Guide 4 Healthy food

Blue Dot # Municipal Toolkit
Protecting Human Health

People in Canada take pride in this country's natural landscapes, rich ecosystems and wildlife. But Canada's Constitution doesn't mention environmental rights and responsibilities. Municipalities across the country are recognizing and supporting their residents' right to a healthy environment. By adopting the Blue Dot declaration, more than 150 municipal governments now support the right to clean air and water, safe food, a stable climate and a say in decisions that affect our health and well-being.

For some municipalities, adopting the Blue Dot declaration is a clear statement about environmental initiatives already underway. For others, it's a significant first step. Either way, after passing a declaration, many ask "What happens next?"

This toolkit provides practical ideas for next steps. Its introduction and 13 downloadable guides cover topics related to human health, green communities and a low-carbon future. Written for policy-makers, each guide shares examples of policies and projects undertaken in communities in Canada and around the world. The goal is to inform, inspire and share good ideas and great practices that will lead to healthier, more sustainable communities now and in the future.

The following guides are available:

Introduction to the Blue Dot Municipal Toolkit

Protecting Human Health
Guide 1:   Air quality
Guide 2:   Clean water
Guide 3:   Non-toxic environment
Guide 4:   Healthy food

Creating Green Communities
Guide 5:   Access to green space
Guide 6:   Protecting and restoring biodiversity
Guide 7:   Waste

Building a Low Carbon-Future
Guide 8:   Transitioning to 100% renewable energy
Guide 9:   Green buildings
Guide 10: Sustainable transportation
Guide 11: Green economy
Guide 12: Climate change adaptation
Guide 13: Ecological footprint and land-use planning

To read more about municipal actions for environmental rights, and to access all the Blue Dot toolkit guides, visit **http://bluedot.ca/municipal-toolkits/**. To read more about the Blue Dot movement and work at the local, provincial and federal levels, visit **www.bluedot.ca**.

Ensuring a healthy environment requires action in communities of all sizes and at all levels of government. This toolkit helps municipalities continue to take the lead.

Acknowledgments

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David Suzuki Foundation   Fondation David Suzuki

Guide 4: Healthy Food

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has stated that food security will exist "when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."[1] Municipalities can increase food security by supporting local food production, distribution and procurement, and contributing to programs to ensure lower income households can access healthy food. A cross-Canada survey in 2013 found that at least 64 local and regional municipalities were working on municipal policies, programs and civil society projects for sustainable food systems.[2]

Canadian examples of good practices

a. Toronto

   i. **Background**: The Toronto Food Policy Council has existed since 1990. Its position within local government allows it to put motions forward to the Board of Health. It's added to strategies and influenced legislation about rooftop gardens and local food procurement. TFPC has supported the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council to mobilize youth, advocated for the Ontario Local Food Act, and worked on implementing the GrowTO Urban Agriculture Action Plan. In 2010, Toronto adopted the Toronto Food Strategy with a healthy communities focus.

   ii. **Initiatives**: Toronto Food Strategy programs include aggregated food procurement (creating an aggregated online ordering system to increase food accessibility for public and private agencies); increased food accessibility through the creation of healthy corner stores; a community food works program to provide training to low income residents; a mobile good food market; and healthy food access mapping.[3] Toronto is researching the possibility of growing more "world crops" in the GTA (e.g., okra, bitter melon). TFPC has also collaborated with the parks department to create guides about soil safety in urban gardens.[4] The Toronto and Region Conservation Authority has a sustainable urban agriculture policy and currently leases land to four urban farm projects. Toronto's Official Plan recognizes community gardens and urban agriculture as green space, community services and public realms.[5]

b. Montreal

   i. **Initiatives**: Montreal authorizes community gardens in all zones.[6] It facilitates community gardening by providing repair and waste services and protects them by placing them in protected park zones. Boroughs run the gardens and organize gardening expert workshops. Each gardener pays $10 a year per small garden. The garden committee setting fees for

1   Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Food Security Statistics," 2015, http://www.fao.org/economic/ess/ess-fs/en/.

2   Rod MacRae and Kendal Donahue, Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs, 2013, http://capi-icpa.ca/pdfs/2013/Municipal_Food_Policy_Entrepreneurs_Final_Report.pdf.

3   City of Toronto, "Toronto Food Strategy," 2015, http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-80219.pdf.

4   City of Toronto, Toronto Food Strategy: 2013 Update, 2013, http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-62765.pdf.

5   Toronto Food Policy Council, growTO: An Urban Agriculture Action Plan for Toronto, 2012, http://tfpc.to/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/GrowTO_ActionPlan_Oct161.pdf.

6   Ville de Montreal, Zoning By-Law, 2010, http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/sel/sypre-consultation/afficherpdf?idDoc=23690&typeDoc=1.

tools and activities. Public educational programs are supported by the Botanical Department and youth garden plots[7]. Garden produce is shared among low income neighbourhoods and 10,000 community gardeners.

