



URBAN AGRICULTURE STRATEGY

Draft Terms of Reference



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OVERVIEW

Purpose

The primary goal of the Urban Agriculture Strategy is to work with the community to develop a strategy to direct urban agriculture efforts within the City of London. This process will start with answering the question, “What is Urban Agriculture?” While no specific definition is proposed, urban agriculture addresses the three pillars of agriculture, namely, growing/producing food, food processing, and food distribution. Urban agriculture does this at a scale appropriate within an urban setting, and often relies on many parties who may play a role in or participate in only one or two of these pillars of agriculture. The roles of the City and the community in developing urban agriculture in the City of London will be reviewed as part of the strategy. The strategy should be broad enough to address all potential aspects of urban agriculture within the city, yet specific enough to result in policy and regulation amendments

where necessary, and to identify the roles and responsibilities of the many stakeholders in delivering and implementing an Urban Agriculture Strategy for the City.

Determining the roles and responsibilities of the City and community in the implementation of the strategy is another important outcome. The continued strengthening of City-community relationships, and how urban agriculture can provide economic, social and environmental benefits to the community and neighbourhoods will be part of this strategy.

Lastly, the strategy should identify the gaps that may exist in providing for urban agriculture in the City, and identify the process for closing those gaps.

Scope

It is important to understand the activities urban agriculture entails. Urban agriculture, is made up of growing, processing and distributing activities within the urban environment. Growing includes all the planting opportunities within the urban environment such as community, backyard and rooftop gardens, as well as greenhouses and larger urban farms. Processing includes local restaurants, community kitchens and anywhere else locally grown food is prepared before consumption. Distribution encompasses sale through farmers markets, road-side stands, other retail, as well as community uses like foodbanks and school cafeterias.

The strategy will outline the roles to be taken in its implementation. An urban agriculture strategy for London is focusing on community scale initiatives and is not intended to compete with existing agri-food business practices within the city. The City has two broad roles: facilitation and regulation. The City can offer support for some activities, as already done through the Community Garden Strategic Plan, for example to help co-ordinate efforts and investment in the city. The city also plays a regulatory role and will evaluate requirements needed to ensure plentiful but safe urban agriculture opportunities. The strategy must also outline the roles for the community to play in urban agriculture within the city.

For the City of London urban agriculture strategy, the geographical area of application is the City. However, given the rural portion of the city dedicated to larger scale agricultural production, the focus of this strategy will be on supporting food production, processing and distribution within the urban area of the city as delineated by the urban growth boundary.

There is an opportunity to assess how the City could assist community groups in utilizing privately-owned property for urban agriculture. A parallel process is investigating the potential opportunities for urban agriculture activities on the lands located at 31 Firestone Boulevard. This demonstration project could be used to focus and clarify the discussion of urban agriculture, and to demonstrate the range of potential opportunities for urban agriculture activities that such as site would present.

Why Urban Agriculture?

Urban Agriculture offers many social, economic and environmental benefits. Urban Agriculture can reduce the costs, both economic and environmental, of food transportation. It can convert food waste through composting while reducing food packaging waste. Urban Agriculture can improve health outcomes not just through the additional fresh vegetables consumed but also the physical activity done in the gardening that produces them. The social benefits of urban agriculture include more community cohesion through connections made at community gardens and therapeutic benefits often associated with gardening.

Goals

The final Urban Agriculture Strategy will:

- Establish a vision and goals for the City regarding food growth, food processing and food distribution within the urban area of the city;
- Determine the roles for the community and the City, both regulatory and operational support, in the implementation of the strategy's final goals;
- Evaluate the Official Plan, Zoning and other By-laws with regards to their effects on potential urban agriculture in the City;
- Analyze and evaluate options for City lands to be used for the purpose of urban agriculture; and,
- Prepare and implement any necessary amendments to City policies, by-laws and procedures determined through the Urban Agriculture Strategy.

