



Fort Saskatchewan Urban Agriculture Plan

What We Heard Report – 2

March 2024



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1. Project Introduction

The City of Fort Saskatchewan (the City) is creating an Urban Agriculture Plan (UAP). The UAP will guide urban agriculture development at the municipal level and align with the policies and directions of the Regional Agriculture Master Plan's (RAMP). The UAP is intended to identify how urban agriculture can be encouraged, supported, and incorporated in the city, as well as to determine its role in Fort Saskatchewan's future.

2. Public Engagement Overview

The UAP project consists of four phases. Residents and interested parties will be engaged throughout the project. Phase I is the data collection and analysis stage. Engagement during Phase I was undertaken to raise public awareness and gauge residents' understanding, interest, aspirations, and perceived challenges associated with urban agriculture practices. Phase II engagement is intended to validate the vision and principles of the Urban Agriculture Plan. The Draft vision and principles were created based on the foundation of feedback received during the Phase I engagement.

Phase II Engagement:

Phase II engagement included an online survey. The City utilized a variety of promotional tools to advertise the UAP project. The project webpage was updated, and the Phase II online survey was made available. The online survey was promoted through social media, newspaper advertisements, the City's webpage, and email notices to registered parties and those who registered for receiving the project updates.

The Phase II engagement online survey was available on the project website for interested parties and residents to share their insights between January 25th to February 8th, 2024. The Phase II survey consisted of 4 questions about the City's Vision for the Urban Agriculture Plan and its Principles.

3. What We Heard Summary

The following summarizes the feedback received during the UAP phase 2 online survey.

Please note that both partial and complete submissions were included in the data analysis. Therefore, the questions may not have been answered by the same number of respondents. The complete written responses to the open-ended questions are included in Appendix B.

Question 1: Do you Agree, Disagree or are Neutral with the following vision:

The City of Fort Saskatchewan is an innovative place where urban agriculture supports local food security, a diverse economy, and nurtures social connections.

A total of sixty-seven (100%) participants responded to this question. Forty-one (61%) respondents indicated that they agree with the vision, while seventeen (25%) respondents disagreed, and nine (13%) respondents remained neutral. This demonstrates support for the vision, portraying Fort Saskatchewan as an innovative place where urban agriculture supports local food security, fosters a diverse economy, and nurtures social connections.

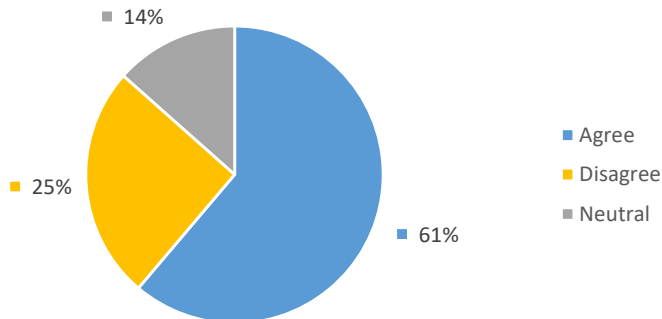


Figure 1. Respondents' thoughts about the city being an innovative place where urban agriculture supports local food security, a diverse economy and nurture social connections in percentage.

Although 25% participants chose "disagree", their comments revealed that some misunderstood the vision statement as the current state of Urban Agriculture in the city, leading them to select the 'disagree' response. Five (7%) residents among those who disagreed expressed concerns that the City is not currently forward-thinking and its policies are unsupportive of Urban Agriculture. They believe the City can be more innovative and should embrace urban agriculture in various ways.

This indicates significant support for the draft vision statement.

