Squamish Food Policy Council Report

Located on traditional Indigenous lands of the Sḵwx̱wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation)

April 24, 2022

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Background

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of what small-scale farming would look like in the Garibaldi Estates, specifically through the community farming lens. The information is aimed to provide details to understand definitions, background, options and more. Currently this document will remain living to best serve the District of Squamish's leadership and planning team.

Squamish Food Policy Council (SFPC) staff have been advancing sustainable food systems in Squamish and the region for over a decade. Staff have participated, led and facilitated engagement with dozens of community members and food system stakeholders in Squamish, the region and across the province. Our team has been able to support policy development as well on the groundwork necessary to implement high priorities of our communities. Our community, region and province continues to experience challenges that greatly impact our food system, this includes: highway closures due to rock slides, atmospheric rivers and flash flooding, pandemics and of course climate related events such as heat domes and fires. In recent events, we have seen how vulnerable our communities are and how much they depend on transportation of our food to feed our communities. It is essential that Squamish prioritize planning for integrating sustainable food systems into our neighbourhood plans.

Policy direction below has been developed from a variety of plans both locally and regionally, as well as community engagement on understanding our communities strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Part of community engagement included SFPC co-organizing an event in December of 2021 'Planning for Food & Agriculture in the Garibaldi Estates' that provided the opportunity to plan and explore how food and agriculture can be incorporated into the nieghbourhood plan. The Suggestions have also included learning from communities across BC through a community of practice, academic resources and the industry's best practices.

Agricultural Land Use Inventory

- The BC Ministry of Agriculture conducted an Agricultural Land Use Inventory (ALUI) in the District of Squamish and in Squamish-Lillooet Regional District Electoral (SLRD) Area D in the summer of 2017.
- The ALUI collected land use and land cover data for analysis.
- While the ALUI was very focused on lands in the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR), non-ALR lands were also reviewed as to the landscape and farming activity (see section 6).
- In the Garibaldi Estates plan area there are no ALR lands but there is one ALR parcel just outside the plan area on Tantalus Road. In the municipality there were 11 non-ALR parcels that met the definition of 'used for farming'. They consisted of pasture lands, some vegetables and mixed fruit production and small-scale livestock.
- In the Estates area, a 3-acre parcel on Mamquam Road was identified with pasture with livestock (equine/horses). The ALUI noted generally that backyard livestock and small lot agriculture are likely under-represented in this inventory. While these activities do not significantly contribute to commercial agricultural production, they play a role in maintaining local food production skills and knowledge, and small scale activities can provide a nucleus for larger market gardens and other potential contributions to the local food supply.

Squamish Food Assets in District of Squamish 2021

As of Summer 2021, there are 77 food assets located in Squamish, of which seven are in or near the Garibaldi Estates neighbourhood:

- Garibaldi CAN Grow Community Garden
- Mamquam Edible Schoolyard (MESY)
- Mamquam Elementary School
- Independent Grocer
- Kitchen Quickies
- Grounded Grocer - (unfortunately was impacted by the fire)
- Plant X

Policy Directions

Overall the policies below support the direction of advancing a holistic sustainable food system. This ensures that all members of our community have access to nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable and culturally appropriate food at all times. It also ensures that viable agricultural lands are protected, and producers, processors, growers, foragers, and knowledge holders are supported. By supporting these policies we are supporting the long list of indicators that impact our food system, which include: food self-reliance, ecological footprint, greenhouse gas emissions, carbon stocks, wildlife habitat capacity, habitat connectivity, nutrient surplus, food production, food imports, total employment, total output, total gross domestic product, total employment income and total tax revenue.

Considerations

- Food focused, 70% to small-scale farm businesses, 30% to community gardens (not kennels, equestrian. Can still be allowed use but not included in agriculture requirements.)
- Food production condensed on east side of Estates
- Establish Community Agriculture Fund to support continued operations, maintenance etc; connect development contribution (either $ or land) to the number of units being built.
- Water access. Irrigation well(s)? (DoS does not want to use potable water for agriculture)
- Infrastructure: fencing, storage, etc who provides these amenities, and is responsible for maintenance.

