The Northeast has the largest amount of prime agricultural soils (1,850 Hectares Class 1 soils) and slightly higher average growing-season temperatures than the other UGAs.



There are significant quantities of land with high capability for agriculture in the surrounding Capital Region including 733,000 Hectares of land with soils classified as prime agricultural soils (CLI Class 1 to 3).

The UGAs therefore represent less than 1% of prime agricultural lands within the region. However, while the region contains a great deal of prime soils, it is not known what portion of the region has been planned for development and therefore, it is unclear what area will remain available for agriculture in the future.

Like most large Metropolitan areas in Canada, Edmonton has been experiencing a loss of farm lands and the conversion of land from agricultural to urban uses.

### From the Local Food Opportunities Report

This report focuses on the opportunity to bolster the emerging local food economy.

In terms of priorities, it is not the demand for local food which requires attention. Rather, the bottlenecks are in food production, food processing, and food distribution sectors.

This report explores six strategies that could help to reduce this bottleneck and provide more value and opportunity for Edmonton's local food economy.

- Increase greenhouse-based food production
- Expand small-scale food processing infrastructure
- Establish a local agri-food hub
- Establish a multi-day, permanent farmers market
- Expand local food in mainstream retailing
- Increase institutional local food purchasing