

# Towards a Winnipeg Food Council

## What is a food policy council?

A food policy council is a group that works with the political process to shape the local food system by looking at it from many different perspectives. Members are usually from different sectors (producers, processors, distributors, etc.), and work together to create a sustainable, accessible, and dynamic food system. Different interests are brought together as the group discusses system issues, researches, and analyzes or proposes policy changes and / or programming related to the food system.

## What does a food policy council do?

Food policy councils improve the local food system by advising policy makers, which could include research, or advocating for specific policies. They also gather information about the local food environment, build relationships with and between stakeholders, create opportunities to discuss the food system, and develop strategies to better address community food security.

Activities depend on the food council's structure and mandate, along with local issues and needs. Common activities include public awareness campaigns, education programs, research, advising on policy, coordinating between existing food policies or programs, and publicizing community resources.

## Why should Winnipeg have a food policy council?

Since 2008, community groups have been requesting that the City establish a food policy council. With both community and political support, Winnipeg's food policy council will be able to make more positive policy changes to help the production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food in Winnipeg.

*OurWinnipeg* recognizes that local food production and connections to our food are part of a vital and healthy neighbourhood (OurWinnipeg, Section 03-2). The Plan directs the City to respond to food needs as identified by communities by working through community partnerships. One of the ways to do this is to create a food policy council.

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## Recommendation (June 2, 2015)

On June 2, 2015 the Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development concurred in a recommendation for the Winnipeg Public Service to:

“engage key stakeholders to investigate and provide recommendations related to the formation, role and governance structure of a Winnipeg Food Policy Council, with a mandate of providing continued advice on agricultural and food related policy”, including:

- providing research and advisory support;
- investigating barriers to production;
- exploring opportunities towards improving food production and food security;
- preparing a report with recommendations about permissible non-invasive agricultural-related uses in Winnipeg; and
- assisting in the creation of an Agricultural and Food Security Strategy

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## Work done to date

The Urban Planning Division researched the formation, role, and governance structure of food policy councils throughout North America, and spoke with people who have direct experience creating and working with food councils.

On May 30 and June 2, 2016, the Urban Planning Division and Food Matters Manitoba hosted conversations about the formation, role and governance structure of a potential food policy council in Winnipeg.

Information discussed at these events was posted online, and stakeholders were encouraged to share the link with their networks. We are now reporting back to you, and getting ready to bring recommendations to council.

## Consultation highlights

On May 30 and June 2, the Urban Planning Division and Food Matters Manitoba hosted conversations with key food-related stakeholders. We heard that:

- Access and equity was a #1 priority. Other priorities included Urban Agriculture, Food literacy, and nutrition and public health.
- Developing a food strategy, policy creation and implementation, and advisory support were the top three things they wanted to see done by the Winnipeg Food Council
- Diversity and broad representation was important, but participants didn't want the group to be too large.
- Participants valued flexibility in membership and activities (e.g. making sure there were members-at-large and not just specific sectors represented, making sure the Council could form working groups, etc.)
- The term "Winnipeg Food Council" was preferred over "Winnipeg Food Policy Council"

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## The proposed Winnipeg Food Council would:

- Advise the Mayor and Council on municipal food issues that affect the City of Winnipeg and its food systems;
- Support the work of the community on food issues, enhance public health and local food security, and increase food literacy and access to food by encouraging multi-sector and strategic approaches and fostering coordination and networking; and
- Support the development, implementation and evaluation of an **Agricultural and Food Strategy** to address municipal food security and food system issues.

## The Agricultural and Food Strategy would:

- include policy directions identified through community engagement, focused research, and other actions to identify proven practices; and
- be operationalized in partnership with the Winnipeg Public Service, the local food movement, businesses, community agencies, stakeholder groups, and private citizens.

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## The Winnipeg Food Council would include:

- the Mayor of Winnipeg or designate;
- one [1] member appointed by the **Province of Manitoba**
- one [1] member appointed by the **Winnipeg Regional Health Authority**;
- one [1] front-line representative from **health sector** (dietitians, chronic health organizations, community health workers, etc.)
- two [2] members involved with **food production** (efforts should be made to represent a diversity of producers);
- one [1] member from **food businesses** (retailers, farmers' markets, food entrepreneurs, wholesalers, etc.);
- one [1] member from the **research sector** (Universities, research alliances, etc.);
- one [1] member from **community groups** or networks connected to food issues (e.g. food access, food skills, resource networks, etc.); and
- up to five [5] **members at large** (six [6] if the appointed City Councillor is the Mayor's designate) with specific skills, experience and interests to increase diversity and add value to particular initiatives.

- The **Winnipeg Food Council's** membership should reflect Winnipeg's **diverse population** including, but not limited to, representation from
- Indigenous communities;
  - newcomers and refugees;
  - people with disabilities;
  - youth (aged 18-30); elders and seniors; and
  - those with lived experience of food insecurity.