

Project asks how Penticton can be 'food secure'

(Penticton, BC – May 25, 2021) – Work is starting on a strategy to achieve food security in Penticton's local food systems as well as in our households.

"You may be surprised to learn that about 14 per cent of the population in the interior worries about their next meal and their ability to buy food," says the City's Director of Development Services, Blake Laven. "With the creation of a local food system strategy, we can take steps now to improve access to healthy and safe food and help reduce poverty in our community."

This statistic from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control 2011-2012 Household Food Insecurity Indicator Report is one of the reasons developing a Food Security Strategy was included as a recommendation in the City's 2019 Official Community Plan. Another reason for developing the plan is to provide guidance for the City's extensive local food systems including growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, and marketing.

"We're fortunate that one-third of our lands are in the Agricultural Land Reserve and with that comes a responsibility to support local agriculture and increase access to local foods," says Laven. "This project will help the City set policy that will ensure a strong and sustainable local food system."

The first step of the work is to understand the unique needs of the Penticton community and the supports available. Citizens are invited to go to shapeyourcitypenticton.ca to learn more and complete a survey that will be available until June 16, 2021. Anyone not able to complete a survey online can complete a paper version available at the City's engagement kiosk located at the Penticton Public Library. Staff will also be popping up at various locations throughout the summer to discuss this work.

"Council is pleased to see this recommendation from the Official Community Plan moving forward and encourage everyone to contribute to a made-in-Penticton solution to this community challenge," says Mayor John Vassilaki.

The project is being completed and in cooperation with Interior Health and with funding from their Community Food Action Initiative.

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