VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS

BOLD ACTIONS FOR A FOOD CRISIS

Filling unmet community food needs during COVID-19

Find our stories at **www.vancouverfoodnetworks.ca/FoodAccess**

VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS

Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks collaboratively build just and dignified community food security alongside: Community members with lived experience of poverty, advocates and policy developers.

Cedar Cottage Food Network Society

Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House

GORDON Neighbourhood House

GRANDVIEW WOODLAND FOOD CONNECTION

MPNH Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House

Hastings SUNRISE Community FOOD NETWORK

CITYREACH CARE SOCIETY

Frog Hollow NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE Creating Our Community Together

Kiwassa neighbourhood house

Little Mountain Neighbourhood House neighbour helping neighbour

Marpole Oakridge NEIGHBOURHOOD Food Network

RENFREW-COLLINGWOOD Food Justice

STRATHCONA COMMUNITY CENTRE We take care of each other

SOUTH VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE

WEST END NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORK

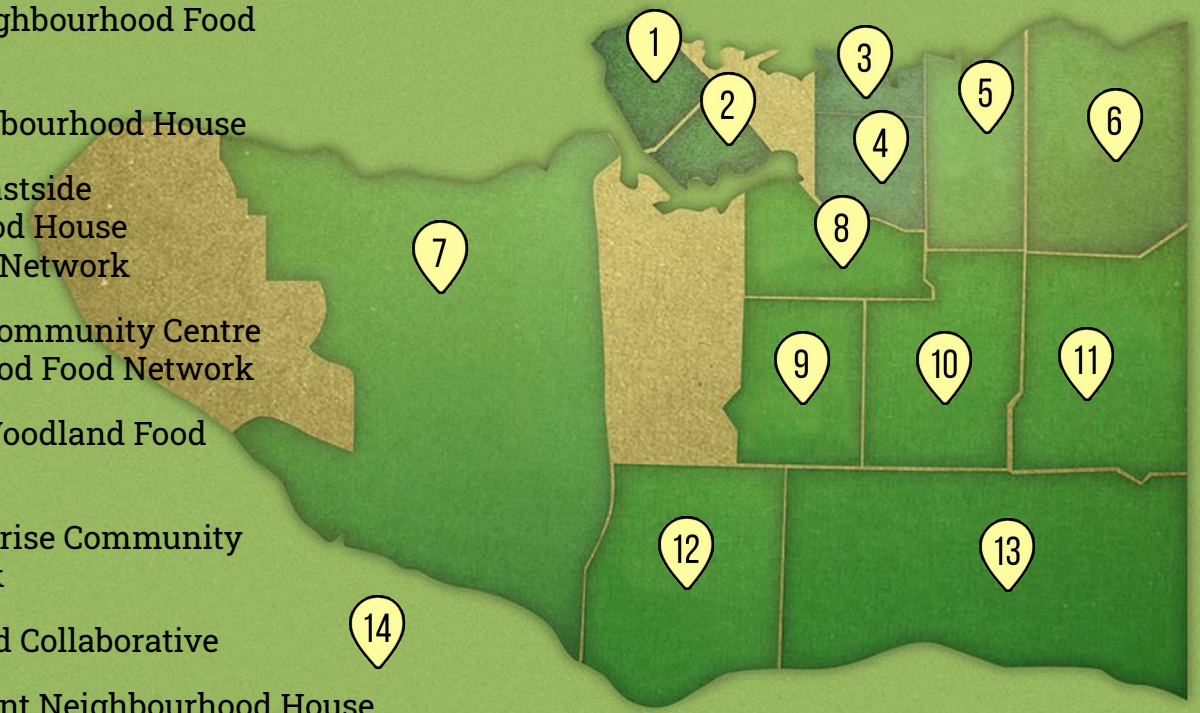
Village Vancouver Transition Society

WESTSIDE FOOD COLLABORATIVE

VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS

This map does not represent all food organizations in the City of Vancouver.

1. West End Neighbourhood Food Network
2. Gordon Neighbourhood House
3. Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House Right to Food Network
4. Strathcona Community Centre Neighbourhood Food Network
5. Grandview-Woodland Food Connection
6. Hastings-Sunrise Community Food Network
7. Westside Food Collaborative
8. Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House



9. Little Mountain-Riley Park Neighbourhood Food Network
10. Cedar Cottage Food Network
11. Renfrew-Collingwood Food Justice
12. Marpole-Oakridge Neighbourhood Food Network
13. South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network
14. Village Vancouver (citywide)

We carry out our collective work and responsibilities to our communities on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.