ii. **Results:** Montreal has the largest community gardening program in Canada with 97 community gardens in the city in 2013. The city has protected two-thirds of its gardens in park zones.[8]

c. Edmonton

i. **Initiatives:** Edmonton adopted a municipally driven food policy initiative in 2011. The Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy is a mix of regulatory policies and programs. It includes planning initiatives to protect food-producing lands, create food hubs and commercial kitchens, improve farmers markets, and develop a local food procurement policy and labelling scheme.[9] Edmonton has approved licensed urban beekeeping, initiated an urban hen pilot project and proposed urban agriculture zoning amendments. It plans to assess and map the food system.[10]

d. Thunder Bay

i. **Initiatives:** The city adopted a Food Charter created by the non-profit Food Action Network. It has a number of food security programs, including school meal programs; community kitchens and gardens; a plant-a-row, grow-a-row program (where gardeners plant an extra row to donate to local food bank); and backyard sharing programs. The gleaning program, in partnership with the Food Action Network, provides free transportation to low-income families to visit farmers and pick produce at no cost after initial harvest and sale. The city recently adopted a Food Strategy Implementation Plan, which includes new priorities such as mapping food access.[11]

e. Other interesting ideas

i. **Initiatives:** Markham's sustainable food procurement policy, in partnership with Local Food Plus, aimed for 10 per cent local sustainable food purchasing in the first year, with a five per cent increase per year up to 30 per cent goal. The program achieved 25 per cent local food procurement in 2012, its third year.[12]

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7   Deloitte, Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities, 2013, https://www.amo.on.ca/AMO-PDFs/Reports/2013/2013BestPracticesinLocalFoodAGuideforMunicipalitie.aspx.

8   Ibid.

9   City of Edmonton, Fresh: Implementation Plan, 2013, http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/documents/PDF/FINAL_IP_fresh_Apr_17_2013.pdf.

10 City of Edmonton, Fresh: Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy.

11 Thunder Bay District Health Unit, "Food Security Programs."

12 City of Markham, "Markham's Journey to Local Sustainable Procurement," 2012, https://www.fcm.ca/Documents/presentations/2012/SCC2012/Markham_Journey_To_Local_Sustainable_Food_Procurement_EN.pdf.

ii. Vancouver's Food Charter is a hybrid system, with partnerships between civil society groups and government. Vancouver built new community gardens, created cultural outreach programs, provided free fruit trees and developed 12 neighbourhood food networks. Between 2010 and 2014, Vancouver increased food assets by 36 per cent.[13]

International examples of good practices

f. San Francisco: Urban Agriculture Program

i. **Initiatives:** San Francisco amended its Urban Agriculture Program to create its Administrative Code in 2011. The Urban Agriculture Program, created by an ordinance, set clear goals with deadlines for audit completion, property owner incentives for temporary urban agriculture and streamlined application for urban agriculture. It also had created 10 new projects by 2014 and provided garden resource centres.[14] San Francisco' Urban Agriculture Program made it the state's first Urban Agriculture Incentive Zone. This means San Francisco property owners can submit applications to the state Agricultural Commissioner for property tax reductions for developing small-scale urban agriculture. Urban agriculture is permitted in all zones in San Francisco. Permits are not required for beekeeping or keeping equivalent or less than four chickens/ducks/small animals or two female goats.[15]

g. Charlottesville, Virginia: Local Food Hub

i. **Initiative:** The Local Food Hub is a non-profit organization that distributes local produce and food products. Local governments provided US$10,000. Foundations fund staff, a vehicle and a loading dock. The Food Hub provides distribution to 70 growers, primarily within a 64-kilometre (40-mile) radius of Charlottesville.[16]

ii. **Results:** The Food Hub increased farm sales by 25 per cent, helped retain more than 200 jobs and donated 45 tonnes (100,000 pounds) of produce to hunger relief.[17]

h. Stockholm has adopted a policy requiring 25 per cent of city food purchases to be certified organic according to the EU organic food regulation. The city purchases food for preschools, schools and elder care facilities.[18]

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13 City of Vancouver, "Local Food," 2015, http://vancouver.ca/green-vancouver/local-food.aspx#food-progress.

14 City and County of San Francisco, Ordinance Amending the San Francisco Administrative Code.

15 SF Environment, "Animal Husbandry," accessed August 1, 2015, http://www.sfenvironment.org/buildings-environments/urban-agriculture/urban-agriculture-permits/animal-husbandry.

16 Deloitte, Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities.

17 "Local Food Hub," 2014, http://localfoodhub.org/howitworks/.

18 Stockholms Stad, The Stockholm Environment Programme 2012-2015, 2011, http://international.stockholm.se/globalassets/ovriga-bilder-och-filer/the-stockholm-environment-programme-2012-2015.pdf.

Good Practices Documents and Links

o   **Best Practices in Local Food: A Guide for Municipalities**

o   **Municipal Food Policy Entrepreneurs Report**

o   **From the Ground Up: Guide for Soil Testing in Urban Gardens** — from the City of Toronto

Advisory services

The **Natural Step Canada (TNSC)** is a national charity whose mission is to tackle climate change and accelerate the transition to a truly sustainable society that thrives within nature's limits. Its academy, advisory services and Sustainability Transition Labs use best-in-class science, systems thinking and facilitation to help individuals and organizations collaborate, solve complex problems, foster innovation, optimize performance and drive systems change.

TNS Canada offers a **Service Cycle for Sustainable Communities** to help municipal governments plan for long-term sustainability and resiliency, embed sustainability into their culture and operations, and engage community stakeholders in their sustainability plans.

To learn more go to: **http://naturalstep.ca/**

The **Whistler Centre for Sustainability (WCS)** is a non-profit organization with the mission to "inspire and facilitate effective planning and meaningful conversations for a better world." WCS provides innovative community engagement, planning and implementation services to local governments across Canada, drawing on its expertise and experience in more than 40 communities. The Centre's work is rooted in future-focused social, environmental and economic values, so that final deliverables embed sustainability throughout.

To learn more go to: **http://whistlercentre.ca**