

City of Surrey Agricultural Plan Summary

City of Surrey Statistics¹:

Population (2006)	364,976
Jurisdictional Area:	
Land	31,837 ha
Water	4,610 ha
Total	36,447 ha
Total Area Farmed (2006)	9,307 ha
% of Farmland:	29.23%
ALR	9,228 ha
Number of Farms (2006)	487
Average Farm Size (2006)	19.1 ha

Date of AAP: September 27, 1999

Title: *Surrey Agricultural Plan: Phase 2 Report - Key Issues and Recommended Actions For Enhancing Surrey Agriculture.* Also unofficially referred to as the "*Farm Community Plan*".

Length: 67 pages.

Prepared by: Zbeetnoff Agro-Environmental Consulting & Quadra Planning Consultants Ltd.

Related documents: Phase 1 Report: Analysis of Economic and Planning Issues facing Agriculture in the City of Surrey. July 1999

Adoption Status:

- Adopted by council resolution. Date unknown.

Purpose Statement:

- "to review and address agricultural development issues"
- "to provide options for resolving conflicts between agricultural use of the land base and other uses"
- "to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in the City of Surrey" (2)

¹ City of Surrey Agricultural Overview. 2009. Government of British Columbia. Ministry of Agriculture and Lands. <<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/resmgmt/sf/Publications.htm#agstats>>

Highlights:

- “This report strongly recommends action by the various stakeholders to facilitate agricultural development in the City.” (ii)
- “ In order to be viable, agriculture in Surrey must have the ability to adapt to changing economic conditions and productively use the lands reserved for it. “ (2)

Outlined Issues & Implementation strategies:

NOTE: All strategies in this summary and in the *Surrey Agricultural Plan* are recommendations only, provided by the consultant, advised by the AAC and other contributors to the farm plan. Following is a summary of the issues and recommended strategies.

1. Requirements for Continued Agricultural Viability:

1.1. Agricultural land use efficiency

- Investment and development in agricultural are vital to improving infrastructure servicing, land use efficiency, and decreasing production costs and urban conflict (at the farmer level).
- Incentives will be created to attract more intensive agriculture and research facilities, create desired farm operations in appropriate areas (use of DPA), foster developer-farmer relationships, create utility pre-servicing, and increased efficiency of farm operations (eg. increased water resources).

1.2. Rural-urban conflicts

- Animosity from neighbouring urban developments are unavoidable and can constrain farm operations, disrupt practices, create nuisance complaints, and lead to potential conflicts
- Rural-urban compatibility will be promoted through both city and provincial initiatives, aimed at both farmers and urban residents.

1.3. Demand for local agricultural products

- Relationship of local-food production to local-food demand is seen as key to the long-term preservation of the ALR in the City of Surrey
- Objectives to increase local demand for local agriculture products will be met by giving preference to business which utilize local food, promoting region-based value-added services, and identifying & attracting services which utilize localised food.

1.4. Marketing of local agricultural products

- Surrey’s population consumes food products that can be produced locally, and purchase food without any knowledge of the food’s origin
- The proportion of food consumed *in Surrey* that is obtained by retailers from outside of the city is increasing - food retailers in BC have procurement policies that are based primarily on lowest price, and Surrey producers are forced to compete at an international level.
- Objectives to increase local food awareness will be met through education, assistance in marketing facilities, support of industry links, promote awareness of localised food production methods, provide locations for farmers markets, marketing programs, and various financial incentives.

1.5. Agricultural service industry support

- Agricultural inputs (ie fertilizer, fuel, seed, equipment) is obtained outside of the city and represents lost local economic opportunity.
- Objectives to ensure that essential agricultural support services remain in Surrey will be met through the promotion of support services, continuing accommodation of these services, and accommodation of the service industry into ALR areas through streamlined business development procedures.

