

**SUBJECT:** Markham Food Charter  
**PREPARED BY:** Katie Burns x5283

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1) That the Staff report titled “Markham Food Charter” and dated June 3, 2013 be received;
- 2) And that the Markham Food Charter, which aligns with the York Region Food Charter, be endorsed;
- 3) And that Sustainability Office staff continue to work with the York Region Food Charter Working Group to develop a food and agriculture action plan and establish a permanent governance body to oversee implementation;
- 4) And that the City of Markham request a seat on the permanent governance body;
- 5) And that Sustainability Office staff report back when the governance body is established for direction to identify the representative;
- 6) And that Sustainability Office Staff continue to build and leverage partnerships with other levels of government, agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, community groups, and residents to advance the Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan;
- 7) And that Sustainability Office staff report back regularly on these initiatives;
- 8) And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Markham Food Charter (Appendix A), which aligns to the York Region Food Charter (Appendix B). The report will also recommend Markham continue work with the York Region Food Charter Working Group to develop a food and agriculture action plan and establish a permanent governance body to oversee implementation.

A food charter is a statement of values and directions to guide food and agricultural policy and action. Food charters address a range of issues and opportunities related to food and agriculture. Food charters can be endorsed by a range of community stakeholders including municipalities, agencies, businesses, community groups, and individual residents.

The Food Charter’s development was led by The Food Charter Working Group (Working Group). It is a diverse community partnership that came together to develop the Food Charter. The City of Markham is a founding member of the Working Group, through the Sustainability Office. Other founding members include: York Region Public Health, York Region Food Network, the United Way of York Region, Seeds for Change, Heart and Stroke Foundation, HealthYork, and York Federation of Agriculture. The Working Group is a provisional body to oversee the development and endorsement of the Food

Charter. Best practices research is currently underway on the establishment on a permanent governance body.

The City of Markham's Sustainability Office took direction to participate in the York Region Food Charter Working Group from two endorsed policy documents: The Agricultural Assessment Study and the Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan. Endorsement of the York Region Food Charter would continue the City of Markham's leadership in the area of local food as the first municipality in York Region to adopt the Food Charter.

The Food Charter working group has been active for over two years. During that time a number of public events and community consultations have taken place to develop the Food Charter. The City of Markham's Agricultural Advisory Committee has played an active role in reviewing and providing constructive criticism to the Food Charter Working Group.

The Markham Food Charter aligns with the York Region Food Charter. It is a shared vision statement to guide residents, businesses and governments in creating a thriving and resilient food system. It is based on the belief that a collaborative and integrated approach is essential to create a healthy and just food system. It is based on 5 areas of focus: Health and Well-being, Economic Opportunity, Environmental Sustainability, Equity and Social Justice, and Education and Skills. The City of Markham has already established a number of policies and programs that advances these areas.

At the same time as the Sustainability Office has been working with the Food Charter Working Group to develop the Food Charter, it has been working to implement many of the Greenprint's Food Security priority objectives and recommendations. The Sustainability Office's work on the following new programs has been enhanced through the relationships established with the Food Charter Working Group.

- Community and Allotment Garden Manual
- Ward 7 Organic Home Garden Pilot Program
- Markham Grows Seed Library
- Sustainability School Outreach
- Agri-Food Tent and Eco-Farm Model at Markham Fair

The Food Charter Working Group held a strategy planning session at the beginning of 2013 to outline its main activities for the year. The strategy consisted of work in 5 main areas:

1. Finalizing the Food Charter
2. Food Charter Toolkit Development
3. Messaging and Media
4. Community Food Assessment
5. Permanent Governance Body

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to seek endorsement of the Markham Food Charter (Appendix A), which aligns to the York Region Food Charter (Appendix B). The purpose of the report is also to recommend continuing the Sustainability Office's work as a founding member of the York Region Food Charter Working Group to develop a food and agricultural action plan and to establish a permanent governing body to oversee its implementation. This report requests a City of Markham seat on the permanent governance body once established.

**BACKGROUND:**

A food charter is a statement of values and directions to guide food and agricultural policy and action. Food charters are developed by a broad spectrum of community interests and organizations. Food charters address a range of issues and opportunities related to food and agriculture. Food charters are unique for each community, reflecting local cultural, social, environmental and economic conditions. Food charters can be endorsed by a range of community stakeholders including municipalities, agencies, businesses, community groups, and individual residents.

