City- Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy Stakeholder Groups Feedback Summary: Round Two

Draft 2- September 26, 2012



Introduction

In June of 2012 a series of four, three-hour stakeholder workshops were held to validate the big ideas that have emerged through previous consultations, to add to that list of ideas, and to discuss the strategic directions for how Edmonton can achieve excellence with each big idea.

Over 70 participants were presented with the big ideas that have emerged so far during the engagement process of the City Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy. These big ideas were as follows:

- 1. Land for growing Food
- 2. Food Hubs and Small Scale Processing
- 3. Farmers Markets
- 4. Urban Agriculture (Small to micro scale production)
- 5. Peri-urban agriculture (small to mid scale production)
- 6. Placemaking through food
- 7. Networking and Information Sources
- 8. Health and food related skill development

Participants were then asked to go to a table designated with one of these big ideas to discuss what they were passionate about. Each idea was accompanied with a series of questions:

- 1. Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?
- 2. Why or why not?
- 3. What is already happening to expand?
- 4. How could this idea be expanded and who should be involved?
- 5. Are there examples from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Each participant was given a workbook to write their ideas and thoughts. The result was 86 pages of raw comments. These were collected, compiled, analyzed and then coded. The outcome of this analysis is presented below with each of the big ideas presented with the key themes in the responses for each of the questions. Some indication as to how frequently certain themes emerged is provided in the language used: "many respondents" indicates a strong theme, whereas "some respondents" indicates less agreement on the theme.

Limitations

The stakeholder groups were held by invitation only, and although considerable efforts were made to reach out to a broad and representative group of identified stakeholders, it is expected that there were individuals and representatives who were not in attendance for a variety of reasons. Therefore, it cannot be stated that the stakeholders in attendance for the four workshops represent an exhaustive and complete list of stakeholders with an interest in food and agriculture in Edmonton.

In contrast to the first round of stakeholder discussions, the four workshops in his round each involved stakeholders from various organizations and backgrounds, with various expertise and experience. As such, there was no way to capture ideas and input from particular groups of stakeholders, for example farmers and producers.

The qualitative data outcomes required analysis that is subject to interpretation. The summary presented here is intended to provide the as much relevance as possible for the development of the City Wide Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy.

Big Idea #1: Land for growing food

Preserve land for agriculture in the urban growth areas.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that providing land for growing food was a sound direction for Edmonton.

Note: "Other" responses were both "yes + no"

Why or why not?

• Create connections between food and community: Many respondents felt that connections to food adds to the diversity of the city and links residents to their heritage and natural surroundings. This connection to food was seen to encourage social interactions. The importance of teaching people about where their food comes from, increasing health and environmental awareness was noted.

- Support local economic development: Providing land was seen by some respondents as a way of providing a variety of economic opportunities. Suggestions for this included increased tourism (agro-tourism), jobs for producers including new farmers, entrepreneurs, and supplying products to retailers.
- Increase food security: Many respondents indicated a need for greater food security in the area, and saw the provision of land for growing food as a key step in this process. Locally produced food was seen to reduce transportation costs (both financially and environmentally), increase access to healthy food, and increase resiliency in the future.
- **Control growth:** Preserving land for agricultural use was seen by some respondents as a tool to control growth and reduce urban sprawl.
- Plenty of existing land: Some respondents indicated that there was already lots of land available, and disagreed with the need to further preserve additional space for agriculture.
- Let market control land use: Some respondents felt that the city should not get involved in determining land use. Rather, they thought the market should drive the use. If landowners wanted to sell their land, it was suggested that they make the choice as to who this was sold to: farmers, developers, the city, etc.

Where?

- Urban Growth Areas: Many respondents indicated that the land contained in the urban growth areas, particularly in northeast Edmonton, was valuable land that should be preserved for agricultural uses.
- Areas with good growing conditions: Some respondents suggested that the agricultural quality of the land should determine the areas set aside for agricultural use. Suggestions were made to conduct further research on where these areas are.
- Spread throughout the city: There were many suggestions for including growing space throughout the city - in backyards, green roofs, community gardens, and mixed into other uses. Some respondents suggested that using city land such as parks, underused parking lots, and school grounds would be helpful. Others suggested putting growing space along existing features such as power line right of ways, or along waterways.

