

**RE: City of Victoria: Support Local Food Systems**

Dear Mayor and Council,

We support the actions, goals and objectives regarding local food systems identified in the draft Strategic Plan, including the following initiatives in 2015 and 2016:

- Completing three high profile projects linked to food security;
- Encouraging boulevard gardens in all neighbourhoods;
- Creating micro-grants for volunteer coordination of commons and community gardens;
- Developing long-term policies for food security and boulevard gardening (including an inventory of City-owned land for food production);
- Introducing new partnerships with citizens and groups to increase food cultivation on public and private land, and
- Enhancing local food systems in general.

We note that these initiatives are consistent with the food-related provisions of the Official Community Plan, found primarily in Section 17. For example, the OCP supports: innovative food production (17.9); urban food supplies (17.A); food education (17.B); connecting people to food (17.5); local food security and sustainability (17.9, 17.A); planted boulevards (8.22.4); native plants (8.58); memorable places (8.a); and adaptive management (22.1). We believe that more progress can be made pursuing these objectives by increasing financial resources for food systems in the 2015 Financial Plan.

We also ask that you make a commitment, and allocate budgetary resources beginning in 2015, to the following initiatives (either as new initiatives within the Strategic Plan, or as detailed measures meant to help implement existing initiatives within the Strategic Plan):

(1) Shift focus in the management of City parks, boulevards and greenspaces from ornamental to edible plants. For example, allocate a minimum percentage of available funding to food-bearing plants and trees, including natives, perennials, and fruit/nut trees (all across Victoria, and especially to enhance/maintain our urban forest);

(2) Provide City assistance with coordination of food-growing resources, including:

- materials pooling / depot (leaves, mulch, soil, cardboard, wood, irrigation materials);
- increase grant funding for existing and emerging food systems initiatives;
- support neighbourhood-level and city-wide food coordination;
- reduce water charges for irrigation of food plants;

(3) Expand availability of City land for food growing, with a mechanism for 5-year security of tenure for growers;

(4) Implement a mechanism for increasing social justice in the distribution of local food supplies (e.g. additional City support tied to "food sharing");

(5) Examine hiring dedicated staff and forming an advisory committee or task force, to spur implementation.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,