Garibaldi Estates (East)

- It is recommended that a larger single development in the Garibaldi Estates area accommodate a mix of housing and agriculture; in that development a minimum of 50% of the overall parcel be allocated to agriculture and food production space. Within the 50% allocated to agriculture some space up to 30% can be dedicated to community gardens of different sizes and styles to accommodate for different abilities and levels of interests in growing food, and sizes of families.
- Ideally that this area would have the larger conglomerate of food production land that would be over 70% dedicated to farm businesses. The 30% would be dedicated to community gardens (of different styles and sizes) to accommodate different abilities and levels of interest in growing food. This directly supports the removal of barriers for new and existing farmers.
    - By providing spaces for multi-family to grow their own food at a community garden, helps with the OCPs indicator to increase community food assets as well providing spaces for neighbours to gather, share knowledge and spend time outside.
    - This space would be neighbouring the farming spaces, but nearby to create community.
- CAN now has a community farm name of 'Common Acres Community Farms' with different locations such as: Easter Seals/Brackendale, Raven Drive Loggers East, etc. This could be another location we oversee to ensure operations, leases and licenses working with Young agrarians to fulfill the land linking.

Sample policies for agriculture and food production pg 27 199711 (civicweb.net)

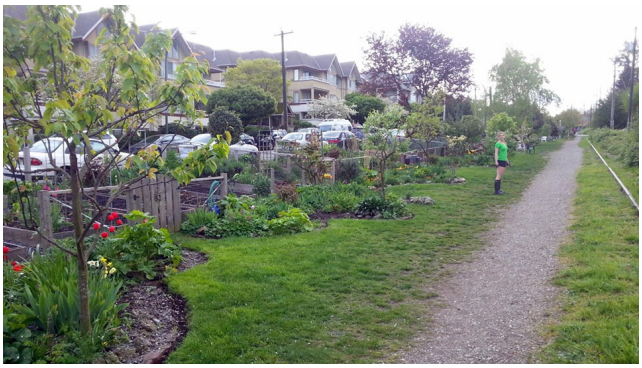
- Areas proposed to be activated to provide food production/agricultural uses will be protected with a covenant on the lands requiring continuous agricultural use by an approved community group, land trust, agricultural operator or strata. The covenant will ensure the land is protected in perpetuity as a community asset and that regenerative/organic agricultural practices are followed.
- Agricultural uses such as crop production, greenhouses, sale of produce grown on-site, grazing, community orchards, equestrian facilities, kennels and other agricultural uses are supported on all Rural/MF properties. (Implementation: Zoning Bylaw amendment).

Garibaldi Estates (West) (½ acres VLA)

- NOW: Land sharing opportunities are encouraged for larger front or back lots. Squamish CAN can help educate growers and landowners on sharing opportunities to help get spaces in the VLA in production if the land owners have no interest.

    - Could there be a land owner's incentive to encourage land sharing for food production for anything over 1000+ sq ft. (density bonus; control is over land use; secure through covenant)
    - Squamish CAN establishes a community guideline for garden sharing to support important conversations and agreements between growers and land owners.
    - Would like to set up a demonstration front yard for the “Grow food not lawns” pilot project to have a visual as to what successful land sharing could look like.
- Future: Not necessary to see agriculture included on those lots in future development, but there is a contribution towards food production in the area
    - Community contributions for any density increase go directly to newly established community agriculture fund which supports running, development and maintaining of community agriculture projects
- Mamquam Road: Along the road there is public land that could be set up by Squamish CAN/SFPC and the DoS for a public corridor including active transportation and food gardens. An example of this is the Arbutus Corridor in Vancouver (water access big consideration)







Garibaldi Estates (West/West)

- Commercial/walkable area
- Regional Farm Hub / Commissary kitchen / Market
    - This multi-purpose project or 'hub' is inspired by the South Island Farm Hub in Victoria, BC. This helps directly support farmers with on-going and year round sales to compliment farmers existing operations (CSA, farmers market, relationships with restaurants).
    - SFPC recently conducted research to determine interest from residents, farmers and food purchasers, showing that 73% of survey respondents are supportive of a regional farm hub and determined that 'Decreasing reliance on imported products', 'strengthening the direct relationship between producer and consumer', and 'improving the convenience of sourcing local fresh foods' were identified as the most important changes to the food system that the Squamish to Lillooet community would like to see.
    - Best located in a mixed use area where this type of commercial and community use can thrive. Perhaps on or near Diamond Head Road.

What do we hope to do?

We propose to work with the District of Squamish, Squamish farmers and future developers to design, establish and build an agrihood/community farm/urban agriculture that would be set up for small scale farmers and have systems in place to ensure that they are sustainable in perpetuity. It is important that the systems designed are still in place and serving both residents, farmers and our communities needs.

We are proud to share that our first community farm 'Common Acres Community Farms" has been established in Squamish at the Easter Seals Camp off Government Rd. which provides long-term leases for three small-scale farm businesses on one acre. While it is the first of its kind in Squamish, our staff has and will continue to explore best practices, lessons learned, etc. from other communities and projects, as we have over the past decade. A second site within the Logger East Agrihood is currently in discussion and will likely become our second location for the community farming projects.