How much and how?

• Small parcels: Focusing on small parcels was seen by some respondents as a way to have agriculture spread throughout the city, and to expose residents to food and

agriculture. Others suggested specific percentages of land allocated for food production (between 10 - 20%), without indicating a desire for specific parcel sizes.

- Use any available space: Respondents suggested that any available space should be used including vacant lots, in landscaping, as part of public areas near hospitals, schools, and multi-family housing, on green roofs, in existing growing space, and exploring alternative growing methods such as aquaponics.
- Zoning and planning tools: Use of the municipal reserve designation and other zoning changes to preserve agricultural land was suggested in response to how to provide land for growing food. Land trusts and conservations easements were also suggested by some respondents. Focusing density was also suggested by some as a way to slow sprawl and preserve agriculture land.
- **Disagreement:** Some respondents didn't agree that land should be preserved for agriculture. Reasons varied, from feelings that the market should control the use, to importance of other natural areas than just agriculture, to maximizing urban infrastructure.

Are there examples of providing land for agriculture from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from around the world, including Seattle's food forest, small farms in Greater Boston within developed areas, British Columbia's Agriculture Land Reserve, and Ontario's Greenbelt. Many other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #2: Food hubs and small scale processing

Food Hubs can be a destination for a wide range of food activities and a place to share resources and knowledge. Ideas: certified commercial kitchen, storage for local food distribution, wholesale, retail, office space, event space, classrooms and demonstration kitchen, farmers market, etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that food hubs and small scale processing was a sound direction for Edmonton.

Why or why not?

- Support local wholesalers/grocers: Many respondents indicated that the lack of wholesale options was limiting the success of grocers. The food hub was seen as a way for local grocers, restaurants and food services to buy at wholesale prices and support the local food economy.
- **Support local producers:** The food hub was seen by many respondents as a strong market for farmers in the area, providing them with a place to sell their produce.
- Create connections between food and community: Food hubs were seen by many respondents as a great way to bring people together, and to promote food culture. It was seen as a way to increase understanding and awareness about food and nutrition. Respondents suggested various educational elements that could be included in a food hub.
- Infrastructure support for processing: Providing processing infrastructure was suggested by some respondents as a way to increase processing options, especially for smaller businesses - infrastructure could be shared by various groups, reducing the cost and space required for each business.

What is already happening to achieve food hubs?

- Existing facilities: Respondents listed a variety of existing facilities, such as farmer's markets, commercial kitchen space, food trucks, local stores, and the Edmonton Food Bank.
- **Programs and businesses:** The variety of initiatives happening at Jasper Place High School was mentioned by many respondents. Other initiatives mentioned were Fruits of Sherbrook, organic food delivery programs, Holes centre, OCRE, and Better Access to Better Food.
- **Relationships and partnerships:** Some respondents mentioned the value of conversations and relationships between individuals and organizations.

What should Edmonton's food hub have, and who should be involved?

• Market: A place for people to get food was a common response. Suggestions for this included a co-op, farmer's market, bulk buying, specialty items, and food bank.

- **Growing space:** Some respondents suggested including growing space in a food hub. They suggested community gardens, greenhouse, rooftop gardens, and sharing related resources such as seeds and tools.
- Meeting space/classroom/event space: A space for gathering, whether for meetings, education, or events, was suggested by some respondents. This included suggestions for a community kitchen or demo kitchen.
- **Processing infrastructure:** Respondents offered a variety of suggestions related to processing infrastructure to include in a food hub. This included warehouse space, commercial kitchen with food processing equipment, and walk in coolers/freezers.
- Restaurants: There were several suggestions to include cafes and restaurants.
- Funding: Several respondents suggested that subsidies may be necessary.
- Location considerations: Many respondents offered suggestions for locations. Many thought there should be multiple hubs, with one in every community. A permanent structure accessible by different modes of transportation was a suggestion offered by some respondents.
- **Groups involved:** A variety of groups were mentioned, including the City, community groups, community leagues, local residents, educators, schools, Alberta Agriculture, Alberta Health Services, farm operators, local producers, restaurateurs, and entrepreneurs.

