



Executive Summary

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has developed an Urban Agriculture Plan (UAP/the Plan) to encourage and promote the uptake of urban agriculture practices in the city, to embed urban agriculture into the city's social and economic fabric, and to promote a culture that values long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Urban agriculture can promote biodiversity, enhance food security, bring community cohesion, and has many other benefits. This makes it a key asset to explore through thorough planning.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has also identified value-added agriculture and food processing as key targets for industrial growth. The Industrial Competitiveness Strategy highlights the value that industrial agricultural investments can bring to the City. The UAP supports the City's economic development in the agribusiness and agricultural sectors.

The Plan also reflects the goals and objectives defined in several municipal and regional planning documents, such as the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board's Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP), Fort Saskatchewan's Strategic Plan, and the Municipal Development Plan (MDP). The UAP reflects consultation with the residents of Fort Saskatchewan and the broad Fort Saskatchewan community, whose voices have shaped the Plan. Between November 2023 and February 2024, the residents and interested parties participated in online surveys and in-person engagements to guide the vision, principles, guidelines, and implementation actions of the UAP. This Plan contains recommendations for urban agriculture practices that are suitable for the city's context, which could help the city strengthen its ties to agriculture by supporting, embracing and diversifying traditional and urban agriculture.





Land Acknowledgement

Fort Saskatchewan and the agricultural land that surrounds it are located on Treaty 6 Territory and Métis Nation of Alberta District 11. We recognize that we stand upon land that carries the footsteps of many Indigenous Peoples, including the Nehiyawak, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, Nakota Sioux, and Métis. The City honours the First Peoples of this land and is committed to fostering

reconciliation through relationship building, knowledge gathering, and education.

We also acknowledge how the interactions between Indigenous people, and the land, water, and air has shaped the history of our city. As people who live on Treaty 6 Territory, we pledge to protect the natural environment, celebrate this Indigenous heritage, and preserve this Indigenous cultural legacy.

Finally, we acknowledge the importance of traditional Indigenous food systems, and recognize the need to continue working

towards truth and reconciliation in food security and food justice for all in agricultural projects, education, and plans in the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY1
Vision Statement
Introduction
1.0 Background
1.1 History
1.2 Location
1.3 Policy Context
1.3.1 EMRB Growth Plan (2017)
1.3.2 'Our Fort. Our Future.' Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Development Plan (2021)9
1.3.3 Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan 2023-20269
1.3.4 Land Use Bylaw9
2.0 Urban Agriculture Backgrounder
3.0 Plan14
3.1 Vision
3.2 Principles
4.0 Action & Implementation





Introduction

Agriculture is an important facet of Fort Saskatchewan's identity. To support the culture of growing agricultural produce in urban spaces, the City has created an Urban Agriculture Plan. The City embraces opportunities for community-scale urban agriculture, agribusinesses, agri-tourism, and value-added agriculture such as processing and packaging with respect to the City's goal of achieving economic diversity.

Fort Saskatchewan understands that agricultural land is a limited resource, and supports the need for a delicate balance between conserving agricultural resources and cultural heritage while accommodating population growth demands responsibly.

Agriculture and industry will remain a part of Fort Saskatchewan's heritage and legacy even as the city expands and grows.

This UAP provides background information and guidance to encourage urban agriculture and awareness about food production and security across Fort Saskatchewan. It further provides guidance to establish regulatory framework that is enabling and manages the space and infrastructure requirements and impacts of urban agriculture.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 History

Indigenous peoples have lived on these lands since time immemorial. Today, the city is located on Treaty 6 Territory and Métis Nation of Alberta District 11.

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has a proud and deep history of agriculture. After the settlement of the Fort, farming became a primary land use and provided many households with a living through direct food production and trade with nearby Edmonton. Even as settlement expanded, agriculture has remained an important facet of Fort Saskatchewan's identity and economy.

The city is surrounded by high quality agricultural lands and also home to active agricultural uses in the Industrial Reserve areas to the Northeast of the downtown core. Lands annexed in 2020 in the southern and eastern parts of the city are under active agricultural use and zoned as Agriculture South AG-S district under the City's Land Use Bylaw (LUB).