Operations:

- A local non profit signs a long-term lease with the land owners and acts as the overall caretakers and management for the space, infrastructure, problem solving as it arises, addressing farmers needs, etc. We would license (sublease) through the land matching program through Young Agrarians. This is our current operations at the Common Acres Community Farm. Both leases and licenses have a fee. The lower the better and we have industry norms to use to compare.
- Neighbours can expect that farmers will be herbal/medicinal, vegetable, or flower farming. Live stock is an option assuming there is interest and support from the neighbours. Additional options for farming include apiaries, fruit trees or berries. With these being attractants for dangerous wildlife, it would be essential to install electric fencing as per bylaw requirements.

Community Farming Benefits:

- **Health Local Economies:** Community farms are locally owned and operated, and democratically controlled. Local farms keep money circulating in their communities rather than exporting it to absentee owners or shareholders, and the benefits are passed on to local restaurants, farmers markets, retailers, and consumers.
- **Environmental Solutions:** Agriculture and farming practices can both harm and protect environmental systems and processes. Groups that farm cooperatively feel a strong sense of stewardship and responsibility to the land, but farmers do face barriers when they choose to farm sustainably. By basing their agricultural activities on sustainable practices, community farms balance environmental sustainability with retention and protection of valuable and threatened farmland.
- **Local Food Security:** Rural communities import much of their food. In the context of a global food crisis, establishing local suppliers of diverse food products increases food security in small rural communities. Communities that invest in community farms help secure farmland and build local food systems for ongoing food production.
- **Market Stability:** When a community invests in a farm, its long term viability and security as a food production (and social) system are supported. Farmers benefit from market and price stability when communities support their farmers through community shared agriculture programs, farmers markets, and local distribution networks.
- **Social Capital and Community Amenities:** Community farms build 'social capital' by involving a diverse group of individuals – farmers, community members, and organizations – with different skills and knowledge. This social capital, or wealth, helps create community amenities beyond

food production, including environmental and agricultural education, recreational opportunities, and nature conservation areas.
Source: Community Farming Benefits (communityfarms.ca)

Requirements to put land in production: Most small-scale farmers regardless of what they are farming will require similar amenities. Below is a list that would be essential for the developer/community to be prepared for. Best practices would also include collaboration with Squamish CAN/SFPC (a community group) who can help set up the systems and infrastructure for long term sustainability and success.

Requirements	Challenges/Barriers/Notes
Storage facility & Cold Storage - This can be an 8' x 40' shipping container or 2 8' x 20' containers. One or half will need to be a walk-in refrigerator, while the other would be a heated/cooled office space and seed storage, etc. This structure would need 100 Amp (240) for energy and water access for a washing station outside of the structure.	Depending on the size and needs of the farmers, there may need to be more of these, but typically for anything under five acres, this should suffice. Location should be convenient for farmers to access from a road and parking for farmers to load and unload produce for deliveries and it will need power.
Water access - Require a min 2" line with frost free yard hydrant taps throughout the property (min one within each ¼ acre). Each tap may be managed differently by a timer and metered if needed.	**District of Squamish** will need to direct if we need to put in an irrigation well, as they do not want farmers using potable water for farming uses. Will be a larger cost if this is the case. *look at long term maintenance costs for irrigation wells.
Fencing and Gates - Installation of minimum 6' ft deer fencing with 2"x2" or 2"x4" wire mesh with metal fence posts. Require 10ft gate for vehicle access and minimum of one 4ft gate for foot access.	Note that we will need to confirm poles that can be used in the ground. Metal vs treated wood. Treated wood is often not supported by organic practices. Metal 't' poles would be 9' and pounded in ground 2-3' ft deep. Access for large soil deliveries or for farmers to operate their business will need access from the main road into the farm, ideally drivability to the storage structure to pick up produce for deliveries, etc.
Road access & Parking is important for operations.	Large vehicles to bring soil and such would need access including farmers and their staff. This can be a simple crushed gravel road with parking central to their plot of land and storage/processing space.
Sales for farmers is essential and each	Some farmers may wish to operate a CSA (Community

farmer will have their own preference.	Supported Agriculture), which is a weekly box that is delivered or picked-up from their customers. Others may wish to have a farm stand. We believe allowing the public to access sites for direct sales and pick-up is important for engagement, education and understanding of where and how food is grown. It also strengthens relationships and support for more local agriculture. Parking spots would need to be secured along with safe entrance and exit.
Washing stations would need to be installed with a permanent covered area and proper drainage into the ground (nothing fancy for drainage)	The needs might vary based on who and how many are farming. (i.e. having two or more stations).
Greenhouses & Small Structures	Minimize or exempt from permits

