Winnipeg Food Council

A City of Winnipeg Citizen Committee

2018 Annual report

The Winnipeg Food Council conducts its work in Treaty No. 1 Territory, the traditional lands of the Anishinabe (Ojibway), Ininew (Cree), Oji-Cree, Dene, and Dakota.

Treaty 1 land is the Birthplace of the Métis Nation and the Heart of the Métis Nation Homeland.

Message From the Chair



It is an honour to serve as the first Chair of the Winnipeg Food Council citizen committee. I first want to thank all members of the Council (and the City staff who support the Council's work), who have been well informed and cooperative in our work together.

We have started work on a City of Winnipeg Agricultural and Food Strategy; established sub-committees with specific tasks; made recommendations on water access at City community gardens, and made recommendations on how to better accommodate urban agriculture in Winnipeg.

More generally, the Food Council has raised the profile of food and agriculture issues within City Hall. The idea of a Food Council was not considered a priority by many councilors just a few years ago, but it is now contributing important ideas and information. I look forward to further development of our Strategy.

- Councillor Brian Mayes
  Winnipeg Food Council Chair

Winnipeg Food Council;
The City of Winnipeg's newest citizen committee

Formation of the Winnipeg Food Council has involved plenty of time and plenty of patience.

Over 10 years ago, community groups concerned about food began their work to address food policy at the municipal level. These individuals and groups realized that food issues must be addressed from multiple perspectives, and that to make the greatest impact, all sectors – public, private, and non-profit – must work together.

In 2014, the Riel Community Committee directed the Public Service to research how to protect the interests of those living on land zoned for agricultural purposes. This led to a report, "Accommodating the interests of Winnipeg's Agricultural Community", which included a recommendation to research and talk to members of the food community about potential governance structure, role and formation of a Winnipeg Food Policy Council.

After research, stakeholder, and public consultations, City Council approved the formation of the Winnipeg Food Council on February 22, 2017. A public call for membership was issued and membership was approved by City Council in June 2017.

The Winnipeg Food Council officially started meeting in January 2018 and we are excited to continue this work into the future.



Postcard supporting the Food Policy Council (2017)

Source: Food Matters Manitoba

Food Council FAQs

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 involved in different parts of the food system (producers, processors, distributors, eaters, etc.), and work together to create a sustainable, accessible, and dynamic food system.

Food policy councils discuss food issues, coordinate between food system sectors, evaluate and influence policy, and support programs and services that address local needs. 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 Council do?

In general, food policy councils improve the local food system by advising policy makers, which includes research, oversight, advising and advocating for specific policies. They also gather information about the local food environment, build relationships with and between stakeholders, create an opportunity to study and discuss the food system as a whole, and develop strategies to better address community food security.

Do other cities have them?

There are currently over 200 food policy councils throughout Canada and the United States. Of that, at least 19 are embedded in government at the municipal level. In Canada, food policy councils from three cities – Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver – have been established by municipal government.

Why was it important for Winnipeg to have a Food Council?

Community groups have been requesting that the City establish a food policy council since 2008. Community input at the beginning of this project ensured Winnipeg's potential food policy council was structured and governed in a way acceptable to both the community and the government.

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, The City of Winnipeg's long-range plan, 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.

Other OurWinnipeg policy directions directly or indirectly connected with food policy involve the need for intergovernmental cooperation, collaboration with economic and community economic development agencies, and a commitment to sustainable long-term planning (OurWinnipeg pp 50-51).

Food issues also intersect with policy directions about sustainability (OurWinnipeg p 65), inclusion and opportunity (OurWinnipeg pp 75-77). The City has also been active in supporting community gardening by creating a Community Garden Policy.

Thinking about Food Systems

A ‘food system’ is the path that food travels from field to fork and includes growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food (Angelic Organics 2013). Accessing food (and making food accessible) is also an important part of this system.

Each part of the food system faces unique set of issues. from production issues (farmland preservation, farmers markets, household & community gardens), to processing issues (local vs. external), to distribution issues (transportation, warehousing) to access issues (inner city grocery stores, co-ops, school breakfasts & lunches, food stamps, the WIC program, etc.), to use issues (food safety and handling, restaurants, street vendors), to food recycling (gleaning, food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens) to waste stream issues (composting, garbage fed to pigs, etc.).” (Dahlberg 1994)

These sectors are interconnected, making food systems extremely complex. Groups working with complex issues must adapt to changes, deal with conflicts, and constantly learn new things.

Groups can address food issues by acting with a common ‘food system vision’ or set of goals in mind. This involves careful analysis of food system sector relationships and food systems thinking, and food councils are formed to do this work.

Different interests are brought together as food councils discusses system issues, researches, and analyzes or proposes policy changes and / or programming related to the food system. By including a broad representation of members across food system sectors, food policy councils can provide a unique and effective lens for food systems thinking, networking, education, and policy advice.

The Winnipeg Food Council does not make policy, but is rather a group of volunteer consulting experts who advise policy makers and respond to recommendations made by Mayor and Council.

A ‘food system’ is the path that food travels from field to fork and includes growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consuming, and disposing of food.



Source: Healthy Food Policy Project

Commercial Agriculture Report

On December 6, 2017, Executive Policy Council (EPC) concurred in recommendations from the Riel Community Committee, and directed the Food Council to report back on where to allow commercial agricultural uses within the City.