1.2 Location

The City of Fort Saskatchewan is located on the east bank of the North Saskatchewan River and is surrounded by rural, agricultural lands within Strathcona County. The city is 25 kilometers northeast of the City of Edmonton. City of Edmonton and Sturgeon County are two neighbouring municipalities across the river.

Fort Saskatchewan plays a key role in bridging urban and rural communities in the region. The city is nestled among some of the most fertile agricultural lands in the country. Recent annexation (2020) grew the city's borders to encompass new agricultural lands.

The city is located within and is a member of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region (EMR). It is also a member municipality of Alberta's Industrial Heartland. Consequently, Fort Saskatchewan is home to the hydrocarbon processing industry and has a long-term supply of light and medium industrial lands available for development. The undeveloped part of the industrial lands and the Industrial Buffer between heavy industry and the city's urban development is currently used for agricultural production. The City's industrial lands have the potential to support agri-food businesses and value-added agriculture. The industrial area's accessibility to the region and its transportation and servicing networks are significant opportunities and assets for diversifying agriculture industry and for the city's economic development.





1.3 Policy Context

1.3.1 Edmonton Metropolitan Regional Board (EMRB) Growth Plan (2017)

Fort Saskatchewan is a member of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board (EMRB). In the coming decades, the region is expected to welcome tens of thousands of new residents. Population growth, housing affordability, climate change, and sustainability are affecting the way that the region grows and adapts. Thirteen municipalities are members of the Board and work together towards a collective goal of strategic and managed growth to attract talent and economic opportunities to this region. The Board's current Growth Plan, 'Re-Imagine. Plan. Build.' was adopted in 2017.

Agriculture is one of the six Policy Areas of the Growth Plan and was a new addition to the 2017 EMRB Growth Plan. The Growth Plan recognizes Agriculture as one of the key drivers of the economy and a significant opportunity and an asset for the region. It gives direction for the conservation of prime agricultural land supply through limiting agricultural land conversion and fragmentation. It further promotes diversification and value-added agriculture production, and planning of infrastructure to support the agricultural sector and regional food system. The Growth Plan further identified that the Regional Agriculture Master Plan (RAMP) needed to be completed to provide a policy framework to achieve the objectives of the Agriculture policy area of the Growth Plan.

1.3.1.2 Regional Agriculture Master Plan (2022)

The Regional Agriculture Master Plan defines urban agriculture as the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and animal husbandry in and around cities. RAMP has four policy areas:

- Policy Area 1, Rural Agriculture, is defined as rural area policy, with some metropolitan area.
- Policy Area 2, Agriculture Co-Exists with Other Land Uses, is defined based on existing land designations and zoning.
- Policy Area 3, Agriculture in Future
 Transition Lands, includes lands designated
 for future growth in the next 25-50 years.
- Policy Area 4, Urban Agriculture, applies to areas that were built-up as of 2021.

Policy Area 3 and Policy Area 4 apply to lands within Fort Saskatchewan, as per RAMP mapping (Figure 1). As the city grows and densifies, planning and consideration will be given to residential developments on agricultural lands in the Future Urban Areas. Further consideration will also be given to urban agriculture within the built-up urban areas.



SECTION 5.0 IMPLEMENTATION

5.2 Land Use

Through the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment evaluation, prime agricultural lands have been identified in the Region. The LESA Map will inform the direction of future growth while continuing to create certainty for the future for agricultural producers in the EMR.

Schedule G LESA-Identified Prime Agricultural Lands and RAMP Policy Areas

Legend

- PRIME AGRICULTURAL LANDS
- POLICY AREA 1
- POLICY AREA 2
- O POLICY AREA 3
- NON-STUDY AREA/POLICY AREA 4
- WATERBODIES
- O EMRB-MEMBER BOUNDARY

Data Sources: Prime Agricultural Areas as identified by the LESA model under the parameters specified in the June 2021 LESA Model Technical Report. Non-Study Area includes identified federal lands, non-EMRB member municipalities, and RAMP Policy Area 4. Waterbodies are as identified by AGRASID 4.1 as a W3 large waterbody and are also excluded from the Study Area.

