



**To:** Public Works and Transportation **Date:** November 29, 2010  
**From:** Cecilia Achiam, MCIP, BCSLA **File:** 10-6125-07-02/2007-  
Interim Director Sustainability and District Energy Vol 01  
Senior Program Manager, CPMG  
**Re:** **City of Richmond Comments On Metro Vancouver's Draft Regional Food System Strategy**

**Staff Recommendation**

That the comments in Attachment 1 of this staff report from the Interim Director of Sustainability and District Energy be endorsed and forwarded to MetroVancouver as input into the Draft Regional Food System Strategy.

Cecilia Achiam, MCIP, BCSLA  
Interim Director Sustainability and District Energy  
Senior Program Manager, CPMG

Att. 1

FOR ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT USE ONLY					
<b>ROUTED TO:</b>	<b>CONCURRENCE</b>		<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>		
Policy Planning	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>				
Parks and Recreation	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>REVIEWED BY TAG</b>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REVIEWED BY CAO</b>	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>

## Staff Report

### Origin

Metro Vancouver has requested City input on the Draft Food System Strategy. This report addresses this request and the following Council Term Goals:

*Council Term Goal #7: “ Sustainability and the Environment – Demonstrate leadership in and significant advancement of the City’s agenda for sustainability through the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy that among other objectives includes incorporating sustainability into our City policies and bylaws”.*

The draft strategy can be found at:

<http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/RegionalFoodSystems/Pages/default.aspx>.

### Background

#### About the Regional Food Systems Strategy

The Draft Regional Food Systems Strategy (RFSS) is a new initiative undertaken by Metro Vancouver. The Strategy was launched in response to increasing prominence of food issues, including on-going concerns about how to protect agricultural land and increase food production.

The RFSS was developed over a 2-year time period and has incorporated input from private, public and non- governmental organizations. Metro Vancouver is envisioning the RFSS to be the first step towards creating a “sustainable, resilient and healthy food system that enhances the economic prosperity of the region and conserves natural systems while improving the health of all residents”.

The RFSS has been developed to the point that it includes 5 broad goals:

- Increased Capacity to Produce Food Close to Home
- Enhanced Role of Food Sector in the Regional Economy
- Healthy and Sustainable Food Choices
- Access to Healthy, Culturally Diverse and Affordable Food for Everybody
- A Food System Consistent with Ecological Health

Twenty strategies are developed under each of these goals. Examples of actions, including proposed priority actions for collaboration are also identified.

Upon Board approval of this first phase of the RFSS, Metro Vancouver will begin work in developing a focused Action Plan in Spring 2011 which will establish key action initiatives.

### Analysis

#### Staff Assessment of the Draft Regional Food System Strategy

##### 1. *Systems-Based Approach is a Key Strength*

A key strength of the Strategy is that it is seeking to consider the food system as a complete system, through production, distribution, services, waste management and nutrient recycling. In this respect the RFSS is looking at ensuring that the system is effective from seed to plate and

back to field. This systems-based approach means that all important factors can be considered. It also means that interconnections are considered, including interdependencies among social, economic and environmental factors. This complete systems-based approach means that investments into action are likely to yield substantially more effective results.

## 2. *Anchored by a Strong Understanding of the System*

The draft RFSS provides a well-considered context section that establishes a strong foundation for developing meaningful action initiatives. The strength of the context section arises from its completeness and level of detail. The strategy recognizes current strengths of the regional food system including:

- the success of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in enabling some of the richest farmland in Canada to still be actively farmed;
- the economic value of the regional's food system
  - although representing only 1.5% of the province's agricultural land base, regional farmland generates 28% of B.C.'s gross farm income from more than 130 different agricultural products
  - about one in eight jobs in Metro Vancouver are in the food sector; and,
- a growing public interest in purchasing local foods.

