

Policy Recommendations
resulting from
Lower Mainland Food Council Action Workshop
June 12 & 13, 2003

1. Farmers Markets in Vancouver

Submitted by:
Devorah Kahn, Your Local Farmers' Market Society
604-879-3276, devorah@eatlocal.org

Zoning

The combination of zoning and limitations set by the Vancouver Charter precludes the establishment and development of Farmers Markets in the city of Vancouver. For example, there is no zoning in the city that allows for outdoor vending. Any business/organization seeking an outdoor venue must:

- a) be permitted to use outdoor space that is calculated by the size of its indoor retail space;
- b) apply for a special, limited "mobile vending" permit;
- c) limit its event to park property and apply for a "special event" through the Vancouver Park Board after receiving support from specific community center association board;
- d) apply to council for a "non-enforcement" of the specific zoning or a development permit to change the zoning of specifically zoned sites such as public or private school properties, private community or ethno-cultural centers, shopping centers, etc.

As it stands, two Farmers Markets currently operating in Vancouver (Trout Lake & Nat Bailey) apply for annual Special Event permits through the Park Board, while the third, the West End Farmers Market, which is located on VSB property, applied for a development permit to change the zoning in 2003. From 1999 - 2002 organizers have requested and received a "non-enforcement" of the zoning.

Due to the nature of Farmers Markets, a hard surface is needed to accommodate vendor vehicles. Supporters of urban markets come from distances too great to walk or may stop at a Market as one of many activities of daily living, therefore demanding a vehicle. Community center parking lots with sufficient space are limited and often compete for parking space when markets are running. Ironically, schools often have hard surface parking lots that sit idle on summer weekends, yet cannot be easily used due to zoning restrictions.

Research and anecdotal evidence shows that local merchants express concerns regarding Farmers Markets in their area, mostly due to unfair tax advantages or competition with selling similar products. Despite these concerns research shows that many communities develop Farmers Markets as a means to increase business to those same merchants due to the large number of shoppers who would otherwise not frequent the neighbourhood.

"True" Farmers Markets cannot and never will be similar to chain retail stores. Despite the existence of three Farmers Markets in Vancouver, each one is unique from the other. Though a few farmers have the resources to attend several markets per week, most are only able to attend, one or two per week. These limitations make each market unique with a variety of produce or products to sell.

Policy recommendations re zoning:

1. create a definition of "true" farmers markets (consider adopting definition from BC Association of Farmers Markets);
2. clearly define "mobile vending" to specifically exclude "Farmers Markets";
3. create a policy that facilitates the development and support (non-financial) of not-for-profit farmers markets in Vancouver e.g. create a special permitting process, re-word the Vancouver charter to allow permit application, facilitate non-enforcement of the zoning of select sites without making a mockery of the zoning system that includes staff support.

Health Department Guidelines

Currently the VCHA permits the following items to be sold at Farmers Markets in the City of Vancouver:

- Raw, whole fruits & vegetables;
- Refrigerated whole eggs;
- Honey;
- Frozen meat & poultry that has been slaughtered and processed in licensed facilities;
- Dairy products processed in licensed and inspected facilities;
- Low risk prepared food items (such as baking, pickles, preserves, etc.) that have been made in home kitchens;
- High risk prepared foods that have been made in a licensed and inspected facility.

Though we are reasonable satisfied with standards set by the VCHA, we feel that items sold at Farmers Markets are scrutinized more closely than similar items sold in stores or other market venues, such as Granville Island or the Chinatown Night Market. For example:

- all processed food or meat/dairy vendors and their items must be approved by the VCHA prior to being sold at local Farmers Markets. No other venue requires this close scrutiny. Despite a near-perfect track record upon inspection, extra Farmers Market staff time and time delays are required when considering and/or accepting new products;
- cooking demonstrations are not permitted unless accompanied by hot & cold running water and a 2 sink system. This is completely impractical in a temporary outdoor setting. Cooking demonstrations lead to increased consumption of products on display - leading to a healthier eating habits;
- the VCHA explains to us that we require extra vigilance on their part due to some of our vendors being permitted to make low risk items at home.

Public Health guidelines for Farmers Markets throughout the province are inconsistent. Provincial guidelines were developed in 2000 by the Ministry of Health, Health Protection Branch (Larry Copeland's office), yet certain municipalities, such as Vancouver, decided these guidelines were not sufficient. Vendors who sell at Farmers

Markets in various municipalities are confused by what is permitted in one jurisdiction vs. another. For example: eggs may be sold from an ice chest in most municipalities, but must be sold from a mechanically running refrigerator in Vancouver (only since 2003). Farmers who used to bring eggs to Vancouver Farmers Markets, no longer do so, due to these restrictions. As a result, residents of Vancouver are forced to drive to Farmers Markets in neighbouring communities to purchase truly "farm fresh" eggs unless farmers purchase more expensive equipment for selling in Vancouver.