Are there examples from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from around the world, including the People's Supermarket in London, La Cocina in San Francisco, The Stop in Toronto, and the new food hub under development in Vancouver. Many other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #3: Farmers markets

Improve and expand on the success of existing farmers markets. Ideas: coordination between markets, more clear focus on agricultural goods, permanent facilities etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



Why or why not?

- **Support local economic development:** Many respondents saw farmers markets as a source of jobs, tourism, and economic support for farmers.
- Improved access to healthy food: Some respondents pointed to improved access to food as a major reason to support farmers markets.
- Criticism: While the majority of respondents supported farmers markets, there were some criticisms, such as the higher cost of food at farmers markets, the proportion of craft items to food found at some markets, and the need to look beyond farmers markets as the only way to source local food. Also, having farmers markets as a "big idea" was questioned i.e. this is already happening.

What is already happening to improve the success of farmers markets?

- New markets opening: Many respondents pointed out the growth in markets in new areas.
- **Promotions and incentives:** Promotion and advertising, as well as incentives such as free parking downtown on a Saturday were suggestions by some respondents.

What are the top three things the markets need to be successful, and who should be involved?

- Location: Some respondents offered suggestions related to the location of farmers markets, such as improving access, providing water and power, and having a permanent location.
- Advertising and promotion: Improving awareness of and promoting farmers markets was provided by some respondents as a way to make markets successful.
- Vendors: Respondents provided suggestions related to the vendors at a market, such as having vendors follow rules and regulations, requiring a commitment of at least 50% of vendors selling food, product commitments, and having a good market manager to liaise with the vendors.

• **Groups involved:** Respondents suggested farmers and producers, artisans, the City, and consumers as being the key groups involved.

Are there examples from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from around the world, including markets in small European villages, Seattle's farmers market, the Ottawa market area, and the success of Edmonton's own downtown market. Many other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #4: Urban agriculture (small to micro scale production)

Produce food within the urban environment. Ideas: community gardens, backyard/rooftop/balcony gardens, SPIN farms, bees, chickens? etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that urban agriculture was a sound direction for Edmonton.

Note: "Other" responses were "yes + no"

Why or why not?

- Create connections between food and community: The strong links made between people while working together in community gardens was suggested by many respondents. Many also pointed at the increase in connections to food made through urban agriculture.
- Support local economic development: Some respondents felt that the smaller relative start-up costs and high value crops often associated with urban agriculture made this a good local economy generator.
- Increase food security: Many respondents felt that urban agriculture improved access to food, and resiliency and self-sufficiency.

• **Reduce environmental impacts:** Decreasing the heat island effect, improving biodiversity, and reducing urban sprawl were reasons given by some respondents.

What is already happening regarding urban agriculture in Edmonton?

- Increase in options for growing food: Many respondents pointed out the number of
 options already available for urban agriculture, such as community garden, backyard
 gardens, as well as specific initiatives such as the Green and Gold garden at U of A,
 Muttart Conservatory's greenhouse, and the Food Bank's growing space.
- **Organizations:** Some respondents provided examples of existing groups, such as Malmo Community Market, River City Chicken Collective, Operation Fruit Rescue, and urban CSAs.
- Increase in interest and awareness: Education courses, extension programs, and school involvement were suggested by some respondents.
- **Challenges:** Regulations and restrictions were raised by some respondents as challenging the success of urban agriculture in the city.

How could urban agriculture be expanded and who should be involved?