The context section also identifies key concerning trends, across social, economic and environmental dimensions, including:

- a growing number of people are being identified as "malnourished"<sup>1</sup>;
- the amount of money being spent on food is being squeezed by the need to cover housing costs;
- about 38% of food available for retail sale is wasted with even more spoilage and waste occurring in homes; and,
- the food sector industry is highly dependent on non-renewable fossil fuels, is a relatively large generator of greenhouse gas emissions and uses over 7 units of energy to produce on unit of food energy.

A key finding of the RFSS is that despite being a basic human need, food is not an issue that resides within any one agency. Rather various components of the food system reside in a multitude of federal, provincial or local government agencies. This fragmented structure generates complexity and a major challenge in addressing the system in a cohesive and complete manner.

## 3. *Developed through Participatory Process*

The RFSS has engaged a wide range of stakeholders, seeking input from the food sector industry, governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and the general public. Significant opportunities, including workshops, webinars and public consultation forums throughout the region, have been provided.

City staff have been providing input throughout the Strategy development process. Richmond Food Security Society have also been providing input.

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<sup>1</sup> Malnourished means that individuals are either "over consuming foods that should be consumed in moderation or they are not consuming enough nutritious foods or both"

#### 4. *Opportunities Exist for Strengthening*

The draft RFSS represents the first attempt to develop a collaborative-based pathway for advancing towards a more sustainable regional food system. The strategy is effective at defining the scope of the community need and this work has led to the development of 5 comprehensive goals. The strength in the current strategy is the comprehensiveness provided in the understanding the current situation and framing the approach to action based on a full systems view. However, opportunities exist to identify priorities to better ensure that resources are directed towards areas of highest need and benefit. A key challenge identified but not currently addressed in the strategy is the need to strengthen the current fragmented management system.

Greater effort is also needed to identify and evaluate alternative action initiatives and better ensure that resources are being directed towards action that yields greatest value (benefits for cost).

Further work is also needed to develop and manage an implementation program as achieving results and realizing the vision set by the strategy will ultimately depend upon effective implementation of the proposed action.

#### Comments by the Richmond Food Security Society

The Society has advised City staff that they are in general support of proposed draft Strategy. They have provided input to Metro Vancouver requesting that the issue of genetically modified foods be addressed.

#### Recommended City of Richmond Comments

Proposed comments, based on the assessment above, are provided in Attachment 1. In summary, these comments recommend:

- a greater focus be placed on identifying and advancing strategic priorities
- a greater focus be placed on addressing core governance and institutional challenges, including the need to establish responsibility for overall system coordination
- clarification be provided in the strategy that a focused Action Plan (i.e., who and what will be done) is to be developed later
- commitment be made in the Strategy that evaluation of alternative action and development of an implementation program (i.e., how and when action will be done) will be conducted as part of the focused Action Plan
- the issue of genetically modified foods be considered in the strategy, that strategies be explored to enable the integration of agricultural activities within different land use designations and zones and the challenge of reducing the carbon footprint be re-titled to incorporate energy considerations directly (i.e., reducing the energy and carbon footprint of food).

#### **Financial Impact**

None

## Conclusion

Metro Vancouver has developed a draft Regional Food System Strategy and has requested input from the City of Richmond. Staff have reviewed the strategy and have found it to be a strong start as a first strategy aimed at advancing towards a more sustainable regional food system. This report recommends that the City of Richmond provide general endorsement for the Strategy and submit comments provided in Attachment 1 as means for adding further value and strength to the initiative.



Margot Daykin, M.R.M.  
Sustainability Manager  
(4130)

**City of Richmond - Recommended Comments on Metro Vancouver's Draft Regional Food System Strategy (RFSS)**

**1. General Support for RFSS**

The City of Richmond considers a sustainable food system to be an essential element of a sustainable community and fully supports the development of the Regional Food System Strategy. The City of Richmond endorses efforts made to-date and commends Metro Vancouver for adopting a complete systems-based approach – one that strives to consider all the processes involved in keeping the region fed (from seed to plate and back to field).

