

Sustainable Food Pilots

A community-based food system to support site improvement, neighbourhood revitalization and corridor transformation.

Project Definition

Working with community partners, this initiative involves planning and implementation of public green spaces and gardens for local food production and green infrastructure, including food forests, indigenous and/or traditional food, native species re-establishment, and other beneficial green infrastructure.

This project will re-use and revitalize vacant and degraded spaces in urban areas, prioritizing those with:

- proximity to the core neighbourhoods or areas flagged for corridor growth and densification;
- a deficit of Municipal Reserve or public green space;
- poor quality or inaccessible green spaces; and
- community partnership opportunities.

This project will achieve multiple outcomes and co-benefits, including:

1. **Revitalizing main streets or Downtown cores by contributing to corridor transformation.** The *Corridor Transformation Plan* includes open space as critical to support urban infill and densification. Open space opportunities identified in the Plan include transit villages, neighbourhood pocket parks and linear parks.

While challenges exist to identify and convert brownfield or underutilized sites to green spaces, there are many vacant lots and brownfields adjacent to corridor growth areas and in the downtown. Revitalizing these spaces is an overall goal of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, Corridor Transformation Plan, and the Brownfield Renewal Strategy.

2. **Improving or reinventing outdoor spaces.** This project facilitates community-led initiatives to reanimating community sites that are centrally located but degraded. Ongoing community feedback reflects a desire for the City to work with the community to revitalize and animate these sites with food systems, community gathering spaces, and green infrastructure.
3. **Reducing environmental impacts.** The spaces proposed are often degraded, contaminated, or are used for illegal dumping or other illegitimate behavior. Revitalizing these sites will reduce these incompatible uses, increase community ownership and “eyes and ears” on these spaces, and in some cases, the addition of green infrastructure will provide some remediation and carbon sequestration benefits.

4. **Increasing accessibility to public spaces.** Due to contamination, improper site uses, and lack of site design these sites are currently underutilized or inaccessible to the community. Revitalizing these spaces will make these sites welcoming and accessible, including through the addition of universally accessible pathways and other accessible design considerations.
5. **Helping communities rebound from the effects of the pandemic.** This project will address a need that was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic for additional high-quality green spaces that the community can access, as the allocation of park space in these neighbourhoods is not always adequate.
6. **Demonstrating measurable direct or indirect socio-economic benefits.** The project will be designed with equity and accessibility considerations including best practices found in the City's equity toolkit.
7. **Encourage the participation of underrepresented groups.** This project addresses ongoing feedback from the community that reflects a need for the City to support community-led food systems work. Structurally excluded groups including a front-line community group that runs several Indigenous food security projects will be partners in implementing the project. Accessibility advocates and other front-line community organizations such as the Saskatoon Poverty Reduction Partnership will also be active partners in project design. Implementation activities such as installing fruit trees and traditional plants will be completed by community members, with support from City staff. This will provide a community building opportunity, relationship and trust-building between City staff and the community and will ensure that cultural protocols are embedded into the project implementation.
8. **Support for the Official Community Plan.** This project supports the OCP which states: "to provide parks and recreation open space sufficient to meet the needs of Saskatoon's residents, ensuring that these resources are distributed throughout the City in a fair and equitable manner."

Scope and Budget (Program Ask and How City Portion is Funded)

The City's contribution is sourced from 2022 Sustainability Reserve recommendations for the Sustainable Food Pilot Projects.

Item	Scope	Budget – Ask	Budget – City Contribution
Traditional Food System Project	Will identify community partners and priorities to implement traditional food systems on public land. This work is in response to a recent University of Saskatchewan report <i>Towards Improving Traditional Food Access for Urban Indigenous People</i> that recommends that “land in cities be dedicated to Indigenous food practices including gardening, gathering...and where ceremonies can take place”.	\$115,000	\$35,000
Food Forest Project	This project will identify community partners and appropriate sites (such as vacant lots and other underutilized spaces) to implement a public food forest that provides community stewardship and education opportunities, particularly for youth and underserved communities.	\$115,000	\$35,000
Edible Foraging Mapping Project	This project will compile geospatial data of edible plants in public spaces and make these data publicly accessible through a mapping project. This work will also inform education opportunities, such as cultural harvesting protocols, appropriate amount of food to harvest, and species identification.	\$140,000	\$55,000
TOTAL		\$370,000	\$125,000

