

A Sustainable Food and Agriculture Strategy for Whistler

Scoping Document

Prepared for: Resort Municipality of Whistler

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Introduction

Purpose

The Resort Municipality of Whistler is interested in examining the opportunities associated with food and agriculture that might contribute towards a more sustainable mountain resort community. Whistler has asked Holland Barrs to consider the scope and draft content of a Mountain Resort Food and Agriculture Strategy for Whistler. The purpose of this scoping document is to develop the rationale for why a sustainable food strategy is necessary for a mountain resort community, and to scope the initial opportunities that would form the foundation work for a future strategy.

This piece of work includes initial considerations of how food and agriculture-related opportunities might be incorporated into the planning and design of the proposed athletes village.

Whistler’s Comprehensive Sustainability Plan

The RMOW has recently completed a host of work related to the development of a Community Sustainability Plan (CSP). Using The Natural Step as a framework around which to organize the work, Whistler underwent a comprehensive planning process called “Whistler, Its our Future” the outcome of which was a broadly supported “preferred future” for Whistler. The CSP, which will serve as a guide to reaching this preferred future, highlights 5 priority areas:

1. Enriching Community Life;
2. Enhancing the Resort Experience;
3. Protecting the Environment;
4. Ensuring Economic Viability; and
5. Partnering for success.

At present the CSP does not explicitly address Food- and Agriculture-related issues although food issues are noted in regard to resident affordability. However, there are many opportunities to relate food and agriculture to the five priorities and the CSP directions as noted in the Table below.

Table 1: How food initiatives can support CSP Priorities and Directions

CSP Priorities and Directions	Comments and food initiatives to support direction
Enriching Community Life:	Food underpins many aspects of culture and community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The community is vibrant and attractive; there is a sense of community pride and spirit. 	Food celebrations, public food markets, farmer’s markets, and community gardens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The resort community is affordable and liveable to both permanent and short-term residents and employees 	Food related affordability initiatives such as food banks, community kitchens, buyers clubs etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Social, spiritual and physical health programs meet the diverse needs of groups and individuals within the resort community 	Diet and nutrition are critical to physical health. Community gardens/greenhouses and affordability initiatives such as food banks, buyers co-ops etc. address social needs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Land use and infrastructure systems are integrated to protect biodiversity and meet basic needs 	Food waste is a large part of the organic waste stream. Backyard and community Composting systems can effectively deal with this waste returning it to the soil as high quality soil amendment
Enhancing Resort Experience	Food is an important aspect of any resort experience – the type and quality of food on offer adds to the experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The sense of place that makes the resort community experience special and unique is respected and enhanced 	In most cultures, food is a highly visible characteristic of the culture and visitors experiences are, in part, shaped by the quality and originality of their meals and the food culture in general.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitors are offered a resort experience that exceeds their expectations 	As above
Protecting the Environment –	Environmental implications (and therefore opportunities) of the food system are significant and include energy consumption (producing greenhouse gases and common air contaminants), land use issues, chemical impacts on wildlife and human health
Ensuring Economic Viability –	Food and restaurant sales are an important contributor to Whistler’s economy. Food related businesses can assist in economic diversification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The resort community integrates its economic health with the economic viability of the resort 	Local food related economic initiatives such as value added food processing, food events, farmers

	markets keep wealth in the local community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Entrepreneurial spirit is recognized as important component of community vitality and is encouraged to flourish 	As above
Partnering for Success –	Food issues cover multiple disciplinary boundaries. Stakeholders in the food system are diverse. Food is also a galvanizing topic around which the community can rally.

The Natural Step

A food and agricultural strategy can assist in moving Whistler towards the Four System Conditions of the Natural Step. The linkages are shown in the following table?

Table 2: The Natural Step linkages to food and agriculture

System Conditions - nature is not subject to systematically increasing:	Food and Agriculture Linkages
1. Concentration of substances extracted from the earth's crust	Food related energy use, equipment manufacture, fertiliser manufacture and application.
2. Concentrations of substances produced by society	Agricultural chemicals (pesticides, fertilisers etc.) Wastes to landfill
3. Degradation by physical means; and in that society	Clearing to create agricultural land, loss of agricultural land to urban development, loss of topsoil and soil nutrients.
4. People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their ability to fulfill their needs.	Food security, hunger, affordability

The Food System

When thinking about a sustainable food strategy for RMOW, it is important **not** to limit our thinking to one aspect of food related activity. Many food related initiatives have a fairly narrow focus e.g. local food production (community gardens for example) or affordability issues. Given the comprehensive nature of Whistler's sustainability planning, it is important to think of the entire system of food and agriculture related activity. This has been referred to by many writers as the "Food System" and we adopt this language here. There are several different elements to the Food System (illustrated in Figure 1) including the following

- **Food production** - how and where food is grown including farms and farmers, the land base, agricultural production techniques and inputs etc.
- **Food processing** - various techniques to preserve and prepare raw food stuffs to be ready for consumption. Includes meat processing, milling, ready-cooked meal and sauce preparation, preserving, additives, etc.
- **Food distribution** - warehousing, transportation, retailing (grocery stores, markets) access (how people pick up food), delivery etc.

