



# Corporate Report

NO: R231

COUNCIL DATE: November 24, 2008

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## REGULAR COUNCIL

TO: Mayor & Council

DATE: October 28, 2008

FROM: General Manager,  
Planning and Development

FILE: 6940-02

SUBJECT: Food Security Initiatives in Surrey – Delegation from the Food Action Coalition

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## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Receive this report as information;
2. Authorize staff to continue working with the Food Action Coalition of Surrey and White Rock (FAC) to advance food security issues of mutual concern in support of the City's Sustainability Charter and the Social Well Being Plan; and
3. Authorize the City Clerk to forward a copy of this report and the related Council resolution to the FAC.

## INTENT

This responds to Council's direction for a report regarding matters raised by a delegation to Council-in-Committee by the Food Action Coalition of Surrey and White Rock. It provides information on the policy framework related to food security, outlines a number of initiatives that the City has undertaken in response to these policies and responds to the future opportunities for the City as proposed by the FAC.

## BACKGROUND

At the September 28, 2008 Council-in-Committee meeting, members of the FAC appeared as a delegation with respect to the development of a Food Policy Charter for Surrey. The delegation identified four opportunities for consideration by the City, as follows:

1. The FAC can develop a "tailored" Food Policy Toolkit for the City of Surrey;

2. Food security could be housed in the City's Sustainability Office;
3. The FAC can assist with the development and promotion of a Food Policy Charter for the City of Surrey; and
4. The City should develop a Food Policy Advisory Committee, consisting of staff, Council and community members.

Council referred the delegation to the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) and the Social Planning Advisory Committee (SPAC) and directed staff to report back on the food security and sustainability matters raised by the delegation.

Representatives of the FAC made a presentation to the AAC at its meeting on October 8, 2008 during which they outlined their goals and activities over the past year. The presentation also included a discussion about opportunities that are available to link the FAC goals with the AAC objectives. In discussion ensuing from the presentation, members of the AAC voiced the opinion that the Flavours of Surrey event, which was held in July 2008, would be a natural area for AAC collaboration with the FAC. As Flavours of Surrey is intended to promote awareness about local agriculture and farming, it was suggested that the FAC could help promote the food security aspect of farming at future events.

Representatives of the FAC appeared as a delegation at the October 23, 2008 meeting of the SPAC. Their presentation included their goals and activities along with ideas about how the Committee could support the FAC. It was suggested that SPAC appoint a representative to the FAC. Following the delegation's presentation, SPAC appointed a member to represent the Committee on the FAC.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Current City Policies and Directions related to Food Security**

Surrey's recently adopted Sustainability Charter calls for Surrey to be "*a city that fosters local employment opportunities and green businesses, including a sustainable agricultural base and local food security.*" The Charter's Vision for agriculture and food security is to:

*"Incorporate a Sustainable Agricultural Base and Local Food Security.*

*Surrey will be a leader in the protection of its agricultural land base and in enhancing the productivity of this land base. Surrey will promote urban agriculture and support sustainable agriculture, with most of the City's high quality food being produced locally. Fresh and healthy food will be available to people of all income levels. Food processing industries will create local jobs and incorporate a high "value added" component to the local economy."*

Specific Charter goals related to agriculture and food production include:

- *"Protect the integrity of the City's agricultural and industrial land base for food production, employment and agro-business services that support the local economy. Work with these sectors to find ways to enhance the productivity of agricultural lands in Surrey;*
- *Maintain farmland and promote food self-sufficiency and production without negatively affecting existing natural areas."*

Food security is clearly an issue that has interconnected socio-cultural, economic and environmental elements, as is reflected in the range of scope items that the Charter identifies for the City to address over time:

*"SC14 - Support Food Security*

*Food is essential not only to maintain life, but also to support healthy and productive residents. Food security is ensuring that that sufficient healthy food is accessible locally at a reasonable cost and that there is a secure supply of food for the future that is produced by sustainable practices.*

*To support food security, the City will:*

- 1. Develop policy and research ways to support local food production;*
- 2. Promote buying local farm products, urban agriculture and new methods for efficient food production;*
- 3. Implement healthy eating and food and beverage practices at City facilities;  
and*
- 4. Support the distribution of food to those who need it.*