**2. Recommendations**

In order to achieve the vision set out in the RFSS, the City of Richmond recommends the following:

*i. Identification of Strategic Priorities*

The City of Richmond recognizes that not all fronts can be addressed simultaneously and that it is important that resources be directed towards areas of highest importance. As such, the City recommends that the draft RFSS be amended to adopt a stronger strategic approach, one that identifies priority areas of focus. These may include considerations such as system areas of focus (e.g., food bank supply, food production, food waste recovery, etc.) and/or population segments to be targeted.

The City also recommends that the relative need for action in the food security in consideration of other core sustainability objectives be articulated in the strategy. By considering food security as part of the larger overarching sustainability focus, organizations and individuals throughout the region will be better equipped to make strategic investment decisions to direct resources effectively across all important dimensions of sustainability.

*ii. Address Institutional Needs as a Core Goal Area*

The Strategy identifies that no one agency has the capacity to address food issues in an integrated and holistic manner and that to-date, food issues are generally dealt with in isolation of other issues and of the overall system. The fragmented nature of current management pertaining to food supply, distribution, consumption and waste management and nutrient recycling is identified as a key challenge

The Strategy is strong first step in connecting the various pieces together. However, the Strategy, alone, is not sufficient for addressing current institutional challenges and realizing cohesive, system-based action over time. As such, the City of Richmond recommends that a goal area pertaining to establishing an effective institutional system/governance model be included. In particular, the City recommends that an agency be identified as having responsibility for overall system coordination.

iii. *Clarification on Strategy and Action Plan Development*

The Food System Strategy currently contains examples of existing policies and initiatives and suggestions of potential action. It is understood that a detailed Action Plan will be developed following the completion of the Regional Food System Strategy. The City of Richmond recommends that this clarification on process be included in the Strategy.

iv. *Action Plan and Implementation Program Suggestions*

The City of Richmond recommends that greater comprehensiveness across the food system (from seed to plate to field) be applied during the action development phase. It is recommended that greater assessment be conducted to “map” current actions across the food system and key gap areas be identified.

In developing the action plan, the City of Richmond recommends that alternative action initiatives be evaluated based on their relative benefit/costs based on triple bottom line considerations (e.g., short/long-term environmental, economic and social). Focus should be placed on action that yields the greatest value.

The City also recommends that an implementation program be developed. This program should clearly identify timelines, funding mechanisms and roles and responsibilities, including overall lead for coordinating implementation. Most importantly, an implementation budget should be established to ensure that resources exist to advance selected action. One example would be to establish a collective fund based on a per capita rate (for example, \$0.10 per person annually). This budget could be used on a cost sharing manner with member municipalities.

v. *Incorporation of Genetically Modified Foods (GMF)*

Recently, more attention is being paid to the relative advantages and disadvantages of genetically modified foods. To address this cross-cutting complex issue effectively requires thoughtful response among multiple agencies and organizations. As the RFSS provides a mechanism for advancing collaborative-based solutions efficiently, the City of Richmond recommends that this issue be included for consideration in the strategy.

vi. *Integration of Agricultural Activities In Urban and Non-Urban Areas*

The City of Richmond recognizes the importance of integrating agricultural activities in various different areas, and in particular in urban zones. The City recommends that the RFSS explore strategic approaches to better enable the integration of agricultural activities in different areas and land use designations.

vii. *The challenge of reducing the carbon footprint be re-titled to incorporate energy considerations directly (i.e., reducing the energy and carbon footprint of food).*

The strategy includes a section that articulates key challenges for realizing a sustainable food system for the region. Included in this section are a number of energy challenges facing the food system. Examples include the system’s current energy intensity, dependency on non-renewable energy sources, vulnerability on global conditions and generation of greenhouse gas emissions. These challenges are discussed under the heading of “Reducing the carbon footprint of food”. Given that the energy challenges are much broader in scope than that reflecting in the current title, the City of Richmond recommends that this title be renamed to more accurately reflect the breadth of energy considerations.