- **Food consumption** – restaurants and other food outlets, home preparation, diet and nutrition, food culture & celebration, waste management etc.

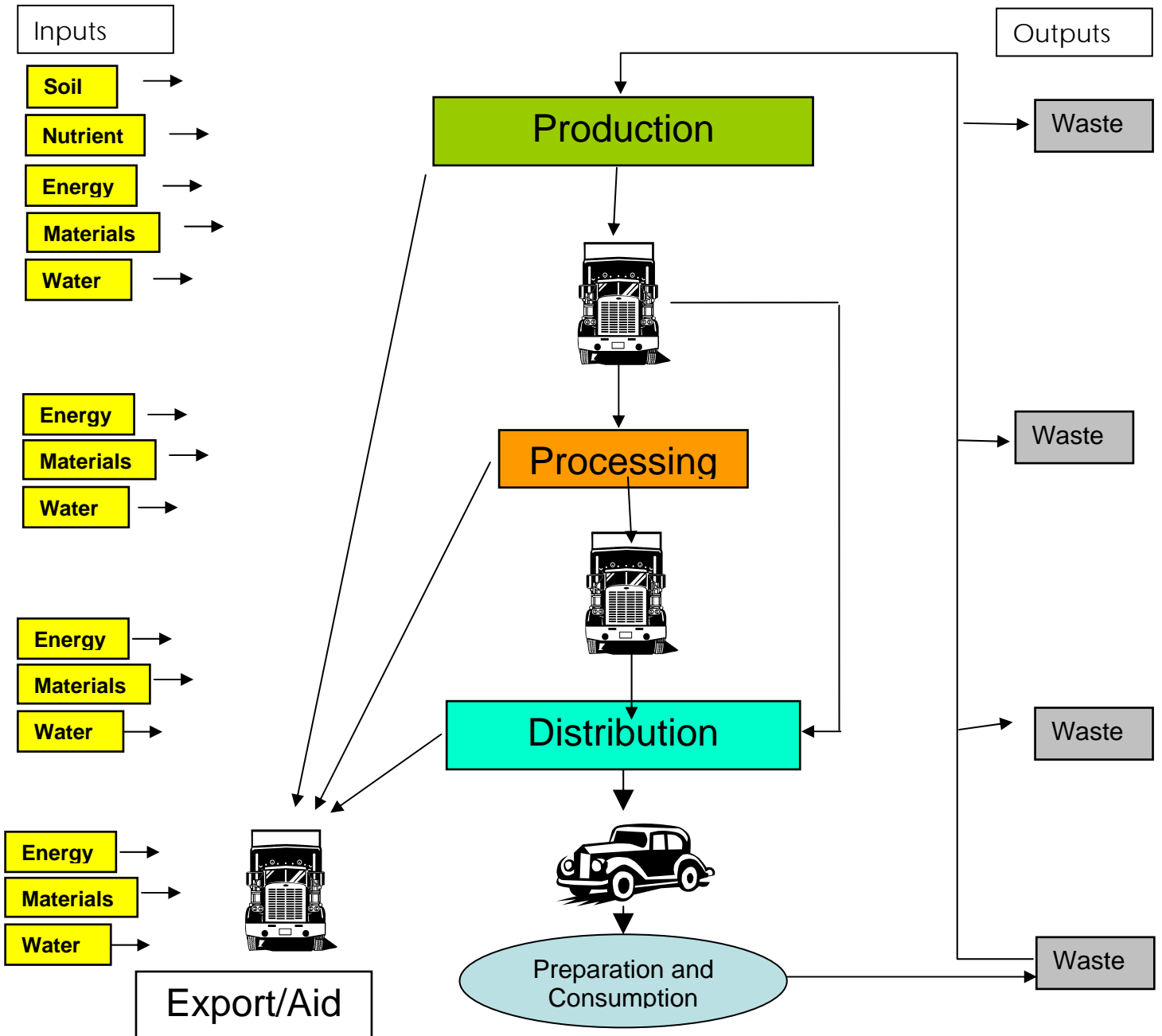


Figure 1: Simplified Illustration of The Food System

The Whistler Context

Mountain resort communities in general, and Whistler in particular have several unique aspects when it comes to the nature of their food supply, distribution and consumption patterns. Whistler has a number of existing strengths with regard to food issues which can be built upon and there are also a number of challenges:

