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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background:

Canadians are becoming increasingly concerned about access to locally and sustainably produced food. Food is personal, political and emotional, and one of the most important issues a planner can tackle (Campsie, 2010). There is a growing commitment by planners to address concerns about food security and sustainability. Urban agriculture is rapidly gaining popularity in Canadian municipalities as a means for providing an alternative and local food source. This report, "*Backyard Chicken Policy: Lessons from Vancouver, Seattle and Niagara Falls*", will explore the practice of urban agriculture in Vancouver, Seattle, and Niagara Falls with a specific analysis of backyard chicken policy.

There is a clear connection between urban agriculture and urban planning. Planners control land use, and have an important role to play in planning for food production and availability. Urban agriculture is becoming an increasingly accepted practice in Canada and municipalities need to consider how this activity can be supported through responsible and practical zoning and official plan policies. The planning profession's increasing commitment to urban agriculture is seen in the growing number of journal articles, conferences and workshops on the topic.

North America has seen growth in municipalities incorporating sustainability principles into policy. Seattle, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia are leaders in urban agriculture, and smaller cities such as Niagara Falls, Ontario are hopeful examples. The research presented in this report demonstrates how municipalities are offering options for developing sustainable food systems. Raising backyard chickens is a tangible example of urban agriculture and a workable response to the demand for local food. This report shares insight into how backyard

chicken policy has developed in larger and smaller cities and offers lessons learned from the process.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives:

The objective of this research is to determine the ways in which municipal planning documents facilitate or mitigate the development of urban agriculture initiatives, specifically backyard chicken policies? In order to answer this question, case examples of Vancouver, Seattle, and Niagara Falls' experiences in developing and implementing backyard chickens will be examined. An increased understanding of how urban agriculture is implemented through planning documents will assist planners when developing the necessary municipal by-laws, policies and zoning to support urban agriculture. The objective of the research is to share lessons with other municipalities about urban agriculture, specifically backyard chicken policy.

1.3 Report Outline:

This research examines the process and components surrounding the legalization of backyard chickens by municipalities, which, while only a small part of urban agriculture, provides an excellent case study and pilot for urban agriculture practices. Planners are agents of change, and have a responsibility to the public to plan for local and sustainable food.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the report. This includes background information and an overview of the research question and objectives.

Chapter 2 includes a literature review which addresses academic research, legislation and urban agriculture planning policy as well as provides an intellectual context and current trends in the field.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methods used and limitations/challenges with the research.

Chapter 4 outlines the analytical framework used and results obtained from the research.

Chapter 5 provides a series of recommendations for other municipalities trying to facilitate backyard chickens.

Chapter 6 includes the report conclusion and directions for further research.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview:

In his book "*Growing Better Cities: Urban Agriculture for Sustainable Development*", Luc J. A. Mougeot (2006) defines Urban Agriculture as:

"an industry located within, or on the fringe of a town, a city or metropolis, which grows and raises, processes and distributes a diversity of food and non-food products, (re)using largely human and material resources, products and services found in and around that urban area, and in turn supplying human and material resources, products and services largely to that urban area"

This definition describes a process that is efficient, sustainable, and socially, economically, and environmentally productive. Urban agriculture has been in practice for many years in cities all over the world, but as concerns over food security grow in Canadian cities, urban agriculture is re-emerging as a possible solution. Urban agriculture also addresses concerns about the availability of culturally appropriate foods, a prevalent issue in today's multicultural cities.

Urban agriculture is not a new idea. It is a long-established livelihood activity that occurs at all scales, from the small family-held market garden to the large agri-business located on the fringe of the city (Redwood, 2009). During WWI and WWII, people in Canada and the United Kingdom kept victory gardens in their backyards as a source of food during shortages. As industrialization increased post-war, there was a separation between urban and rural activities whereby urban agriculture was dismissed as a fringe activity that had no place in the city. However, its potential is now beginning to be realized by people who are concerned about where their food is coming from and how it is produced. Despite the significant challenge of being perceived as a problem,

urban agriculture is now part of the debate on how to improve cities (Redwood, 2009). Concern about local food, nutritional deficiencies, and the effect of obesity is growing (Campsie, 2010). Many people are now seeing urban agriculture as an alternative and solution to issues associated with the current food system.

2.2 Canada's Food System and the Role of Urban Agriculture:

The food system in Canada has undergone huge changes over the past 100 years. Canadian farmers, once the dominant producers, are now competing with farmers in the United States, Chile and Costa Rica for a share in the market. Traditional farms have responded to this competition by increasing their size while simultaneously reducing their output to a few cash crops. As a result, many family farms have given way to corporate farming (Razvi, Kuenzig & Kwan, 2010). In the meantime, small farms that have concentrated on local distribution and organic produce have demonstrated renewed vitality as consumers have become more conscious of their food systems (Razvi, Kuenzig & Kwan, 2010)

The current pace of urbanization is unprecedented. The United Nations predicts that by 2005, the world's number of urban dwellers will surpass rural dwellers, and by 2020 the urban population will be sixty percent of the global population. As agricultural land is lost to development, urban agriculture will take on an increasingly important role in food production.

