

Priorities Committee Meeting_Oct18_2016

REPORT FOR INFORMATION**Preliminary Urban Agriculture Strategy****Report Purpose**

To provide the Priorities Committee with the preliminary Urban Agriculture Strategy.

Council History

September 29, 2015 – Council was provided with the Implementation Strategy for the Agriculture Master Plan, outlining that the Urban Agriculture Strategy would be the first strategy to be developed.

July 19, 2016 – Council reviewed the Urban Agriculture Strategy Explore and Assess Report which included the vision for the strategy, the review of background research, legislation and best practices, and the results of the public engagement process from the first phase of strategy development.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: Future development of agricultural endeavors and businesses in Strathcona County urban areas and hamlets

Governance: Policy recommendations to areas of urban agriculture

Social: Community building through development of urban agriculture

Culture: Community building through development of urban agriculture

Environment: Supporting and encouraging best management practices

Other Impacts

Policy: Potential recommendations for existing or creation of policy

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: Planning and Development Services; Family and Community Services; Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs; Recreation, Parks and Culture; Enforcement Services; Economic Development and Tourism

Summary

Throughout the months of July-August 2016, the project team focused on the creation of a preliminary strategy (Enclosure 1) based on the results of the Explore and Assess report. This preliminary strategy contains guidelines for seven urban agriculture topic areas and identifies existing policies, bylaws and procedures that may need to be revised or created in order to support the Urban Agriculture Strategy.

The preliminary Urban Agriculture Strategy provides recommendations under the seven topic areas identified through the public engagement:

1. Community Gardens

Community gardening is the practice of growing and raising food in a shared garden space for direct consumption. Land for these gardens can be publically or privately owned, and can be managed as individual allotment plots or as a communal effort of growing and harvesting.

Proposed actions include:

- amending the Land Use Bylaw to include a definition for community gardens
- develop a County-led community garden initiative
- allow access to public lands as areas for community gardens
- promotion and support for independent community gardens

Initiatives in community gardening would begin in 2017. A business plan initiative has been submitted in the 2017 budget cycle to address the proposed actions.

2. Public Agriculture and Edible Landscaping

Public agriculture refers to food grown in the public spaces of a town or city, and is generally used as a public or shared amenity. An example includes an urban orchard, where harvest and sharing by community members is encouraged.

Proposed actions include:

- amending the Land Use Bylaw to include a definition for public agriculture
- establish adopt-a-plot and other edible or pollinator supporting growing areas
- mapping of edible trees and shrubs
- developing an awareness campaign of edible plants

Initiatives in public agriculture and edible landscaping would begin in 2019.

3. Urban Farms

Urban farming is the commercial practice of growing and raising food within the boundaries of a city. Creativity and innovation are the norm in urban farming. Typical scales of operation range from small plot intensive farms such as shipping container production to capital intensive commercial enterprises such as warehouse gardening.

Proposed actions include:

- amending the Land Use Bylaw to include a definition for urban farms
- developing a County-supported youth farming and entrepreneurship program
- develop a campaign to promote and support urban farming

Initiatives in urban farming would begin in 2018.

4. School Agriculture Program

Urban agriculture in schools can take on different forms including, but not limited to, garden classrooms, indoor growing demonstrations, greenhouses, and in-class presentations.

Proposed actions include:

- foster growing opportunities in schools
- increase educational opportunities around urban agriculture in schools

Initiatives in school agriculture would begin in 2017. No budget implication as much of the work is currently being conducted.

5. Urban Livestock

Urban livestock includes the raising of chickens, bees, rabbits, and small breed animals in an urban setting. In some cases animals are being raised for food production such as eggs or honey. In others, animals are being kept as pets.

Proposed actions include:

- a pilot project for urban backyard chickens
- replace the current Animal Control Bylaw with new bylaws - a (revised) Animal Control Bylaw and an Alternative Pets Bylaw
- activities to increase pollinator habitat, health, and education

Initiatives in urban livestock would begin in 2017. A business plan initiative has been submitted in the 2017 budget cycle to address the proposed actions.

6. Home Gardens

Home gardens are small areas of land or raised beds used for growing food on or around a house or apartment complex. Throughout the engagement process it was identified that there are many divergent impressions around the types of home gardening allowed in Strathcona County.

Proposed actions include:

- promotion and advocacy around home gardening
- increase knowledge on programs and courses available on home gardening in the community

Initiatives in home gardening would begin in 2018.

7. Education and Coordination

Efforts in education and coordination of action will be critical in building momentum and maintaining direction for the previous topic areas.

Proposed actions include:

- stakeholder conversations of the key areas implemented through the Urban Agriculture Strategy
- ensure education continues in all of the above mentioned actions

Initiatives in education and coordination would begin in 2019.

The preliminary Urban Agriculture Strategy has been presented to the public through an online survey and three open houses.

Enclosure

1 Urban Agriculture Strategy Draft