Existing Strengths

1. The cultural experience of food (especially dining out) is already a big part of the Whistler experience
2. Whistler Village's compact urban layout designed for tourists provides good opportunities for food related celebrations
3. There are already a number of food-related initiatives including a food buying club, community kitchens, the "Locals Discount", Farmer's Market, Food and Wine Celebration, 2 greenhouses (growing food for food bank and local gardeners), a food bank, organic food delivery (see Appendix A).
4. Food is made more affordable to residents through discount systems such as the "Whistler Card" for locals.
5. Awareness and knowledge of sustainability issues in Whistler means that there would likely be support for food related initiatives that advanced the sustainability agenda.
6. Whistler already has a number of celebration events including food celebrations and the high level of social capital in Whistler means that food related initiatives have a high chance of success.
7. There are many food outlets in Whistler including a number of high-end restaurants. This means that spending on food and beverages is high and that food price is not the only consideration

Existing Challenges

1. Very little productive soil capacity (no land in ALR) within the Municipality itself although there is productive farmland in Squamish/Lilloet Regional District including high quality farmland around Pemberton.
2. Poor growing conditions due to climatic extremes
3. As a result of the above, most food is shipped into Whistler by truck from the Lower Mainland, Pemberton?
4. The tourism industry has expectations in terms of food quality, food availability (i.e. year round availability of non seasonal foods)
5. Affordability is a real issue for Whistler residents and workers, especially for the large service sector (30% of Whistler residents work in the Accommodation and Food/Beverage establishments). The

cost of an average family grocery purchase was examined in several BC communities¹, and the Whistler cost was found to be 17% greater than the average of those communities. In addition, other expenditures (especially accommodation) are higher putting further pressure on incomes. Whistler residents therefore, spend on average 13% of their incomes on food compared to 11% for residents in the GVRD. Restaurant meal prices are higher than those in the Lower Mainland (especially in peak seasons).

6. Whistler food prices are likely sensitive to higher fuel costs because all food is shipped a fair distance. If fuel prices rise, this will impact food prices more than communities that produce a lot of food locally.

Why is food an important topic for a sustainable community?

This section develops the rationale for why a food and agriculture strategy is relevant to a mountain resort community like Whistler.

Food and agriculture issues cross many disciplinary boundaries and touch on most aspects of sustainability. Many food issues could be addressed by incorporating food related directions in the Transportation, Energy, Affordability, and other strategies that have already been developed. However, this piecemeal approach would not address the systemic nature of food-related issues nor address these issues in a comprehensive manner.

There is a unique network of stakeholders related to food issues and a food and agriculture strategy would serve to galvanize these stakeholders and create a “food movement” in Whistler. This is what we have seen in the City of Vancouver recently where diverse stakeholders who have been primarily concerned with food issues in the Lower Mainland came together to form the lower mainland food council, and the City of Vancouver Food Policy Task Force. This quickly led the formation of a City of the Vancouver Food Policy Council.

Food is so ubiquitous and so essential to life that it is often taken for granted. A focused Food and Agriculture Strategy will allow the true value of food and agriculture to be revealed and unacknowledged

¹ Prices were examined in Whistler, Pemberton, Squamish, Lillooet, Kamloops, Abbotsford and North Vancouver, including “big box” stores such as The Great Canadian Superstore where available.

opportunities to be daylighted. It would allow an examination of food as a “flow” of matter and energy through a community and to ask how the environmental, social and economic benefits of that flow could be maximized.

Food is a highly visible aspect of any community. The food culture and the patterns of food consumption make a strong statement about the community and its values. How, where and what we eat are some of the defining characteristics of what we are and believe in as a community.

Finally, the food system has a number of important impacts on both local and global aspects of sustainability. These are explored below and summarized in Table 3: For each topic a number of “Strategic Questions” are posed, a score (1-5) is given to indicate our estimate of the degree of influence Whistler has over these issues (5 represents the largest influence), and finally some possible actions are listed.

Food and Agriculture-Related Sustainability Issues

Community and Health

The most basic food related social sustainability issue is hunger. When people do not have enough food or enough high-quality food serious health problems can arise quickly.

There have been several studies comparing the nutritional value of modern fruits and vegetables to those of the past. These studies are not conclusive but seem to suggest that modern food lacks some important micro-nutrients. This is the result of crop breeding programs that focus on appearance and durability rather than taste and nutritional value. Organic food on the other hand has been shown contain higher levels of micro-nutrients and is therefore considered more nutritious.

Food is a big part of our cultural and recreational activities and therefore plays a large part in forming the social glue that binds the community together.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler ensure that everyone in the community has access to a safe, nutritious, affordable supply of food at all times?
(4) Food bank funding and promotion, residents discount, provision of space for local residents to grow food (greenhouse space etc.).