Council Support

The development of an Urban Agriculture Strategy is the result of Council direction. At its meeting on September 1, 2015 Municipal Council resolved:

that Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to consult with key stakeholders and to report back at a future meeting of the appropriate standing committee, with respect to the feasibility of an overarching urban agriculture policy that will outline the following:

- i) an inventory of parcels of City-owned land that are potential location for urban farming;*
- ii) the role the City of London could play with regard to urban farming on public lands;*
- iii) a clear definition of “urban agriculture”; and,*
- iv) a review of the current license policies and by-laws to ensure that the City plays a role that does not hinder the various aspects of urban agriculture such as land preparation, food growth, food production and food sales. (2015-S12) (2/9/CPSC)*

This resolution provides the basis for the development of an Urban Agriculture Strategy.

A second resolution was generated April 19, 2016 when Municipal Council resolved:

that the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back at a future meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee with respect to how the City can assist in facilitating community groups utilizing privately owned lands for the purposes of urban agriculture; it being noted that the attached communication was received from Councillor M. van Holst with respect to this matter.

that, for the purposes of urban agriculture, the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back at a future meeting(s) of the appropriate committee with respect to how the City can assist community groups utilizing:

- i) privately-owned property; and/or*
 - ii) the property at 31 Firestone Boulevard;*
- it being noted that the attached communication was received from Councillor van Holst with respect to this matter.*

Recent Work in the Community

An Urban Agriculture Strategy would fit into a history of local food systems work completed in the city.

The Community Food Assessment, completed June 2016, outlines historic and current work to support the local food system in London and Middlesex County. The Community Food Assessment provides an action plan that outlines those actions needed to enhance our local food system and the likely organizations to take action. The Community Food Assessment dedicates an entire section of the action plan to “Community-Based and Urban Agriculture” initiatives.

The Middlesex-London Health Unit, City of London and London Community Foundation are in the process of supporting the development of a Local Food Policy Council. The Community Food Assessment provides an action plan for this future Middlesex-London Food Policy Council. The recommendations in the Community Food Assessment include the key actions for the Food Policy Council in the next few years. A goal of the Food Policy Council is to help guide the Middlesex-London community toward a healthier and more sustainable food system.

The London Plan, the City’s new Official Plan, addresses Food Systems planning through

a chapter dedicated to it. The draft policies promote community gardens, city investment in local food production, and ending food deserts.

The Community Gardens Strategic Plan, completed in September 2015 outlines the City’s role in maintaining and improving community gardens on public land throughout the city through the 2015 to 2019 period. The intent is that the Urban Agriculture Strategy would complement this strategic plan, to identify other potential opportunities to promote urban agriculture in the city.

The Hamilton Road Food Coalition operates out of the Crouch Neighbourhood Resource Centre and they have been working on food security planning in their neighbourhood including possible community food projects including a potential urban farm.

London’s Food Charter, endorsed by Municipal Council in 2011, establishes a vision of London as a food secure community. The Charter was developed by the Child & Youth Network with the goal of creating a Food Secure Community.

Food systems work is not always done with the label ‘food systems’. Other local initiatives have been undertaken that are related to the development of an Urban Agriculture Strategy, and will be considered in developing the strategy.







SCHEDULE

The Terms of Reference establishes a three-step process to create an Urban Agriculture Strategy. The schedule begins with approval of the draft Terms of Reference at the Planning and Environment Committee meeting on September 6, 2016.

The three steps of the process will build upon work that has already been done in the community, particularly the recently-completed Community Food Assessment, London's Food Charter and the policies of *The London Plan*.

The process will include:

- Defining Urban Agriculture
- Establishing the Vision for Urban Agriculture in London
- Assessing the Current Situation
- Developing the Strategy
- Implementing the Strategy-Initiative and Timelines

Step One – Defining Urban Agriculture and Establishing the Vision

Tasks to be completed in Step One include:

- Define for the purpose of the Strategy what is meant by 'Urban Agriculture';
- Refine the scope of the Strategy;
- Review existing policies and initiatives including those identified in the Community Gardens Strategic Plan and the Local Community Food Assessment documents;
- Identify criteria necessary to create a site inventory of City and other lands within the built-up area potential for urban agriculture activities;
- Determine policy and regulatory barriers preventing urban food production, processing and distribution;
- Report back to the community with research results; and,
- Finalize vision and goals in collaboration with the community.