*EC12 - Surrey's Agricultural Land Base*

*The City has policies in place to preserve the integrity of a productive agricultural land base. However there is pressure on this land base from external sources for conversion of these lands to "higher values" uses.*

*The City will:*

- 1. Work with the region and the Province to protect the City's agriculturally designated land base and the quantity and quality of the agricultural soil base;*
- 2. Work with the agricultural sector to enhance the productivity of agriculturally designated lands and to encourage increased production of ALR lands in the City that are not now used for agriculture due to these being unused or used for non-agricultural purposes;*

3. *Work with the agricultural, commercial and industrial sectors to accommodate agricultural uses that are not soil-dependent in other employment areas, such as the construction of greenhouses on industrial roof tops, to free additional lands for soil based agricultural production;*
4. *Develop policies, regulations and programs that will help to reduce the amount of land in the ALR that is used for non-agricultural use or is out of agricultural production;*
5. *Work with the agricultural sector to promote Surrey's agricultural products, both through "buy local" programs and promotion of products outside of Surrey;*
6. *Encourage a stable and skilled local agriculture employment base, including the engagement and education of young people on the value of agricultural careers;*
7. *Promote opportunities for "value-added" processing businesses related to local agricultural products; and*
8. *Support initiatives and projects that introduce agriculture into the urban and the industrial areas of the City through means such as community garden plots, green roofs with agricultural capacity, "vertical farming" and other initiatives.*

#### EC17 - Educating the Workforce

*Essential to the health and growth of the local economy is the development of a skilled work force. To promote local career training opportunities, the City will:*

*Work with the City's two universities to develop them as world class institutions with a variety of programs that serve the future of the region and City and build on the City's strengths, such as agriculture, transportation and health care."*

In addition, the Charter supports the social objectives of the Plan for Social Well Being.

Under the "Nutrition and Food Programs" social service element in the Plan for the Social Well Being, to address the gap "*There is a need to ensure sufficient capacity of food banks and food/nutrition programs, the need for affordable meal programs and for ethno-specific food service options,*" there are two key recommendations:

- *"Participate in community planning process/networks such as the Surrey Food Policy Network to address the needs for adequate distribution of food resources to those in need.*
- *Provide support as required, within the City's mandated responsibilities and resources, to implement the results of the recommendations from the Surrey Food Policy Network and other forums."*

The Sustainability Charter and the Plan for the Social Well Being of Surrey Residents support the FAC's overarching goals of decreasing hunger, increasing local food sustainability and improving nutritional health.

### **City Initiatives on Food Security**

The City has a long-standing commitment to support agricultural lands and production capacity in Surrey in consultation with the AAC, including a range of policies and programs that promote a secure and productive Agricultural Land Reserve. More information on the range of these policies and programs can be found on the City's website at:

<http://www.surrey.ca/Doing+Business/Agriculture+and+Farming>

In addition to supporting agriculture, the City has been active in promoting other food security goals through a variety of means:

1. Completing a Healthy Food and Beverage Study for City facilities and applying the study findings to provide a healthy and sustainable food environment for citizens and staff that serves as a model for the community;
2. Initiating the development of a Sustainable Meeting Policy. This policy will integrate healthy and sustainable food and beverage practices, including the use of local products and the minimization of waste;
3. Liaising with the Food Action Coalition - City staff has worked with the Food Action Coalition to promote and implement initiatives such as the Food Policy Toolkit;
4. Community Gardens – There are currently two community gardens operating in the City: the North Surrey Organic Community Garden, located at the northwest corner of Cedar Grove Park and the Dunsmuir Community Garden, located at Blackie Spit. Other locations have been identified for potential partnerships with community groups;
5. Encouraging residents and businesses to "Buy Local":
  - The Farm Fresh Guide lists local farms that offer produce and horticultural products for sale to the public;
  - The AAC, in partnership with the Surrey Farmers' Institute and the BC Ministry of Agriculture and Lands hosted an inaugural Flavours of Surrey event, an outdoor food and beverage tasting, at the Historic Stewart Farm on July 27, 2008, to celebrate the diversity of Surrey's culinary culture;
6. Supporting Healthy Eating - The City supports the goal of increasing by 20 percent the BC population that eats the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

