

Saanich Agriculture & Food Security Plan Public Input Summary

Open House and Workshop

Key Themes and Recommended Actions

2:30 to 5:30pm January 18, 2017
Cedar Hill Golf Course

The District of Saanich hosted an open house and workshop to engage the public around the *Saanich Agriculture and Food Security Plan*. The event provided attendees an opportunity to peruse project information posted on large boards as well as participate in deeper discussions regarding the proposed key themes and recommended actions in a small group format.

The event was well attended, with over 60 individuals taking time to read through information, provide feedback, and take part in conversations regarding the major themes of the plan. Several members of the Task Force attended the event as well.

Event Format

The format of the event included:

- Information boards posted around the room that highlighted the timeline, process and key components of the plan;
- Post-it notes provided for attendees to write comments and post them alongside specific actions;
- Sticker dot exercise where individuals could vote on which actions should receive the highest priority during implementation;
- Powerpoint presentation by the consultant to provide an update on work done on the plan to date and to review the objectives of the workshop;
- Facilitated discussions at five tables (one for each of the plan's main themes);
- Opportunity to rotate through all of the five tables in order to provide feedback on each of the themes and their actions;
- Short verbal reports back to the larger group by the five facilitators at the end of the event.

In addition, several one-on-one discussions took place between the consultants, staff, and participants as the location was large enough to accommodate this level of interaction. Coffee and locally-sourced food was served.

Feedback on Themes and Recommended Actions

The following is a summary of feedback received for each of the themes. The summary includes a combination of comments made directly onto poster boards and comment sheets, as well as feedback heard during each of the five rounds of facilitated discussions and informal conversations. Top priorities are identified for each.

Theme 1: Connecting gaps in the local food system to improve food self-sufficiency

Suggestions

- Bring more municipal land into production (gardening in boulevards, food forests).
- Revise bylaws to allow more farming, food production and sales in urban areas.
- Consider using Panama Flats for food production, storage, or processing.
- Provide more opportunities for community gardens.
- Support the hiring of a food system coordinator at the municipal level.
- Foster relationships with NGOs and CRD.
- Look for ways to increase access to healthy food for families with young children.
- Connect with First Nations to coordinate traditional food feasts and fund restoration work.
- Study water supply quality and quantity for consideration for agricultural trends.
- Inventory aspects of Saanich current agriculture and food security including urban, rural and indigenous food opportunities.

Top priorities from discussion

- Bring land into productive use.
- Utilize Panama Flats.
- Support the plan by providing grants and hiring a Food System Coordinator

Top priorities from information boards and comment sheets

- Review OCP and zoning bylaw to align with plan's commitments.
- Use grant system to support local food projects.
- Create a food system coordinator position.
- Support efforts to re-establish an indigenous food system.
- Support food production on school grounds.
- Support food waste reduction.
- Conduct a farm and food growing and access inventory.

Theme 2: Strengthening local awareness of the local food system

Suggestions

- Provide more opportunities for people to get to know local farms (tours, maps).
- Consider allowing pocket markets within the area.
- Create a logo and map of farms for Saanich products.
- Promote local food for institutional needs (universities, hospitals).
- Partner with Victoria Foundation and other funders to share best practices and models like Lifecycles, Haliburton.
- Promote signage by facilitating the ability to obtain and install signs.

- Work with First Nations for food related festivals and events.
- Support restoration work and capacity building for revitalization of traditional practices.
- Encourage the removal of non-native invasive species in school areas.
- Support opportunities to improve training, skills and knowledge in and about farming in Saanich.

Top priorities from discussion

- Bylaw changes to allow more food production and sales in urban areas.
- Support a farmers market and/or pocket markets.
- Promote Saanich producers through online marketing.
- Partner with non-governmental groups to leverage interest in local food.

Top priorities from information boards and comment sheets

- Continue to assist with promotion of festivals and other agricultural events.
- Explore bylaw changes to increase opportunities to sell food locally.
- Include native plants, forest restoration, and traditional food systems as part of the curriculum used to provide food education in Saanich schools.
- Support awareness of farms, and food products from Saanich.