- How can Whistler increase the nutritional value of food residents are consuming? (4) Education about relationship of long-term health and nutrition. Educate regarding nutritional value of food types and benefits of organic food etc. School meal/nutrition programs.
- How can Whistler use food to create more social capital? (3) Community gardens/greenhouses, food-related celebrations/events, encourage residents with gardens to grow food for food bank, encourage food bank participation.

Local Economic Development

Food is a big part of the economy of any community. While farming has steadily declined as a percentage of overall GDP (now approximately only 1%), food-related expenditures make up a considerable part of the local economy. In Whistler, approximately 13 % of personal expenditures are for food. Given a population of approximately 9500, and a median income of \$27,116, this represents approximately \$33 million dollars per year spent on food (and beverages) not including tourism expenditures which may be much higher.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler increase the multiplier effect of food-related expenditures within the local/regional economy? (3) Grow food on a commercial scale within the SLRD to supply restaurants/hotels. Encourage purchase of local food through a Buy Local campaign, rating system for food outlets, encourage food related celebrations/events.
- How can more value be added to food items without making food unaffordable for local residents? (2) Encourage local food processing operations, souvenir foods etc. Develop a food processing incubator/ community food processing centre where individuals can

Land Use

We rely on a secure, productive agricultural land base to feed us and to generate significant economic activity in the Province. The amount of agricultural land on the planet is finite, and while a small proportion of our vegetable crop is grown hydroponically (and therefore requires no soil), land with good quality soil is a precious asset (comprising only 5% of the Provincial land base). Across Canada and the world, we are seeing the loss of this valuable agricultural land to urban development, and in some countries, to desertification. The problem is compounded because cities are often located in areas where the best farmland exists. This is the case

with the Lower Mainland where two thirds of the Province lives in the most productive agricultural region this side of the Rockies.

Recognizing the decline in our agricultural land base (the Province was losing 6,000 or more hectares each year in 1970's), the Provincial government formed the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR) in 1973 to protect in perpetuity the most productive agricultural land in the Province. This is widely seen as a highly progressive piece of legislation and is the envy of many jurisdictions.

While the amount of land in the ALR has remained relatively constant since its inception, there has been a spate of recent applications to remove lands from the reserve in the Lower Mainland. These have come from both developers and municipalities. The Squamish Lilloet Regional District has lost 1993 hectares since inception of the ALR in 1974.²

In large part, this pressure to remove farmland from the ALR reflects the comparatively low value of farmland compared to its value for other uses, housing for example. The low value of farmland is due, in part, to the difficulty in making a viable living from farming in many areas.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler encourage the preservation of farmland and soil quality in the Province and elsewhere? (1). With no land in the ALR within its municipal boundaries, Whistler has limited influence when it comes to farmland preservation. Therefore, possible actions are limited to raising awareness of the issue, engaging in dialogue with nearby municipalities, and petitioning Agricultural Land Commission to protect the integrity of the ALR. In addition, because many of the arguments for removing land from the ALR centre around the viability (or lack thereof) of farming, Whistler can influence farmland preservation by supporting farm viability (see next bullet point).
- How can Whistler ensure the economic viability of local/regional farms and farmers? (4) Encourage purchase of local food through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) schemes, farmers markets, Buy Local campaigns, and a municipal purchasing policy that requires purchase of local food for municipal events, municipal cafeteria etc.
- How can Whistler ensure fair trade practices for farmers in other countries? (1) Education, municipal purchasing policy.

² Agricultural Land Commission website: www.alc.gov.bc.ca/

Energy Consumption

The food system is a large consumer of energy. Energy is used in food production to power agricultural equipment and heat greenhouses. In addition, most chemical fertilizers are produced from fossil fuels. Energy is used in food-related distribution (transportation, refrigeration etc.). A study in Iowa estimated that an average item of food travelled 1474 miles (2358 km) to reach its destination.³ Energy is also used during food processing (equipment), and retailing (lighting, refrigeration), food purchasing (transportation for grocery shopping), and finally during consumption (cooking, refrigeration etc.).

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

Given that Whistler is committed to reducing the consumption of fossil fuel based energy:

- How can Whistler reduce the food miles travelled (FMTs)? (4)
Encourage purchase of locally grown/processed food through local greenhouses/gardens, CSAs, farmers markets, local food delivery (especially using alternative fuel vehicles).
- How can Whistler reduce the embodied energy in food? (3)
Encourage purchase of locally grown/processed food through CSAs, minimally processed foods, local greenhouse production, local food delivery (especially using alternative fuel vehicles).
- How can Whistler encourage a reduction in the use of fossil fuel based fertilizers? (2) Educate about benefits of Organic Food. Encourage practice of composting in municipality. Provide high quality municipal compost to local growers.
- How can Whistler reduce the use of fossil fuels for greenhouse operations? (3) Support the production of food locally in sustainable greenhouse operations. Explore partnerships to use waste heat/methane from local industry/landfill.