Urban agriculture is an important part of the solution to food security, but faces barriers in implementation due to restrictive zoning and municipal attitudes. The lack of formal recognition and support of urban agriculture creates challenges for urban farmers and gardeners and hinders the progress of urban agriculture at the community level (Lebedeva, 2008). Urban agriculture helps reduce food insecurity, which is likely to intensify with increasing population

growth. Food security refers to a population's stable physical and economic access to healthy food with minimal reliance on emergency food sources (Lebedeva, 2008). As well as providing food security, urban agriculture can act as a catalyst for political organization. A survey of producer groups in 2005-2007 identified that organizations based around urban agriculture play a significant role in social cohesion, offering technical training and providing a platform for political lobbying (Redwood, 2009).

Urban agriculture also has a number of advantages from the policy perspective: it is relatively easy to implement at the local level; it does not entail massive behavioural or infrastructural change; it does not require exorbitant funding; it produces relatively quick results; and, it can involve citizens in a meaningful way. Urban agriculture does not entail major investment in infrastructure. It is a flexible activity that can take place in the nooks and crannies of cities: on vacant lots, along the sides of buildings, and in underused spaces on roofs and terraces (Lebedeva, 2008).

2.3 Increasing Food Supply through Urban Agriculture:

The question of community food security still occupies limited discussion space in urban policy decision-making. However, the rise in food prices in 2008 and 2009 as well as growing concerns about food safety have led to an increased interest in citizens having more control over their food supply. This has led to a rise in community and urban gardening as well as a number of activist and non-governmental groups to support this passion (Jolliffe, 2009). The food system can be made considerably more sustainable by producing foods locally and at a smaller scale. More localized production would greatly diminish the need for packaging, refrigeration, and transportation, reducing hidden costs and impacts of food (Lebedeva, 2008).

2.4 The Relationship between Urban Agriculture and Urban Planning:

Municipalities have a role to play in creating an alternative food system. Traditional land use practices that produce narrow and prohibitive zoning definitions and by-laws can restrict creative and innovative solutions. Alternatives to these practices are needed (Razvi, Kuenzig & Kwan, 2010). Local by-laws should be updated to reflect the need to accommodate diverse agricultural use not only in rural areas but in urban areas as well (Wilkins, 2010). There is a need for city councils to get involved or stay involved in the promotion of community food sources to address these concerns (Jolliffe, 2009).

Razvi, Kuenzig and Kwan (2010) suggest the following policy recommendations for municipal governments in order to implement changes in the current food system:

- Create land use policies that encourage the development of new housing for migrant professionals as well as affordable housing for people within the community while mitigating impacts on agricultural land;
- Revise definitions of agriculture and agriculturally related activities to allow more diverse forms of agricultural activities and crops;
- Allow the creation of smaller parcels to produce commercial crops and reduce or review the minimum distance separations that prevent farmers on small farms from raising animals;
- Consider Transferable Development Rights programs to allow farmers to maximize their land values without sacrificing the inherent value of protected agricultural lands; and,
- Identify and allow secondary uses that have minimal impact on agricultural land and allow farmers to earn supplementary income without tax penalties.

Urban planners have an important role to play in terms of creating a sustainable food system. Planners have the professional expertise and community-oriented and interdisciplinary perspectives that can strengthen community food systems and food system planning (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000). The changing role and powers of urban planners have implications for how planners can facilitate or support urban agriculture (Quon, 1999). Planners have a large role to play in shaping an alternative food system. Urban planners need to find ways to capture the benefits and counter or prevent the potential problems of urban agriculture activities (Quon, 1999). Land use issues, specifically availability of land, access to land and usability of land are of particular concern to urban farmers. These issues are imposed or perpetuated by the urban planning policy context through: a lack of formal recognition of urban agriculture in planning policy; a lack of awareness about the socio-economic and environmental role of urban agriculture in cities; a lack of clear government responsibility for the various aspects of urban agriculture; resistant attitudes or cultural norms held by players in the land use planning process; and, a lack of resources, technical and financial support for urban farmers from the government (Quon, 1999).

Urban agriculture can both assist and hinder urban planners in achieving planning goals such as orderly and sustainable city form and function, urban environmental management, and community development. Urban planners shape patterns of land use and the built environment in and around cities to manifest a desired future urban state and to distribute public benefits to citizens. Making space available for food production, in rural or urban areas, is a job for land use planners (Campsie, 2010). In recent years, traditional, often technical approaches to planning and managing urban areas have been altered by such trends as increased public participation in community decision making (Quon, 1999). Urban planning is a government-administered process of determining how actions will shape the future, and of selecting and prescribing the

best course of action to arrive at desired goals for an urban area or to prevent new and solve existing urban problems.

The role of the urban planner has changed from that of the expert technical designer of the future form and function of a city, to that of a facilitator of community members articulating a community vision (Quon, 1999). The primary role of the planner is to develop and administer the municipal plan. Planners conduct background studies, identify issues, evaluate alternatives and recommend particular land use policies, but these policies are often shaped by vocal and interested community members, and the suggested policies are finally adopted by elected officials or community decision makers, not by planners (Quon, 1999). The planner's influence on events, then, stems from the capacity to articulate viewpoints and develop consensus and coalitions among those who do wield some power (Levy, 1991).