Theme 3: Improving the interconnection between food production and the environment

Suggestions

- Increase pesticide/fertilizer regulations and enforcement.
- Ensure wildlife management is done sustainably and responsibly.
- Create or support programs that support ecosystem regeneration (pollinators, enhance soils, recharge water sources, etc.).
- Develop programs for water storage and management.
- Provide leadership around the issue of food waste.
- Provide incentives or subsidies to organic producers.
- Provide educational opportunities for allotment and community gardeners.
- Explore incentives for grey water use.

Top priorities from discussion

- Management of deer and geese.
- Water management for irrigation and drainage.
- Food waste reduction and compost initiatives.

Top priorities from information boards

- Participate in CRD initiatives to manage wildlife.
- Support a special water rate for agriculture.
- Encourage urban farmers and gardeners to compost, harvest rainwater, etc.
- Work with First Nations to identify and protect important shellfish beds.



- Ensure that Development Permit Areas work to improve the overall integrity of farming areas.
- Support efforts to enhance farmland and increase crop yield in Saanich.

Theme 4: Managing land use to support farmland

Suggestions

- Provide support for farming practices outside the ALR.
- Be sensitive to the relationship between urban infrastructure and agricultural impacts.
- Regulate footprint, housing size and location on farmland.
- Provide a compliance check before renewing business licenses in A zone.
- Use GIS and satellite imaging to assist with enforcement and compliance.
- Offer small grants or tax breaks for agricultural production on land that was previously fallow.
- Consider more options for food production in urban areas.
- Create a farmworker housing plan or strategy.
- Address the lack of industrial zoned land in Saanich to stop the fragmentation of agricultural land.

Top priorities from discussion

- Business licensing in A zone.
- Compliance and enforcement strategy.
- Education of the real estate industry.
- Regional farmland trust.

Top priorities from information boards

- Encourage and support landowners of underutilized farmland to develop farm plans.
- Consider adopting a Development Permit Area that could act as a buffer strategy to reinforce the urban growth boundary and protect farmland.
- Support the development and operation of specialty crop farms to diversify farm production, increase economic development, increase local food production, and improve farm income.
- Require Agricultural Impact Assessments, performed by a Professional Agrologist, to be accompanied by landowners along with ALR non-farm use, exclusion, and/or subdivision applications.



Theme 5: Supporting multi-generational farmers and emerging farmers

Suggestions

- Add the farmland trust to the vision statement.
- Need clarity around what Saanich's goals are with regard to farmland protection.
- Consider using Panama Flats for food production.
- Need to move Haliburton forward, still in incubation stage.
- Partner with UVic and Haliburton Farms to get students on to the land.
- Disincentivize non-agricultural use of agricultural land.
- Continue to facilitate capacity building, host inter-generational farming events to share ideas.
- Work with farmers to expand their businesses (not just academics and NGOs).
- Facilitate housing for multifamily farms to increase affordability for new farmers.
- Look to property stewardship by NFP Fieldstone Community Farm Society as a model.
- Look into land use designation for agri-tourism.
- Explore a native plants garden program.

Top priorities from discussion

- Support the regional farmland trust model.
- Utilize Panama Flats.
- Ensure farmland remains farmed (take non-farm use pressure off).

Top priorities from information boards

- Support infrastructure for processors within Saanich to extend the seasonal availability of local foods.
- Promote and support land-linking and mentorship program(s) that match land with people who want to farm.
- Support the CRD in efforts to initiate a process to establish a regional food and farmland trust.
- Identify current on-farm or near-farm housing options for farmworkers and use this info to update/create farmworker housing policies.

Next Steps

The information and feedback received during the open house/workshop will be used to update the list of recommended actions and draft an implementation strategy for the plan. The revised action list and draft implementation strategy will be used to develop the draft Agriculture and Food Security Plan that will be presented to the public in late spring 2017 for a final round of input and feedback.