Water Consumption

Agriculture is one of the biggest users of potable water. In many regions of the world, water is overdrawn from aquifers for irrigation. The peak demand for farm irrigation also coincides with the peak demand for household irrigation water and the need for this water for fish habitat.

³ Pirog, Rich and Benjamin, Andrew. Checking the food odometer: Comparing food miles for local versus conventional produce sales to Iowa institutions. Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

Overdrawing aquifers in dryer climates has resulted in salinization of some soils.

Water is also used heavily for food preparation and cleanup both commercially (restaurants) and domestically.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

Given that Whistler is committed to reducing the consumption of potable water:

- How can Whistler encourage reduced water consumption in farming practices outside its jurisdiction? (1) Educate about benefits of organic agriculture which tends to practice mulching and therefore may use less water.
- How can Whistler encourage reduced water consumption in farming practices within its jurisdiction? (4) Educate local growers, encourage use of rain barrels and other storage/re-use containers.
- How can Whistler encourage lower water consumption for food preparation and cleanup? (2) Educate processors, meter water.

Liquid Waste

Agriculture, especially intensive livestock operations, produce large quantities of liquid waste which can be very difficult to dispose of and have been linked to high profile cases of groundwater contamination.

Food preparation in commercial and domestic situations, produces a lot of wastewater (grey water) that is minimally contaminated.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler encourage reduced production, and proper disposal, of liquid waste in farming practices outside of its jurisdiction? (1) Influence limited to awareness-raising and encouraging consumption of foods from farms that manage waste properly.
- How can Whistler encourage reduced liquid waste from food preparation and clean up? (3) Install water meters and encourage use of water efficient plumbing fixtures.

Solid Waste

Solid waste is produced at all stages of the food system. Most of the organic waste can be composted and used as a valuable soil amendment.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler reduce the amount of food-related solid waste going to landfill? (5) Encourage local domestic composting by providing subsidized compost bins and educate residents regarding value and use of composting. Provide free domestic/commercial pick up of separated food wastes and compost these at municipal scale. Encourage reduction in packaging of food stuffs. Buying from local farmers at farmers markets will likely lead to a reduction of packaging as vendors at these markets tend to use minimal packaging).

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Conventional farming practices promote mono-cultures and tend to discourage both crop and wildlife diversity.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler encourage farming practices (both within and outside of its jurisdictional boundaries) that encourage proper stewardship of ecosystems and increased biodiversity? (2). Awareness and education of food buyers.

Toxics, chemicals

Modern farming techniques use an array of different pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, some of which have been found to be toxic to humans and to wildlife. These are used to ward off pests and crop diseases, and to treat food so it can be stored for longer periods.

Strategic Questions and Opportunities for Influence

- How can Whistler encourage less toxins to be used in food production and processing? (1) Educate about, and encourage consumption of organic food.

Table 3: Relative Impact of different elements of the food system on key sustainability issues

		Food System Elements				
		Producti on	Processin g	Distribution	Consumptio n	Aid/Expo rt
Sustainability Issues	Land	√√√	√	√	√	
	Energy	√√√	√	√√√	√	√√
	Water	√√√	√		√	
	Liquid Waste	√√√	√√		√	
	Solid Waste	√√	√√	√	√√	
	Ecosystems and Biodiversity	√√√				
	Toxics and Chemicals	√√√	√			
	Community & Health	√√	√√	√	√√√	√√
	Local Economic Development	√√	√√	√√	√√√	√√

Note: This is a subjective assessment and not based on quantitative data.

Vision of Success for a Sustainable Food System in RMOW

This section briefly describes the different elements of what a sustainable food system for Whistler might look like.

- A sustainable food system will help to protect farmland and the quality of soil in the Province. It will support the livelihoods of local farmers and ensure the ongoing integrity of small farms.
- The food system will use less energy because most of the food consumed is produced within the region, thereby dramatically reducing the number of food miles travelled. Air quality in the region would see an improvement as a result. In addition, food will be produced using substantially less fossil fuel-based fertilizers.
- Water will be used more efficiently, using drip irrigation or rainwater to irrigate food lands/greenhouses in the community.
- Food that cannot be grown locally will be produced in a way that provides a fair income for farmers (fair trade) and in a way that is protective/restorative of ecosystems.
- All residents (including those on low incomes) will have access to a safe, affordable, nutritious food supply
- There is a high awareness of food related issues. Most local residents are knowledgeable around the issues associated with food and agriculture and many actively participate in supporting ethical food and agriculture practices.
- Local food and farmers would be regularly celebrated as part of Whistler Culture
- Food dollars would be multiplied and re-circulated within the local economy, bolstering local economic development and jobs
- Food would be preserved using less packaging and generating less solid waste. Packaging would be recycled or re-used. Organic food waste would be composted for use as soil amendment.

