

Conversations on a Proposed Brandon Food Council Results & Recommendations

Hosted by:

City of Brandon Poverty Committee

Global Market Brandon

Food Matters Manitoba

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7th Street Access Centre

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Executive Summary

On January 27th, May 10th and May 13th, 2017, the Brandon Poverty Committee, Global Market Brandon (Canadian Mental Health Association, Westman), and Food Matters Manitoba invited stakeholders in Brandon to conversations on the potential for a municipal food council.

A total of 31 participants took part in these conversations, including producers, processors, distributors, entrepreneurs, advocates, dietitians, and representatives of health organizations, community organizations, service agencies, and municipal government. During the consultations participants took part in the same three rounds of discussion, each related to a key topic identified in the background research on municipal food councils. The discussions round topics were as follows:

1. Connection to government: Should the proposed Brandon Food Council be administered by the city of Brandon, or community-led? If it is community-led, will the city be involved? How?
2. Membership and Resources: Who should be included in the Brandon Food Council? What resources will be required?
3. Roles and Priorities: What kinds of activities should the proposed Brandon Food Council be doing? What kinds of food-related issues should they work on?

The following recommendations have been developed from these conversations.

Connection to Government

The proposed Brandon Food Council should:

- Be organized and led by its community members and organizations.
- Have at least one City Councilor on membership who is dedicated to being a food champion at the local level.
- Receive financial and in-kind resources made available by the city to administer the proposed Brandon Food Council and related projects, either directly or through a Social Planning Council.
- At least one City Councilor should sit on the Brandon Food Council to have a direct line to municipal government and related supports.
- (A) host organization(s) should take on the Food Council and work alongside municipal government by reserving a seat for at least one City Councilor on the Council.

Membership and Resources

The proposed Brandon Food Council should have:

- Approximately 15 members, including representatives from the healthcare sector, city council, education and research institutions, food producers and farmers, waste management experts, food retailers, non-profit and community organizations, legal and accounting experts. And those with lived/direct experience of food insecurity.
- A budget of \$50,000-\$100,000, including 1 or 2 staff to coordinate and support the council.

Roles

The proposed Brandon Food Council should:

- Coordinate and network with programs, organizations and individuals to initiate and develop relevant projects.
- Examine opportunities and develop a community-based food strategy that fosters sustainability.
- Engage in outreach to disseminate information, promote food literacy, and encourage participation from the community.

Priorities

The proposed Brandon Food Council should:

- Promote and provide education in order to improve community health and sustainability.
- Consider and plan for urban land use in order to promote community resilience.
- Support the development and education of local food sourcing and promotion of the local food sector.

Introduction

Brandon has many community organizations, public institutions, and individuals who are dedicated to addressing the local challenges of hunger, limited food access, unemployment and underemployment, economic development and environmental stewardship. We have the opportunity to gather individuals from across multiple sectors in a collaborative effort to strategically address these shared issues.

This document presents results and recommendations from three stakeholder discussions held in the winter and spring of 2017 on the possible structure and formation of a proposed Municipal Food Council for Brandon. From these conversations, it is clear that the creation of a Brandon Food Council is a compelling next step. A Brandon Food Council would bring together a diverse membership to strategically and collaboratively create a community-based food system that works for the benefit of all.

What is a Municipal Food Council?

A Municipal Food Council (MFC), sometimes referred to as a Food Policy Council¹, consists of a group of stakeholders concerned with many – if not all – of the five main aspects of the food system (production, processing, distribution, consumption and waste management). MFCs work across sectors, and often include anti-hunger and food justice advocates, educators, government officials, farmers, grocers, chefs, food workers, food processors and food distributors (Harper, Alkon, Shattuck, Holt-Giménez and Lambrick 2009).

MFCs create an opportunity for discussion and strategy development among these various interests, and create an arena for studying the food system as a whole. They are a place for diverse food system stakeholders to discuss food issues, foster coordination between food system sectors, evaluate and influence policy and support programs and services that address local needs. They establish platforms for coordinated action at the local level and can create a context to better facilitate the activities of community organizations (Harper et al. 2009; Burgan and Winne 2012). The central aim of most MFCs is to identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local food systems, spurring local economic development and making food systems more environmentally sustainable and socially just (Harper et al. 2009).