The urban planner has more regulatory than supportive and encouraging tools and strategies to effect land use changes, and these tools are often indirect because of the large proportion of privately-owned land in communities. There is often a gap between creating and implementing planning objectives. Planners tend to have more influence, and therefore can be proactive, in undeveloped areas than in built areas of a community (Quon, 1999). Urban planners do have a role to play in permitting and encouraging particular land uses, such as urban agriculture. Urban planners often assist in or act as catalysts for policy development and the acceptance or rejection of land use proposals, help resolve conflict and competition over land resources, and help determine appropriate locations for different activities (Quon, 1999).

2.5 Backyard Chickens in the Municipal Context:

The concept of raising chickens in an urban environment for fresh eggs is gaining popularity in Canadian municipalities. The urban hen movement is part of a growing effort in Canadian cities to solve some very serious problems with the food system (Payne & Zeisman, 2010). Many major North American cities, including Vancouver, Victoria, New York, Seattle, Chicago and Los Angeles, together with Ontario communities such as Niagara Falls, Brampton and Guelph, allow the small-scale raising of hens in backyards. Vancouver City Council voted unanimously to change city by-laws to legalize the keeping of hens within city limits last year and instructed staff to develop policy guidelines on backyard hens. The policy will have a focus on protecting the health and welfare of citizens as well as ensuring human treatment of backyard hens (Deacon, 2010). Concerns about noise, odors, disease and the attraction of predators and vermin to backyards have been effectively addressed by the hundreds of cities and towns that have already allowed backyard hens (Payne & Zeisman, 2010). Toronto council will likely face the issue of chickens in the next few months. Councilor Joe Mihevc says it most likely will be part of the urban food strategy that comes to council from public health. Municipal licensing will likely weigh in from the perspective of animal control (Peat, 2010).

The keeping of backyard chickens plays an essential role in the creation of sustainable local food systems. Municipal by-laws are frequently standing in the way of people keeping backyard flocks (Jolliffe, 2009). A by-law could address any concerns about backyard chickens by requiring permits; dictating minimum lots sizes, coop location and construction rules; outlining feed and waste-removal practices; limiting numbers; and, banning roosters for noise control (Mills, 2010). Permits allow municipalities to monitor and control chickens, which can simplify by-law enforcement and cover costs for monitoring. Permitting can also be a good interim measure in the process of introducing urban hens (Jolliffe, 2009).

Backyard chickens advocates cite environmental benefits, such as reduced food transportation and the consumption of kitchen waste and production of compost by chickens. Living conditions for backyard chickens are generally more humane than the industrial production setting (Mills, 2010). Peat (2010) stresses that, just like any pets, the bottom line is that owners have to be responsible and know what the chickens' needs are. The following list is compiled from the Waterloo Hen Association, Urban Chicken Underground and the Calgary Liberated Urban Chicken Klub. It identifies the benefits of raising backyard Chickens in urban environments:

- Chickens can provide healthy, pesticide-free eggs;
- Reduction of weekly food bills;
- Reduction of greenhouse gases through reduction in food transportation costs;
- Chickens consume kitchen waste, reducing municipal waste problems;
- Chickens produce great compost for the garden;
- Chickens are a great way to teach children about food sources;
- Chickens make great pets;
- Chickens kept in the backyard are generally living in much more human conditions than their battery cage industrial chicken counterparts; and,
- The path to global environmental sustainability begins with local initiatives and urban chickens are one of those.

Maintaining a close connection to our food supply is a positive choice. It offers a way to a healthier and more ecologically sustainable lifestyle (Payne & Zeisman, 2010). Citizens want access to safe and healthy food, and many are realizing the importance of being more involved in their own food production. Municipalities need to examine food production in their region and foodshed as the supply chains get more complicated, oil price volatility continues, and there is greater public concern regarding greenhouse gas emissions and environmental sustainability. Urban chickens can be a part of the solution to these problems (Jolliffe, 2009). Localizing food

production reconnects people with the natural world in their urban environments and can be as valuable a source of education as it is of food.

2.6 Case Examples in Urban Agriculture:

2.6.1 Urban Agriculture in Vancouver (Population 578,000)

Under the City of Vancouver's current working definition, urban agriculture includes community gardens, farmers markets, raising backyard chickens, hobby bee-keeping, as well as shared garden plots and edible landscaping. The city recently released a set of guidelines for urban agriculture in the private realm. Some of the goals identified in the guidelines include: enhancing the city's food security; reducing the city's ecological footprint by decreasing "distance to fork" through encouraging more locally grown, culturally appropriate and affordable food production; encouraging increased social interaction in high density developments; and, supporting and encouraging an environmentally and socially sustainable activity.

The application of urban agriculture design guidelines for the private realm is focused on urban agriculture in private, primarily residential developments which include consolidated common outdoor amenity space. The guidelines will assist the development community in designing usable spaces for urban agriculture, city staff in evaluating proposals for urban agriculture, and residents who will be provided with access to well-integrated opportunities for urban agriculture.

2.6.2 Urban Agriculture in Seattle (Population 608,600)

The City of Seattle's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) defines urban agriculture as a type of infill development that fits into the growth strategy for Seattle and the region by adding a missing element of livable communities and stimulating small-scale economic development. The DPD supports and encourages urban agriculture by: adding and/or clarifying definitions for horticulture, aquaculture, animal husbandry, community gardens and urban

farms; allowing community gardens and urban farms as permitted uses; allowing rooftop greenhouses; adding farmers markets to the definition of multipurpose uses; and, increasing the number of chickens allowed on residential property from three to eight.