Figure 2 summarizes the potential benefits of pursuing such a vision.

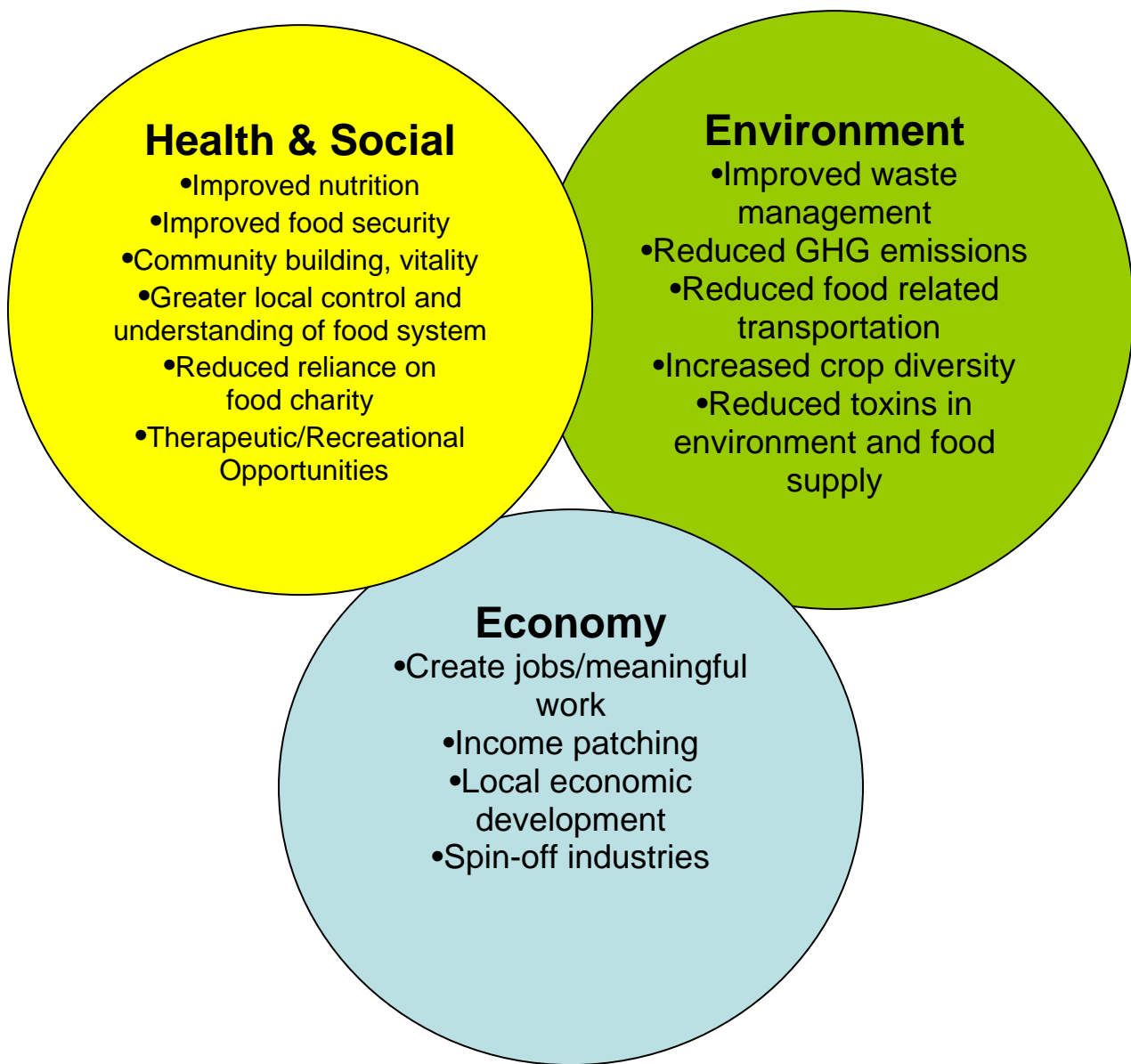


Figure 2: Potential Benefits of Improved Community-Food System Relationships (adapted from City of Vancouver, Southeast False Creek Urban Agriculture Strategy)

Opportunities and Initiatives

This section outlines broad opportunities to make progress towards the vision as well as specific initiatives (bulleted) that could become part of each opportunity:

Opportunity #1: Build broad community support for local food and farming

- Work with local partners to build support for a locally based, ecologically restorative, healthy food and agricultural system
- Highlight the links between food and sustainability in community planning processes
- Work with local schools to incorporate local food and agricultural educations into curriculum
- Educate about, and create the demand for ethical products, farming practices

Opportunity # 2: Create space and opportunities for both commercial and non-commercial, local horticultural production:

