

## FOOD WASTE AND INSECURITY REPORT

### Analysis and Implementation Options

#### RECOMMENDATION

That the August 8, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE00787, be received for information.

Requested Council Action		Information Only	
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle		ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals	
CONNECTED This unifies our work as we work to achieve our strategic goals.		Climate Resilience  Healthy City	
City Plan Values	BELONG. LIVE.		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Greener as we Grow  Inclusive and Compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community Safety and Well-Being  Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the Future		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Waste Reduction Roadmap</li><li>Fresh - Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy</li><li>Edmonton Urban Farm</li><li>City Council has approved Zoning Bylaw changes allowing for more urban agriculture and local food production activities across the city as of February 2016.</li></ul>		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>EXT00696 Food Waste and Insecurity Report</li></ul>		

#### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the August 25, 2021, Community and Public Services Committee meeting, the following motion passed:

# Food Waste and Insecurity Report - Analysis and Implementation Options

That Administration provide a report with a response to the August 25, 2021 City of Edmonton Youth Council report EXT00696 (Food Waste and Insecurity Report: A Youth Perspective) including an analysis and possible implementation options of the recommendations.

## Executive Summary

- In August 2021, the City of Edmonton Youth Council prepared a recommendation-based information report that provides youth insights on food issues in Edmonton.
- Administration has analyzed this report and provided implementation options for each recommendation.
- Administration suggests that the City of Edmonton use existing frameworks, processes and resources to continue to support solutions related to food waste and food security.
- The City Plan, fresh: Edmonton's Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy and Edmonton's Waste Reduction Roadmap include goals related to food waste and food insecurity.
- Administration has developed and is implementing strategies focused on food waste and food insecurity.

## REPORT

The City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) is an advisory committee to Edmonton City Council. In August 2021, CEYC provided a recommendation-based information report, Food Waste And Insecurity Report: A Youth Perspective (Attachment 1), providing unique youth perspectives on food issues in Edmonton. The report focuses on two major food issues within Edmonton: food waste and food insecurity.

The report brings a unique youth perspective to the challenges of food insecurity and food waste, and is based on research, interviews and a survey of Edmontonians aged 13–23 years old on food waste and food insecurity. The report's recommendations seek to align with The City Plan objectives of Greener as We Grow and A Community of Communities, as well as select actions from Edmonton's Waste Reduction Roadmap. A key message delivered in the report is that while initiatives that redirect good food away from waste streams and keep it available for consumption (referred to as gleaning), there are greater underlying issues that need to be addressed or else the immediate efforts will only act as "band-aids."

In particular, the report states that "food insecurity and food waste are intrinsically tied to social issues such as poverty, climate, and homelessness." While the efforts of the City, stakeholders and other orders of government help to address food insecurity and food waste, they are not a holistic solution in and of themselves. The CEYC report encourages "the City to take a step forward when it comes to addressing food issues, and pursue mitigation strategies that are more innovative, far-reaching, and equitable in their implementation." In some cases, these actions lack clear City policy or Council direction, or they are beyond the jurisdiction of the municipal order of government.

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Administration has analyzed the CEYC report and identified work previously completed or that is currently underway and provided implementation options for each recommendation.

Administration recommends that the City of Edmonton use existing frameworks, processes and resources to support the development of solutions related to food waste and food security where appropriate. As well, the City will continue collaboration with community stakeholders, such as those who bring expertise to both subject areas. CEYC recommendations that align with this ongoing work would be supported, and those that do not align with ongoing work would not be supported or explored further unless directed by Council. Additional information is available in Attachment 2 and current policy direction is summarized in Attachment 3.

### **Food Waste**

There is no universally accepted definition of food waste, with variation as to the types of food included (e.g. liquids may or may not be included) and whether or not packaging is included.

The phrase “food loss and waste” typically covers the entire value chain from production to distribution, wholesale, retail and residential, whereas the term “food waste” typically refers to waste that occurs at the household level. When considering items at the consumer end of the supply chain, food waste is often split into two categories: avoidable food waste, which includes items that were at some point edible (but may have spoiled), and unavoidable food waste, which includes items that are not typically eaten (e.g. pits, peels and bones). When describing food that is still suitable for consumption and that may be donated to charitable organizations for further distribution, the phrase “surplus food” is preferred to “food waste”.

The City of Edmonton last conducted an audit of waste from residential curbside collection customers in 2019/2020. The garbage stream contained 26 to 42 per cent food waste by weight, with the higher percentage occurring in the winter when yard waste is not being generated and the total volume of waste is lower. Roughly two thirds of this food waste was avoidable (17-28 per cent of the overall residential stream) rather than unavoidable (8-14 per cent). This shows that Edmontonians have significant room for improvement in terms of making the best use of the food they purchase.

The City of Edmonton introduced separate food scraps collection for curbside collection customers through the Edmonton Cart Rollout in 2021. Food scraps from roughly 250,000 homes are now collected in green carts separately from other waste streams, enabling more efficient processing that keeps this waste out of landfill and generates beneficial new products like energy and compost. During the first partial year of the service, approximately 35,000 tonnes of food scraps were collected. The quantity is expected to increase to 60,000 tonnes in 2022.

Sorting food scraps from other waste is a nudge for Edmontonians to visualize and be inspired to reduce the amount of food waste they generate. The use of the phrase “food scraps” is also intended to differentiate between leftovers and inedible food, encouraging residents to eat edible food rather than put it in the green carts.