2010 was declared “The Year of Urban Agriculture” by the City of Seattle in order to promote community agriculture efforts and increase access to locally grown food. As part of the 2010 Year of Urban Agriculture, Seattle City Council approved Council Bill 116907, which supports the rapidly growing local food movement. This new legislation permits an increase in the number of chickens allowed per lot from three to eight, with additional chickens allowed for large lots associated with community gardens and urban farms.

2.6.3 Urban Agriculture in Niagara Falls (Population 86,000)

Urban agriculture in Niagara Falls exists on a smaller scale in terms of policy development compared to Vancouver and Seattle, but there are examples of the practice throughout the city. Niagara Falls is one of several Ontario communities that permit backyard chickens. Prior to 2005, residents were permitted to keep up to twenty chickens. In 2005, the city amended its Animal Control By-law to reduce the number to ten. Niagara Falls permitted backyard chickens before a lot of communities were considering the practice, and Vancouver used the city as a model when they were developing their own backyard chicken policy.

Another form of urban agriculture in Niagara Falls is community gardening. There are several community gardens in Niagara Falls which are regulated through the Urban Forestry Committee and Park in the City Committee. These committees encourage environmental responsibility and city-wide beautification through community action.

Vancouver, Seattle and Niagara Falls are examples of cities which permit backyard chickens within city limits. They demonstrate how municipalities are updating their planning documents to include urban agriculture practices and achieve a greater level of sustainability. Their size and location differences also provide insight as to how they each approached the process of legalizing backyard chickens.

2.7 Conclusion

The backyard chicken movement has come to symbolize a greater shift in the way people are thinking about the quality and origin of the food they consume. Faced with the notion that much of the food we eat, including eggs, is mass produced in factory-like settings, Canadians want to know more about how their food is grown and what steps it takes to get to the dinner table (Cross, 2010). As noted by Philipa Campsie (2010), planners who attempt to intervene in the food system need to be courageous and strong-minded. Food is personal and political and emotional, and one of the most important issue that planners can tackle.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Research Approach:

This report explores in detail how planning documents for the cities of Vancouver, Seattle and Niagara Falls were updated to incorporate urban agriculture activities. The research involved is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research allows in-depth investigation of an idea (Yin, 2009) and opportunity for the researcher to introduce their own personal bias to help form a more complete picture. The benefits of using qualitative research methods to examine the relationship between planning and food include: the ability to examine a complex question that could be difficult or impossible using quantitative methods; providing a higher level of exploration; and, revealing the “human” side of the issue. Measurements collected in qualitative research are harder to analyze mathematically than quantitative data, but often contain more information and are easier to interpret.

Punch (1994) defines observation, interview, and document analysis as the central techniques of qualitative research. The research methods for this report include a literature review, a municipal documents analysis, and a series of semi-structured interviews. These methods allowed the researcher to investigate the topic from multiple angles and fill in missing pieces of information.

3.2 Triangulation:

A literature review, municipal document analysis, and semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to triangulate the data. Triangulation incorporates the use of several sources of data to examine one topic and establishes multiple sources of evidence to mitigate bias in the research. Examining backyard chicken policy with three different methods creates a

triangulation of perspectives that clarifies the issue better than single-observation research. This technique also helps validate the findings and reduces the impact of bias (Berg, 2009).

3.3 Methods of Data Collection:

The methods of data collection are presented in the order in which they were conducted. The literature review determined what information was relevant and helped narrow the research scope. The municipal document analysis illustrated how the by-law and Official Plan was amended and updated. Semi-structured interviews with key informants were conducted to verify findings and fill in any knowledge gaps identified in the literature review and municipal documents analysis. Interviews also helped qualify the information and put it into perspective.

3.3.1 Literature Review:

The purpose of the literature review was to address academic research and urban agriculture planning policy, as well as provide an intellectual context and reveal current trends in the field. There is a growing body of work available on urban agriculture, ranging from books to municipal reports to newspaper articles. In order to effectively investigate backyard chicken policy, it is important to understand what has happened already in the field of urban agriculture. The literature review explored the history of urban agriculture and its re-emergence today as an alternative method of food production. It also incorporated three case examples of North American cities which permit backyard chickens. The urban agriculture policies of each city are examined in greater detail in Chapter 4. Policy Analysis and Discussion.

3.3.2 Municipal Document Analysis:

The analysis of municipal documents outlined the municipal planning process and past accomplishments of the three cities in terms of urban agricultural policies. A table of key backyard chickens policy components was created in order to determine similarities and difference between the three cities. The table identified important stages in the process of legalizing backyard chickens including public education, voting for/against backyard chickens, and subsequent changes to municipal zoning by-laws.

Key documents analyzed include:

City of Vancouver: *Animal Control By-Law, Zoning and Development By-law, and Guidelines for Urban Agriculture in the Private Realm.*

City of Seattle: *Official Plan, Local Food Action Initiative, the Municipal Code, and the Land Use Code.*

City of Niagara Falls: *Animal Control By-law, Official Plan*

3.3.3 Interviews:

Interviews with key informants were meant to provide validation and verification of key components identified by the literature review and municipal documents analysis. Two interviews were completed with informants from the City of Vancouver and the City of Niagara Falls. In order to conduct interviews, the researcher was required to submit an application to the Queen's University Graduate Research Ethics Board. As part of this application, the confidentiality of all interview participants was protected.