Edmonton Metropolitan
Region Board

REGIONAL AGRICULTURE MASTER PLAN

5(



A TO THE WELL AS

The RAMP requires that a UAP be prepared for each member municipality with an urban center. The RAMP states that UAPs may provide:

- 1. Support for land use policies for agriculture and the value-added sector;
- 2. Policy direction for infrastructure and services that are needed to support urban agriculture and the value-added sector;
- 3. Policy direction to create a public engagement process for education around urban agriculture and to avoid conflict over land uses associated with urban agriculture;
- 4. A description of the potential range of urban agricultural uses that can be considered in the city, and uses that may not be considered or suitable;
- 5. Policy direction to ensure that appropriate urban agriculture becomes an accepted part of complete communities;
- 6. Policy direction to embed agriculture as a land use in the Land Use Bylaw; and
- 7. Special considerations for the city.



1.3.2 'Our Fort. Our Future.' Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Development Plan (2021)

The MDP gives direction to Fort Saskatchewan's economic development as the City doubles in its population. The MDP identifies Food and Agri-Business as a key new area for economic development and encourages innovation and enhancements in the agricultural sector by embracing new trends in commercial agriculture and local, urban food production practices. Fort Saskatchewan is home to high-quality soil, especially in the southern and eastern areas of the municipality. These areas are still being used for agricultural production. The MDP directs that the existing agriculture should be supported until lands are required for the urban development. It further restricts premature conversion or fragmentation of lands to ensure viability of agricultural operations for as long as possible. Expansion of urban growth into these areas must follow the long-range plans, such as the Area Structure Plans (ASPs) for these areas. It also provides direction to the future ASPs, including the requirement to provide development timeframes and certainty for the long-term viability of existing agricultural uses.

1.3.3 Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan 2023-2026

The Fort Saskatchewan Strategic Plan sets out the Strategic Planning Framework and values for the 2023-2026 period. The vision of the Strategic Plan includes "... Fort Saskatchewan is home with a small-town feeling at heart and where a strong sense of community thrives...". Under the Environmental Stewardship Goal of the Strategic Plan, there is a commitment to using resources wisely and to implementing sustainable best practices.

Development of the UAP aligns with the following initiative identified in the Strategic Plan:

"Preparation of an Urban Agricultural Plan to increase awareness and understanding for business and residents of the importance of agriculture and agri-food sectors within urban service areas, to help grow the regional economy, as well as promote the ecological and social benefits urban agriculture provides to communities."



1.3.4 Land Use (Bylaw C23-20)

Agricultural uses exist in the Agricultural General South, Industrial Reserve, Urban Reserve, and Industrial Buffer Districts. In the Agricultural General South District, the goal is to reserve large parcel sizes to inhibit agricultural fragmentation as residential expansion continues. Similarly, in Urban Reserve, Industrial Reserve, and Industrial Buffer zones, Agriculture is one of few permitted uses. This is to encourage ongoing agricultural use of the area, before lands are converted to their eventual industrial or residential uses.

The Land Use Bylaw (LUB) defines a Community Garden as a plot of land used by a group of community members to grow vegetables and fruit for personal use and consumption. This currently prevents the use of community gardens for agri-production for economic purposes.

A development permit is not required for a Community Garden, provided that the maximum area of the garden is less than 0.25 hectares.

A Community Garden is a discretionary use in DC(A)-14 Direct Control – Ross Creek Crossing District, and DC(A)-17 Direct Control – Town Crest Road District.

The City is currently working on the creation of a new Land Use Bylaw that will align with direction from the MDP to support and embrace urban agriculture. The Urban Agriculture Plan will inform the development of the new Land Use Bylaw.



1.4 Public Consultation

Fort Saskatchewan's Urban Agriculture Plan was developed from 2022-2024, in four phases (Figure 2).