5 Sectors of the Food System
Adapted from Harper et al. 2009

¹ The term Municipal Food Council (as opposed to Food Policy Council) is used throughout this document in an effort to keep a broad sense of the possible functions of the council beyond policy-related activities.

There is no one formula for creating a MFC; each is as unique as the community in which it is formed and the people for whom it is created. MFCs may form at the request of government or as a grassroots movement and can take on many different roles and initiatives.

However, many initiatives share a common path – starting with a community food assessment, building a food system network, identifying projects and educational events, and creating a food charter or a municipal food strategy and action plan (MacRae and Donahue 2013). Over 64 municipal and regional governments across Canada are using a food systems approach to improve health, generate economic development, address environmental sustainability, and engage communities (MacRae and Donahue 2013).

The strength of MFCs has been shown to lie within their ability to be locally relevant. They do best when they build off the momentum of groups in their own communities, address issues for which the need for change has already been locally identified, and come up with locally-based policies and programs (Harper et al. 2009).

Background on the Proposed Brandon Food Council

The creation of a MFC has been a priority of the City of Brandon Poverty Committee since it began its work on establishing the Brandon Food Charter (Appendix A). The Brandon Food Charter was initiated in hopes of creating civic momentum towards a more democratic and sustainable food system that promotes local culture and context and includes a recommendation to create a Food Policy Council to advise on food policy issues (Brandon Food Charter). The Brandon Food Charter was signed and celebrated in April of 2014.

Following the ratification of the Brandon Food Charter, a Brandon Community Food Assessment was completed through a partnership between the Brandon Neighborhood Renewal Corporation and Brandon University (May and Leadbeater 2015). This assessment provided key recommendations (Appendix B) and action steps for the city, including the creation of a Food Action Network to implement, guide, and monitor supportive food actions and results-based programs and partnerships in relation to public awareness, food access, food skills programming and food policy. Such a network would partner with local farmers markets, Manitoba Health, Manitoba Agriculture Food and Rural Development, and independents such as Small Farms Manitoba to use collaborative approaches to compile and share local producer resources (May and Leadbeater 2015).

In the fall of 2016, the City of Brandon Poverty Committee, Global Market Brandon, and Food Matters Manitoba began research on the potential for a MFC in Brandon. This included a review of existing municipal policies and research related to food in Brandon, as well as best practices related to the development of MFCs in other Canadian jurisdictions. Options for the proposed Brandon Food Council were presented to the City of Brandon Poverty Committee on December 13th, 2017. Following this presentation, the City of Brandon Poverty Committee determined that stakeholder conversations would be the next logical step towards gathering information and support toward the creation of the proposed Brandon Food Council.

Stakeholder Discussion Process

On January 27th, May 10th and May 13th, 2017, the Brandon Poverty Committee, Global Market Brandon (Canadian Mental Health Association, Westman), and Food Matters Manitoba invited

representatives of food system sectors and stakeholder groups in Brandon to a conversation on the potential for a MFC in Brandon. This conversation was attended by community organizations, entrepreneurs, producers, processors, distributors, food advocates, service agencies, dietitians, health organizations, and provincial government representatives. A total of 31 participants took part in these discussions.

At each meeting, stakeholders were invited to introduce themselves, their affiliation, and what they wanted to achieve through participating in the conversation. They then divided into smaller discussion sized groups of 3 to 6 people. Each group participated in the same three rounds of discussion, each related to a key topic identified in the background research on MFCs:

1. Whether or not the proposed Brandon Food Council should be administered by the city of Brandon or community-led.
2. Who should be included in the membership and governance of the proposed Brandon Food Council, and
3. The potential roles and priorities of the proposed Brandon Food Council.

For each round, all groups listened to the same presentation, featuring examples of best practice from other Canadian cities. Following the presentation, stakeholders had a moment for reflection before discussing the topic among their small groups and completing an exercise with others in their group. Each group then reported their ideas back to the whole group, before moving on to the next topic.