FOSTERING FOOD SECURE NEIGHBOURHOODS

Here's a look at the role we've played in community food security locally, long before COVID.

Over 25 years, Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks have learned to support people in growing and accessing nutritious and culturally familiar foods close to home, in neighbourhoods throughout the city. We promote access to food with dignity, and without barriers.

Many of our actions and principles reflect the global **Right to Food** standards, as outlined by the United Nations (tinyurl.com/UNRightToFood).

Our model is unique! We are a citywide network of networks, working together collectively through problem-solving, sharing information and resources, and advocating to increase our collective impact to build healthy food for all neighbourhoods.

Our work shows how investing in a just community food security model builds strong relationships, and quality access to food on an everyday basis. We've also demonstrated resilience and adaptability when crises arise.

Our model is responsive to the unique needs and cultures of each neighbourhood. Investing in community food security promotes individual and collective health, and eases strain on social and health care systems due to poverty and inequity.

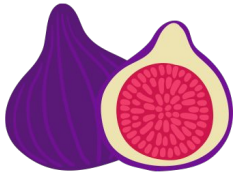
Building resilience for Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks (before and beyond COVID) means:

- Advocating for food justice, poverty reduction, and Indigenous land sovereignty
- Urban food growing, including community, school and permaculture gardens
- Gardening workshops, seed-saving and distribution
- Community meals
- Good Food Boxes
- Cooking and nutrition workshops
- Community food markets and food distribution
- Community food celebrations and festivals
- Food recovery

Gardening and urban farming helps people teach, learn, and socialize with neighbours of all ages, cultures and backgrounds; learn skills and exercise outdoors; and, grow fresh food close to home.

Pictured here: Indigenous herbalist Lori Snyder teaches Britannia High School students about wild and native plants, and their role in supporting healthy food systems.

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY IMPACT



"In July I had a series of small strokes, severe anemia to the point my nails all spooned, hair fell out, I could no longer breathe. I couldn't walk. I required transfusions, iron infusions. My blood count was so low from malnutrition.

COVID protocol was tight during that period. After a week in hospital, I came home to nothing in the fridge. The Grandview-Woodland Food Connection program rushed in to help me, immediately.

Having a variety of veggies, I had to learn preparation and storage. I caught myself Googling for recipes and freezing tips. It kept me active, even though I was confined to my home.

Due to COVID shutdowns, there were no services available to me for rehabilitation, except for this one. I received healthy foods, and a break from social isolation waving to volunteers at the doors.

There are so many seniors and families that need to eat good healthy food as medicine. I would not have survived this pandemic without this food delivery program."

Food Recipient, Grandview-Woodland Food Connection

...and sharing food as medicine for healthy living

ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY

Here's a brief look at how food insecurity affected our neighbours during COVID-19, and our response.

During COVID-19, people in our city faced a food crisis that lasted long after the shelves were restocked. Many people became food insecure by losing employment and income, as well as access to affordable, nutritious food near home.

Our food systems were inequitable before 2020, and COVID worsened these problems. The 2016 Census shows 20% of Vancouverites live below the poverty line, which is closely linked to food insecurity. Numbers are much higher for our Indigenous and Black neighbours, and newcomers to Canada—who remain disproportionately affected by poverty and food insecurity.

These were just some impacts of the food crisis:

- Long grocery lineups creating barriers for people with limited mobility
- Limited grocery delivery services
- Inability for people to afford healthy food
- Closure of many citywide food services, meaning longer travel times and health risks to reach a central food bank location

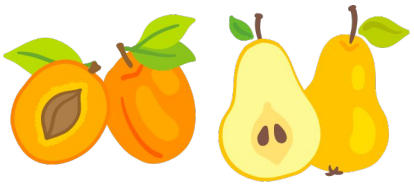
Our work creates a strong body of evidence that community food security builds everyday resiliency and crisis-preparedness in our neighbourhoods.

Our existing relationships allowed **15 Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network staff** (many of them working part-time) to immediately grasp the need for filling the gaps with emergency food assistance.

Providing emergency food access during COVID was a mandate shift for us, but here are some ways we've boosted food security during the pandemic:

- Food hamper and meal deliveries
- Pop-up produce markets
- Online gardening guides & workshops
- Seed packet mailouts
- Outdoor community meals at a distance

OUR COVID FOOD CRISIS RESPONSE



Here's a glimpse of the collective impact for our neighbourhood food networks, from March-May, 2020. Not all networks have reported in every category. Thanks to emergency funding from the Federal COVID Food Relief Fund, United Way, and other partners and funders, we were able to leverage $1,665,466.