The two semi-structured interviews with municipal planners from the City of Vancouver and the City of Niagara Falls were conducted via telephone. Using semi-structured interviews as opposed to structured questionnaires allowed informants to explain unclear elements of the

planning process, fill in knowledge gaps, and evaluate the planning process. Participants were first contacted by email with a follow up telephone call to schedule an interview. These participants provided knowledge and information on the process of legalizing backyard chickens; issues of food access and security; and public support and participation in terms of urban agriculture for their respective municipalities. An interview with the City of Seattle was not conducted due to the inability to schedule one with city officials. There was no response from Seattle despite repeated queries.

Interview questions were meant to address any gaps in information identified in the analysis table. Backyard chicken policy components were separated into two categories: legislated information or process-oriented. Most of the legislated information was gathered in the municipal document analysis. The process-oriented information came from municipal records, media coverage, and local food organizations. Interview participants addressed any elements of the process that were unclear and demonstrated how the cities engaged the public, facilitated discussion on backyard chickens, and supported urban agriculture by updating zoning by-laws and official plan policies. A list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

3.4 Data Analysis:

The intent of this report is to determine in what ways municipal planning documents facilitate or mitigate the development of urban agriculture initiatives, specifically backyard chicken policies. The analytical framework is based on three components: the concept of urban agriculture; zoning and land use; and, the role of the planner. This framework informed the recommendations provided by the report. A list of fourteen components was documented and examined (See Chapter 4. Policy Analysis and Discussion and Appendix A). The three case examples were compared in order to identify similarities and differences between their backyard

chicken policies. The results of this data were analyzed to determine what components led to a successful policy. The research methods presented in this report were intended to compliment this analytical framework.

3.5 Challenges and Limitations:

Several limitations with the proposed research methods were identified. A key challenge in writing this report was the fact that backyard chicken policy is in the early stages of development in Canada. Therefore, the available information is limited. The more literature there is on the topic, the more substantive future research can become.

Time restrictions in developing this report also meant that the researcher was required to limit interviews to one small and one large Canadian city. The recommendations provided are meant to be applicable to a range of cities, but there may be unanticipated challenges with this process. Both Vancouver and Seattle have a long history of activism in urban agriculture and other governance aspects which help facilitate action and discussion of urban agriculture issues. Smaller cities such as Niagara Falls do not have the same governance structure, and recommendations for larger cities may not be transferable to smaller municipalities.

There is an overall bias in this report on the part of the researcher in support of backyard chickens. Backyard chickens are only one part of the practice of urban agriculture. This report does not examine other examples of the practice, such as community gardens, green roofs, bee keeping or farmers' markets.

Chapter 4: POLICY ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Analysis Overview:

A table of key backyard chicken policy components was compiled to determine similarities and differences between the three cities (Vancouver, Seattle and Niagara Falls). Components were meant to identify important elements in the process of legalizing backyard chickens including community support, additional urban agriculture policies, and subsequent changes to municipal zoning by-laws. The components were categorized as either legislated information or process-oriented.

Legislated information included:

- Provisions written in separate backyard chickens by-law or included in the city's animal control by-law;
- Whether there were additional urban agriculture guidelines in the city's official plan;
- The by-law's definition of "chicken";
- Whether there was a registration or permit requirement;
- What were the defined minimum coop and run dimensions;
- Defined setbacks for the coop from property lines;
- The maximum number of hens permitted; and,
- Any other regulations defined in any city by-laws.

Process-oriented components included:

- City guidelines for keeping backyard chickens;
- The presence of a food council or similar entity;
- A city-run urban agriculture or food policy website;
- The presence of local food or sustainability initiatives;
- Whether there was citizen group participation; and,
- Whether public meetings were held on the subject of backyard chickens.

Information on several components was not available (citizen group participation, presence of a local food council or similar entity, and public meetings and/or information sessions). Any gaps in information were addressed through interview questions (See Appendix B).

4.2 Policy Components:

The three cities were compared in order to determine similarities and differences between their backyard chicken policies. A list of fourteen components was documented and examined. The results of this data were analyzed to determine what components led to a successful policy.

4.2.1 Provisions written in separate backyard chickens by-law

No new backyard chickens by-laws were written for the three cities examined. Existing animal control and zoning by-laws were amended to include provisions for the keeping of backyard chickens.

4.2.2 Provisions included in Animal Control By-law

Each of the cities examined amended their existing animal control by-law to include provisions for the keeping of backyard chickens. Sections 7.15 and 7.16 of Vancouver's Animal Control By-law No. 9150 outline the requirements for registering and keeping hens. Seattle's Municipal Code 23.52.052 regulates the keeping of animals. Section C outlines the regulations for keeping domestic fowl. Schedule "C" of Niagara Falls' Animal Control By-law No. 2002-129 specifies the maximum number of chickens permitted and provisions for housing backyard chickens.

4.2.3 Additional urban agriculture guidelines

Both Vancouver and Seattle had additional urban agriculture guidelines. Vancouver produced an Urban Agriculture Strategy for Southeast False Creek and Urban Agriculture Guidelines for

the Private Realm. The Urban Agriculture Strategy was created for the purposes of informing the planning process for the new community at Southeast False Creek. The Urban Agriculture Guidelines are intended to provide guidance on the design of urban agriculture developments where they are proposed, and to be used by city staff in assessing these proposals.