Discussion Module 1: Connection to Government

1.1 Presentation: Connection to Government

The first topic presented covered the complexity of the tradeoffs in establishing a MFC that is tightly knit to local government or one that is independent of it. The advantages of an MFC that is tied to municipal government include access to government resources and in-kind support, as well as the ability to affect and change policy at the city level and work with local government to create city wide strategies. Alternatively, community-led MFCs tend to exercise more freedom in their analysis and critique of municipal food systems (Ilieva 2016), and are often more accessible and responsive to stakeholders. The data suggest that in either case, well-structured access to city council, with some level of staff support and financing, leads to greater MFC effectiveness (Harper et al. 2009). Three options¹ were presented for Brandon, including the strengths and weaknesses of each:

- Embedded in Government
- Independent of Government (Community-Led)
- Social Planning Council Subcommittee.

Embedded in Government

Municipal Food Councils that are embedded within municipal government have a very strong connection to policy makers and typically focus on a more city-wide systems scale including creating food action plans, food charters and policy changes. There is some increased credibility in being affiliated with government and there may even be an appointed individual to work on a government strategy for food. There could be easier access to financial and human resources, data sources and a broad range of government departments which would offer a greater coordination of the food system across different sectors.

Some challenges could include change of government leadership which may result in changing levels of support or even termination of work which could mean a diminished interest in food policy issues. The priorities of the work are usually determined by elected officials or government staff which may or may not seek input on those priorities. This could show up as there being less attention to community desires and difficulties in developing a sense of community leadership and ownership. (Palmer, A. 2016, Burgan and Winne 2012).

Independent of Government (Community-Led)

Food Policy Councils that are community-led or independent of government tend to focus on community food security and food related projects. They offer more grassroots control and advocacy, fewer bureaucratic restraints, and the opportunity to partner with a non-profit organization which may provide funding or in-kind contributions. Because of the existing organizational structure, it

¹ Only the first two options were presented during the January 27th meeting. Shortly after, the idea of a social planning council in Brandon began to circulate. The May 10th and 13th presentations included the option of having the proposed Brandon Food Council be a sub-committee of a social planning council.

would be a quick start up and potentially provide greater community buy-in due to affiliation with the existing organization. Fundraising is also an option due to fiduciary oversight and there remains an opportunity for government employees to be members of the council.

Challenges to overcome include looking outside of the scope of the organization, to the food system as a whole. It may be difficult to expand that scope if it is in conflict with the organization's mission. There might be less of a focus on policy if there is a misunderstanding about advocacy rules for nonprofits. Connection to and support from the nonprofit might waver if leadership changes within the council or nonprofit. And there is the possibility that membership could rely too heavily on the nonprofit to lead and not take on leadership roles or feel ownership over the council (Burgan and Winne 2012; Palmer 2016).

Social Planning Council Subcommittee

"Social planning involves community and government groups and organizations working together in collaboration to address critical social issues facing a community... A social planning body can provide leadership and facilitation in bringing together key people around a specific problem or issue. Social planning activities can also include providing advice or making recommendations to civic bodies regarding public policy as it relates to specific social issues" (Interior Health).

As a subcommittee of a Social Planning Council, the proposed Brandon Food Council would have direct access to key community service providers involved with the Social Planning Council. This would mean instant access to a wealth of knowledge and perspectives as well as a diverse array of community sectors related to the promotion of community health and wellness which is a key cornerstone in the food system. The Social Planning Council and the Food Policy Council could build momentum together, building partnerships in the community and encouraging collaboration between sectors. The greatest challenge this option poses is that the Social Planning Council is in initial planning stages, making it difficult to anticipate how it would administer the proposed Brandon Food Council.

1.2 Exercise: Connection to Government

After the presentation, each small discussion group had a chance to reflect on which model would be best for the proposed Brandon Food Council. Each person in the group received one vote for the structure that they felt was the best option. For the January 27th meeting, participants had two options for their vote: a MFC that is embedded in government, or a MFC that is independent of government. The May 10th and 13th meetings included a third option: a subcommittee of a social planning council. After discussion, the options and casting their votes in small groups, everyone reconvened to share the results of the small group discussions with the larger group.