Policy recommendations re Health Department guidelines:

1. Considering the vast number of "cottage industries" including food prep that are being done in people's homes, the VCHA should issue less expensive and less stringent licenses for low risk home prepared food items and allows inspection, regardless of being on one's home.
2. Create policies that support safe, local cottage industries and farm products. Consider the true risk of foods prepared, grown or raised in small quantities vs. the risk of foods being prepared in poorly monitored, large industrial settings.
3. Support initiatives that have been developed by other jurisdictions or agencies regarding selling and preparing of food products. Trust that each municipality has the best interests of its own citizens. There is no need to reinvent the wheel in each municipality regarding food safety.

2. Urban Agriculture/Food Production

Submitted by:

*Rob Barrs, Holland Barrs Planning Group Inc.
604 688 9765, barrs@shawbiz.ca*

1. City should explore the feasibility/economics of innovative urban agriculture projects by encouraging/funding a number of pilot projects carried out in conjunction with non-profit organizations and university partners. These projects could include land-based aquaculture, organic greenhouses, rooftop gardens etc.
2. Examine the possibility of securing a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) green building innovation credit for local food production that is integrated with the building/site. Discuss this with representatives from LEED BC to see if on-site food production can be incorporated into the LEED rating system or at the very least recognized as a legitimate innovation credit.
3. Research funding available for urban agriculture projects - Kyoto, FCM, etc. and make this knowledge available.
4. Complete an inventory of unused space suitable for urban agriculture in the region.
5. Small scale growers find difficult to market and sell produce: Facilitate an urban growers co-op that might collectively purchase and market produce, negotiate problems and agreements. Might include DTES organizations, individuals, social housing complexes etc.
6. Bring different ethnic groups into the fold. Many recent (and not so recent) immigrants to Canada bring with them a great amount of skill and innovative techniques useful for urban agriculture. This often uses approaches and crops that others haven't focused on. We should make a special effort learn from their skills.
7. If more food were grown in the City using composted organic wastes it would likely result in reduced waste management fees, reduced transportation impacts and (depending on the approaches used) improved opportunities for stormwater

management. City Operations could fund a study looking at potential savings as a result of urban agriculture initiatives. i.e. what does the City currently pay for stormwater management, waste removal etc. services that might be avoided as a result of urban agriculture initiatives.

3. Good Land Stewardship

Submitted by:

*Ramona Scott, Agricultural Liaison, Conservation Partners Program
250-479-8053, ramona@conservancy.bc.ca*

"Whereas farmers can provide not only food, but also clean water, habitat for native wildlife and plants, and a barrier against sprawling development; Whereas the price of farm commodities has fallen in real terms for decades but the value society places on the environmental quality farmers can provide is rising; We recommend that regional and municipal governments, through by-laws, policies, and planning, create ways for farmers to be paid for good stewardship practices on working farms with good land."

4. Public Food Distribution: Corporations in Schools

Submitted by:

*Tara Belcourt, US Moms Community Projects
604-261-2282, us_moms@yahoo.com*

1. A policy for analysis of the nutritional value of school breakfast & lunches based on nutrients necessary for learning & maintaining healthy growth & not on simply calories. (Nutritional Equity Declaration - NED - as presented by UsMoms Community Projects)
2. Create a policy to only allow nutritional food & drink items including water to be sold on school grounds by having the same sponsoring companies put healthier items to stock the vending machines.
3. Create a policy (or try out a pilot project) that all existing school meal programs include breakfast, lunch & 2 healthy snacks a day in order to meet the nutritional requirements of growing learners and incorporated into the daily schedule either in the classrooms as a part of the curriculum i.e. math - fractions, division, grouping, Health/Phys Ed. Science- energy, food chains, plants, nutrition, active living or included in the general school structure i.e. before recess they have to eat to have the energy to play in the morning & afternoon. The education aspect is very important. Appleton video was shown as an example of success. (Pilot Project proposed by UsMoms & video is available upon request 604-261-2282)
4. Having the DPAC look at fundraising initiatives and the harmful side effects of candy shops during school hours with a policy to commit to making healthier choices that are still yummy & will still raise money i.e. real fruit juice gummies & juice smoothies instead of gummy bears & kool aid jammers; yogurt/ Carob or real chocolate covered granola bars not chocolate bars or fake chocolate (accompanied by educ. material on the effects of candy/nutritional deficiency on learning); home baked goodies that use healthier choices like real chocolate & natural ingredients, whole grains, unrefined sugars etc. (Education/ Recipes to be provided for interested bakers/fundraisers on PAC's to ease transition etc.)