Seattle named 2010 “The Year of Urban Agriculture” and voted to expand urban agriculture opportunities in the city. Code changes included in Ordinance 123378 help create a more sustainable and secure local food system by increasing opportunities to grow and sell food in the city. The City of Seattle also provides guidelines for animal husbandry, aquaculture, community gardens, horticulture, and urban farms.

The City of Niagara Falls permits backyard chickens and rabbits within the urban boundary, as per Schedules “C” and “D” of By-law 2002-129.

4.2.4 Definition of “chicken” in by-law

How each city defined “chicken” provided information on the required age and gender of birds permitted. Vancouver used the term “Hen” which was described as “a domesticated female chicken that is at least 4 months old”. Seattle used the term “domestic fowl”. Niagara Falls used the term “Chicken” but did not provide a further definition.

4.2.5 Registration/permit/licensing requirement

Only one city had a formal registration requirement. The City of Vancouver required that hens be registered with the city’s Backyard Hen Registry. Seattle has a voluntary registry through King County Public Health, and requires permits for urban farms over 4,000 ft². Dog owners in Niagara Falls are required to registers their dogs, but there is no registration requirement for chickens.

4.2.6 Coop and run requirements

Coop and run requirements were generally included in by-law provisions. Vancouver requires at least 0.37 m² of coop floor area and at least 0.92 m² of roofed outdoor enclosure (By-law No. 9150, Section 7.16(a)). The City of Seattle does not specify any minimum coop and run measurements. Niagara Falls does not specify coop and run dimensions, but does state that the chicken coop “shall be designed and constructed to ensure proper ventilation and sufficient space for the chickens and maintained in accordance with good animal husbandry practices and shall keep all vermin out” (By-law No. 2002-129, Schedule “C” Section 6).

4.2.7 Defined setbacks

All three by-laws outlined required setbacks for coops. A coop in Vancouver must be located no closer than 3 m from any door or window of any dwelling and no less than 1 m from any property line (By-law No. 10065, Section 10.18.1(c)). In Seattle, structures housing domestic fowl must be located at least 10 ft from any structure that includes a dwelling unit on an adjacent lot (Seattle Municipal Code, Ordinance No. 123378, Section (C)(3)). A chicken coop in Niagara Falls shall be located at least 25 feet from the rear lot line of the lot on which the chicken coop is located and at least 15 feet from any side lot line of the lot on which the chicken coop is located (By-law No. 2002-129, Section C (11)(1)(2)).

4.2.8 Maximum number of chickens permitted

The number of chickens permitted varied between the three cities. Vancouver permits no more than 4 hens. Seattle increased the numbers of chickens permitted from 3 to 8. Niagara Falls used to permit 20 chickens, but decreased the maximum number permitted to 10.

4.2.9 Other regulations

Other regulations relating to backyard chickens for the three cities included the prohibition of roosters within city limits. In order to mitigate this concern, the City of Vancouver requires that chickens be at least 4 months of age so that gender can be identified.

4.2.10 Guidelines for keeping backyard chickens

Two of the cities examined provided additional guidelines for keeping backyard chickens. Vancouver produced a document titled “Basic Chicken Care” which provides information on coops, pens, food/water, and sanitation. Residents in Seattle can take a course called “City Chickens 101”, which is comprehensive introductory course for people interested in keeping chickens in the city and who want to start with adult birds. Niagara Falls does not provide any guidelines or workshops for keeping backyard chickens.

4.2.11 Year by-law was passed

Backyard chicken policies are a fairly new idea. Vancouver and Seattle both passed legislation permitting the practice in 2010, and Niagara Falls first permitted backyard chickens in 2002.

4.1.12 Presence of a Food Policy Council or similar entity

A food policy is a decision, program or project, endorsed by a government agency, business, or organization, which affects how food is produced, processed, distributed, purchased, protected and disposed. Food policy can be local, regional, provincial, national or within an institution (Vancouver Food Policy Council, 2008). Vancouver’s Food Policy Council examines how the local food system operates and provides policy recommendations to Vancouver City Council on how it can be improved. Seattle belongs to a Regional Food Policy Council which develops just and integrated policy and action recommendations that promote health, sustain and strengthen

the local and regional food system, and engage and partner with agriculture, business, communities and governments. The City of Niagara Falls does not currently have a food policy.

4.2.13 Municipal urban agriculture or food policy website

The municipal webpage is an important source of information for residents. Both Vancouver and Seattle have websites devoted to the city's urban agriculture practices and food policy initiatives (See Analysis Table Appendix A). The City of Vancouver website (http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/social_planning/initiatives/foodpolicy/projects/chickens.htm) provides information on registering and raising backyard chickens, and includes links to community garden sites and the Vancouver Food Policy Council. Seattle's urban agriculture website (http://www.seattle.gov/council/urbanagriculture/chickens_in_city.htm) provides resources for residents interested in raising backyard chickens, as well as links to community garden and urban farm sites. Currently, the City of Niagara Falls' webpage does not provide any such information.