In response, the Winnipeg Food Council consulted with the Winnipeg Public Service and urban growers; researched the Winnipeg regulatory context; and examined both local and national precedents related to growing food for resale throughout the city. Research produced three anticipated policy outcomes:

1. **Growing produce as a permitted principal use**. Personal gardens are currently not permitted as a principal use, although community gardens are. Underutilized spaces throughout Winnipeg could (with the owners' permission) be converted into growing spaces for either short or long-term use.
2. **Commercial sale of produce**. If food produced in residential areas was sold on site, day-to-day activities in residential neighbourhoods could be impacted. The city, as land use regulator, must consider how to simultaneously preserve the character of residential neighbourhoods and support local food production.
3. **Use of public lands to grow produce**. Community groups and individuals currently grow food on City-owned lands. Demand for land to grow produce is increasing, creating the opportunity for further guidelines, processes and reporting mechanisms to clarify how public lands may be used for food production, and how groups may benefit from sales of items grown on public lands.

This report included information about how other jurisdictions have responded to the above three considerations, and the recommended that Council:

1. direct the Public Service to, in consultation with the Winnipeg Food Council, prepare amendments to Winnipeg Zoning By-law 200/2006 and Downtown Winnipeg Zoning By-law 100/2004, to address and implement the three policy outcomes (growing produce as a permitted principal use, commercial sale of produce, and use of public land to grow produce) noted in the report; and
2. endorse the Province of Manitoba's online fact sheet about gardening and soil contaminants, which also includes resources for producers and consumers on safe gardening practices, soil testing, and other methods (such as raised garden beds) to ensure food safety.

This report was approved by Council on September 20, 2018.

Budget

In 2018, the Food Council did not have a budget to hire a coordinator, but we are pleased and thankful to announce that Council has provided a grant to help move our work forward in 2019.

Subcommittee work

In July, 2018, the Winnipeg Food Council approved formation of three subcommittees, focused on development (work planning, other special projects), policy and research, and communications. Work of these subcommittees will be advanced by the Food Council Coordinator.

Reports from these committees will be provided in the 2019 Annual Report.

Committee Mandate

The Food Council's function is to:

- Advise the mayor and Council on food system related issues
- 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, fostering coordination and networking, and supporting ongoing consultation
- Initiate the development of and support the implementation, maintenance and evaluation of a City of Winnipeg Agricultural and Food Strategy to address municipal food security and food system issues.



Winnipeg Food Council (2018)

Back Row (L-R): James Platt (Winnipeg Public Service), Mandela Madit Kuet, Karin Kliewer (Public Service Liaison), Councillor Jason Schreyer, Kelly Janz, Councillor Brian Mayes (Chair), Lavonne Harms, Bruce Berry

Front Row (L-R) Andi Sharma, Phaedra Miller, Rob Moquin, Dr. Joyce Slater

Not pictured: Jasmine Tara, James Battershill

Food Council strategic planning

Throughout the first part of 2018, the Development Subcommittee met and applied for funding from Innoweave, an organization that helps community organizations learn about, assess, and implement new approaches to community work, like collective impact, developmental evaluation, and constructive engagement.

On August 29, 2018, Innoweave approved a coaching grant of $7,500 to hire a coach who will help the Food Council establish a plan to guide its work into the future.

Anna Weier, the Food Council's coach, is a skilled facilitator who has worked in the areas of program coordination, planning, evaluation, community engagement and sustainability. Anna has 15 years of experience supporting community organizations and facilitating planning and evaluation. She has planned for and led group decision-making where problem solving and consensus building have been integral.

Anna has worked as a Planning and Evaluation Facilitator independently and as part of the Health in Common team. She participates on many community boards, and enjoys supporting group processes and decision-making.
All these characteristics, along with her work in the food sector, has made Anna a perfect fit to guide Food Council planning.

Anna continues to work with the Food Council, the Development Subcommittee, and the public service to help determine the scope of Food Council activities, establish a vision and mission, and develop strategic directions for the future.



Anna Weier; consultant and Food Council coach



Activities report

The Food Council is a committee consisting of citizen volunteers, many of whom have experience building organizations, programs and/or businesses.

The Winnipeg Food Council is the one committee reporting to EPC that does not have a budget to support coordination work. Despite this challenge, in 2018, the Food Council:

- created a work plan and built a functioning committee “from the ground up”;
- initiated public service reports on costs associated with providing water in strategic community garden locations in Winnipeg;
- participated in stakeholder consultations to help shape the City of Winnipeg’s Recreation and Parks Strategies;
- supported the work of newly a formed community organization, Mealshare, which received provincial funding to bring restaurants, consumers, and local community organizations together to combat youth hunger;
- put forward a commercial agriculture report, which includes research and recommendations on how to better accommodate urban agriculture in Winnipeg;
- successfully secured $7,500 of external funding that will provide six days of technical coaching to help the Food Council initiate the development of and support the implementation, maintenance and evaluation of a City of Winnipeg Agricultural and Food Strategy; and
- formed subcommittees to advance Food Council’s work.

- The Food Council has accomplished these actions without a coordinator and with no allocated funds. However, in 2019, Council invested $25,000 to hire a Coordinator to assist with activities outlined in the work plan.
- Creating the Food and Agricultural Strategy is not only part of the Food Council’s function, but is also listed as an action under the Climate Change Action Plan.
- This strategy will help address municipal food security and food system issues and will be an ongoing City resource similar to existing food-related strategies in Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto and other major cities across Canada.

What’s next for the Food Council

It is expected that the strategic planning process that is currently underway will help guide committee activities in the near future. Funding has been secured to hire a Food Council Coordinator to assist in carrying out its stated goals and mandate in 2019. To prepare for future years, the Food Council will continue to request modest funding comparable to that allocated for other City of Winnipeg citizen committees to assist in completing activities.

Contact Information

Jeanette Sivilay
Food Council Coordinator
204-943-0822

Karin Kliewer
Public Service Liaison
204-986-8635