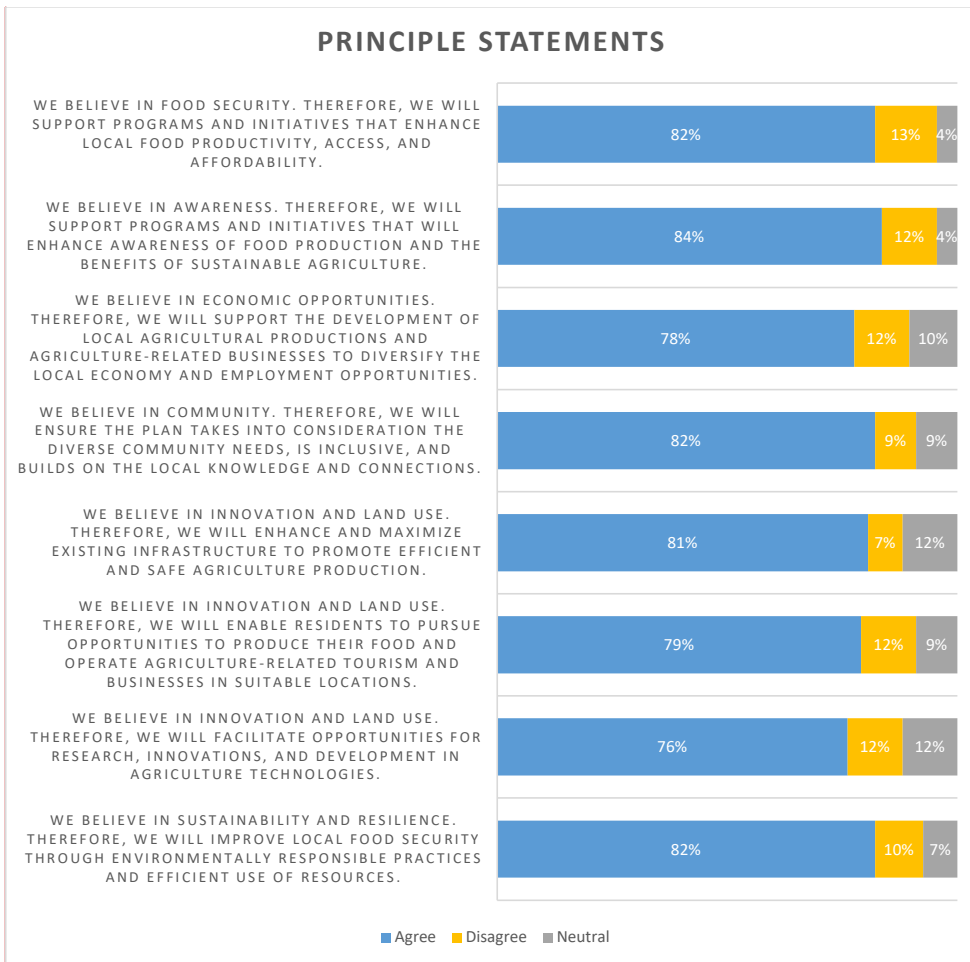
Question 2. Additional comments: (Open-ended question)

Nineteen (28%) participants responded to this question. Most comments expressed support for Urban Agriculture and welcoming the opportunity to grow food for themselves and the community in their back yards and community gardens. Many comments focused on raising animals such as chicken and bees for sustainability. Out of nineteen comments, eight (42%) participants expressed interest in urban beekeeping and raising chickens, whereas five (26%) expressed concerns about noise, smell and other nuisances associated with them.

Residents expressed that the City is less innovative and forward-thinking compared to the surrounding communities. Some comments mentioned skepticism and barriers to Urban Agriculture, such as lot size, land availability, access to resources like water for gardens, and current policies and regulations.

Question 3. For each of the principles listed below, please let us know if you Agree, Disagree or are Neutral with the statement.

A total of sixty-seven (100%) participants responded to this question, with most agreeing with the draft principle statements. The following table identifies level of residents' support for the draft principle statements.