- Provide more space: Many respondents made suggestions for additional space for growing food, including rooftops, a percentage of park space, within new development sites, at public institutions, vacant lots, greenhouses, and exploring indoor options.
- **Remove barriers:** Reducing the red tape and restrictions on some urban agriculture activities, such as backyard hens and bees, was suggested by many respondents.
- Education: Some respondents felt that providing more educational opportunities for citizens would improve urban agriculture. This included both general awareness, as well as specific training for new growers/farmers.
- **Provide incentives:** Grant programs, subsidies, and other forms of financial assistance were suggested by some respondents.
- **Groups involved:** Respondents suggested restaurant owners, chefs, schools, the city, developers, and community groups should be involved.

Are there examples from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from around the world, including a variety of places that allow urban chickens and beekeeping, Vancouver's downtown market gardens, rooftop gardens in many communities, as well as the numerous examples of great things already occurring in Edmonton. Other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #5: Peri-urban agriculture (small to mid scale production)

Produce food within small to medium scale farms Ideas: market gardens, green house, neighbourhood farms (agri-hoods) backyard gardens, etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that periurban agriculture was a sound direction for Edmonton.

Why or why not?

- Support local economic development: Some respondents felt that this scale of production increased opportunities for farming and processing, and could supply other food-related industries.
- Increase food security: Many respondents felt that urban agriculture improved access to food, and increased food security in the city.
- Not a city concern: Some respondents disagreed that the city should get involved in determining agricultural use of peri-urban land.

What is already happening to increase small to medium scale farming?

- Available markets: Existing markets and retailers for local food was suggested by some respondents, as well as the demand to justify these markets.
- Land needed: Some respondents indicated they felt there was a strong need to preserve agricultural land or otherwise supply land for long term agricultural use.

What are the top three ideas to increase small to medium scale farming in Edmonton and who should be involved?

- Long term land use: Many respondents suggested a need to preserve farmland for long term tenure. Different mechanisms to accomplish this were provided, such as City ownership, land trusts, zoning, and agricultural reserve land.
- Improve market options: Creating new opportunities to market produce was suggested by some respondents. Ideas included a food hub, roadside stands, and more and better farmers markets.
- **Provide financial support:** Some respondents felt that financial assistance would support peri-urban farming. Ideas included grants and tax credits, as well as business improvement practices to make farming more affordable.
- Education and promotion: The importance of education and encouragement for both citizens and farmers was mentioned by some respondents.
- **Groups involved:** Farmers, food processors, start-up companies, the City, School Boards, and volunteers were suggestions made by respondents.

Are there examples from other places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from across Canada, including Ontario's Greenbelt, Southlands in BC's lower mainland, and BC's agricultural land reserve. Other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #6: Place-making through food

Enhance Edmonton's food culture and create interest through food activities. Ideas: Festivals, local food marketing campaign, edible landscaping, patios, food trucks, street markets, etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that placemaking through food was a sound direction for Edmonton.

Why or why not?

- Create connections between food and community: Many respondents pointed to food as a key for bringing community together. They also mentioned the importance of educating residents about food and nutrition.
- Support local economic development: Place-making was seen by some respondents as an excellent opportunity to promote the local food economy. This could be in the form of entrepreneurs, local producers, restaurateurs, and other local food businesses.
- Unique culture and identity: Some respondents tied place-making to the creation of a unique identity for Edmonton's communities. This connects to the previous two ideas.

What interesting food places/events does Edmonton already have?

- Events: Many specific examples were provided, including events such as the Heritage festival, What the Truck festival, Taste of Edmonton, Indulgence Edmonton, Highland festival, and others.
- **Places:** Examples were provided such as Strathcona, Whyte Avenue, 10th Street, 118 Avenue, downtown markets, Sherbrooke, and others.

In what places could food help to animate and create interest and vibrancy in Edmonton? In what ways?