Building on the success of the Edmonton Cart Rollout, City Council has also approved the introduction of mandatory separate collection of food scraps from properties like apartments

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and condominiums that receive the City's communal collection service. Implementation planning for the new service is currently underway. The first properties are expected to transition to three-stream collection in 2023, with the service eventually rolling out to approximately 167,000 homes receiving the City's communal waste collection services across almost 3,400 properties.

The City also encourages residents to reduce the amount of food they waste by providing motivation and tips on the City website and through social media channels. The information draws on local and national research related to the causes of food waste, and factors that have been shown to help motivate food waste reduction. Edmonton is also a member of the National Zero Waste Council, and leverages their resources regarding food waste reduction, such as Food Waste Action Week and Waste Reduction Week.

As interest in this issue grows, the private and not-for-profit sectors are also contributing to solutions. Various platforms have launched to connect customers to restaurants and stores that have unsold food surplus. Other platforms facilitate the donation of unsold products by connecting charitable organizations and stores.

### **Food Insecurity**

Food insecurity is a complex issue experienced when food access is limited or eating patterns are disrupted as a result of financial, physical or social barriers. In the immediate and short term, food insecurity presents as hunger and is mitigated by access to food resources through a variety of means. There is recognition, however, that food insecurity and hunger are symptoms of the larger issue of poverty and income insecurity. In considering what it means to be "food secure," the Food and Agriculture Organization's definition expands beyond food access, stating that food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life," recognizing that choice and access to culturally relevant foods are important aspects of food security.

In Edmonton, there are a variety of organizations and approaches for addressing food insecurity. The Edmonton Food Bank provides hampers to families in need, supports community depots, meal and hamper programs in community agencies and school snack programs. Bethel Community Pantry, Garneau Food Security, and Ormsby Food Distribution provide low barrier access to food staples on a weekly basis, and social enterprises such as WeCan Food Basket and Khair for All provide low-cost prepaid access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and frozen meat.

In May 2020, Multicultural Health Brokers surveyed the families that access their services and 68 per cent indicated that they were in current need of food. In the first three months of 2021, Edmonton's Food Bank provided food hampers to 75,531 people and continued to serve an average of 25,801 people per month through 2021. These numbers are only indicative of people who sought these services and support. Many individuals and families experiencing food insecurity never access mainstream resources for a variety of reasons. Instead, they may get support from family and cultural communities, or not access food resources at all.

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In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Edmonton Community Social Work Team convened the Edmonton Community Coordination of Food Resources Committee (ECCFRC) to provide an opportunity for coordination, strategic direction and leadership so that low income and vulnerable Edmontonians could access food when and where they needed it. The Committee's goals were to:

- Find efficiencies to best deliver services;
- Share information and resources to facilitate service provision, coordination and bulk purchasing opportunities;
- Maximize donations, grant funding and agency resources (working towards cooperative grant applications); and
- Explore and address issues underlying food insecurity.

The coordination table ended in May 2021, however work in the community continues. Community Social Workers provide information about the range of food programming available and facilitate connections as needed.

There is a recognition that food insecurity has a direct link to income insecurity. Programs and responses that address the immediate need of hunger are important and valuable work, and policies and actions that address income insecurity are also necessary for a long-term solution.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

The actions described in Attachment 2 reflect work underway by the City of Edmonton, and therefore existing financial resources are sufficient to support the implementation.

## **COMMUNITY INSIGHT**

Administration received input from the Edmonton Food Council, a volunteer advisory council that provides the City strategic and expert insight into the food and urban agriculture landscape, local food policies, emerging issues and opportunities, and building and maintaining relationships with the food and urban agriculture community. Edmonton Food Council's input included feedback received from Edmonton's Food Bank and Edmonton's Multicultural Health Brokers Co-op, two organizations with expertise in these subject areas.

Social policies can have a significant impact on reducing food insecurity when they address its root causes, which are primarily low incomes and poverty. Edmonton's Food Bank and Food Banks Canada have made recent recommendations concerning food security. These recommendations primarily focus on income, housing and better access and connection to services to help mitigate food security issues.

The introduction of food scraps sorting was shaped by the input of thousands of Edmontonians through the Future of Waste Public Engagement in 2018 and 2019, and continues to be refined by observing resident actions, monitoring traditional and social media coverage, and analyzing 311

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inquiries and other resident support channels. Messaging and supports continue to be adjusted to help residents both reduce and accurately sort their waste.

Waste Services communicates regularly with stakeholders involved in the food retail and rescue sectors. These include Leftovers Foundation, Edmonton's Food Bank, Second Harvest, Loop Resources, Too Good to Go, and grocery stores. Waste Services also works with local private processors of food waste to maintain an understanding of their feedstock requirements, capacity and throughput to optimize how food waste is processed by both the City and the private sector.

### **GBA+**

Food insecurity has a direct link to income insecurity; therefore, individuals and families with lower incomes are more likely to experience food insecurity. Many individuals and families experiencing food insecurity never access mainstream resources, such as Edmonton's Food Bank, for a variety of reasons. While valuable, these resources do not replace the need for policies that address income insecurity and are necessary for a long-term solution.

Policies in The City Plan include providing affordable housing and local food options to support social equity and supporting the development of a sustainable food system in collaboration with regional partners. Administration has developed relationships with community stakeholders focused on developing solutions to support members of communities most affected by food insecurity.

Additionally, access to culturally appropriate (or culturally recognized) food remains an issue that is often overlooked and is related to food insecurity. Acknowledging and supporting the dignity of underrepresented groups and new Canadians by enabling access to healthy and culturally appropriate food, not just what might be available can contribute to equity outcomes.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Food Waste and Insecurity Report: A Youth Perspective
2. Implementation Options
3. Policy Direction