Commented [SS1]: Principle Statements

Question 4. Additional comments: (Open-ended question)

Nineteen (28%) participants provided additional comments. Once again, the residents' comments were generally supportive of the draft principle statements. Eight (42%) residents emphasized the importance of the food resiliency, sustainability, and health benefits of local food production. Three (16%) participants highlighted the educational aspect of growing projects and the importance of creating awareness about food production. One participant appreciated the City's commitment to the community gardens, while six (32%) expressed concerns about the City's current lack of support for Urban Agriculture and hoped for future support. These responses support the principles of believing in food security, with support programs and initiatives that enhance food productivity, access, and affordability, as well as the principle of promoting awareness and supporting programs that enhance awareness of food production and the benefits of sustainable agriculture. One participant suggested including a principle about protecting neighbours' rights to quiet enjoyment of their property.

4. Next Steps

Findings from this second phase of engagement will be considered in finalizing the vision and principles of the Urban Agriculture Plan as required. The feedback will then be used to create a final Urban Agriculture Plan which will be shared on the City's website, and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2024.

For more information on the project please visit:

<https://mysay.fortsask.ca/UAP>, or email fortplanning@fortsask.ca to be put on the mailing list.

Thank you to all who participated. We are grateful for your time and appreciate the energy you have put into planning for the future of urban agriculture in the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

Appendix B: Comments Received on Open-Ended Survey Questions

Question 2. Additional comments: (Open-ended question)

- Please allow residents to have urban chickens
- This idiotic city doesn't care about any principles or visions. Will never care about trees or plants or feeding the residents, this is all pandering to disguise the fact that Gale and council will be ripping up the north side of the highway in town to create the "Fort Saskatchewan Common" which will probably have more gas stations and pizza places while the residents suffer from light pollution and gain nothing. Expand the Fort towards Lamont and Sherwood Park and stop screwing with peoples homes and neighborhoods of 30+ years so that you can put up another liquor store and instead plant a bunch of trees and a food forest where the Fort Saskatchewan Common is planning on going. Also plant at rivers edge. I am so ashamed and disappointed in this city and I do not believe this city cares about any of the principles of sustainability or land use if they can make a Buck instead
- Growing for the public is an amazing way to get people outside.
- I think fort sask is not open minded at all to urban farming.
- Allow bee and chickens to be raised in back yards.
- My only concerns are if someone is keeping bees and the neighbors are allergic to bees. Also with chickens if their coop and area is not kept clean there is the possibility of smelling bad also the possibility of more coyotes, rats and other predators coming into our neighborhoods!
- Currently the ban on livestock prohibits having a backyard chicken. Lot sizes are often too small for gardens. The community gardens are fantastic when used and give many people opportunities to grow food. The city policy of utility charges discourages gardens by making them more expensive to water. If we need to use potable water, we get charged for its volume plus equal volume of wastewater which is obviously not going to sewer. Fix this! Apply a ratio in summer to drop summer water use charges
- I believe agriculture should be in rural areas (farm land) and do not support birds and bees in a city setting. This is why I am neutral in the vision. Social connections can be enjoyed in a rural area. I agree with the local community vegetable gardens as they are in open spaces but do NOT agree with raising birds, livestock, bees, etc. in a residential back yard. Residential back yards are not suitable locations for raising livestock. I have no issues with a backyard vegetable garden for a residents personal use but disagree with animals, bees, etc. being raised in residential back yards. Hence why I will "Disagree" with the principles as I see the principles as vague and do not wish to have back yards raising chickens, goats, bees, birds, etc.
- Would appreciate more future innovative policies to become forefront in this area. Urban Agriculture has endless possibilities to ensure people utilize free space for an environmental wholesome purpose . Incentivizing positive environmental impact for present and future members of the community. Abundance of produce year end could be donated to charitable organizations accepting fresh produce. turn industrial and large residential complex Rooftop into gardens and green spaces
- Urban agriculture should be used for the enjoyment of individual families. It must not disturb the quiet enjoyment of neighbours. Chickens in particular are noisy and disturb people's sleep in the morning. There is no place in an urban environment for chickens. Livestock are also noisy and dirty. Growing fruits and vegetables should be promoted to allow people to enjoy doing so. But in the urban environment, this should be at a scale of a hobby, not an economically attractive venture. The vision must recognize the right of neighbours not to be disturbed by these activities, in particular by noise and odours. Many people living in a city don't want a farm beside them.

