

Food Systems

17



GOALS

- 17 (A) A healthy share of the food that supplies Victoria's daily needs is sustainably grown, processed and packaged in the city, in surrounding agricultural areas, and on Vancouver Island.
- 17 (B) Victorians have access to skills, knowledge and resources to produce and process 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 cafés animate street life and bring people together. Food gardens and farms outside the city provide fresh food and regional green spaces. The food system has major impacts on transportation patterns, urban employment, ecosystems, and waste management. The global food system has expanded Victoria's **foodshed** worldwide, providing both relative abundance and associated environmental, social and economic impacts.

Given the small land base available within Victoria, and the city's commitment to accommodating a significant amount of regional population growth, Victoria will continue to rely on agricultural lands outside the city and the greater global

food market to supply a large share of its food. The policies in this plan aim to encourage food production where safe and suitable, to forge links to regional agriculture, and optimize the many recreational, health, civic and local economic benefits that flow from a stronger local food system.

Locally, several issues influence Victoria's move towards **food security** and a more sustainable food system. A growing number of residents and families are food insecure, and rely on local charitable food services, such as food banks, for regular access to food. Within Victoria, many households with access to land grow a portion of their own food. At the same time, the 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. Locally, the Capital Region's traditional agricultural sector is declining due to aging farmers, loss of critical **food system infrastructure** (such as meat, vegetable, fruit and grain processing facilities) and decreasing economic viability.

In 2015, kitchen scraps were banned at the Hartland Landfill reducing the volume of organic material arriving. However, kitchen scraps and other easy-to-compost materials still make up the largest share of the regional waste arriving at Hartland - 21% or roughly 75 kilograms per person every year. This and other decomposing organic waste produce approximately 7% of our community's GHG emissions. Reducing and diverting residential kitchen and yard waste is a priority for lowering the city's waste-related GHG emissions, and a way to return nutrients and structural elements to local soils. Finally, Vancouver Island imports the vast majority of its food, creating additional concerns for the future cost and stability of the food supply in the face of rising energy costs and climate change.

The plan policies support a shift towards a more sustainable food system, one that considers and integrates food production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste recovery to support the nutritional, social, environmental and economic health of the community (see Figure 18). As a result of this whole systems approach, the plan includes not only policies to support food production, but also food security, emergency preparedness, food-related economic development, waste management, and access to food-based businesses, services and amenities.

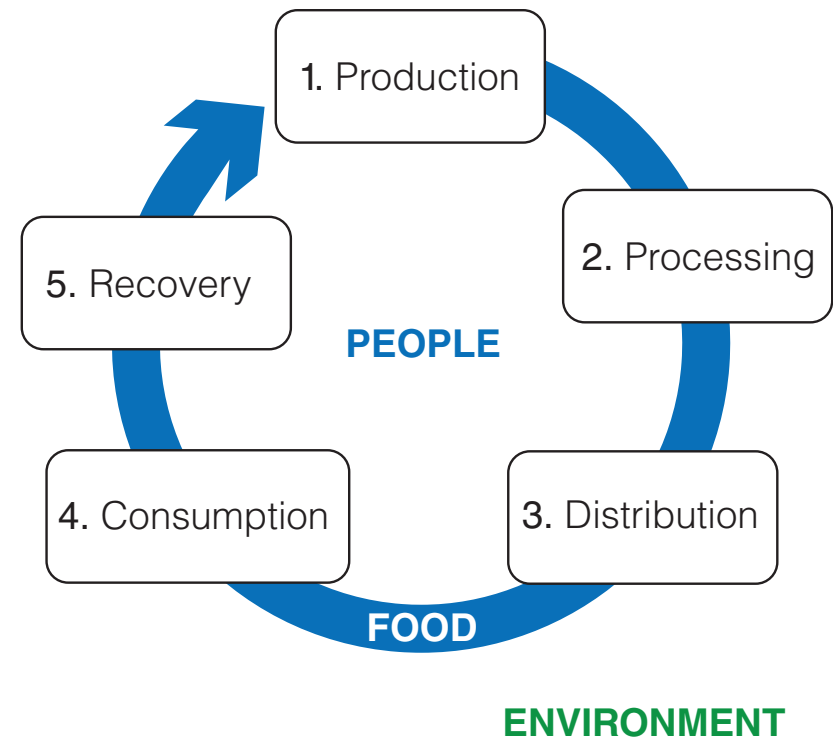
To address these challenges, the plan proposes a coordinated approach to address food-related issues. This requires the City to work in partnership across departments and with senior levels of government, the health authority, other agencies, organizations and individuals to consider the connections 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 reduction, recycling and re-use of organic waste.

