



City of Richmond

Report to Committee

To: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Committee
From: Cathryn Volkering Carlile
General Manager – Community Services
Date: September 17, 2009
File: 01-0370-01/2009-Vol1
Re: Food Security – Follow-up to July 2009 Council Referrals

Staff Recommendation

That:

1. The City work with the Richmond Food Security Society and other non-profit organizations to establish a community-based delivery system for Richmond's community gardens;
2. The City develop three (3) additional community gardens on City land, with a minimum of 20 plots each over the next three (3) years.

Cathryn Volkering Carlile,
General Manager, Community Services
(604-276-4068)

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY			
ROUTED TO:		CONCURRENCE	
Parks Programs		Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>
Business License		Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEWED BY TAG		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER			
REVIEWED BY CAO		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

Staff Report

Origin

At the July 13, 2009, Council meeting, Richmond City Council requested in response to the report pertaining to “pocket” Farmer’s Markets that:

1. Staff review procedures for further sites, after consultation with the Food Security Society, for other pocket farmer’s markets and food stands.

In response to the report pertaining to a recommended City response to Food Security, staff were also requested to explore and report back on the following:

2. Support more farmer’s markets on City property, in particular the Richmond Cultural Centre site;
3. Develop a non-for-profit community garden promotion team, including representatives from non-profit sections, community centres, the Parks Division, and the public to help identify areas of the City suitable for new community gardens;
4. Develop a joint task force among the City, Richmond Food Security, and other organizations committed to food security in order to propose a terms of reference for a Richmond Food Security Strategy;
5. Provide land for food production for non-profit agencies interested in growing food for the Richmond Food Bank; and
6. Assess the potential for a grant to the Richmond Food Security Society, and that the Society be asked to recommend a member for delegation to the Metro Vancouver group.

This report responds to these referrals.

Background

Action targeted towards addressing Food Security supports the Council Term Goal to “*Demonstrate leadership in a significant advancement of the City’s agenda for sustainability through the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy*”.

Analysis

The following section provides recommended action for each of the identified referrals.

1. Referrals 1 & 2 – Review procedures for further sites for farmer’s markets and food stands. Support more Farmer Markets on City Property, in particular the Richmond Cultural Centre.

Since the above referrals, the City supported a Farmer’s Market at the Richmond Cultural Centre for the 2009 season. The Food Security Society advises that there is interest to offer the market at the Cultural Centre and potentially establish additional markets at City Hall, community centres and other public facilities in future years. The City is currently developing a new zoning bylaw. Proposed amendments include new provisions which would enable use of City property for the purposes of pocket farmer’s markets and food stands. Staff anticipate that the new bylaw will be presented to Council in the Fall 2009 prior to next year’s season. Staff have advised the Society that provided these provisions are deemed acceptable to Council, any party interested in establishing a farmer’s market or food stand on City property would solely be required to secure a business license. Staff have encouraged the Society to submit their application as early as possible in the Spring.

2. Referral 3 - Develop a Non-for-Profit Community Garden Promotion team

A promotion team is a great idea for raising awareness and encouraging more people to engage in community gardening. At the current time, however, the demand for community gardens exceeds available supply. Presently, there are about 350 garden plots in the City of Richmond. These are provided on both public and private lands. The City of Richmond's parks system incorporates four (4) community gardens which in combination provide close to 200 allotment gardens, all of which are in use. The City presently has a waitlist of approximately 100 people.

Rather than dedicating resources towards promotion at this time, staff recommend that action be first directed at making more gardens available. This requires increasing both the number of allotment plots and expanding the operational capacity for garden administration and program delivery. It is recommended that:

- the City of Richmond add a minimum of three (3) community gardens on City owned land, with at least 20 plots each, over the next three (3) years;
- the City, the Richmond Food Security Society and other interested parties work to establish a community-based delivery system for garden administration and program delivery. In particular, it is recommended that work be directed at establishing a Community Garden Office by the Spring 2010. The Office would be responsible for the administration and operation of City-owned community gardens, enabling the City to support further community garden development¹.
- a community garden supply goal, inclusive of both public and private lands, be developed as part of the City's Food Security Strategy and Parks and Open Space Master Plan being developed in early 2010².