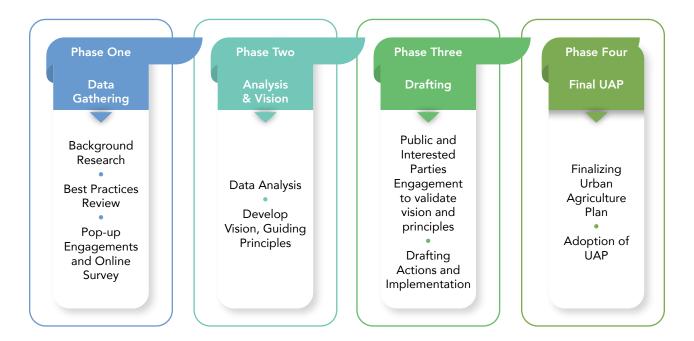


Figure 2: UAP development phases

The Plan is based on a robust two-phase engagement with the public and interested parties. Interested parties included existing community garden groups, the Chamber of Commerce, Indigenous groups, youth groups, and school boards. A student team from Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) assisted City Administration in the organisation and delivery of the engagement. The NAIT team also supported the development of the Plan through conducting background and best practices research to support the development of the UAP.

In the first phase of engagement, the City used an online survey and pop-up engagements to learn about residents' and interested parties' desires for urban agriculture and general thoughts around growing food in the city. The online survey consisted of twelve (12) questions, leaving room for open-ended feedback. The City Administration, with the assistance from the NAIT student team, also hosted four (4) pop-up engagement booths at various locations and times to accommodate residents' varied schedules. In total, one hundred and eighty four (184) residents visited the survey website, and 88 survey responses were received.

Around 85% of respondents indicated that urban agriculture was important to Fort Saskatchewan (Figure 3). Most respondents stated that they already practice some form of urban agriculture, including growing fruits and vegetables on their own property, using a community garden, or purchasing locally produced food from farmers' markets, greenhouses, and cottage businesses. Additionally, many stated that they would like to participate in other forms of urban agriculture, including growing food in greenhouses, making and buying compost, keeping urban chickens and bees, and volunteering for urban agriculture groups. Some respondents expressed concerns about possible nuisances.

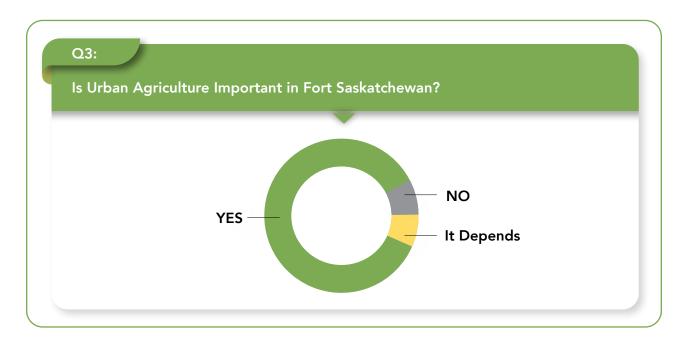


Figure 3: Public Engagement Results on Urban Agriculture

Through the survey, Administration also learned about challenges and barriers to practicing urban agriculture, what concerns were present, in which areas of the city residents think urban agriculture should be practiced, and what respondents think urban agriculture should look like broadly in Fort Saskatchewan. The detailed summary of the residents' feedback can be found in the What We Heard Report – 1 (Appendix A).

Based on the information residents provided, Administration and the NAIT team prepared the draft Vision and Principles for the Plan.

In the second public engagement phase, the City used an online survey to verify the draft Vision and Principles of the Plan. Sixty-seven individuals responded to the online survey. Overall, there was strong support for the draft vision and principles, with noted support for increased City support for Urban Agriculture. More details on this phase of Public Engagement can be found under What We Heard Report - 2 (Appendix B).



Grow Your Own Project.

The Grow Your Own Project brings together kids from across the Fort, engaging them to learn how to farm their own backyard plots. Working since 2015, Dennis Stelmack has led kids to get off their phones and into their back yards – and last year, produced over 8,000 pounds of food for the Food Bank! The Project now has over 60 community partners and has connected countless kids with growing their own food: linking sustainability, active youth, and urban agriculture.