Municipalities across Ontario and Canada have endorsed or have draft food charters:

- Toronto (2000)
- Saskatoon (2002)
- Great Sudbury (2004)
- Vancouver (2007)
- BC Capital Region (2008)
- Durham (2008)
- Thunder Bay (2008)
- London (2010)
- Guelph-Wellington (2011)
- Kawartha Lakes (2011)
- Simcoe County (in progress)
- Hamilton (in progress)

**Policy Background**

The City of Markham's Sustainability Office took direction to participate in the York Region Food Charter Working Group from two endorsed policy documents: The Agricultural Assessment Study and the Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan.

The Agricultural Assessment Study, endorsed by Council in 2009, proposed a "Local Food Charter" as Optional Policy Actions for Further Consideration (6.2.3). The study stated:

"As part of the Greenprint sustainability initiative, Markham could consider developing a local food charter. The charter could address issues such as food production, distribution, food retail access, community health, waste management and economic development."

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“York Region has identified support for a Local Food Charter in the draft Official Plan... The Town could also work with the Region to determine how a Regional Food Charter could support the Town and if a separate Food Charter would be useful.”

The Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan, endorsed by Council in 2011, established Food Security as one of twelve priorities, with three objectives:

1. Support education and engagement in the local food system
2. Significantly increase community food producing opportunities
3. Significantly increase the viability of local commercial food growing and processing

The Greenprint has 36 recommendations related to food and agriculture. The recommendations that relate to a food charter are:

71. Develop a Local Food Strategy and work with York Region and other partners to incorporate and implement it

73. Implement the recommendations from the Agricultural Assessment Study

228. Work with other partners to establish an initial series of working groups

The Greenprint is a broad reaching, long-term plan that requires collaboration between multiple sectors and jurisdictions for successful implementation. The Food Charter has been designed as a complementary document to the Greenprint, sharing many of the same priorities and value statements. Through the development of the Food Charter key stakeholders in the local food system have discussed and will be endorsing the shared values of the Food Charter. Once the Food Charter is endorsed, the next step is to develop a shared food and agriculture action plan, which will outline the tasks for each stakeholder group. The Sustainability Office will report back as the food and agriculture action plan is developed to ensure alignment with the Greenprint and other Building Markham's Future Together strategic documents.

#### City of Markham Leadership in Food Policy

Endorsement of the Markham Food Charter, which aligns with the York Region Food Charter, will continue the City of Markham's leadership in the area of local food as the first municipality in York Region to adopt a Food Charter.

The City of Markham established this leadership through the adoption of a local food procurement policy and a zero waste cafeteria in June 2008. Markham has since been widely recognized for this leadership role, including as Ontario Local Food Champion in 2011 and at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainable Community Conference in 2012 in a workshop on building the business case for regional food systems.

Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan and the Sustainability Office have built on this success, assisting in the establishment of the Stiver Mill Farmers' Market, the development of two printed guides to assist South Asian and Chinese residents in finding locally grown food, supporting establishment of the community group Seeds for Change, which is actively developing new community and school food growing gardens, supporting five new community gardens between 2010 and 2012 with up to five new opportunities in 2013, and the draft Community and Allotment Garden Manual that is being piloted in 2013. The City of Markham has also established the Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee that is working on communications, outreach, education, economic viability, sustainability and policy.

### Food Charter Working Group

The Food Charter's development was led by The Food Charter Working Group (Working Group). It is a diverse community partnership that came together to develop the Food Charter for York Region, local municipalities, and community stakeholders. The City of Markham's Sustainability Office is a founding member of the Working Group. Membership to the Working Group is volunteer and open to individuals, groups and agencies that support the Working Group's goal.

The Food Charter Working Group's founding members include:

- City of Markham Sustainability Office
- York Region Public Health
- York Region Food Network
- Seeds for Change
- Heart & Stroke Foundation
- United Way of York Region & York University (Knowledge Mobilization Unit and Faculty of Environmental Studies)
- York Region Federation of Agriculture
- HealthYork

The Working Group is a temporary governance body to oversee the development and endorsement of the Food Charter. Best practices research is currently underway on the establishment on a permanent governance body, looking at models including food policy councils and food roundtables.

### Food Charter Working Group Milestones

The Food Charter working group has been active for over two years. During that time a number of public events and community consultations have taken place to develop the Food Charter.