1.6. Farm succession

- Gaps in knowledge (through transfer of ownership and retirement) are creating inefficiencies in farming practices, sub-standard land use, higher costs and lower revenues, and financial stress (on behalf of farmers).
- Objectives to ensure continued productivity will be met through facilitating agricultural apprenticeships, financial purchase incentives, and regional relationships with the GVRD.

2. Encroachment on the Agricultural Land Base

2.1. Conversion of land within the ALR for non-farming purposes

- “Outright uses” (See ALC Act) remove land from the ALR and convert to alternatives uses, resulting in a reduced agricultural land pool, potential & unwanted wildlife & recreation impacts, and creates a higher market value for farmland.
- Objectives to reduce ALR status removal will be met through lobbying the ALC for amended policies, regulatory measures (proposed bylaws), and encouragement of non-ALR conversion to agriculture.

2.2. Impact of ownership of ALR land by non-farmers

- Non-farmer ownership of ALR land tends to have a negative effect on Surrey’s agriculture.
- Objectives to ensure that ALR land held by non-farmers is available for farming will be met by possible changes to regulations, and financial incentives.

2.3. Impact of residential development within the ALR

- Large (individual) residences on ALR parcels create fragmentation and disrupt neighbouring properties.
- Objectives to minimize the impact of new residences in the ALR will be met by possible bylaw adoptions, lobbying of the ALC for ALC Act amendments, the encouragement of individual farm plans, and zoning “compatibility” requirements.

2.4. Conversion of agricultural land outside the ALR for non-farming purposes.

- Separation of agricultural and urban land uses is necessary to avoid conflict - conversion of land adjacent to agriculture has led to interface problems.
- Objectives to maintain farming outside the ALR boundary (to provide a transition) will be met by regulatory measures and the ongoing retention of agricultural buffer lands.

3. Encroachment on Agricultural Operations

3.1. Recreational access

- Recreational access to agricultural lands, usually ungranted, results in disruption of activities, vandalism, property damage, littering and food safety issues.
- Objectives to mitigate recreation impacts and disruptions will be met through increasing public awareness, education, city planning (parks layout), physical barriers, increased security, financial payouts, and involving farmers in decision-making processes.

3.2. Wildlife depredation of crops

- Migrating and indigenous wildlife (mostly avian) are a nuisance, creating field damage, crop loss and contamination.
- Objectives to reduce damage, loss, as well as compensate farmers for losses will be met through technical advising, financial assistance, wildlife management techniques, and providing easements on agricultural land for wildlife.

3.3. Drainage, irrigation and flood control

- Flooding and irrigation issues cause property damage and reduce productivity, respectively.
- Objectives to improve drainage, reduce flooding, and provide irrigation will be met mainly through infrastructure improvements and improved irrigation technology.

3.4. Pesticide drift and chemical usage

- Risk is somewhat perceived, however chemicals have the potential to adversely affect wildlife, water and air quality.

- Objectives to manage this threat can be met through signage, promotion of organic markets, financial assistance to farmers that reduce chemical use, vegetative buffers, education of the public, and encouragement of pesticide-free production adjacent to “problem” areas.
- 3.5. Fish habitat protection
 - Agricultural activities can be harmful to fish habitats by impairing water quality from manure, nutrient and pesticide runoff.
 - Objectives to reduce impacts on fish habitats, while balancing needs of both, can be met through monitoring and continued upkeep of appropriate mitigation measures.
- 3.6. Safe farm vehicle movement
 - Increased traffic flow on rural roads is negatively affecting arm vehicle movement.
 - Providing for safe farm vehicle movement through transportation planning and public education.
- The AAC will be continually consulted for recommendations and further strategies to address issues.
- The City of Surrey, along with the ALC and Provincial Government are and will continue to be key stakeholders in executing agricultural plan strategies.