BROAD OBJECTIVES

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

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

Figure 17: Sustainable Food System Cycle



COMPREHENSIVE FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING

- 17.1 Participate in coordinated community and regional efforts to develop a more sustainable food system that considers all stages of the food system as shown in Figure 18, and that:
 - 17.1.1 Contributes to the economic development, environmental management, and social well-being of Victoria and the region;
 - 17.1.2 Encourages local and regional food production and processing, and protection of productive farmland;
 - 17.1.3 Recognizes access to safe, sufficient, culturally appropriate and nutritious food as a basic need for all community members; and,
 - 17.1.4 Celebrates local food culture, cuisine, and local, Indigenous and multi-cultural food traditions.
- 17.2 Advocate to the Capital Regional District to work 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.
- 17.3 Assess neighbourhood food system features and needs as part of local area planning.

URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION

- 17.4 Review and develop City policy to increase the number of allotment gardens, **commons gardens**, edible landscapes, food-bearing trees and other types of food production activities that considers other uses and identifies:
 - 17.4.1 The land types and potential City-held sites where different food production activities might be supported;
 - 17.4.2 The roles and responsibilities of participants;
 - 17.4.3 Mechanisms to encourage and support food production sites on City-held lands, other publicly-held lands, and on private lands; and,
 - 17.4.4 Mechanisms to acquire land for food production purposes, where appropriate.
- 17.5 Encourage food production activities in visible and suitable public places to foster a connection between people and the process of growing, harvesting and eating fresh produce. [SEE ALSO SECTION 9 – PARKS AND RECREATION]
- 17.6 Include urban food production objectives in the development of management strategies to address pests, disease, invasive species, urban wildlife and other ecological issues on public and private lands.
- 17.7 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, where feasible.
- 17.8 Work with community groups to develop pilot projects for the planting, maintenance and harvesting of food-bearing trees on suitable City-held lands.
- 17.9 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

- 17.10 Support food production on private land where it is safe, suitable and compatible with the Land Management policies in this plan.
- 17.11 Encourage the provision of gardens and other food production spaces for the use of residents in new multi-unit housing.
- 17.12 Develop voluntary guidelines for food production in multi-unit, mixed-use developments and other types of housing, to support a range of on-site food production activities such as edible landscaping, rooftop gardens and food-bearing trees.
- 17.13 Support the keeping of small livestock in the city by:
 - 17.13.1 Maintaining regulatory support for the keeping of poultry and honeybees; and,
 - 17.13.2 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.
- 17.14 Explore expanded small-scale commercial urban agriculture through a review of policy and regulations to consider the opportunities for, and implications of:
 - 17.14.1 Enabling infrastructure and human resources needed to support small-scale commercial urban agriculture as a home occupation;
 - 17.14.2 Using residential accessory buildings for commercial agricultural purposes; and,
 - 17.14.3 Allowing commercial urban agriculture uses, including greenhouses, in commercial and industrial zones.

FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

- 17.15 Support the achievement of residential densities sufficient to support food stores and other food retail uses such as bakeries, restaurants and pubs, in Town Centres and Urban Villages.
- 17.16 Explore expanded street food vending opportunities to animate the public realm 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.
- 17.17 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.
- 17.18 Pilot new uses in appropriate locations that enhance urban food production, processing and food waste recycling.
- 17.19 Work with neighbouring municipalities, the Capital Regional District, the provincial government and other food system stakeholders to increase the regional food supply by:
 - 17.19.1 Establishing policies, tools and initiatives to protect and expand working farmland, such as a regional farmland trust; and,
 - 17.19.2 Implementing strategies to support and re-establish key food system infrastructure such as meat, fruit and vegetable processing facilities.

ACCESS TO FOOD

- 17.20 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 healthier, and more secure and dignified access to nutritious, culturally appropriate food.
- 17.21 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.
- 17.22 Identify short and long-term food supply and infrastructure needs as part of a critical infrastructure assessment in City emergency preparedness planning. [SEE ALSO SECTION 18 – EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT]
- 17.23 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. [SEE ALSO SECTION 12 – CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY]

FOOD WASTE

- 17.24 Consider establishing community recycling and take-back depots within Town Centres and Urban Villages at scales suitable to a convenient and effective system.
- 17.25 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.
- 17.26 Continue to work with the Capital Regional District, neighbouring municipalities and other partners to:
 - 17.26.1 Improve residential kitchen and yard waste collection and diversion programs, including for multi-family residences;
 - 17.26.2 Foster behaviour change and increase education to reduce food waste from residential and commercial sectors; and,
 - 17.26.3 Deliver a regional, industrial treatment facility for organic waste and identify ways to get more value from organic waste that keep nutrients in the region.

[SEE ALSO SECTION 12 – CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY]

MEASURING PROGRESS

- 17.27 The following targets should be considered in measuring progress towards the plan's food system objectives:
 - 17.27.1 A minimum of 90% of residents are within 400 metres of a full service grocery store by 2041.
 - 17.27.2 All organic food and yard waste generated within Victoria is diverted from the regional landfill by 2030.