1.3 Results: Connection to Government

January 27th Results: Connection to Government

The results from the first small group discussions and exercises on January 27th are included in Table 1. The strength of the grassroots organizations and community members were reflected in the majority vote for a non-government placement, but it was clearly articulated that having a city representative(s) / government champion sit on the council would strengthen its standing with municipal government and access to support.

In small group discussions, one group noted that it did not feel as though there were enough options. They split their votes equally between the choice of a government or community-led council, but they would have preferred a hybrid model which would be more of a partnership between municipal government and community groups. The other group preferred a MFC independent of government. During the large group discussion that followed, participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of each model. In the end, the general consensus was for a hybrid model, organized and led by community members and organizations, with champions on Brandon City Council, and access to financial and in-kind resources to administer the proposed Brandon Food Council and related projects.

Table 1: Connection to Government (January 27th results)

Type (# of votes)	Advantages	Disadvantages
Independent of Government (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could still have a City of Brandon representative • Could apply for charity status • Maintain grassroots movement and community partnerships • Can staff a position independent of government resources • More buy-in from community groups and organizations • Opportunity for diverse stakeholders • Not politically influenced • Less expensive to maintain • More freedom in mandate and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs funding • Volunteers are spread thin • Finding an agency to take it on • Less accountability
Embedded in Government (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could reinforce work of the poverty committee • Could focus on education and advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to government changes • Unlikely to get city council buy-in: council and staff would not be willing or have the capacity

May 10th and 13th Results: Connection to Government

The results from the discussions on May 10th and 13th are included in Table 2. Participants at these meetings spent most of the time in discussion and most found it difficult to cast a vote. Some participants suggested that the proposed Brandon Food Council's connection to government will depend on its mandate. As a result, votes are not recorded for these discussions.

In the large group discussion, there was a general consensus that the proposed Brandon Food Council should be a hybrid of the options provided. Rather than discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each model, the large group discussion centered on the essential elements of a hybrid model and whether or not a Social Planning Council would be a good fit. Because the Social Planning Council is in initial planning stage, this option requires further investigation.

Once again, the majority of those in attendance preferred the idea of having a MFC that is supported in-kind by the City of Brandon, involving city councillors in collaborative efforts, but not a designated committee of Brandon City Council. If adequately funded – by the City of Brandon, through a Social Planning Council, or other sources of funding – such an arrangement would allow the proposed Brandon Food Council to influence municipal policies and programs, while limiting the potential of government processes to obstruct its work.

Table 2: Connection to Government (May 10th and 13th results, combined)

Type	Notes
Hybrid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential Elements: • Fewer obstacles • Brandon City Council representative(s) and/or champion(s) • Sufficient legitimacy at Brandon City Council to influence municipal policies and programs related to food • In-kind resources from the City of Brandon
Social Planning Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for much cross-over and collaboration on social issues • One example of a hybrid approach • Currently in initial planning stages

1.4 Recommendations: Connection to Government

The desire for a hybrid formation of council arose strongly, as well as the importance of having a representative of Brandon City Council directly involved in the Brandon Food Council. Based on conversations it is recommended that the proposed Brandon Food Council should:

- Be organized and led by its community members and organizations.
- Receive financial and in-kind resources made available by the city to administer the proposed Brandon Food Council and related projects, either directly or through a Social Planning Council.
- Reserve a seat for a representative from Brandon City Council to have a direct line to municipal government and related supports.
- (A) host organization(s) should take on the Food Council and work alongside municipal government by reserving a seat for at least one City Councilor on the Council.

Discussion Module 2: Membership and Resources

2.1 Presentation: Membership and Resources

This topic asks how the proposed Brandon Food Council would operate, including its membership (how many and who), governance (committee terms and roles), and resources (what types of resources are needed and who will supply them).

There is no one right way to structure a MFC, however there are best practices that have been identified based on cumulative research on existing Committees of Council in Brandon¹ and MFCs in other Canadian cities. At the January 27th discussion the facilitator gave a short presentation on three case studies of MFCs in Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. This information was originally prepared for the City of Winnipeg's work towards a MFC (City of Winnipeg Urban Planning Division 2016). The May 10th and 13th discussions included Ottawa's Just Food as an example of an open membership structure to represent another way in which a potential Brandon Food Council could be structured.