<b>Milestone &amp; Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
Heart & Stroke Foundation - Knowledge to Action Workshop	Sustainability Office Staff attended the workshop that focused on active living and healthy eating in York Region. Working in a small group with York Region Public Health, York

May 26, 2011	Region Food Network, and Seeds for Change the goal of establishing a food charter was set.
Food Charter Working Group Established September 13, 2011	A meeting was convened with the organizations that initially expressed interest and additional stakeholders were invited.
Food For Change; Building a Food Charter for York Region November 9, 2011	The first stakeholder meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the current situation (now), the future vision (wow), and the steps needed to get there (how) of food and agriculture in York Region.
Food Charter Presentation to Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee February 2, 2011	Members of the Food Charter Working Group presented an overview of what food charters are, examples from other jurisdictions, and the work currently underway.
Food For Change Action Day: Cultivating a Healthier Food System in York Region March 1, 2012	A second stakeholder meeting hosted by the City of Markham was held at Angus Glen Community Centre. The baseline research was presented and an action planning session was held that generated collaborative projects including the 2015 gardens initiative.
Food Charter Community Survey Summer 2012	A survey to assist in identifying priorities for the Food Charter. The Sustainability Office's summer outreach student brought surveys to Markham events to ensure that our resident's input was included.
Draft York Region Food Charter Released for Consultation September 28, 2012	A draft of the York Region Food Charter was launched for community consultation at Markham Fair
Community Consultation October 2012 – March 2013	Consultation on draft. Markham's Agricultural Advisory Committee reviewed the charter and provided detailed feedback to the Working Group at the January 10, 2013 meeting.
Working Group Strategy Session January 18, 2013	The Food Charter Working Group held a strategy meeting to develop goals and action plans for Food Charter finalization and endorsements
Food for Change: Sprouting Healthy Local Food Systems March 20, 2013	The final York Region Food Charter was unveiled at the second annual Food For Change Day, which included a focus on Economic, Environmental, and Educational activities and opportunities.
Food for Change: From Charity to Dignity May 29, 2013	"Dignified access to food for all" is a value of the Food Charter. This was a conversation open to the public on the relationship between food charity and food security in York Region.

Overall Funding to June 2013	As of June 2013, the Food Charter Working Group has been able to secure a total \$108,500 in funding to support the Food Charter's development, including a part-time staff to coordinate the development of the Food Charter, event costs, website and branding development, and research on food charter best practices and permanent governance models.
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### Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee Role

The City of Markham's Agricultural Advisory Committee, comprising of agricultural and food stakeholders, has played an active role in reviewing and providing constructive criticism to the Food Charter Working Group. The Food Charter was discussed at the following Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee meetings:

- February 2, 2012
- March 1, 2012
- January 10, 2013
- March 7, 2013
- April 4, 2013

The consolidated comments provided by the Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee on the Draft Food Charter as well as meeting minutes where the Food Charter was discussed are in Appendix C. The Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee was pleased with the Food Charter's final draft and recommended that it was ready to be brought to General Committee for endorsement.

### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

The Markham Food Charter aligns with the York Region Food Charter. It is a shared vision statement to guide residents, businesses and governments in creating a thriving and resilient food system. It is based on the belief that a collaborative and integrated approach is essential to create a healthy and just food system. It is based on 5 areas of focus: Health and Well-being, Economic Opportunity, Environmental Sustainability, Equity and Social Justice, and Education and Skills. The City of Markham has already established a number of policies and programs that advances these areas.

The following discussion includes the contents of the Markham Food Charter, shows examples of City of Markham policy alignment, and highlights partners through the Food Charter that will be seeking endorsement of the same shared value statements.

### Health and Well-Being

The values in the Markham Food Charter are:

- Access to a variety of healthy and affordable food in all neighbourhoods and facilities.
- Food policies and practices to improve and inspire health.
- The importance of food for physical, mental, emotional and cultural wellbeing.

- Community ownership of healthy, locally-grown and processed food.

The City of Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan has a priority of "Individual Health," which includes recommendations on healthy eating programming and gardens to promote well-being. The Greenprint's "Food Security" priority also includes recommendations on programs to promote local and home grown food as part of a healthy lifestyle and sustainable and healthy food at facilities. Both the Integrated Leisure Master Plan and Draft Official Plan also have policies relating to food and health, through programming, facilities and the design of complete, transit oriented communities.