City of Surrey OCP (1996) Supporting Statements:

- All local area (incl. secondary or neighbourhood plans) existing on the 1996 adoption date of Surrey’s OCP are retained in their “resolution” status. Area plans may be amended by council resolution. (192)
- The “**Farm Community Plan**”, as outlined in OCP, “establishes specific policies and actions to protect agricultural areas and enhance the viability of farming”. It is intended to “guide development of farm community while increasing public awareness of its importance”. (207)
- Section F-1 (Protect Agriculture and Agricultural Areas) of the City of Surrey OCP specifically and comprehensively address key agricultural issues, including:
 - Buffering & Adjacent land use
 - Agricultural land use & conformity
 - Agricultural Land Reserve & Provincial legislation
 - Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC)
 - Local support of agricultural, retail activity, and value added industries
 - Environmental guidelines and protection
 - Water use, quality, irrigation and drainage
 - Community agriculture awareness (90 - 93)
- The City of Surrey OCP makes specific references to the **Surrey Agricultural Plan**:
 - I. Agricultural “objectives are reinforced by **Surrey’s Agricultural Plan**. (5)
 - II. City will protect farmland as a resource for agriculture, heritage, and distinct landscape, and will “address farm viability issues with advisement from the **Surrey Agricultural Plan**”. (89)
 - I. The “**Agricultural Plan**” was “adopted” by council in 1999 to “propose a range of measures to maintain a healthy farming economy in Surrey”. (89)
 - II. Section F-1.2 (6): “Utilize guidelines and policies recommended in the **Surrey Agricultural Plan**.” (91)
 - III. Implementation measures: “Pursue objectives and strategies in conjunction with **Surrey’s Agricultural Plan**” (93)
 - IV. Floor area ration on agricultural lands is governed by the **Surrey Agricultural Plan** (143)
- The City of Surrey OCP outlines implementation measures to protect and enhance agriculture:
 - I. Work with the AAC, ALC & farmers to promote “higher” uses of agricultural land
 - II. Amend bylaws where necessary to conform to provincial legislation, specifically the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the *Farm Practices Protection Act*.
 - III. Work with engineering department

- IV. Protect ALR land and farm practices through both development applications and the use of the *Agricultural Land Commission Act* and the *Farm Practices Protection Act*.
 - V. Use DPA guidelines to establish effective buffers. (93)
- The City of Surrey OCP outlines community indicators to help protect agricultural areas and enhance farming, including area of farmland, sales amounts, ALR lands, and agricultural zoned land (93).
 - All properties outside agricultural designation that abut those lands, as well as all land within 300 meters of agricultural designated land are designated as “*farm sensitive lands*” and require a Development Permit. Regulations include: buffers, minimum building distance, landscape requirements, and guidelines for construction of doors, windows, building clusters, etc. (226)

Development Process/Timeline:

Not available.

References to Agricultural Land Commission Act:

- Under the section titled “*Current Surrey Agricultural Policies and Initiatives*”, the Surrey AAP states that in order to maintain agricultural activities, the city must “*Ensure that all land uses within the ALR conform to the policies and regulations of the **Agricultural Land Commission Act** and the **Farm Practices Protection Act**.*” (7-8)
- Maintaining agricultural activities will be further accommodated by ensuring that land uses within the ALR conform to the **Agricultural Land Commission Act** and **Farm Practices Protection Act**.
- Agriculture in Surrey should be pursued “*in accordance with the intent of such legislation in the **Agricultural Commission Act** and the **Farm Practices Protection Act**.*” (8)

References to the Right to Farm (Farm Practices Protection) Act:

- “*Part of the impetus for an Agriculture Plan was the enactment of the Farm Practices Protection Act which provide(s) local governments with opportunities and tools to plan for and implement policies with respect to agriculture*” (1).
- Improve consistency with **Farm Practices Protection Act** (16).
- The **Farm Practices Protection Act** protects the rights of farmers, but localised action will be needed to reduce rural-urban conflict (17).
- See notes above under ALC Act.

References to Water Rights (Canada Water Act, BC Water Act):

- “*BC ownership of water is enshrined in the **Water Act***” (12)