Membership

MFCs generally have between 10 and 30 members, with 15 being an optimal size (Burgan & Winne 2012). In contrast, Committees of Council for the City of Brandon are all smaller in number with about 6 members including 2-3 appointed city councillors. MFCs are intentionally cross sector. They are often made up of a diversity of food system stakeholders, including but not limited to producers and processors, marketers and distributors, health-care professionals, researchers, community development workers, food retailers of all sizes, labor organizations, local and regional government officials, and general public (Burgan and Winne 2012).

The most successful initiatives have organizations or individuals who champion the vision and offer tactical advice and skills such as navigating institutional structures and arrangements and know how to work with the full political spectrum. (MacRae and Donahue 2013). Membership may be selected based on specific sectors such as production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption, and waste management, as well as education, government, youth, and the general public, including those with barriers to food security. Professional qualifications and experience with community work are often considered assets among MFC members.

Selection of these members can include self-selection, appointment by government, invitation by the host organization, application and review, or some combination of the above (Harper et al 2009). In the case of City of Brandon Committees of Council, all voting members are appointed by Brandon City Council.

MFCs and Committees of Council generally have a chair, co-chairs, and/or vice-chair. These members are most often voted on by MFC membership. Chairs, co-chairs and vice-chairs develop agendas, lead meetings, represent the MFC to the community and government agencies, and ensure it follows its policies and mission (Burgan & Winne 2012).

¹ Three committees were presented as examples of what is currently working in our local context. These are the Age Friendly Committee, the Brandon Aboriginal Peoples Council and the Brandon Poverty Committee.

Required Resources

Funding typically comes from the governing body that created the council such as a non-profit or government, others have diverse sources of funding from private foundations and organizations or individual donations (MacRae & Donahue 2013). Sourcing funding from local grant organizations may lead to increased competition for limited funding with other community organizations, many of which should be working in cooperation with the food council. Reliable and continued financing ensures longevity, the ability to create long-term solutions to food related issues, and the ability to continue operations without disruption.

Food council work will require supports such as human resources and funding. Many MFCs have either no staff at all or only one part-time staff person, relying instead on volunteers or on restricted amounts of staff time from city employees assigned to the council, in addition to their usual government duties. (Harper et al. 2009).

2.2 Exercise: Membership and Resources

After the presentation, each small discussion group had a chance to reflect on what they felt the Brandon Food Council would require as far as membership and other resources. In the January 27th meeting each group received a Create Your Own Committee worksheet to fill in. The majority of the discussions were around the topic of membership. As such a separate brainstorming exercise sheet was included in the May 10th and 13th meetings. After discussion in small groups, everyone reconvened to share results with the larger group.

2.3 Results: Membership, and Resources

On January 27th, stakeholders preferred the idea of a small council membership, this idea stemmed from the belief that a large council would be ineffective. Stakeholders emphasized the need for diverse representation such as those with lived experience of food insecurity, non-profits, health organizations etc. It was noted that youth play an important role in the future of our food system and should be included in membership. Stakeholders felt that 1 or 2 staff people and a budget of \$50,000 to \$100,000 would be needed to effectively carry out the activities of a food council.

In contrast to the January 27th meeting, the May 10th and 13th stakeholder participants were leaning more towards having a larger sized council and even an open membership council with a smaller board of directors or a larger council with subcommittees to reflect the values of networking and collaboration between organizations. There was a consensus that a larger council would be a great opportunity to include more sectors and demographics and to have more voices at the table. This would require excellent communication skills between members. There was also a desire to find a representative who would be able to carry the momentum for change at the city level. Participants at these discussions did not have time to discuss resource requirements.

Overall, those recommended to be on the Food Council were consistently representatives of the healthcare sector, those working with food insecurity such as non-profits, and those working towards environmental stewardship and community growth like the Community Garden Network and the Assiniboine Food Forest.