- Edible landscaping: Some respondents suggested food gardens and fruit trees be included in landscaping.
- Street and patios: Many respondents felt that removing restrictions on patios would increase vibrancy of communities and celebrate food. There were also some suggestions to consider how to make patios and outdoor seating available during the winter months. Several respondents also mentioned food trucks as a way of getting more food on the street.
- Increase prominence of food in festivals: More festivals, such as those celebrating local food and harvest time, were suggested by some respondents. Other ideas included incorporating local food into existing festivals.
- **Producers and retailers:** Some suggestions were made for connecting producers to community leagues or otherwise directly linking farmers to residents. Some respondents also suggested a greater role for local restaurants in promoting local food, through events and education.
- **Coordinator:** There were several suggestions for a city food coordinator, who would share information and organize food events.
- **Specific locations:** Some areas were suggested, such as connected to community centres, public institutions, and downtown core and mature neighbourhoods.

Are there examples of great food places that Edmonton could build on?

Examples were given from across North America, including: festivals, pop up restaurants, television shows related to food, and edible landscaping. Other examples were provided, all of which will be considered by the project team for inclusion in the Example Practice Guide.

Big Idea #7: Networking and Information Sources

Establish a central location (possibly on-line) for relevant food and agriculture resources and information for a broad audience including businesses, community organizations, government, schools and many others. Ideas: online "clearinghouse," staff coordinator, etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



Ten participants responded to this question. Of these participants, the majority felt that centralizing networking and information sources was a sound direction for Edmonton

Why or why not?

- **Connecting existing resources:** Some respondents commented that the community should stay connected and may have common ideas to problems or issues
- Building on what is already here: Many respondents stated that there is already an active food culture in Edmonton and this is a way for people to get in touch with what is already happening
- Current lack of information: One respondent stated that a lack of information is often expressed, however some respondents were concerned that linking people to that information is difficult and if there was a website than how does one promote the website
- Economic concerns: One respondent s were concerned that a centralized resource would turn into something like a government data base using tax dollars and no one will use it.

What is already happening to provide a networking resource?

• Websites: Respondents listed the following websites. One respondent stated that they didn't think anything formal was happening in Edmonton

- o www.csaalberta.com,
- o www.onlyhereforthefood.ca
- o www.shareedmonton.ca
- o <u>www.slowfoodedmonton.ca</u>
- Nothing Formal: One respondent commented that they didn't think anything formal was in place. Another respondent didn't think there was anything in place and stated if there wasn't they would consider starting one.

How could a networking resource be established and who should be involved?

- On-line resource: Many respondents commented that a centralized on-line resource run by an organization or the city would be a solution. One respondent was concerned that this resource remain grass roots and not corporate. They also suggested having an on-line framework that people could plug into.
- Newspapers: One respondent suggested utilizing local newspapers to feature local food networks, resources and education
- **Community based generalist:** Two respondents referred to a "Community Based Generalist" as a way to establish a network resource
- **Phone line:** Some respondents mentioned having a phone-in option for those who are not computer literate
- Who should be involved: Respondents comments included "everyone should be involved", small scale farmers, although there was a concern that this could be cost prohibitive and one comment suggested that it should be established through a multi-level partnership, although who would be involved in that partnership was not stated.

Are there examples of other places that Edmonton could build on?

Respondents comments were limited to two examples including: Crestwood CL a program "that brings in a farmer every two weeks or so" and the Alberta's agriculture industry.

Big Idea #8 Health and food-related skill development

Expand education and awareness on food-related topics. Ideas: classes on nutrition, cooking, gardening, pest control, seed saving, food processing, master food program, resource gardener at community garden, etc.

Is this a sound direction for Edmonton?



The vast majority of respondents agreed that providing land for growing food was the right direction for Edmonton. One circled both yes and no

Why or Why Not?