- Many other small cities/towns have urban plans in place that allow for the keeping of laying hens & or bees. This would greatly benefit the community for those interested in doing so in terms of self sustainability and environmental impact.
- All citizens should be allowed by law to raise live stock if feasible. Chickens and Bees could be managed in a fenced backyard.
- I have been trying for a few years to get council to allow residents to keep a small number of hens. Alas, they shoot it down every time. :(
- I wouldn't particularly apply the word innovative. We are doing much the same as any other community. My personal opinion is that we need to do more to eradicate the issues rather than just playing catch-up with band-aid approaches.
- I'd like to see residents have a # of allotted chickens
- I would love to have chickens/hens in our back yard for some food security. Also they can keep food scraps going into the landfills.
- I disagree with this statement because, as a resident of Fort Saskatchewan for approximately 15 years, my family and I have tried to work hard to help develop the urban nature of our community through planting trees, cleaning up garbage, supporting inactives, utilizing the beautiful walking paths, amazing dog park, etc but when a few years ago, we tried very hard to get city council to be open minded and listen to the benefits of being able to have urban hens we were not listened to, we were stone walled, we were made fun of, and we were slammed by our local media outlets even when we researched and created quite a substantial following and interest by local residence the urban hens topic was off the table according to council and they made it clear that Gail Katcher was not interested in even looking anywhere at that initiative. This was disappointing. When communities all around us, large and small were embracing the idea, Fort Saskatchewan city council turned a deaf ear.v Fort Saskatchewan is behind the times and not innovative.
- We do not currently do a lot to support local food security or diversify the economy, but it is most certainly a good goal to work towards!
- Perhaps this is a communication issue. I am not aware of any innovation supporting this statement aside from community gardens and the farmer's market. Most homes do not have lots large enough to allow for urban bees/chickens, etc. and if they do, there is generally opposition from neighbors.

Question 4. Additional comments: (Open-ended question)

- We do not see our city supporting urban food growing, or back yard chickens.
- Having plants that are good to eat out in nature also teaches a good skill of plant identification that can be used in other aspects of foraging
- Urban agriculture can be great if rules are followed. With the cost of living increasing I feel it is important to allow people to better their lives by producing their own food.
- Who is we?
- How about planting fruit trees on the boulevards, and in our parks. Maybe in some of the town flower gardens there could be things like carrots and other vegetables.
- I certainly believe in community and believe in the principles if they were to state in rural areas or community vegetable gardens in open spaces and not in residential back yards. The way the principles are worded is too vague.