Table 3: Membership and Resources (results)

	Jan 27	May 10	May 13
Member Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Producers • Food banks • Retailers and restaurants • Indigenous organizations • Nutritionists • People with lived experience of food insecurity • Food security organizations • Waste management • Consumers • Youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandon School Division • Three levels of government • Food producers/farmers • Business Expert • Accountant • Doctor • Lawyer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthcare providers and public health • Food Production • Indigenous People • Newcomers • Health Food Stores • Education (schools) • Faith Group • Strategic Thinkers and Planners • Food Stores (incl. chains) • Not for Profits • Community Gardens • Youth and Seniors
Specific Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assiniboine Food Forest • Samaritan House • Brandon NRC • Prairie Mountain Health • Brandon Friendship Centre • Westman Immigrant Services • City Council • Dave Barnes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samaritan House • Westman Immigrant Services • Brandon University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brandon University • Assiniboine Community College • Maple Leaf • Global Market • United Way • Next Gen • Me to We • 4H • Mindfulness Practitioners • Samaritan House • Salvation Army • Brandon Friendship Center • The Marquis Project • Healthy Brandon • 7th St Health Access • City of Brandon Poverty and Environment Committees • Prairie Mountain Health
Number of Members	7-12	12-20	15-30
Required Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 to 2 support staff • \$50,000 to \$100,000 	(due to time constraints this topic was not discussed on May 10th or 13th)	

2.4 Recommendations: Membership and Resources

The proposed Brandon Food Council should have:

- A mandate to provide food education and skills training in order to increase community wellness and connection to food, and improve local food security by coordinating between food related organizations, promoting existing programs and identifying community needs.
- Approximately 15 members, including representatives from the healthcare sector, Brandon City Council, education and research institutions, food producers and farmers, waste management experts, food retailers, non-profit and community organizations, legal and accounting experts, and those with lived/direct experience of food insecurity.
- A \$50-\$100,000 budget, including 1 or 2 staff to coordinate and support the council.
- At least one city councilor should sit on the Brandon Food Council to have a direct line to municipal government and related supports.
- (A) host organization(s) should take on the Brandon Food Council and work alongside municipal government.

Discussion Module 3: Roles and Priorities

3.1 Presentation: Roles and Priorities

The presentation on this topic focused on how MFCs might build connections and collaboration among stakeholders to improve environmental stewardship, plan for public food security and health, and help develop the local economy. MFCs can affect national and provincial level policy debates, bring together multiple sectors that wouldn't otherwise work together, bring local food policy into mainstream politics, boost local economics and combat poverty.

Established MFCs typically are a centre point for gathering, coordinating, networking, and facilitating for the purpose of achieving goals that address concerns held by food system stakeholders. Their audiences often include government agencies, businesses and other organizations, community groups and individuals (Schiff, R 2008). They may develop program or project ideas and then work with relevant community groups to implement these. This helps to avoid redundancy and enhances work that is already being done.

The priority areas most often addressed by MFCs include a) food access, hunger and food insecurity; b) the quality of available food; c) economic opportunities that are balanced for a diverse range of food system stakeholders; and d) environmental sustainability and responsible natural resources management to meet our current food and nutrition needs without compromising the ability of the system to meet the needs of future generations (Hodgson, 2012).

3.2 Exercise: Roles and Priorities

After the presentation, stakeholders divided up into their small groups to discuss which roles and priorities should be focus areas for a future Brandon Food Council. After the discussions, stakeholders participated in a voting exercise, in which each person received 3 stickers to vote for potential roles of a Brandon Food Council and three stickers to vote for priority policy areas that the Brandon Food Council should work on. Participants had the option to use all three stickers on one or any combination of roles and priority areas, respectively.

Possible roles included:

- Coordinating and Networking
- Strategy Development
- Advocacy
- Research
- Advisory Support
- Engagement and Education
- Resourcing Support
- Programming
- Policy Implementation

Possible priorities included:

- Access and Equity
- Food Education
- Nutrition and Public Health
- Waste Management
- Urban Agriculture
- Economic Development
- Environmental Sustainability
- Local and Regional Food
- Land Use and Long Range Planning

3.3 Results: Roles and Priorities

Overall, there was a strong emphasis on Strategy Development, Engagement and Education, and Coordination and Networking. Strategy Development was strategically chosen as an option that included many other topics but with the more specific focus of developing a common vision and being actionable. There was a strong vote for community education based on research demonstrating the positive link between education and its effects on food choices, and health. Stakeholders noted that a MFC would provide a much-needed place from which to coordinate and tackle large scale food system challenges at the local level.