- Identify and designate /zone some land for commercial/non-commercial food production?
- Support the development of (more) community greenhouses
- Allow small-scale commercial greenhouses as a use in some zones
- Explore opportunities to utilize waste heat from commercial/industrial operations to assist in heating greenhouses
- Develop community gardens/greenhouses that are easily accessible to pedestrians and transit users
- Encourage the development of school gardens/greenhouses and their use in curriculum

Opportunity #3: Support local and regional farms and farmers

- Develop Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, farmers markets (with preference given to local farmers and food processors)
- Develop a municipal procurement policy
- Buy local campaign

Opportunity #4: Ensure food security for all residents

- Ensure that emergency food services (food bank, meal programs) are adequate to address the need within the community
- Encourage the development of school meal programs to provide affordable, nutritious, healthy meals to children

- Promote self-help initiatives such as community kitchens, buying co-ops, cooking clubs, community gardens as alternatives to food banks
- Ensure that affordable grocery stores are located close to residential areas (preferably within walking distance)

Opportunity #5: Explore food related local economic development opportunities

- Promoting the consumption of local foods (see above)
- Encourage the formation of local, small-scale value-added food processing industries (home based, community kitchen based, small scale commercial).
- Develop a Food Processing Training Facility as a local economic development incubator
- Encourage the development of “Whistler” food brands that would appeal to tourists.

Opportunity # 6: Encourage ethical consumption

- Consider developing an ethical food rating (labelling) system for Whistler Food Retailers and Restaurants (Leadership in **Ethical Agriculture and Food**) that would rate food businesses against a number of criteria outlined in this document
- Encourage the adoption of existing fair trade products and procurement practices
- Encourage the consumption of certified “organic” food
- Encourage the consumption of animal products where the animals have been treated humanely (SPCA-certified for example).

Opportunity # 7: Invest in food related initiatives in the Athletes Village

Many of the above noted strategies can be applied to the Athlete’s Village. In addition, the following specific opportunities may apply:

- Invest in a unique high-profile, food-related demonstration project such as a “bioponic system” that grows both fish (aquaculture) and vegetables in a closed loop system where the wastes of one component provide the nutrients for the other OR perhaps a more conventional aquaculture project (raise trout or tilapia for protein consumption)
- Set aside land and construct greenhouses, perhaps heated by burning methane (landfill gas) from nearby landfill, ground source heat pump or using waste heat from commercial building(s)
- Develop an in-vessel composting system for organic waste and use the compost for food production/landscaping purposes

- Explore opportunities for intensive Green Roofs for gardens/food production, especially suited to concrete buildings.
- Edible landscaping – using edible ornamentals (berry bushes and fruit trees in place of non productive varieties)
- Stage local food celebrations/events with Athletes at the time of Olympics

Opportunity # 8: Encourage the public celebration of local food and food culture

- Farmer’s markets
- Events/celebrations around local seasonal crops

Opportunity # 9: Manage Food Related Transportation More Effectively

- Food related truck transport is likely a large part of the daily truck transportation into and out of Whistler. It may be possible to manage this more effectively through “right-sizing” of vehicles, combined logistics etc.

A Path Forward

The above noted strategies will take concerted effort and a few years to put in place. Therefore, this section suggests a possible path forward for the near term.

Policy Framework – the first step in addressing food related sustainability issues is to develop an enabling policy framework in which RMOW acknowledges the importance of food and agricultural to the success of the Resort and its importance with regard to sustainability. This can be done through the CSP process and through future OCP amendments as well as through more ad-hoc council decisions. This will send the right message to the community and to potential investors.

Food Policy Council - RMOW should explore the possibility of forming a Food Policy Council that can develop food related initiatives and guide development of food policy. Food Councils exist in a several cities in North America and a few in Canada (Toronto, Kelowna and recently one was established in City of Vancouver). Typically, membership is from all food sectors including:

- Farmers
- Food processing companies
- Grocery store owners/managers

- Nutritionists
- Community gardeners
- Food writers
- Food activists

Co-ordinator - Unless food issues are made a priority they tend to be lost amidst more pressing municipal priorities. To avoid this, RMOW should consider hiring a co-ordinator or identify an existing RMOW staff member to take on responsibility for co-ordinating all food and agriculture-related initiatives. This person may serve as support to the Food Policy Council noted above.

Invest in Pilot Projects - Select a high profile, win-win food related project/initiative to invest in and help raise the profile of the food agenda.

Athletes Village Planning and Design

Many of the strategies noted above can be applied or adapted to the planning and development of the planned Athletes Village at the lower Cheakamus Site.