- Food is connected to health: Many respondents emphasized the link between the food we eat and our mental and physical health. Some respondents stated that health improves with the understanding of where our food comes from.
- **Community Building:** Some respondents stated that food-related skills are related to community building and creating a sense of community. One respondent suggested that food could play a role in decreasing social isolation for new immigrants and refugees.
- Food security: Many respondents stated that having the skills to grow and cook food will empower people to improve their food security by increasing their knowledge about health and nutrition and reduce their cost of living.
- Loss of food-related skills: A number of respondents were concerned over the loss of food-related skills (cooking, growing and preparing food) due to societal changes, loss of experts and elders, courses being cut from school curriculums and general lack of awareness

- **Desire to learn:** One respondent reflected that there is a desire to learn and this is reflected in projects such as community gardening and Edmonton permaculture.
- Improve farming practices: One respondent stated that food –related skills for farmers improves basic hygiene, biology and understanding of pest control/

What is already happening to expand basic food skills?

- Informal knowledge Sharing/Media: There was a long list of what is already happening informally around building food-building skills these included educations in stores, "talking across the fence", informal gatherings, speaker skills and "multicultural wisdom". There were also many references to media including blogging, YouTube, facebook and television.
- School programs: Many respondents referred to food-related programs in Edmonton Schools including basic gardening, food preparation, culinary skills and classes focused on where food comes from. REAL kid, Apple Schools and Little Green Thumb were referenced.
- Cooking and food processing classes: OFRE's, Seasoned Solutions and Gail Hall and Metro Continuing Education, Basic Shelf, Young Chefs, We Can and NAIT, Athabasca were all referred to as places offering classes on cooking and/or food preservation. Some respondents also stated that local stores are offering cooking and food prep nights.
- **Community Kitchens/ Collective Kitchens:** Some respondents mentioned both collective and community kitchens as place where people learn food related skills; one specific example was the Mennonite Centre.
- **Food Waste:** Respondents stated that composting skills were being taught through composting programs and at community gardens
- Farm/Gardening Skills: Many respondents referred to community gardens as a place to learn good growing skills. CDC North also offers beekeeping courses.
- **Community Organizations and Societies:** Many organizations were referenced as places offering food-related skills including Edmonton Horticultural Society, Reskilling Edmonton, Operation Fruit Rescue, Food Safe, Serve Safe, We Can Food Basket Society, Food Banks and Eat Alberta

How could health and basic food skill resources be expanded and who should be involved?

• Government programs and Policy: Some respondents felt that government policy and programs could support resource expansion. This includes re-instating

previously offered services such as district home economics, and district agriculturists to work with urbanites. A food Policy Council was also mentioned as a way to expand food skill resources. One respondent also mentioned the need to mandate that city facilities should provide locally produced healthier food.

- **Providing spaces for cooking and growing food:** The need for physical venues to cook, process food and share knowledge was mentioned by many respondents. These include community halls, root cellars, city facilities and community kitchens.
- Economic Support and Investment: Some respondents felt that education must be affordable or even free to promote good health. Some respondents also suggested funding support for conferences (i.e. Eat Alberta), Youth and adult cooking courses and for community kitchens and community gardens
- In Schools: Many respondents suggested that the emphasis should be placed on integrating food-related skills in school curriculum. Respondents listed teacher training, bringing elders in to share their knowledge, gardening as a cross cultural activity, school/community partnerships and food prep and nutrition classes
- Institutions: Some respondents mentioned the need to link preventative health care and food. There was a also a suggestion that hospitals and long term care facilities could provide better food for patients
- Informal Knowledge sharing and media: Some respondents referred to intercultural and intergenerational food sharing and to consider refugees and immigrants in this process.
- Who should be involved? Respondents listed to following groups: Alberta Health, AHS, Community Leagues, Faith Communities, Not for profit organizations, schools, school boards and a number of respondents listed that everyone should be involved.

Examples from other places:

Jasper Place High School was listed by a number of respondents. Other examples listed included Eat Alberta, NAIT, the Multicultural Tea House, Bee Keeping Groups in San Francisco, Calgary, Portland and New York, Primary Care Network and public health project s in Waterloo, Kitchener and Guelph.