In small group discussions:

- January 27th Group 1 emphasized a need for a food policy discussion forum along with research and action on food education. Strong nutrition education can lead to healthier food choices.
- January 27th Group 2 emphasized education through programming. They identified a need for a knowledge base to provide food security advice and supports and bring people together.
- January 27th Group 3 stressed the need for a comprehensive food strategy, coordination between existing programs and organizations, as well as community and local government buy-in.
- May 10th Group emphasized education around food based skills and ensuring that food needs are met in the community as well as coordination between existing organizations.
- May 13th Group highlighted the need to have the community of Brandon at the forefront of all decisions including the need to develop a strategy for food security and to engage and educate the community about existing resources and traditional food skills.

Table 4: Possible roles for the Proposed Brandon Food Policy Council

Roles	Total Votes	Jan 27th	May 10th	May 13th
Strategy Development	21	9	4	8
Engagement and Education	19	10	5	4
Coordination and Networking	13	8	5	0
Advocacy	10	5	3	2
Programming	6	3	1	2
Resourcing/Supporting	6	3	3	0
Advisory Support	5	0	1	4
Policy Implementation	2	1	1	0

Table 5: Possible Priority Areas for the Proposed Brandon Food Council

Roles	Total Votes	Jan 27th	May 10th	May 13th
Access and Equity	21	12	6	3
Food Education	18	13	1	4
Land Use and Long-Range Planning	10	6	3	1
Local and Regional Food	10	6	3	1
Environmental Sustainability	10	3	4	3
Economic Development	8	5	3	0
Urban Agriculture	7	2	3	2
Nutrition and Public Health	5	2	1	2
Waste Management	1	0	0	1

Discussion Results: Priorities

The results from the “Priority Areas” voting exercise are included in Table 7. Food Education and Access and Equity were identified as the highest priority topics to tackle in our community in all of the groups.

Individuals preferred topics that were overarching, for example Access and Equity could include greater coordination of programs and organizations including identifying possible gaps or duplications in services and provide education around food based skills and accessing available local resources. It was noted that food education builds on food access and could include topics such as community gardening and using available land to grow food, self-sustainability, and independent local food sources as well as nutritional education to promote healthy food choices.

A common thread that ran through discussions was the importance of healthy food. Not only ensuring equal access but also how to prepare healthy nutritious meals and to make good food choices by opting for healthy alternatives when given the option.

In small group discussions:

- January 27th Group 1 focused on access, equity, and education. They identified affordability as a barrier, but also that people are in need of more information and skills.

- January 27th Group 2 focused on access, equity, and education, as well as land use/long range planning for individual and collective production (farms, gardens) to ensure independent, sustainable, and local food sources
- January 27th Group 3 focused on enhancing access and equity through the economic development of the local food sector (employment, income generating) and education about local and regional foods.
- May 10th Group highlighted the need for networking support between organizations, and a desire to spread information in diverse ways. They also discussed the need for volunteers to process and harvest food which would provide education as well as support those with barriers to food access.
- May 13th group also had a focus on traditional food skills education and community building to support the next generation in an environmentally sustainable way. They discussed the current “waste generation” and the need for a cultural shift around food.

3.4 Recommendations: Roles and Priorities

Recommendations: Roles

The Brandon Food Council should:

- Coordinate and network with programs, organizations and individuals to initiate and develop relevant projects;
- Examine opportunities to develop a community food strategy that fosters sustainability; and
- Engage in outreach to disseminate information, promote food literacy and skills, and encourage participation from the community.

Recommendations: Priorities

The Brandon Food Council should:

- Promote and provide education in order to improve community health and sustainability;
- Consider and plan for urban land use in order to promote independent sustainability; and
- Support and promote the development of the local food sector, including education on food sourcing.