2.0 URBAN AGRICULTURE BACKGROUNDER

Urban Agriculture is a broad topic that covers any form of agriculture taking place in an urban or suburban setting. This includes agri-processing, agri-businesses, and value-added agriculture that require access to the robust transportation systems, markets, services, and infrastructure that are typically available in urban communities. Urban agriculture connects residents to local farms, gardens, and other agricultural sites for education and to provide opportunities to grow and harvest their own food. Some common examples of urban agriculture include:

Personal Gardens – Portions of private residential lots used or the growing and cultivating of edible plants for personal use.

Community Gardens - Portions of privately and publicly owned lands are designated for growing and cultivating food. Often community gardens serve as a meeting point or a social hub, where residents gather to harvest their own food and meet other people who are interested in urban agriculture.

Farmer's Markets - Places where growers and agri-businesses in the urban communities and the surrounding area can sell food and agricultural products. These markets are also an opportunity for people who are unable to grow their own food to access fresh, locally sourced and processed produce and foods.



Edible Landscapes, Fruit-Bearing Trees & Landscaping

- Publicly
accessible areas
that contain edible
plants, as well as trees
and shrubs that bear edible
fruits, nuts, leaves, and flowers.

Urban Beekeeping - The husbandry of small hives, limited in scale, either in yards or occasionally on the tops of buildings. Urban beekeeping is usually led by experienced beekeepers who may offer their honey locally, with occasional

general public

involvement.

Urban Hens - The keeping of few hens in a small coop and run within the backyards of the private properties. Urban chicken raising is restricted to hens (no roosters due to noise) and is limited in scale to avoid nuisance effects on neighbours and the public.

Urban Greenhouses

- Small-scale greenhouses in urban areas used to extend the growing season. Large-scale green

houses are accommodated within commercial and industrial areas. Greenhouses are especially impactful in northern and challenging climates.

Aquaponics - Structures that combine aquaculture and hydroponic agriculture for

growing of plants and the raising of fish together in one system.

Hydroponics - Is a gardening method in which plants can be grown without soil, and just with water and nutrients.

Temporary/Movable Farms

- A more recent innovation, temporary farms are equipped with pallets or other industrial bases which allow them to be moved by forklift and truck between vacant sites as the urban area develops or re-develops.



A Flock of Sheep and a Herd of Goats

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has a herd of sheep and goats that graze and maintain the grass at West River's Edge and the Historic Precinct. The goats assist in clearing over 96 hectares of land from thistles and other weeds. Every year, the City hosts a sheep arrival and leaving parade. The sheep are cared for by a shepherd. Residents and visitors are welcome to pet the sheep at the Historic Precinct.

The development of the City's UAP was guided by residents' feedback, community values, and key planning frameworks. The vision and principles of the UAP are rooted in the MDP, Strategic Plan, and insights gathered through public engagement.

3.1 Vision

The City of Fort Saskatchewan is a place that embraces its agricultural heritage, urban agriculture and innovation in the agri-food sector to ensure local food security, a diverse economy, and social connections.

3.2 Principles

- We believe in sustainability and resilience. Therefore, we will improve local food security through environmentally responsible practices and efficient use of resources. We will also expand economic diversity to ensure resilience against economic ebbs and flows.
- We believe in *innovation and land use*. Therefore, we will facilitate opportunities for research, innovations, and development in agricultural technologies. We will enable residents to pursue opportunities to produce their food and operate agriculture-related tourism and businesses in suitable locations. We will enhance and maximize existing infrastructure to promote efficient and safe agriculture production.
- We believe in community. Therefore, we will ensure the Plan takes into consideration diverse community needs, is inclusive, and builds on local knowledge and connections.
- We believe in economic opportunities. Therefore, we will support the development of local agricultural productions and agriculture-related businesses to diversify local economy and employment opportunities.
- We believe in education and awareness. Therefore, we will support programs and initiatives that will enhance education and awareness of food production and the benefits of sustainable agriculture.
- We believe in food security. Therefore, we will support programs and initiatives that enhance local food productivity, access, and affordability.