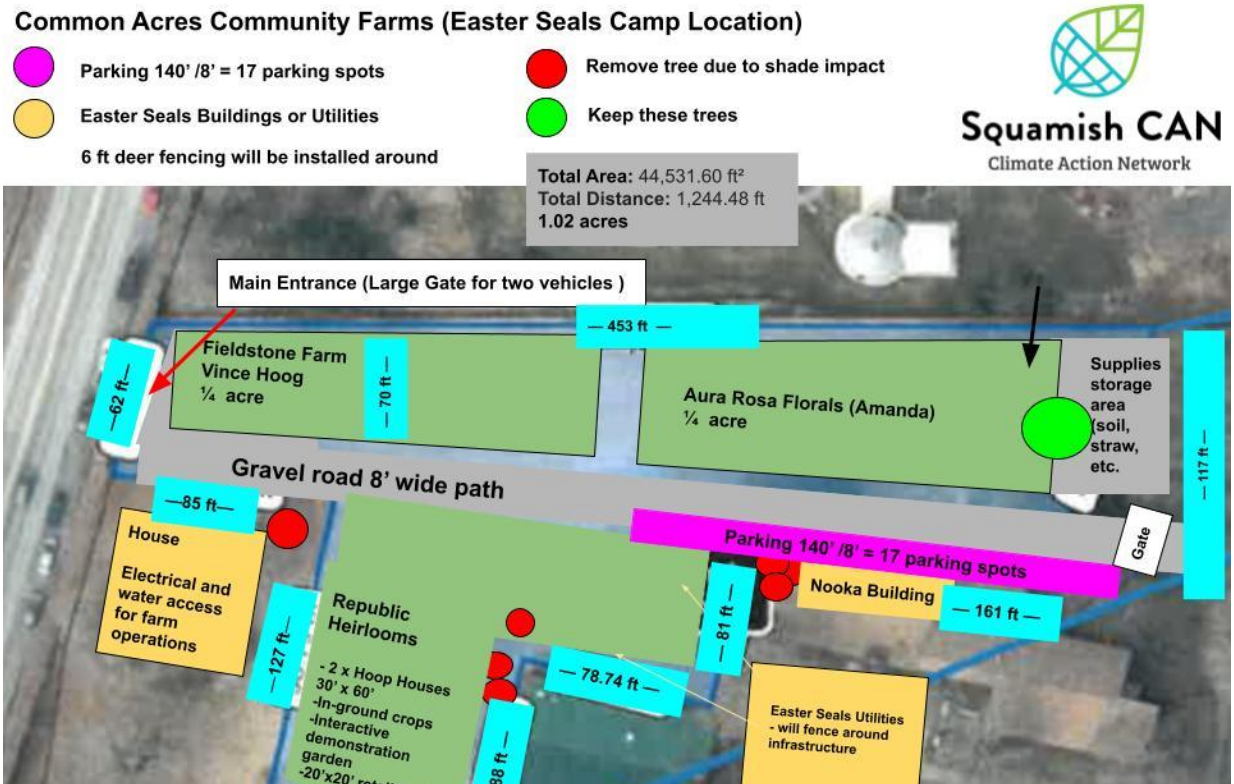
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Examples of Community Farms in BC

As there are many models of community farming, the three farms below have demonstrated leadership, sustainability and are most aligned with the direction set in Squamish with Common Acres Community Farms. Over the past decade, Squamish CAN staff has toured all these sites, met with staff and have ongoing discussions to learn about suggestions, successes and challenges.

Common Acres Community Farms

Since 2016, Squamish CAN staff have been looking for land to secure a community farm. After many years of discussion with private landowners, municipal and provincial governments, we opened our doors officially in April. While we are still working out details of the vision and community guidelines, we will continue to have discussions with developers, municipalities and private landowners to secure more land for community farming.











Haliburton Community Organic Farm

[Haliburton Community Organic Farm | 741 Haliburton Rd, Saanich, BC (haliburtonfarm.org)]

- Haliburton Community Organic Farm is a publicly-owned farm within the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). The farm was saved from development by a group of concerned citizens and the District of Saanich, who purchased the land. The Farm is a community and educational certified organic farm.
- The farm is centrally located in a suburb of Victoria surrounded by single family residences
- All 9.3 acres is managed by the non-profit with five farm businesses operating on it.

