

Community Food Charters

What they are and when to use them

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

Barbara Joughin
Vancouver Food Policy Council

The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC)

- Supports the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver
- 21-member multi-sectoral citizen advisory group
- Advises City Council on food system / food security issues

- What is a food charter?
- Why are they useful?
- History of food charters
- Vancouver's process

What are Food Charters?

They are policy-reference documents that:

- present a vision for a just and sustainable food system *that has been developed by the community and endorsed by the community's decision-makers*
- anchor municipal commitments to sustainable food system policies
- provide guidelines for decisions about food

What are Food Charters?

They are tools that link policy and community action.

- They bring people together to talk about and work on local food system and food security challenges.
- They provide a reference for managing food system issues on a system-wide basis.

What are the 'ingredients'?

Food Charters combine:

- Vision statements
- Principles / Guidelines
- Action goals
- Background & rationale

How are Food Charters useful?

Take time to understand why a food charter will be useful in your community and to decide how you will use it.

How are Food Charters useful?

Food charters benefit communities, decision-makers and the environment.

- Activate civic engagement
- Articulate an overall vision for food policy
- Facilitate collaboration
- Catalyze actions
- Benefit the environment

How are Food Charters useful?

They activate civic engagement.

- They create opportunities for conversations about food.
- These collaborative processes produce a valuable tool.
- More public participation helps communities address challenges.

How are Food Charters useful?

They articulate an overall vision for food policy.

- Bring together separate policy areas (land use and zoning, waste management, health and food safety)
- Support staff to initiate innovative planning and operations strategies

How are Food Charters useful?

They facilitate collaboration.

- Facilitate inclusivity
- Expand traditional thinking and roles
- Extend range of influence and action
- Show leadership and vision

How are Food Charters useful?

They catalyze actions.

- Inform projects that benefit local economies and the environment
- Support fundraising

How are Food Charters useful?

They benefit the environment.

- Encourage personal and institutional choices that support more sustainable food systems

How are Food Charters useful?

In summary, food charters:

- express a community's vision for a sustainable and just food system
- help anchor municipal commitments to principles and guidelines for sustainable food system policies
- start and focus conversations about food
- network within and across jurisdictions
- support fundraising
- energize actions that create benefits for communities and the environment

History of Food Charters

Food Charters are part of a recent movement to build sustainable food policy at the local and regional level.

They are largely a Canadian phenomenon. Some parallel food policy documents exist in American jurisdictions (see Sacramento, Iowa, Connecticut).

History of Food Charters

Several Canadian municipalities have passed food charters:

- Toronto (2001)
- Saskatoon (2002)
- Prince Albert (2003)
- Sudbury (2004)
- Kaslo Village (2007)

History of Food Charters

Others developed food policy statements:

- Merritt (2000)
- Kamloops (2001)

There are now regional food charter processes in Victoria's Capital Region District and in Manitoba.

Vancouver's Food Charter

Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC):

- reviewed food policy in North America
- identified key work areas for new VFPC
- defined our vision and values
- defined our approach

Vancouver's Food Charter

Define values and vision:

- Let the issues, values and vision emerge from the process of meeting and talking together over time

Vancouver's process:

- VFPC mandate to draw on foundation of previous work and representation
- Produce a draft and consult with community

Vancouver's Food Charter

Draft, review, consult:

- Drafted document that reflected our priorities
- VFPC reviewed and revised summer/fall of 2005
- Large community consultation event October 2005
- Community workshops series throughout 2006
- Networked with other food charter communities throughout

Vancouver's Food Charter

Adoption by City Council:

- Role of City Council Liaison
- Lobbying activities
- Final draft incorporated suggestions from councillors
- Presented to City Council on February 15, 2007
- Unanimously adopted
- Endorses key values of a sustainable food system in Vancouver

Vancouver's Food Charter

- Presents a vision for a just and sustainable food system for Vancouver
- Identifies five central principles:
 - Ecological health
 - Social justice
 - Community economic development
 - Collaboration and participation
 - Celebration
- Points toward actions

An accompanying document provides background information about food charters.

Vancouver's Food Charter

The VFPC uses our Food Charter to:

- Guide VFPC work and community initiatives and projects
- Engage our community
- Integrate food system policy with the City's priorities and overall sustainability goals