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Vancouver will become a global leader
in urban food systems.



LOCAL FOOD

TARGET:

INCREASE CITY-WIDE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD ASSETS BY A MINIMUM OF 50% OVER 2010 LEVELS.

Food matters—like water and air, we can't live without it. What and how we eat can be a daily reminder of our interconnection with the earth's natural systems and with each other.

Food systems—the way we grow, process, transport, and consume food—have been central to the sustainability of communities for millennia. For example, the fossil fuels used to transport berries from South America, the energy used in cooling systems for food storage, and the amount of land used to graze animals and produce meat and dairy products all consume resources and produce waste. In fact, food represents one of the largest sources of our greenhouse gas emissions. It also accounts for almost half of our ecological footprint if you extend emission calculations to include factors related to food.

There is no single definition of “local food.” In this plan, however, “local” means that the distance from farm to plate is as short as possible. The City of Vancouver's definition of local also includes factors such as the working conditions of the people who grow and harvest the food, the environmental impact of the food's production including the use of pesticides, and the affordability or accessibility of food for all residents.

A stronger local food system reduces the size of our ecological footprint by cutting down on the use of fossil fuels as well as protecting food-producing lands and related biodiversity. Local food contributes to human health and is considered by the Vancouver Economic Commission as a growing sector of a strong green economy.

All of these factors make food a powerful part of a just and sustainable city.



BASELINE NUMBERS

It's estimated that Vancouver currently has 3,340 food assets, including community kitchens, markets, compost facilities, garden plots, and more. Success will be measured using these numbers for comparison, as well as through a review of the local workforce, people involved in the local food economy, and community capacity. This includes things like the presence of neighbourhood food networks, as well as the number and kinds of food-related activities available to residents.

An additional metric will track the number of residents who live within a five-minute walk of a basket of fresh produce. Further research is needed to determine an accurate baseline for this measurement.

Food asset growth

FOOD ASSET	CURRENT	2020 GOAL	PER CENT INCREASE
Community Kitchen	69	100	45%
Farmers Market	4	22	450%
Community Produce Stand	3	15	400%
Community Food Composting Facilities	0	5	500%
Community Garden Plots	3,260	5,000	53%
Urban Orchards	3	10	330%
Urban Farms	1	5	400%
Food Hub	0	1	100%
Total	3,340	5,158	54.4%

HIGHEST PRIORITY ACTIONS

The following are the highest priority actions for 2011–2014. The complete list of Local Food actions can be found in the *Greenest City 2020 Action Plan* available at talkgreenvancouver.ca

1. *Develop a draft municipal food strategy to coordinate all aspects of the food system.* There are many players involved in Vancouver's local food movement. This action aims to create linkages across City departments and to the Vancouver Food Policy Council, community partners, and other programs so that their efforts can strengthen one another and help us move more effectively toward the 2020 target.
2. *Grow more food in the city.* An increase in urban agriculture will include five to six new community gardens plus one new urban farm per year over the next three years. This also includes a plan to expand the number of farmers markets within the city. In all cases, the City will work with the Park Board, neighbourhoods, and landowners to determine the location and process for implementation of these resources.
3. *Make local food available in community centres, parks, neighbourhood houses, and other City-run facilities through a local food procurement plan.* The City can use its significant purchasing power to buy just, sustainable, and locally produced food products. Examples could include produce from local farms and baked goods from local producers.

GREEN JOBS

- urban farmer
- urban beekeeper
- farmers market coordinator
- commercial food recovery coordinator
- community kitchen operator
- food processor
- horticulturalist
- food retailer
- policy analyst and researcher
- educator

KEY STRATEGIES TO 2020

Develop a coordinated municipal food strategy

This strategy focuses on the importance of working across City departments and with community partners to articulate a vision, as well as goals, and actions for Vancouver's food system. A food strategy will provide a framework for an integrated approach to planning food policy and actions.

This goal cannot be achieved without a coordinated collaborative approach that takes into account the big picture and uses the talents of all involved. Some ideas that may be explored in this strategy include: zoning to protect food-growing spaces, the appropriate placement and licensing of urban farms, and amended bylaws to better facilitate food production and community produce stands.

Support the creation of food infrastructure and food-related green jobs in production, processing, storage, distribution, and waste management

A sustainable urban food system is not possible without the infrastructure—the land, people, and buildings—to make it happen. Some actions in this strategy include: a food-related incubator to assist the development of local food businesses, and a central food hub that can provide space for the assembly, storage, and distribution of food from local farms and the processing and development of local food products.

Increase access to information on just and sustainable local food

There are many excellent food projects happening in Vancouver, but not enough opportunities to share knowledge and build connections with the wider community. A possible action is to create a directory of key local food initiatives as well as annual events that support and celebrate local food.