Evaluation Criteria Alignment

This project demonstrates alignment with the funding application as follows:

Project Rationale Meets one of the Project Priorities (choose one or more)

Revitalize Downtown Core and Main Streets

- Yes. For example, vacant lots that are currently degraded or underutilized are often found adjacent (or perpendicular to) to “main streets” such as the Junction along 20th Street West, and in the Downtown area of Saskatoon. These spaces would be prioritized for food pilot implementation. Social distancing measures during the COVID-19 pandemic further emphasized the importance of adequate and high-quality green space. This project will improve the quality of current green spaces by revitalizing vacant lots.

Reinvent Outdoor Spaces

- Yes. This project will revitalize underutilized or degraded public spaces to include opportunities for food production such as food forests, traditional foods and medicines, and documentation of edible species in the City's “Green Network.”

Create Green Infrastructure

- Yes. Food production is considered part of the City's green infrastructure inventory through the Green Infrastructure Strategy. This project will increase the use of edible and native species grown and managed in the Green Network.
- The project also implements Actions in the Green Infrastructure Strategy such as "Action 3.3: Work with and support partners to incorporate food and fruit production or traditional food systems into high priority urban areas".

Increase the Accessibility of Community Spaces

- Yes. Degraded or underutilized spaces such as vacant lots will be prioritized for the food projects. This will make sites that are currently unused more appealing and welcoming to the community.
- Additionally, a foraging mapping component of the projects will map edible landscapes in public spaces so that the community can easily see what areas are available for public harvesting.

Outcomes

Briefly describe the socio-economic benefits associated with this project.

- The project will benefit equity and opportunity including programming for Indigenous residents in the traditional food pilot. The project will be designed using the equity toolkit. The project also addresses health and well-being by reducing hunger, creating programs that lead to a higher quality of life, and addresses civic participation by creating volunteer opportunities, supporting community-led efforts, and providing recreational opportunities.
- The project will be developed using ethical and democratic governance principles, including accountability and transparency, application of employee and public engagement, effective communications, and use project management best practices. The piloting approach will provide the opportunity to explore opportunities and consequences of various programs and will be assessed based on data and metrics throughout their implementation.
- One or multiple front-line community organization(s) will be partners in the project delivery. One in particular, CHEP Good Food, operates an urban agriculture internship program (the askîy project) that delivers community-based programming about food production and local food systems through a social enterprise model. Supporting this type of project by contracting sustainable food projects to this or similar organizations will help ensure that project outcomes are meeting community priorities.

Does the project promote environmental benefits?

- Yes. Revitalizing vacant lots will have co-benefits such as reducing or mitigating pollutants on these sites and improving carbon sequestration through improved soil and vegetation conditions.

- The projects are expected to result in healthy, local and/or sustainable food production as well as enhanced nature and greenspaces. Program design will also look for opportunities to conservation of water, reduce heat island effect, and reduce the use of chemicals in gardening.

Does the project allow more people to use the space?

- Yes. Vacant lots and other degraded sites are unwelcoming to the community, and are often sites of illegal dumping, incompatible activities, needle deposit, etc. A co-benefit of this project will be introducing site uses that encourage positive community building activities.

Project Readiness

Provides a responsible budget including clear costing, procurement decisions and equity considerations.

Item	Description	Cost
City staff to oversee pilots and engagement	Project manager at the City to oversee pilots, engagement, data analysis, and contract with community partner.	\$135,000
Contracts with community organizations to deliver the work	Will include community partner staff time to develop, engage, and implement the pilot project, as well as complete mapping research for the edible foraging mapping project. Estimated at \$50,000 per pilot.	\$150,000
Supplies, plants, and materials for pilot project implementation	Will include plant material, supplies for site preparation and restoration, associated equipment costs, etc.	\$130,000
Mapping	Data analysis of edible plants in public spaces for the edible foraging map project, and mapping components into a publicly accessible and user-friendly map.	\$ 50,000
Honorariums for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and others	Honoraria to thank community members for their time in co-developing the project.	\$ 10,000
Communications and engagement	Will include community-led communication of results including education materials developed in multiple languages or provided through storytelling.	\$ 20,000
TOTAL		\$495,000