3. Referral 4 - Develop a Joint Task Force to Propose Terms of Reference for Richmond Food Security Strategy

At the July 13, 2009 meeting, Richmond City Council adopted an overarching Food Security Response Agenda, bringing together the range of existing City initiatives pertaining to Food Security and establishing a collective course of action based on full systems approach³. The Response Agenda identified a City of Richmond Food Security Strategy as a priority action. The objective of the strategy is to identify achievable action that addresses critical areas of priority for the City based on a review of the complete food system. Staff intend that a joint working group, inclusive of the Food Security Society and other stakeholders, be established to guide the development of the City's Food Security Strategic Plan.

¹ It is envisioned that a Community Garden Office would provide a coordinated community-based management approach for the delivery of the community gardens city-wide. The Office would provide a complete service, including community garden promotion, administration, programming and resource support across both participating private and public land. The Office would also work with the City and other organizations to identify potential locations for gardens on private and public lands. The City would support the Office predominately through the provision of community garden plots. The City would also provide additional resources support (e.g., technical advice, gardening supplies, web-site promotion, etc.). It is anticipated that the Office would largely be financed through annual garden allotment user fees. Additional financial support would also likely be sought through the City's grant program and other sources of external funding.

² By developing longer term community garden supply goal as part of these two strategic plans, the City will be able to establish a long-term community garden supply goal that best integrates community gardening as part of a holistic approach to food security and park planning.

³ The Council adopted Food Security Response Agenda identifies three areas of priority focus:

- *Empower* - raising awareness and building capacity to help support the development of a whole-system approach, including advocating for a strengthened regional approach.
- *Grow* - working in partnership to meet the food supply needs of the community today and tomorrow.
- *Access* - taking local government action in support of the equitable distribution of food

4. **Referral 5 - Provide Land for Food Production for Non-profit Agencies Interested in Growing Food for the Richmond Food Bank**

The City currently provides land at Terra Nova Rural Park which non-profit organizations use to produce food for the Richmond Food Bank. The area provided has been expanding over the years. Any future requests for additional food production will be considered in alignment with the City's underlying philosophy to support and in accordance with the City's Food Security Strategy and Open Space Master Plan.

5. **Referral 6 - Society be asked to Recommend a Member for Delegation to the Metro Vancouver Group**

Metro Vancouver's Sustainability Framework approved by the Board in May 2008 identified a Regional Foods Systems Strategy as a priority action. Work has been initiated and is being guided by the Agricultural Committee – a standing committee to MetroVancouver Board. Two advisory groups, a Working Group and Reference Panel, inclusive of representatives from all sectors in the food system have been established to assist in the planning process. The City of Richmond has recently been invited to participate as a local government representative. Other representatives include agriculture production, food processors, food service providers, whole distributors, health agencies, educational institutions and community organizations.

A regional symposium is being held in November 2009 to solicit input from a wide range of food system experts and stakeholders. The objectives of the symposium are to discuss what the goals of the strategy should be and solicit input on a draft Framework of Action. Representatives from the Richmond Food Security Society, as well as City staff, will be participating⁴.

Results from the symposium will be used to develop the regional strategy. A draft strategy is scheduled for completion in early 2010. Following public consultation in the Spring, a final strategy is expected to be completed for June 2010.

6. **Referral 7 - That staff explore the potential for a grant to the Richmond Food Security Society**


The Richmond Food Security Society are eligible to apply for City grants through the standard application process. The grant applications for 2010 are due on October 16, 2009 and recommendations considered in a report to Council in early Spring 2010.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact with the recommendations. The proposed new community gardens will be absorbed within Parks operation budget.

Conclusion

The development of a resilient food system is dependent upon the concerted efforts between the private sector, levels of government, community organizations and the general public. This report recommends initiatives based on collaborative-based action. In particular, this report recommends the establishment of a community-based delivery system for Richmond's community gardens, enabling the City to focus its resources on providing more community gardens. This report also identifies other collaborative action to be taken among the City, MetroVancouver, community organizations, private sector and others.


Margot Daykin, M.R.M.
Sustainability Manager, Community Services (604-276-4130)

⁴ Staff from the Richmond Food Security Society have indicated that they are interested in participating in the MetroVancouver regional strategy development and anticipate that their involvement can be accommodated within their existing budgets.