Ensure that Vancouver's neighbourhoods have equal access to healthy, local food

Resilient neighbourhood food systems mean that residents have access to fresh produce, to a community kitchen, or to a network of people who can help start and support projects. Some actions include: increasing the number of neighbourhood food networks that provide information and resources to residents, working to ensure all residents are within a five-minute walk of a basket of fresh produce, and encouraging programs that either use or compost excess food from commercial operations.

Advocate for food issues at regional, provincial, and national levels

Despite an increase in local food assets, Vancouver will continue to have a strong dependence on food grown outside city boundaries. The regulations and policies of other levels of government can work together to further efforts to implement local food actions and strategies. Some of the actions include: continuing to advocate for food-growing capacity in the Lower Mainland's Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) and other areas, and collaborating with the Vancouver School Board to ensure school breakfast and lunch programs receive adequate funding.

WHAT IT'S GOING TO TAKE TO GET THERE

As with many Greenest City goals, strong partnerships are necessary for success. From Vancouver's Food Policy Council to local food producers, from regional and provincial governments to neighbourhood groups, there is a place in this plan for everyone to play a role. Fortunately, Vancouver has a strong and growing community of people working for a local, sustainable, and just food system. This is a foundation we can build on as we make progress towards our 2020 goal.

WHO GETS TO EAT FRESH?

Some Vancouverites have an easier time than others finding a place in their neighbourhood to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Access to fresh produce is not distributed equally across the city. One of the

priorities in the Local Food plan is to ensure that the majority of residents live within a five-minute walk of a basket of fresh produce. This is in contrast to a corner store that might only carry chips or other packaged food.

There are a number of areas in Vancouver where access is well outside a five-minute walk. While specific measurement requires further definition, work can begin to address the identified gaps.



WE'RE NOT STARTING FROM SCRATCH!

Samples from Vancouver's food system history

- Food Policy Council created in 2004
- Bylaw changes in 2005 encourage hobby beekeeping
- Vancouver's 2007 Food Charter underpins the goals of a just and sustainable food system
- Bylaw changes in 2010 allow for backyard hens
- The 2010 by 2010 Challenge increases the number of community gardens and orchards
- Curbside food scraps pickup begins in 2010 and diverts waste from the landfill

The City is working on several sets of local food-related guidelines and programs that will benefit from the Greenest City Action Plan. These include:

- Development of a Vancouver Food Strategy
- Revised Beekeeping Guidelines
- Edible Landscaping Guidelines



FOOD SECURITY SPROUTS UP ACROSS THE CITY

The Renfrew Collingwood Neighbourhood House creates educational workshops and community kitchens. They do this in partnership with local early childhood education centres to increase access to healthy food for culturally diverse, low-income community members.

The Renfrew Collingwood Food Security Institute has increased leadership and training opportunities for residents and has enhanced social support networks among low-income and culturally diverse populations—all through food sharing, organic growing, nutrition education and more.

The Britannia Urban Gardens Project developed a food gardening program at Britannia Secondary in response to interest within the school and wider community. The project has helped to reconnect participants to the land and to the food they eat, supported healthy eating choices, and fostered leadership development. It also fostered stronger partnerships between the Britannia Community Centre, the school, and the wider community.



NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS—COMING TO A COMMUNITY NEAR YOU

Neighbourhood Food Networks (NFNs) are coalitions of community members, community organizations, agencies, and businesses who collaborate to achieve food system goals. Actions include monthly potlucks, community kitchens, coordinating community produce stands, organizing skills-building events like gardening and seed-saving workshops, and more.

There are a growing number of NFNs currently operating in the City of Vancouver, including five that were funded through the Greenest City Neighbourhood Grants program (2010) and Social Responsibility Fund (2011). Vancouver aims to ensure that each neighbourhood is serviced by an adequately resourced NFN. Depending on need, this may or may not mean a NFN in each local area. It could also involve a coordinating body to assist their development.



Q: WHAT IS A FOOD ASSET?

A: RESOURCES, FACILITIES, SERVICES OR SPACES THAT STRENGTHEN THE CITY'S FOOD SYSTEM.

Some examples include:

- Neighbourhood food hubs that are centres for education and skill building on topics such as gardening, composting, and food preservation
- Community kitchens
- Farmers markets
- Community produce stands (these are mini-markets that provide vulnerable populations with access to fresh food)
- Food scraps composting facilities and programs

- Community garden plots
- Urban orchards
- Urban farms (these are areas of land in the city used to grow food that is sold to residents or retailers)

Under the *Greenest City 2020 Action Plan*, the number of food assets would increase by 54% from an estimated 3,340 to 5,158 by 2020.