Partnerships established through the development of the Food Charter include health focused organizations, including York Region Public Health, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and HealthYork (which has recently been integrated into York Region Public Health). Through collaborating with partners with a shared mandate of "Health and Well-being," the City of Markham will be in a better position for Greenprint implementation, specifics of which are discussed later in this report.

#### Economic Opportunity

The values in the Markham Food Charter are:

- Economic development plans that ensure robust and financially sustainable agriculture.
- Innovative food and related industries that unite producer, processor, distributor, health, tourism, education and hospitality sectors.
- Locally-grown traditional and world foods.

The City of Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan has recommendations under the "Food Security" priority that encourage economic opportunity in the agricultural and food sectors. The recommendations include supporting training and jobs in the agricultural and food sectors, promoting local food and agri-tourism, local food procurement, collaborating with other levels of government to promote food growing and appropriate on-farm processing, supporting local food sale opportunities (farmers' markets, Community Shared Agriculture (CSAs), etc.), and assisting with connections between local farmers and markets. The Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee also has a subcommittee working on Economic Viability and Sustainability.

Partnerships established through the development of the Food Charter include the York Federation of Agriculture, which represents the agricultural sector and York University, which offers research support. York Region's Economic Development has also been an active stakeholder that has been engaged throughout the development of the Food Charter. These partnerships can assist the City of Markham work towards some of its strategic goals, including exploring opportunities for agri-tourism.

#### Environmental Sustainability



The values in the Markham Food Charter are:

- Rural and urban agriculture practices that protect biodiversity and improve the health of our land, soil, water and air.
- Integrating agriculture and food into energy and climate change policies and strategies.
- Protection of agricultural lands and a streamlined regulatory framework.
- Reducing food and packaging waste among consumers, retailers, processors and producers.

The City of Markham's Greenprint has a number of environmental recommendations related to food and agriculture under the "Food Security" priority. The recommendations include education on waste diversion and home composting, increasing opportunities for home and community gardens, integration of agriculture and food in energy and climate plans, and encouraging environmental best practices in food growing and processing. The Ecological Integrity priority also includes recommendations on biodiversity on agricultural lands and increasing fruit and nut trees in urban areas. The Draft Official Plan includes a number of policies that clearly outline protections for agricultural lands and encourage environmentally responsible agriculture. Additionally, Markham's Waste Management policies, including Zero Waste, have established Markham as a leader in waste diversion. The Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee also has a subcommittee working on Economic Viability and Sustainability.

Partnerships established through the development of the Food Charter include the agricultural sector through the York Federation of Agriculture and the urban agriculture sector through Seeds for Change (a Markham based organization building new school and community gardens) and York Region Food Network that operates community gardens. The Food Charter Working Group was a key stakeholder in the drafting of the York Region Integrated Waste Management Strategy's Value of Food section and will continue to be a partner in the finalization and implementation of the strategy.

#### Equity and Social Justice

The values in the Markham Food Charter are:

- The basic right of all residents to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate and accessible food.
- Dignified access to food for all.
- Fair compensation and a safe and respectful work environment in the agriculture and food sectors.

The City of Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan has a recommendation under the Social Equity priority to empower residents in improving local service delivery including food growing and access. The Greenprint also addresses affordability, which impacts food access, through the Shelter and Access and Mobility priorities. The Greenprint also has a number of recommendations to increase community based food growing through home and community gardens, including donations of fresh food to local food banks.

Partnerships established through the development of the Food Charter include York Region Food Network, which is responsible for the Markham Food Bank and the Markham Community Garden and the United Way of York Region, which supports a wide variety of programs throughout Markham aimed to alleviate poverty and food insecurity. York Region Public Health also offers programs and research to address and increase access to healthy food for residents.

#### Education and Skills

The values in the Markham Food Charter are:

- Food literacy and skills for all residents, with a focus on food growing, healthy cooking and composting.
- Education that supports opportunities in the agriculture and food sector.
- Understanding the connections between food, farming, the economy, health and the environment.

The Greenprint has recommendations in the Food Security Priority to increase education and engagement in the local food system, including an advisory group to identify food and agricultural opportunities, education on healthy and environmentally friendly food choices, and knowledge sharing opportunities of community gardeners. The Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee also has a subcommittee working on education, outreach and communications related to agriculture.