Sandown Centre for Regenerative Agriculture

[Virtual Field Trip | Sandown (sandowncentre.com)]

- Land was privately owned, formerly a racetrack. District denied subdividing for single family homes. Negotiations resulted in a portion of land along the highway being subdivided and redeveloped commercially while the remaining 100+ acres were transferred to the District of North Saanich.
- 50% of taxes (about $120k annually) from the subdivided commercial lot goes to the agriculture fund



which supports the farm.
- Managed by a non-profit.
- Ran into issues around permitting for small structures and greenhouses which was an unnecessary barrier to farmers as well as wasted time and money.
- Each farmer has a minimum ¼ acre plot, and each plot's water is individually metered and paid for by the farmer.

UBC Farm

Home | CSFS at UBC Farm

- The UBC Farm is the Centre for Sustainable Food System's main research, teaching and learning space, located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people, and housed under the Faculty of Land and Food Systems.
- The Farm is organically managed, and UBC Farm produce is certified organic through NOOA. We cultivate over 200 varieties of fruits, vegetables, and herbs, and also feature honey beehives and egg-laying, open-pasture hens.
- https://ubcfarm.ubc.ca/about/ - watch the video.



Farmers on 57th

- One acre of community growing space and therapeutic gardens, now part of 25 acre multi-million redevelopment. Marpole Vancouver. Read more here.



Kwantlan Polytech University Farm



Allotment style gardens in downtown Montreal



Rooftop Farm and Foodhub, Downtown Montreal



About the Report Author

Who is the Squamish CAN | Squamish Food Policy Council?

The Squamish Food Policy Council (SFPC) was formed in 2015 to further sustainable food systems work in Squamish and the Sea-to-Sky region. Our mission is that ALL members of Squamish have access to enough nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times. Squamish Valley food and agricultural lands are protected and productive, and producers, processors, growers, foragers, and knowledge holders are valued and supported. We invite you to learn more about our work here: About Us - Squamish Food Policy Council.

Squamish CAN (Climate Action Network) is the backbone organization for the SFPC that empowers our community with just and actionable solutions to the climate crisis through education, policy development and systems change. Formed in 2009, Squamish CAN is a registered non-profit that is highly regarded in Squamish for often being the centre point for many initiatives involving community partners to achieve a common goal. We have been working with municipal and regional governments, public educators, other non-profits, and local businesses to see change happen in the community. Squamish CAN also aims to increase civic engagement in food systems through community gardens, food literacy workshops, and educational programs and events, whilst cultivating partnerships at the local and regional level to influence policy. We invite you to learn more about us here: Squamish CAN

Advancing community farming while removing barriers for new entrants is one of the high priority action items (1.2) of the Squamish Valley Agriculture Plan (SVAP).

Appendix

- **Food assets (community assets)** are places where people can grow, prepare, share, buy, receive or learn about food (e.g. community gardens, commissary kitchen, food hub, etc.)
- The term **food system** describes the interconnected systems and processes that influence nutrition, food, health, community development and agriculture. A food system includes all processes and infrastructure involved in feeding a population: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, consumption, distribution and disposal of food and food-related items.
- **Urban agriculture**, urban farming, or urban gardening is the practice of cultivating, processing, and distributing food in or around urban areas. Urban agriculture is also the term used for animal husbandry, aquaculture, urban beekeeping, and horticulture.
- **Food sovereignty** is a food system in which the people who produce, distribute, and consume food also control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution. This stands in contrast to the present corporate food regime, in which corporations and market institutions control the global food system.
- An **agrihood** is a type of planned community that integrates agriculture into a residential neighbourhood. It can be a single-family, multifamily, or mixed-use community built with a

working farm or community garden as a focus. Agrihoods are based around the concept of integrating farms and gardens into the development. The focus for agrihoods is that they allow for local residents to farm that land, which helps support agriculture plans or climate action plans to reduce the transportation of food and help establish a resilient food system. Agriculture production is typically organically grown or follows best practices for restorative agriculture. Agrihoods can vary from rural communities with many acres to farm or be in town closer to an urban area. With the context of Squamish and Garibaldi Estates Neighbourhood Plan, the developments will be small acres and considered more urban or in town.

- **Young Agrarians (YA)** is a farmer-to-farmer educational resource network for new and young ecological, organic and regenerative farmers in Canada.
    - Squamish has 10-12 farmers/market gardeners who are registered and looking for land to lease
    - 2-3 land owners are registered who are looking to lease out land