The City of Surrey promotes increased consumption of fruits and vegetables through the following initiatives:

- Acting in a partnership with Fraser Health and other community organizations, the City of Surrey plays a lead role in the monthly distribution of fresh fruits and vegetables to participants in the Harvest Box program, which provides access to healthy, low cost, local produce, through Parks, Recreation and Culture facilities;
- Healthy Vending - The City's vending machines contracts are currently under review. Terms of reference are being developed to guide new contracts to ensure healthy food options are provided in vending machines and through concession sales;
- Nutrition tracker - The City of Surrey's nutrition tracker website is a tool that tracks consumption of fruit and vegetables to encourage healthy eating;
- Healthy Kids Who Cook - An in-school cooking program delivered in partnership with School District 36 targeting behaviourally challenged children and youth. The program provides hands-on skill development and nutrition education;
- Healthy Eating Program Guidelines - These guidelines are followed by all staff delivering children's recreation programs, ensuring that healthy foods are provided, prepared in a food safe manner, and nutrition education information is shared with parents and children (i.e., healthy lunch checklist); and
- Nutrition Challenge - During the month of March, schools and City employees participate in the healthy eating challenge that encourages daily consumption of fruits and vegetables.

### **Proposals by the Food Action Coalition**

At their presentation to Council-in-Committee, the FAC identified four opportunities for cooperation for consideration by the City. Each of these is presented and discussed below:

- 1. FAC can develop a "tailored" Food Policy Toolkit for the City of Surrey.**  
The Developing Organizational Food Policy Toolkit is a useful document that is being applied for specific City needs. For example, the Healthy Food and Beverage Study and the Sustainable Meeting Policy are building on information provided in the toolkit. A number of initiatives in the toolkit have also been implemented in the past by the City, including Buy Local programs, Building Healthier Workplaces and Community Gardens. Staff will continue work with the FAC to apply lessons learned and to enhance the toolkit for the future;
- 2. Food Security could be housed in the City's Sustainability Office.**  
The Sustainability Office will coordinate the activities of various City departments to address the vision, goals and actions identified in the

Sustainability Charter. The Sustainability Office is also charged with prioritizing the activities identified in the Scope of the Charter, allocating resources, establishing targets, monitoring progress and reporting back on these activities. Since the matter of food security cuts across the interests and mandates of all City Departments and the City's Advisory Committees, it would be appropriate for the City's Sustainability Office to coordinate the City's actions on the issue of food security.

**3. Assist with developing and promoting a Food Policy Charter for the City of Surrey.**

Food Security has been identified in the Scope of the Surrey Sustainability Charter. The intention of the Scope of the Charter is to capture all of the items of concern under the three pillars of sustainability (economic, environmental and socio-cultural) and the three spheres of influence (corporate, municipal jurisdiction and external). It is not intended to create separate charters for each scope item, but rather to ensure that the defined scope items reflect the vision and goals of the Sustainability Charter and that appropriate policies are developed for each such scope item. The matter of food security will be one of the scope items that will be addressed over time.

**4. Development of a Food Policy Advisory Committee, consisting of staff, Council and community members.**

Issues of agriculture and food security have socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects which overlap. The City currently has committees that deal with food production/security issues from an economic and environmental perspective (the AAC and Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC)) and hunger and nutrition issues from the social perspective (the SAPC). This current committee structure appears sufficient to address the matter of food security in an advisory capacity to Council. Ultimately, any significant policy work in this area would be undertaken by staff or consultants and be reviewed with the advisory committees of Council.

## CONCLUSION

Food security is an important objective for the City of Surrey. The City's Sustainability Charter and Social Well Being Plan provide a framework for addressing food security issues and actions in support of food security are underway in the City. It is recommended that the City continue to work with the Food Action Coalition, as outlined in this report, to advance the matter of food security in Surrey.

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