Conclusion

A Brandon Food Council would offer a much-needed forum to begin networking, discussion and coordination between sectors and organizations; the need for which was underlined throughout stakeholder discussions. During conversations, many valuable insights were gleaned regarding the status of food, what the needs are in the community as well as what the most beneficial role and priority areas would be for a Brandon Food Council.

We have many knowledgeable organizations, public institutions and individuals who are working hard to improve our food system and making the effort to come together as a council will provide a network to collaborate and share resources. The council would offer a platform from which to launch strategic action and a holistic approach to food systems, community development and sustainable growth.

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Appendix A: Brandon Food Charter

(City of Brandon 2009)

Whereas the Government of Canada has formally endorsed the right of every individual to have food security, which means that everyone has access to enough safe and nutritious food to stay healthy and have energy for daily life;

And whereas governments at all levels have recognized the need for food systems planning, and the need to establish principles to govern decisions regarding food production, distribution, access, consumption and waste management;

And whereas Community Food Security is a comprehensive approach that integrates all components of the food system, from producers to consumers, which emphasizes the health of both the environment and local economies and promotes regional food self-reliance;

And whereas a sustainable local food system promotes social justice, population health, and reflects and sustains local culture and environment;

Therefore, the City of Brandon will strive towards ensuring that all citizens, regardless of economic and social status, have access to sufficient, affordable and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and to be free from hunger by advocating for the following:

- Building partnerships between citizens, educators, and food providers
- Encouraging community and backyard gardens including composting
- Promoting farmer's markets and other local food initiatives
- Providing educational opportunities on sustainable food production and preparation
- Providing awareness on nutritious and safe food choices
- Supporting training and job opportunities in food production and security to enable economic development
- Seeking out access to nutritious food
- Promoting a more economical and ecologically sustainable food system by providing awareness of the role of local farmers and producers in our lives
- Recognizing that the celebration of food is central to both culture and community
- The formation of a Food Policy Council to advise on food policy issues
- Ongoing research and monitoring of the Food Charter and the Food Policy Council to keep citizens abreast of emerging trends in the fields of food security, local food self-reliance, and sustainable food systems
- Providing leadership in the development of Food Charters for the Westman region

Appendix B: Brandon Community Food Assessment Recommendations

Opportunities and Recommendations for Action (May and Leadbeater 2015)

Food Access & Food Choices

1. Explore the creation of a grocery store shuttle to increase access to healthy food.
2. Determine opportunities for a downtown grocery store through a social enterprise or cooperative model.
3. Create an alternative food distribution model such as a Good Food Box program to increase access to lower priced fresh produce available for residents.
4. Develop group buying models to assist agencies in acquiring lower prices food for their programming needs.

Food Skills

5. Encourage agencies already hosting food skills workshops and training to develop monitoring methods that will help them determine ongoing needs of their clients.
6. Create more community kitchens that are approved for food skills training, food re-sale, and are available with child minding facilities.
7. Advocate for development of school division based nutritional education in all schools, modeled after pilot programs developed at École New Era.
8. Establish community gardens and/or indoor growing stations at all Kindergarten to Grade 8 schools in the Brandon School Division.

Policy & Research

9. The Community Garden Network and City of Brandon develop new land use agreements and policy.
10. The City of Brandon Poverty Committee develop a local food procurement policy such as Food Matters Manitoba Local Sustainable Food Procurement Program with partnership at the municipal government level.
11. The Poverty Committee, in partnership with the City of Brandon and Department of Geography at Brandon University, develop GIS maps to gain deeper insight into municipal issues such as where to locate new food retailers in existing food deserts.

12. The Brandon Community Garden Network and other organizations such as Healthy Brandon and the Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation collaborate with Department of Geography to identify potential future community garden development and other projects that deal with food security.
13. Database creation and website design by post-secondary institutions for non-profits and agencies with limited staff and time capacity can lend meaningful support to organizations and offer valuable learning opportunities for students.

Public Awareness

14. Community partners of the original food assessment project explore the creation of a Food Action Network to implement, guide, and monitor supportive food actions and results based programs.