- Include food related initiatives in the Terms of Reference for the design of the Athlete's Village.
- Identify and designate land for food production purposes
- Explore opportunities to use waste heat from wastewater and commercial businesses for greenhouse heating
- Explore opportunities for intensive green roofs or rooftop greenhouses that can make use of building heat for growing food.
- Invest in an experimental food system such as "bioponics" that grows fish and vegetables in a closed loop symbiotic system
- Utilise edible landscaping in landscape design

Further Research – If progress resulting from food initiatives is to be evaluated over time, it is essential to establish some baseline information. Data should include:

- Existing patterns of food consumption (i.e. what is the makeup of the average Whistler diet) and more precise understanding of food related expenditures
- Where is food coming from at present? Map locations and quantities of existing sources of foods and estimate the food miles travelled as well as a way to track this in the future.
- Establish magnitude of existing food related economic activity

Appendix A – Existing Food Initiatives

The following list of existing food-related initiatives was provided to the consultants by Shannon Gordon.

Affordability Initiatives

Food Buying Club

The Food Buying Club assists financially restricted Whistler families to access groceries at more affordable prices than currently available in Whistler. A group of 10 families who meet the financial need criteria (same as Recreation Credit Fund) pay a small membership fee to cover banking fees and supplies and sign on for volunteer duties. Families accessing the Food Bank on a more consistent basis are given first priority.

Community Kitchens

Our Community Kitchens facilitator teaches participants to shop for and prepare healthy and budget-conscious meals to bring home for themselves and their families. There are 66 families currently involved in this program.

Food Bank

The Whistler Food Bank is available to Whistler residents in need and is supported by The Grocery Store, Nesters and IGA, and the many local individuals and businesses. Food is distributed on the first and third Mondays of every month from the trailer behind Our Lady of the Mountains Catholic Church on Lorimer Road, from 11:00am to 1:00pm. In December, the Food Bank is open every Monday.

The “Local’s Discount”

Many Whistler businesses currently offer an informal “local’s discount”, which usually amounts to a 10% savings for those who request it. Other incentives are also informally offered, such as lowered prices for repeat business.

The “Whistler Card”

Launched spring 2004, the Whistler Card means that locals no longer have to ask for the “local’s discount” in Whistler. Through the Chamber of Commerce program, over 200 businesses are providing resident cardholders with discounts, incentives, or extra convenience on locally purchased items including food, transportation, clothing, recreation, and other products and services (discount information for each business is posted on the Chamber’s web site). The annual fee for the card is \$37 (plus GST) or \$20.10 for a six-month card. Participants are required to participate in an online questionnaire on community initiatives, the guest-service culture, and how the Whistler experience can be made even

better. The questionnaire results will be used to inform community learning and resident offerings, helping facilitate Whistler becoming a 'learning community'.

Other Initiatives

Whistler Farmer's Market

The Whistler Farmer's Market is held on Sundays 11 AM to 4 PM

- Farm fresh produce
- Certified organic goods
- Homemade soaps, candles, and pickled foods
- Freshly baked bread, cookies and desserts
- Custom made furniture and antiques
- Arts and crafts unique to this area
- Jewellery, kids clothes, and woven knits
- The best value around



The Whistler Farmer's Market is part of the BC Farmers' Market Association. All the participating vendors from Lions Bay to Lytton have to make, bake or grow their wares. The idea is to feature local artisan talents and farmer produce - whether its vegetables, fruits, flowers, paintings, craft furniture or wines. The emphasis is on good quality without a factory label.

Whistler's Greenhouse Project

There are two greenhouses at Spruce Grove and one at Myrtle Philip bottom field which is strictly for the Food Bank. There are a total of 36 beds that have been rented by community members for \$50 for the season. The Food Bank has another 18 beds, plus some plants growing in Steve Milsteins greenhouse. Most people are growing something specific for the Food Bank as opposed to working out 15% of their harvest. Links with the Chateau Chef have been established who is willing to turn excess crop into gourmet jarred items (pasta sauce, salsa, etc.) which will be sold at the Farmer's market and perhaps the local grocery stores. Profits will be split between the Chateau Foundation and the Food Bank. There have been discussions about applying for a large grant to investigate the possibility of year round greenhouses which would use heat vented from buildings. We received \$16,000+ in donations from the RMOW, The Chateau Foundation, Whistler-Blackcomb and Nesters. The whole project has cost over \$23,000 to date, with WCSS footing the balance. For more information, please contact WCSS at (604) 932-0113.

Cornucopia: Whistler's Wine and Food Celebration

Cornucopia is an annual celebration of food and wine including gourmet dining, wine tastings, food and wine seminars and special culinary events. It is now in its ninth year

<http://www.whistlercornucopia.com/cornucopia/index.asp>

Pemberton Farms

Food is sold at the farm gate of a number of local farms in Pemberton.

http://www.pemberton.ca/var/communityFiles/pemberton_farmers_institute.pdf

Sturdy's North Arm Farm offers farm visits as well as farm gate sales.

<http://www.northarmfarm.com/>