Procurement Decisions:

- The project will be contracted to a community partner(s) in alignment with the City's Purchasing Policy.
- CHEP Good Food and the Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre have been identified as potential community partners who could be contracted to complete the traditional land use and food forest projects, as they have existing programs or experience that could provide a foundation for this work (e.g., urban agriculture education programs, community garden programs).
- Meewasin has been identified as a potential contractor to complete foraging mapping work, since they have existing staff with geospatial expertise, and because many potential foraging sites are within their jurisdiction.

Equity Considerations:

- The equity toolkit and Triple Bottom Line assessment will be used during design of the project.
- Procurement will prioritize a front-line community partner organization, ideally with representation from the Indigenous and BIPOC community. Best practices from the Indigenous Procurement Protocol will be utilized.
- Honorariums for Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and marginalized community members to provide meaningful and authentic engagement opportunities will be provided and have been budgeted for.
- Project outcomes will consider additional equity considerations such as communicating results in multiple languages, and opportunities for storytelling and education activities that are developed by and for the community.

Demonstrates the Project Can Be Completed in Realistic Timelines:

- Q4 2021 – Finalize project scope and complete project procurement.
- Q1 2022 – Finalize project development and planning. At this stage, the City will work with its stakeholders to finalize priority spaces for projects to take place on and complete any final feasibility work needed. The community partner will proceed with project planning and relationship building with the community.
- Q2 2022 – Initiate project including site preparation and installation of green infrastructure and food features.
- Q3 2022 – Complete project implementation and initiate education and engagement components.
- Q4 2022 – Continue ongoing education and engagement; complete any remaining project work.
- Q1 2023 - Incorporate best practices, lessons learned. Project partner to provide the City with recommendations for next steps and formalize roles and responsibilities of ongoing site management.

Project Timeline (proposed start date and end date)

- October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2023.

Can the project be completed by March 31, 2023?

- Yes. The components of this project included in this funding request can be designed to wrap up by March 31, 2023. Best practices and recommendations will inform future projects at the City however.

Has there been any community or stakeholder engagement on the project?

- Yes. Engagement on the Green Infrastructure Implementation Plan is underway (and will wrap up July 4). As of June 29, preliminary results of a community survey show that 88% are in favor of traditional food system pilots, 81% are in favor of edible foraging mapping, and 86% are in favour of a food forest pilot. Finalized results can be provided on July 5. Further engagement will be completed with community partners who will be contracted to complete the work.

- More generally, the City has heard repeatedly in past engagement activities that residents would like the City to work towards a sustainable food system. Reports like the 2014 Saskatoon Regional Food System Assessment and Action Plan identify recommendations for the City, but many of these have not been funded or implemented. Many local community organizations are also working towards a sustainable food system but have provided feedback that the City could improve its support to these programs. Feedback during the COVID-19 pandemic reflected that front-line community organizations are struggling to support food security in vulnerable communities. At the same time, community feedback has reflected a desire for improved management of derelict public green spaces such as vacant lots, and that this could be achieved through improving food production opportunities.

Priority Alignment Summary

- Project is “shovel ready.”
- *Project can bring in other partners.* Meewasin is interested in providing support and services for preparation of the mapping and utilizing data generated. Other front-line community organizations will be engaged to implement the project and they may have funding or in-kind resources available.
- *Are of a smaller scope, where the project will be completed quickly so the program benefits will be shared broadly.* Project is short-term, with a scope valued at \$495,000.
- *Help communities rebound from the effects of the pandemic and contribute to the reanimation of communities, towns and cities.* Project supports re-animation of the community by providing access, activities, and resources in the public realm.
- *Can demonstrate measurable direct or indirect social-economic benefits.* Quantification of local food produced is part of the project. Changes and increases can also be quantified and reported.
- *Encourage the participation of under-represented groups.* Project includes traditional or indigenous food pilot and aims to partner with front-line organizations who are addressing poverty in Saskatoon.