- Chickens and noisy animals have no place in an urban environment. The principles of the UAP must protect neighbour's rights to quiet enjoyment, while promoting quiet, odour free hobbies that provide enjoyment and additional food sources. Gardening should be available to all through community access programs or individual property use. The city is not a place for agriculture based business, and particularly not for animal based business or hobbies.
- In the above questions under "principles" I understood the "we" to mean in reflection of the values the UAP is intending/ my ideal goal for the UAP. If I am incorrect in that assumption and it was in turn referring to how fort sask operates as of now -my answers should be reversed. I don't feel like the city of fort lends itself to the ideal of being self sufficient or encourages individuals food security. I would love to keep some chickens & maybe even some bees. However for now, I grow what food I can, and supplement with hunting and fishing when in season. Let's make keeping hens an option Please.
- The wording of this question confused me. I do not believe the municipal government of Fort Saskatchewan allows for its residents to produce eggs or honey. I think it should.
- Bring in courses in food production and agriculture and equipment starting in junior high
- I feel that council doesn't believe in half of these things. Food security? Yea, I can plant a garden but I cannot keep a couple chickens. That is I may say. Are less noisy and smelly than dog runs. They honestly are, especially when using a deep litter method. Can I drill a shallow water well in my back yard for water security?PLEASE amend the bylaw to allow us, the citizens of Fort Saskatchewan, to keep up to 6 hens. It would be an extremely easy transition and ammendment. We could easily just use the city of Edmontons rules and regulations and just port them over. Thank you.
- No livestock in backyards. Chickens will attract mice. I don't want to hear complaints from people who witness a backyard chicken slaughter. Bees are ok.
- These listed beliefs are all admirable. Now, IF the city will actually adopt them and formulate actual concrete actions and adopt policy and processes to garner implementation - that's doubtful.
- Interesting questions and tough to answer because it almost impossible to know what the hell they mean. They sound good and reasonable but can be interpreted in so many different ways. When you do surveys please dumb down the questions so they can only be interpreted one way.
- I haven't seen anything much more than the local farmers markets, community gardens, Grow Your Own Project (that supports the local Food Bank) and numerous Food Bank initiatives going on. This is something that other communities are doing as well. My bigger concern is that these initiatives are not solving any problems and the needs of people living here (and everywhere) is increasing rather than decreasing. People get a "feel good" response when donating or volunteering to or for these organizations but again it is a never-ending scenario that cannot be sustained indefinitely.
- Hello, Firstly, I want to acknowledge the City of Fort Saskatchewan for providing garden plots for their residents and appreciate their commitment to our community. I believe that this should only be the start as more people need to know that they can partake in these community activities such as the ability to rent out gardening plots, and what ever else that the city wants to introduce in the way of self sustainability. it would be wonderful to have mini workshops to introduce people/ families to these kind of things, learning how to garden, how permaculture is wonderful for the soil and our natural ecosystems, bee keeping on a small scale, & possibly even chickens...etc. I have looked into other community gardens such as Leduc's community gardens and they are much larger then our tiny plots, (These are ok for first time gardeners or individuals but larger areas need to be made available for families and people who love gardening on a larger scale in order to possibly be able to can their harvest). The present garden plots also need to be enclosed in order to prevent thief and vandalism as people put a lot of time and effort into these plots and get really downhearted when

people just walk by and steal or pull out and drop the produce that these gardeners have worked so hard to produce. Communities such as Plamondon have their community plots fenced in and have a keyless entry code for whomever rents from them. This way the gardeners feel that the city/town have their back and take this seriously. I sincerely hope that these comments are helpful to you to map your future plans for our community gardens, etc... :))

- So important!! Food should be local for health..
- If Fort Saskatchewan city council agreed with sustainability and food security awareness and initiatives it would have and will endeavour to listen to its citizens and look to other communities to promote its citizens right to grow their own food security by allowing them to have urban chickens, dry their clothes on clothes lines to reduce wasted energy. City council would put effort into research on how urban hens can tremendously reduce landfill waste, add to quality of life and mental well being of its citizens.
- I encourage Fort Saskatchewan to develop a feasible and sustainable urban agriculture plan, but I would like to see concrete actions taken and resources provided. Empowering residents to grow/raise their food in an educated and environmentally responsible manner through free education and support is a way include everyone. Have free permaculture sessions or online resources for those who want to do this so they can learn. It is difficult to locate information for our particular climate, especially utilising local plants and trees. Most available information caters to BC, Ontario or American locales and a lot of research and trial and error is involved in getting started here on the Prairies. An idea is for the city to have professionally designed permaculture/food forest landscape examples available so a homeowner could look at the list, choose a favourite design, and install it in their yard. Include recipes and preservation ideas so the food will actually be eaten and not go to waste. This can help to increase food security. Like how the British educated their people on Victory Gardens during WW2 to provide food for their nation. Have examples on public land for residents to learn from. What about the laws surrounding food surplus? Are residents able to have a market garden without having to pay for stalls at the Farmer's Market? Can someone sell an extra 4 jars of strawberry jam or extra tomatoes to their neighbours? What about extra eggs or honey? This kind of cottage industry could get small scale urban hobby farmers interested in growing more than grass on their lawns, as well as develop food security and community. Doing this on the "black market" is always possible but having the ability to do it legally is empowering. I am interested to see the long term results of Fort Saskatchewan's UAP and I hope this is a successful long term project.