A first community meeting will be scheduled for October. A second chance for input from the community will occur at the Advisory Committee on the Environment – Urban Agriculture Conference, scheduled for November 19, 2016.

Step Two – Creating the Strategy

Developing the Urban Agriculture Strategy will rely on confirming the vision established in Step One, and closing the gaps and identify the roles of the stakeholders in the Strategy.

Tasks to be completed in Step Two

- Based on the vision established in Step One, assess the current situation to identify gaps that exist;
- Using the criteria established in Step One, complete an inventory of potential sites for urban agriculture activities;
- Develop a Draft Urban Agriculture Strategy;
- Check-in with community to review the Draft Urban Agriculture Strategy;
- Co-ordinate review of possible by-law amendments and other City initiatives with internal partners; and,
- Finalize the strategy and present draft amendments to community participants.

A community check-in meeting to review the first draft of the plan will be scheduled in early January 2017, providing for a second opportunity to present a final draft in advance of presentation to Council in Spring 2017.

Step Three – Implementing the Strategy

Following community consultation the final planned step is to seek Municipal Council approval of an Urban Agriculture Strategy.

Tasks to be completed in Step Three:

- Seek Municipal Council’s endorsement of an Urban Agriculture Strategy for the City of London.
- Identify and bring forward any necessary regulatory changes (By-law amendments and licensing).
- Identify initiatives and establish timelines.

The goal is to have a final Urban Agriculture Strategy before Council in Spring 2017.







CONSULTATION

Collaboration is essential to ensure the goals of the strategy are achieved. This can best be achieved by involving those within the city who are interested and invested in the creating the Strategy. Public consultation is an integral part of the proposed process. The City needs to ensure those who are likely to carry-out the goals of the strategy participate in its creation.

Participants

Possible stakeholders include (this list may not be exhaustive):

- Local gardeners and farmers
- Local restaurateurs
- Middlesex London Health Unit
- Business Improvement Associations
- Western Fair District
- London Food Bank
- Community Groups and Organization involved in Food Systems initiatives
- London Community Foundation
- Local residents
- The Middlesex-London Food Policy Council

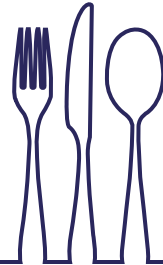
From the City:

- Municipal Law Enforcement
- Council Committees
 - Advisory Committee on the Environment
 - Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Neighbourhood, Children & Fire Services
- Parks and Recreation
- Parks Planning
- Realty Services

The approach to attracting participants will reflect a 'snowball' method to spread notification beyond those directly notified. By asking stakeholders to distribute notice through their networks, a greater number of involved Londoners will be made aware and able to participate in the process.

Publicly advertised meetings at each step is the intended approach. The possibility remains that further meetings could be scheduled should there be a need to focus on specific elements. Comments will also be collected throughout the process.





31 FIRESTONE BLVD

The property at 31 Firestone Boulevard has been identified as a site for potential urban agriculture demonstration projects within the city. The site presents a unique opportunity for larger scale initiatives near potential neighbourhood users. The site has the potential to meet community desires for increased local food production.

Background work is being completed to ensure that the site can operate as an urban agriculture demonstration site. One challenge is that the site is zoned for industrial uses and is in an industrially designated area, so the long-term use of the site for urban agriculture activities is not guaranteed. The first step is an evaluation of the site to ensure that it is suitable for growing purposes, and that there are no soil issues. The proximity and availability of water will also be assessed.

Staff will be reporting out the results of this work in September.

If the site is available, a process to determine what initiatives or pilot projects could be undertaken with community partners will be initiated. The goal is to have the site prepared and available in time for the 2017 growing season.