
Subject: Stouffville Urban Farm

Staff Report No. CS-002-25

**Department/
Commission:** Community Services Commission

Date: May 7, 2025

Recommendation:

- 1) That Council direct staff to proceed with the creation of an Urban Farm at Franklin Field

Report Highlights

- The Town will hire a Farm Manager on contract to oversee the creation of an urban farm at Franklin Field
- At build out, the farm will consist of four mixed use market garden ranges approximately 15m x 30m each
- Staff will continue to explore additional funding sources while utilizing new sponsorship funds as well as existing capacity within the 2025 operating budget to fund start up costs

1. Purpose:

Staff is seeking Council support and direction to develop an Urban Farm in Stouffville at the Franklin Field location bordered by Burkholder St. to the northern boundary and Franklin St. to the western boundary.

2. Background:

At the December 11, 2024 Council meeting, a presentation was received from the Partnership Manager with the Barrett Centre of Innovation in Sustainable Urban Agriculture, Durham College. The presentation reviewed the importance and potential to establish an Agri-Food Hub in Stouffville for the production of produce through indoor and outdoor sustainable agricultural methods.

The goal of an urban farm is to increase access to fresh, locally grown produce as well as offer educational programming regarding the farming sector while building sustainability and food security in the Region.

Staff was directed to investigate and report back to Council.

3. Analysis:

While the initial presentation featured an indoor hydroponic modular facility in addition to an outdoor farming component, there are operational and financial considerations that will require additional investigation and can be brought forward in future years for Council consideration. For this report, focus will be placed on the creation of the outdoor farming component that will see the development of up to 4 mixed use garden ranges (50' x100' each) to produce a variety of fresh produce to be made available to the community.

The preferred location for the urban farm is Franklin Field which is bordered by Franklin St. to the West and Burkholder St. to the North which would be repurposed over the next 5 years to become a multifunctional space that can showcase agricultural practices while providing an inviting space to gather, create, relax, and participate in hands-on programming. Additionally, to making fresh locally grown produce available for sale to the community, it will be the intent to donate a percentage of the produce to support the Stouffville Food Bank to further support our residents experiencing food insecurity.

A Farm Manager will be required to oversee the creation of the farming beds along with developing future programming and making key connections with local school boards and community organizations to foster partnership relationships where students and program participants may benefit from participating in farming activity. As the program and growing season develops, some supporting part time hours will be required to maximize the crop yield.

It is not anticipated that the Urban Farm will generate any revenue to offset start up and operating expenses in 2025 and staff will continue to explore funding opportunities to operate in a cost neutral environment.

4. Options:

4.1 Option A (Recommended)

That Council direct staff to proceed with the necessary actions required for creation of an Urban Farm at Franklin Field.

5. Financial Implications:

The Urban Farm is not anticipated to generate revenue in 2025 as efforts will be focused on farm logistics and set-up to support growing initiatives in 2026. To support the required set up and operating costs in 2025 and in the years ahead, sponsorship commitments to date have been secured in the amount of \$50,000/year for five years and staff will continue to explore additional funding sources.

Staff applied for funding support through the Agricultural Workforce Equity and Diversity Initiative (AWEDI) in December but were informed that proposal reviews were paused due to the pending Provincial election at the time. Staff remain in contact with the program office and are hopeful to receive an update in the coming weeks. A funding application will also be submitted through the RBC Community Investment Fund and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Legacy Fund at the June intake.

Staff will utilize existing funds within the current 2025 budget allotment to offset funds required to support start up of the Urban Farm initiative.

6. Broader Intergovernmental Impacts and/or Considerations:

NA

7. Communication:

A communication plan including a press release and social media posts will be created to notify the community of this initiative.

8. Alignment with Strategic Plan:

1. A Town that Grows

A Town that grows in support of complete communities

Improve the condition and efficiency of the local road network while addressing connectivity and advancing active transportation facilities

2. A Healthy and Greener Town

Increase Offerings and Opportunities for Active Living

3. An Engaging Town

Increase Community Engagement & Outreach

9. Attachments:

None

10. Related Reports:

None

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For further information on this report, please contact the Department Head: Rob Braid, Commissioner of Community Services, at 905-640-1900 or 1-855-642-8697 ext. 2245 or via email at rob.braid@townofws.ca