Partnerships established through the development of the Food Charter include York Region Food Network, which delivers community programs such as Community Kitchens to teach cooking skills, York Region Public Health that has healthy eating resources, and York University that offers research support and opportunities. Many Food Charter Working group members are also involved in the York Region Food for Learning program, which delivers student nutrition and education in York Region District School Board and York Catholic District School Board.

#### Food Charter Alignment with Sustainability Office Programs

At the same time as the Sustainability Office has been working with the Food Charter Working Group to develop the Food Charter, it has been working to advance the Greenprint's Food Security Priority's recommendations. The Sustainability Office's

work has aligned with the Markham Food Charter's value statements, especially those under "Education and Skills" and "Environmental Sustainability". As well, the Sustainability Office's work on these programs has been enhanced through the relationships established with the Food Charter Working Group.

- Community and Allotment Garden Manual – The establishment of a framework for the City of Markham to build and support new and existing community and allotment gardens. Food Charter Working Group members, including Seeds for Change and York Region Food Network, have expertise and experience with community gardens in Markham and have offered support during the development of the manual.
- Ward 7 Organic Home Garden Pilot Program – A program delivering educational workshops and support to 100 home gardeners in Ward 7, with comprehensive program research and evaluation to expand in future growing seasons. Food Charter Working Group Members offer experience in delivering similar workshops and have a network of experts across the province to share best practices.
- Markham Grows Seed Library – A pilot branch was opened in partnership with Markham Public Library in Milliken Mills Library in April and has offered Gardening 101 workshops. The library will lend seeds to Markham Public Library card holders at no cost to take home and grow and seeds may be saved from the plants to be returned. The program has had very positive uptake and expansion to other branches is being explored. The Food Charter Working Group is excited about this innovative pilot and how the model created in Markham can be spread throughout York Region.
- Sustainability School Outreach– A Markham District High School Co-op Student worked with the Sustainability Office to deliver a Greenprint and Food Security priority focused and curriculum aligned program for 9 classes in the spring of 2013. It included in-class activities, three pots of plants for each class to grow, and a free take home "Green Thumb" kit for students to start home gardens. The Food Charter Working Group developed the concept in-class engagement and the "Green Thumb" kit as part of the outreach and marketing plan for the Food Charter. The Sustainability Office took a leadership role in piloting the program, the results of which will be reported back to the Working Group.
- Agri-Food Tent and Eco-Farm Model at Markham Fair – The City of Markham, through a Markham Environmental Sustainability Fund grant assisted in the development of an Eco-Farm Model that highlighted 21 ways that Markham farmers protect the environment. The tent and model were established in 2011 and in 2012 was enhanced through participation of Food Charter partners, including running a hands-on cooking program for children.

On January 18, 2013 The Food Charter Working Group held a strategy planning session to outline the main activities for 2013. The strategy consisted of work in 5 main areas:

1. **Finalize the Food Charter** – Completed for March 20, 2013 event.
2. **Food Charter Toolkit** – A resource for municipalities, businesses, community groups, and residents to understand the Food Charter and take action within their jurisdictions.
3. **Messaging and Media** – Continue engaging with the media and residents on the value of food and agriculture, shifting from the development of the vision (The York Region Food Charter) to the development of an action plan.
4. **Community Food Assessment** – investigate the viability and seek funding to complete a comprehensive study of food and agriculture. A helpful tool to understand the current situation, develop targets and track progress.
5. **Permanent Governance Body** – complete research that is already funded on models of on-going governance for the York Region Food Charter. A Food Policy Council, Food Roundtable, etc. could replace the Food Charter Working Group as a permanent governance body that is dedicated to the values of the Food Charter and able to develop policies, programs and projects.

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE: (external link)**

Not applicable.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**


The York Region Food Charter implements objectives and recommendations in Markham's Greenprint Community Sustainability Plan and the Agricultural Assessment Study. See Background section.

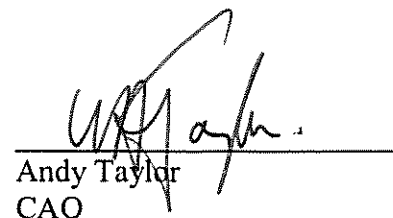
**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDED**

**BY:**

  
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Graham Seaman  
Senior Manager, Sustainability

  
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Andy Taylor  
CAO

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Appendix A: Markham Food Charter

Appendix B: York Region Food Charter

Appendix C: Markham Agricultural Advisory Committee Comments on York Region  
Draft Food Charter