

**Urban Agriculture Strategy****Report Purpose**

To provide Council with the Urban Agriculture Strategy for consideration and approval.

**Recommendation**

THAT the Urban Agriculture Strategy, as set out in Enclosure 1 to the November 29, 2016 Transportation and Agriculture Services report, be approved.

**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.

October 18, 2016 – Priorities Committee reviewed a preliminary Urban Agriculture Strategy as a report for information.

**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:** Potential recommendations for existing bylaw reviews

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

**Summary**

During the months of February to October 2016, Strathcona County and Intelligent Futures developed the Urban Agriculture Strategy (Enclosure 1). This 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 Urban Agriculture Strategy provides proposed actions under the seven topic areas that were identified through substantial public engagement. These actions include:

**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:

- Include “community garden” as part of the definition of “park” in the Land Use Bylaw
- Develop a community garden policy
- Promotion of and support for independently organized community gardens
- Create a County-led community garden initiative, with the County providing public land access

## 2. Public Agriculture and Edible Landscaping

Public agriculture refers to food grown in the public spaces of a town or city, and is generally meant as a public or shared amenity. An example of this would be an urban orchard that requires relatively little maintenance, where harvest and sharing by community members is encouraged.

Proposed actions include:

- Include edibles in open space planning
- Mapping of edible trees and shrubs in public realm
- Develop an Adopt-a-Plot initiative for edible and pollinator-supporting public orchards and food forests
- Develop signage identifying edible plants

## 3. Urban Farms

Urban farming is the commercial practice of growing and raising food within the boundaries of a city, town, or municipality where large-scale farming is less feasible or desirable than in rural areas. Urban conditions such as typically smaller available land area and diverse neighbouring land uses mean that urban farms lean towards higher per square foot productivity, and less mechanization, with more focus on produce and less on livestock.

Proposed actions include:

- Explore adding urban farming definitions to the Land Use Bylaw
- Develop a campaign to promote and support urban farming in Strathcona County
- Develop a County-supported youth farming and entrepreneurship program with a place-making urban focus

## 4. School Agriculture Program

School agriculture programs can take on different forms including, but not limited to, classroom gardens, community gardens, horticulture training gardens or greenhouses, vertical growing hydroponic and aquaponics systems. Among these types, different age groups and curricula can be engaged and lesson plans can be designed to minimize added teacher effort while maximizing learning outcomes.

Proposed actions include:

- Foster growing opportunities at every school in the County
- Increase educational opportunities around urban agriculture, technology and entrepreneurship in schools

## 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:

- Replace the current Animal Control Bylaw with new separate bylaws: a revised Animal Control Bylaw and create an Alternative Pets Bylaw
- Create a pilot project for urban backyard chickens
- Encourage a Bee Healthy Strathcona Campaign -
  - Revise planting guidelines to incorporate pollinator habitat into ornamental landscapes
  - Amend Apiculture Bylaw to allow demonstration beehives in additional land use districts
  - Install beehives as demonstration projects in lower traffic areas

## 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. A home garden is typically planted and maintained by a single person or family.

Proposed actions include:

- Promotion and advocacy around residential gardening opportunities
- Share programs and courses on home gardening across the community

## 7. Education and Coordination

Efforts in education and coordination of action will be critical to build momentum, maintain direction, and realize a full return on invested public and private resources. Well-conceived efforts in education and coordination will cross all of the other strategy areas, tying people, expertise and investment together into Strathcona County-specific urban agriculture, food system and community results.

Proposed actions include:

- Create structured stakeholder conversations on key implementation areas of the Urban Agriculture Strategy
- Ensure education in all actions

An anticipated implementation schedule for the proposed actions can be found in Enclosure 2.

## **Communication Plan**

Communication objectives:

1. Generate awareness and interest in the implementation of the urban agriculture strategy.
2. Create understanding of the implementation process and timelines.
3. Create awareness of how we are investing in and managing agriculture strategies to contribute to Strathcona County as Canada's most livable community.

## **Enclosure**

- 1 Urban Agriculture Strategy
- 2 Urban Agriculture Strategy Anticipated Implementation Schedule
- 3 ppt Urban Agriculture Strategy Presentation