The City of Fort Saskatchewan has two Community Gardens at Jubilee Park and Clover Park, which have been very successful. The City oversees the 30-bed Jubilee Park Community Garden, where residents are able to reserve plots and grow their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs. These community spaces are gathering places for sharing food, gardening tips, and community spirit.

4.0 ACTION & IMPLEMENTATION

The following actions stem from the Vision Statement, community engagement, and current plans in place.

Understanding the importance of seeing progress through the implementation of the UAP, the City should establish metrics for measuring community engagement, land use, and the environmental impact of urban agriculture. Periodic evaluations and adjustments may be needed as feedback is received and outcomes emerge.

Action	Implementation
 Explore regulatory and policy updates to Fort Saskatchewan's Land Use Bylaw and Municipal Development Plan to align with the RAMP. 	 Conduct a review of the LUB and MDP during future update cycles to identify potential areas for alignment with the RAMP.
 Maintain agricultural operations and minimize adverse impacts of urban development on existing, surrounding Agricultural operations for as long as possible. Maintain continued access to allow farmers to productively work their lands, without fragmentation, until such a time as the lands are converted to residential development for population expansion; and 	 The Area and Neighbourhood Area Structure Plans provide direction on contiguous development staging, development timeframe, topsoil management and mitigation measures to minimize impact on the surrounding Agricultural lands. The development of an Agriculture Impact Assessment and Soil Management Plan is required as part of the preparation of Area and/or Neighbourhood Structure Plans.
 Address soil management and mitigation of adverse effects to agricultural lands by adjacent urban development activities. 	resignation and detaile Fluid.

- The Land Use Bylaw will give consideration to:
- Allow for urban agriculture and remove barriers to the implementation of personal and community gardens, greenhouses, cottage industries, agribusinesses, and value-added agriculture;
- Integrate definitions for urban agriculture, including uses and activities related to the same; and
- Conserve existing agriculture by prohibiting conversion and fragmentation of agricultural lands until they are required for the contiguous urban development as per the approved Area Structure Plans.

 Adopt an Agricultural Lens to Land Use Bylaw reviews to enable urban agriculture.

- Explore:
- Accommodating and supporting community gardens in parks and open spaces;
- Addressing planning, design, operation, and location criteria for community gardens;
- Accommodating and maintaining native, edible plants in publicly owned open spaces, sites, and street boulevards; and
- Providing terms of reference for design and maintenance of Community Gardens.
- Expand and install critical infrastructure to support urban agriculture where feasible.

The Municipal Development Plan Update should review and evaluate incorporation of urban agriculture in publicly owned spaces and provide criteria and guide-lines for implementation where feasible.



	Action	Implementation
5	 Ensure neighbours' rights to enjoyment of their properties are protected by addressing potential nuisance associated with urban agriculture. 	 Undertake a Community Standards Bylaw update to remove any barriers to practicing urban agriculture in accordance with the City's Planning and guiding documents, and reflect mechanisms to address any potential nuisances due to the improper execution of urban agriculture.
6	 Support agribusiness and value-added agriculture industries in the city. 	 Continue to recognize agribusiness and value-added agriculture as target industries in Fort Saskatchewan.
7	 Explore the ability to accommodate hens on lots over 0.8 hectares in Clover Park and agricultural lands in the new Land Use Bylaw. 	 Work with Municipal Enforcement, Planning & Development, Family and Community Support Services, and AHS to establish and roll out an effective and well-planned implementation. Ensure alignment with the Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw and the Community
8	 Provide a platform to share information including and not limited to an up- to-date inventory of outdoor growing spaces, permit requirements, applicable bylaws, information on educational resources, and broader urban agricultural and funding opportunities. 	Standards Bylaw. Create and maintain a dedicated webpage on the City's website that serves as a one-stop destination for all information related to urban agriculture in the city.
9	 Maintain and monitor funding incentives established for agribusinesses and value- added agriculture. 	 Continue to evaluate and monitor funding incentives to attract agribusiness and value-added agriculture to the city.