4.2.14 Local food and sustainability initiatives

Sustainability or local food initiatives can be a major support to urban agriculture policy. Vancouver has a number of local food programs, including Get Local (a community of BC food producers, businesses, and groups working together to promote eating locally in the Metro Vancouver area), Farm Folk City Folk (a not for profit society working to cultivate a local, sustainable food system), and Think Local (a community connection to local food).

Similar initiatives in Seattle include the Local Food Action Initiative (Resolution No. 31019 a series of actions meant to promote local and regional food sustainability and security), Council Bill 116907 (support the local food movement), and Seattle Tilth (a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and educating people about gardening organically, conserving natural

resources and supporting local food systems in order to cultivate a healthy urban environment and community).

The Niagara Local Food Co-op is a marketing and distribution system for local farmers, agricultural producers, and consumers.

4.3 Discussion:

Key findings from the research are discussed in this section. They include strengths and weaknesses, updating by-laws, additional guidelines, role of the public and public consultation, and where the policy development process can be improved.

4.3.1 Strengths and weaknesses:

Three of the main strengths associated with backyard chicken policy in the cities examined include clear parameters, a commitment by local government, and thorough public consultation. When writing guidelines for keeping backyard chickens, Vancouver made a significant effort to provide lots of details and clear parameters. The city's guidelines for keeping backyard chickens describe basic care, pest control, housing, and registration. As revealed in the interview (Vancouver Planner, Personal correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 4th, 2011), the objective of the city was to make the process of registering and keeping chickens easy. This was further supported through the city's simple online registration system. The public is required to notify the city that they are keeping chickens but that is the extent of involvement. The City of Seattle's commitment to increasing urban agriculture opportunities is made evident through new legislation. Council Bill 116907 increases access to local food through improved urban farm and community garden policies. Niagara Falls ensured that the public was thoroughly consulted

when they wrote their backyard chicken policy in order to address any concerns residents had (Niagara Falls Planner, Personal correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 6th, 2011).

Weaknesses identified by this researcher included timeline of legislation and coop provisions. The backyard chicken policy in Vancouver has only been in place for a year. Because the policy is so new (i.e., Vancouver's policy came into effect in 2010), key problems associated with implementation and enforcement have not been identified yet. The City of Niagara Falls includes provisions for coop design, size, and setbacks, but does not specify that owners are required to house chickens in a coop. The Niagara Falls informant identified the provisions as arbitrary (Niagara Falls Planner, Personal correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 6th, 2011).

4.3.2 Updating by-laws:

All three cities that were examined in this study had added provisions for keeping backyard chickens by updating their existing Animal Control By-laws and Zoning By-laws. Keeping information together in one place and the process simple seemed to be a common goal between the cities when updating their by-laws. By-law amendments included the maximum number of chickens permitted, required setbacks from property lines, and coop and run dimensions. Information on Vancouver's by-laws and provisions was summarized in the city's *Backyard Chicken Guidelines*. This was purposefully done to concentrate information for the public, who would not normally use a by-law as a tool (Vancouver Planner, Personal correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 4th, 2011). Niagara Falls updated their Animal Control By-law to keep all the information in one place.

4.3.3 Additional guidelines:

Additional guidelines for keeping backyard chickens were not consistent among the three case examples. The role of additional guidelines for keeping backyard chickens is to answer frequently asked questions, increase awareness and understanding of the practice, and provide information. If citizens have a concern or query, the city website is often the first place they look for information. Providing information online is a proactive step for municipalities. The City of Vancouver has a website dedicated to backyard chickens which includes a link to social planning department, Food Policy Council, and animal control (<http://vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/projects/chickens.htm>). The website also includes a summary of by-laws, requirements, and answers to frequently asked questions. Seattle links to their guidelines for backyard chickens from their urban agriculture (<http://www.seattle.gov/urbanagriculture>) website. Seattle also provides links to other backyard chickens resources. The City of Niagara Falls does not provide any additional information or guidelines on the practice.

4.3.4 Role of the public and public consultation:

Members of the public play an important role as advocates for municipal policies. They are often catalysts for new ideas in local government, such as increased urban agriculture opportunities. For a backyard chicken policy to be successful there needs to be support from both the public and city council. The role the public played in implementing backyard chicken policy varied between the three cities. In Vancouver, there was support from members of the public involved in urban agriculture; however, the council played the most supportive role. Council had received a strong indication from the Food Policy Council for backyard chickens. As noted by the Vancouver Planner interviewed for this research, it was not a question of “should we do this?” but “how can we do this properly and address all the concerns?” (Vancouver Planner, Personal Correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 4th, 2011). There was no broad consultation.

Residents could leave comments via the city's website. Council members also played a significant role in Niagara Falls because they were the ones receiving complaints about backyard chickens. However, the Niagara Falls Planner interviewed for this study felt that a thorough public consultation was conducted in order to effectively address all concerns (Niagara Falls Planner, Personal Correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 6th, 2011). Public feedback was used to update the Animal Control By-law.

4.3.5 Where the process can be improved:

The two interview participants were asked how the backyard chicken policy could be improved in their respective cities. Because the practice of keeping backyard chickens is relatively new for most municipalities, it is still evolving. There are several ways the process can be improved. Vancouver stressed the importance of consulting with the right people. The BC SPCA felt that they were not consulted enough during the process, and more consultation with their organization might have led to better guidelines (Vancouver Planner, Personal Correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 4th, 2011). The City of Niagara Falls could reconsider the required location of coops in future by-law reviews (Niagara Falls Planner, Personal Correspondence, Telephone Interview, April 6th, 2011). In general, the cities were satisfied with their guidelines and had not encountered any major problems with their policies.

Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Recommendations for other cities developing backyard chicken policy:

The objective of this research was to share lessons with other municipalities about urban agriculture, specifically backyard chicken policy. The following are a series of recommendations for municipalities trying to facilitate backyard chickens. They are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather a list of successful strategies implemented by other cities.

1. Public consultation

Public consultation is an important stage in the process of creating and implementing backyard chicken policy. Municipalities need to conduct thorough consultation with the public in order to obtain input and feedback from residents. Consultation provides the opportunity for the public to voice their concerns and allows the municipality the opportunity to address concerns and create awareness.

2. Keep the process simple

“Keep the process simple” applies to finding information on backyard chickens guidelines, registering backyard chickens, and updating by-laws. The fewer steps and opportunities for misunderstanding there are, the more likely that a policy is successful. Information on backyard chickens policies, by-laws and guidelines should be concentrated in one area (eg. the municipal website). The process of registering chickens with the city should be simple administratively and have an online option. Relevant by-laws should be updated rather than writing new ones, keeping the provisions together in one document.

3. Importance of education and information

Proper education and provision of information is critical in the success of a policy. Members of the public need information about proposed changes and possible impacts, and the municipality needs to educate the public about the steps they are taking to mitigate potential issues. Information on urban agriculture, backyard chickens, and local food access should be available to the public online or in pamphlet form at city hall. Information and education should be part of the consultation process as well as an on-going monitoring program.

4. Council support

New initiatives such as urban agriculture policies need strong support from city council. Council members need to be committed to improving their city's sustainability and supportive of green policies. This support helps set the foundation for action and sends a message about the city's priorities.

5. Role of Food Policy Councils and local food initiatives

Food policy councils and local food initiatives play an important role in developing a sustainable food system for residents. They help create standards for sustainable and local food production, environmental responsibility, nutrition, and community development. These types of organizations are also often the starting point for actions such as the backyard chicken movement. They can function as a source of knowledge for municipalities considering the practice and a forum for discussion.

6. Involve the right people

When creating a new policy such as permitting backyard chickens within city limits, it is important to involve the right people during the process. Allowing stakeholders the opportunity to voice their concerns and/or support will help develop the best guidelines and

policies possible. Relevant stakeholders in the backyard chickens process include but are not limited to citizens groups, municipal government departments, and humane societies. Obtaining input from multiple angles helps establish fair and comprehensive guidelines.

7. Municipal Enforcement

Enforcement plays an important role in implementing a successful policy. Including proper provisions in by-laws for backyard chickens makes it possible for the municipality to enforce them. Enforcement is important for protecting the city as well as residents.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION

Concerns about food production, accessibility, and security are growing. Canadians are looking to municipal governments for sustainable and responsible solutions to these issues. Municipalities across Canada are attempting to address these concerns by increasing opportunities for urban agriculture within their cities. Urban agriculture can take the form of farmers' markets, community gardens, green roofs, or, as explored in this report, keeping backyard chickens. Backyard chickens represent a means to a local, accessible, and sustainable food source. There are many benefits associated with keeping chickens, such as access to a healthy source of protein, reduced groceries bills, and opportunities for awareness and education about food issues.

Chapter 2 provided a background of the history of urban agriculture and current trends in the field. The available literature on backyard chicken policy is thin, but the number of academic journal and media articles about the role of backyard chickens is growing. While urban agriculture is not a new idea, many municipalities are incorporating it into their by-laws and official plans for the first time. This report examined the process of implementing backyard chicken policy in three cities.

Research methods used for this report were described in Chapter 3. They included a literature review, a municipal document analysis, and semi-structured interviews. These three methods of data collection helped determine in what ways municipal planning documents facilitated or mitigated the development of backyard chicken policies in Vancouver, Seattle and Niagara Falls.

The analysis in Chapter 4 was based on three components: the concept of urban agriculture; zoning and land use; and, the role of the planner. The discussion section illustrated what components were involved in developing and implementing backyard chicken policy in three North American cities. Components analyzed were either process-oriented or legislated information. Each component was compared between the case examples and discussed. Interviews were conducted to fill in any gaps in information and cited.

From the analysis, recommendations for other municipalities trying to facilitate backyard chickens were created (See Chapter 5 Recommendations). A series of seven recommendations were outlined in Chapter 5 for municipalities to consider when developing or implementing a backyard chicken policy.

This report is the first step in more expansive research that could be undertaken at a later stage. The research presented will help the transfer of knowledge on backyard chicken policy between municipalities that want to learn more about the ins and outs of developing and implementing this policy.

New directions for research in this emerging policy area could include examining the relationship between backyard chickens and communities gardens. Most backyard chicken policy requires that the owner live on-site to ensure care and maintenance. The majority of community gardens are located on public land, and thereby not permitted to keep chickens despite meeting other requirements such as setbacks, maximum number, coop dimensions. Community gardens and backyard chickens are both growing urban agricultural practices, and in the future, community groups will likely campaign to include both practices on the same piece of land. Additional research on how the two practices interact could benefit municipal planning, which will likely have to consider this issue in years to come.

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