5. Food Policy for Schools

Submitted by:

Nathan Hyam, Chef & Author

604-253-3111, nflux@direct.ca

Responsibilities

The school board recognizes the important connection between a healthy diet and a student's ability to learn effectively and achieve high standards in school. We also recognize the school's role, as part of the larger community, to promote family health.

We recognize that the sharing of food is a fundamental experience for all peoples; a primary way to nurture and celebrate our cultural diversity; and an excellent bridge for building friendships, and inter-generational bonds.

Goal

The educational goal is to improve the health of the entire community by teaching students and family's ways to establish and maintain life-long healthy eating habits. They goal shall be accomplished through the following policy recommendations:

- Core academic content in the classroom
- Nutrition education (Culinary Arts & Home Economics Departments and the Continuing Education Program)
- Garden experiences and local farm/school connections involving several school departments
- Nutritious reasonably priced food and beverage choices being available in the cafeterias
- Limiting the availability of soda pop in schools
- Making fresh food on site wherever possible
- Purchasing locally produced foods

6. Food Bank Building

Submitted by:

Carol Ranger, Reach Centre

604-254-3987, cranger@reachcentre.bc.ca

1. Recommend that the City of Vancouver fund a large building/warehouse to house multiple food-related projects that have the objective of improving food security for the citizens of Vancouver. i.e. Food Bank, Good Food Box, Community Kitchens, Fruit Tree Project, Farmers' Market Society, UsMoms (plus any other food groups who required office/warehouse space and would benefit from the synergy created by such a union.)
2. Recommend that the City make available resources to these groups i.e. expertise, equipment, administrative assistance.
3. Recommend that the City direct the Health Board to define "access to healthy food for all citizens" a core service, and hence fund staff to ensure this occurs.

4. Develop a "Food Security Fund", which would provide core funding for initiatives focused on food, food access and the creation of a sustainable food system in Vancouver.

7. Small Scale Food Production

Submitted by:

*Ellie Schmidt, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority
604-255-3151, ellie_schmidt@vrhb.bc.ca*

1. Develop a Food Policy Council funded by City\Province\GVRD
2. Ask city Councillors to champion a Food Security Advisory Committee to City Council. This body be involved with COOL and neighborhood governance and reform.
3. Develop a "model" build on Victoria model of "becoming a collaborative community for working" together

8. Composting

Submitted by:

*Marja Kauppi, BA Social Work
604-520-0247, kauppi@telus.net*

1. Make food waste an important political issue - get it on the public agenda
2. Government should play an active role in increasing awareness and support for food waste composting
3. By-laws, legislation should be written to encourage and support food waste composting initiatives throughout the province and municipalities
4. Contact and network with existing agencies/organizations for food waste & composting training for the community
5. Help develop food waste composting guidelines
6. Actively support the development of compost markets
7. Partner in the development of a high profile demonstration site and encourage municipal governments to design and complete a successful food waste composting initiative - involve community representatives
8. Make it advantageous to compost food waste - remove obstacle to composting such as farms unable to access food waste by working with farmers or others capable of utilizing the waste
9. Address the issue of tipping fees for compostable waste - develop incentives by making it lower than those set for conventional disposal or by imposing disposal bans on compostable waste.

9. Public Awareness of Food Issues & Buy Local Promotion

From Workshop Notes:

- Labeling requirements for BC produce & food products.
- Small, local farmers restricted by regulations e.g. egg marketing have a specialty pool for quotas.
- Vegetable commission - control products supply management.
- Public education about real costs of producing food, e.g. California imported food vs. local food ~ Economics of farming - why is it so much cheaper to buy imported Californian food than what can be produced locally.
- Hospitals, colleges, universities, municipal cafeterias, parks board concessions all Buy Local.
- Government subsidies on food production.
- Municipal government to intervene in economic system to make it fairer for local farmers: e.g. land, buildings for farmers markets; reduce tax rates to markets that only sell local food; protect zoning of agricultural land; protect agricultural practices against neighbour complaints in residential areas.
- Municipalities approving good developments, re-zoning applications which support local food production.
- Support agricultural land trusting.