Becoming a world leader in community food security: Because of our existing work and relationships, we were able to rapidly respond and provide emergency food assistance throughout Vancouver. With permanent funding of $1.76 million (0.11% of the City of Vancouver's annual operating budget), 22 full-time Food Security Coordinators (CUPE 15, Programmer 2) could help neighbourhoods build a future where every household is food secure—making Vancouver a world leader in community food security.

7,807
Households Supported

178,239
Prepared Meals Provided

20,104
Individuals Supported

37,583
Volunteer Hours by 1,332 People

105,190
Food Hampers Delivered
...containing nutritious food that was purchased or donated

215
New Partnerships Leveraged
...in addition to our existing partnerships

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY IMPACT

"Thank you to your amazing staff and volunteers. You all work so hard at making produce available to us. Everything is always of incredibly high quality and quantity. You make it affordable for myself, my daughters and granddaughters and my Mom to enjoy this nutritious food.

You are also saving us from having to wait in long lineups and then carry the produce home. Transit is difficult to access for them as well. My Mom is 90 years old, and my daughter has two toddlers, so it's difficult for them to get out at this time.

I have been using my portion to cook nutritious jars of soups and casseroles that I take to my Mom, so she has easy to reheat-and-eat meals at hand."

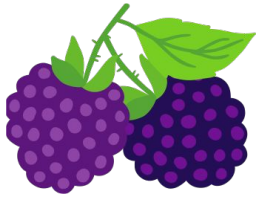
Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
Food Network produce program participant

...and how we spread healthy eating during COVID

Even during a crisis, Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks prioritize close-to-home food choices, including nutritious and culturally familiar foods, with dignity and free from fear. Our existing relationships and community partnerships make this good work possible.

Pictured here: City of Vancouver staff at Sunset Nursery in South Vancouver shifted some of their work to growing food for COVID emergency food relief, delivered by Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks .

INVESTING IN RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS



Here's a brief look at our vision for a food-secure future.

Billboards, advertising, politicians, and news media have told the public that food banks are the answer to food insecurity. We recognize the role that food banks play in helping people put food on the table, but we know through our work that building thriving, food secure communities requires a long-term capacity-building approach.

We need better legislation, more funding, and more support to help communities grow toward their vision of a just, equitable, and food secure future.

With an annual budget of about $1.76 million (just 0.11% of the the City of Vancouver's $1.597 billion operating budget), there could be a full-time Food Coordinator in all 22 Vancouver neighbourhoods (CUPE 15, Programmer 2). Our current operating budget from the City of Vancouver is $200,000 per year, through the Sustainable Food Systems Grant.

We seek the funding to continue our pre-COVID work citywide, creating a future where every neighbourhood has a community food security network, and every household is food secure.

Here are the systems changes we advocate for, in support of our vision of a resilient food future:

- Stronger poverty reduction legislation and policy, including Right to Food principles that address deep poverty—and including but not limited to, enacting a universal basic income program
- Increased and ongoing funding for local, place-based community food security organizations dedicated to food justice, including Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks
- Comprehensive and multi-ministerial provincial food strategy, rather than fragmented ministry-by-ministry food policy
- Indigenous land and food sovereignty, working to decolonize our current food systems in solidarity with local Indigenous communities

COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY IMPACT

"This is the one light in my life right now, and I sure appreciate it."

Gordon Neighbourhood House food recipient

"There's a group of neighbours near our food distribution site who are skilled gardeners, and are diverse in language, culture, age, and physical ability. They connect at the garden to share tips, seedlings, and soil, intuitively supporting each other. While food security, mental health and social isolation are challenges during the pandemic, this group has found a way to cope."

Khalid Jamal, Strathcona Community Centre Food Security Program Coordinator

Pictured here: Fruits and veggies purchased by an appreciative participant, who received vouchers from Gordon Neighbourhood House—and who typically could not afford such a variety of fresh local produce.

...and how we support thriving neighbourhoods

Help our neighbourhoods build responsive and resilient community food networks in Vancouver.

Follow, Like & Share.

VANCOUVER NEIGHBOURHOOD FOOD NETWORKS

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A proud member of the BC POVERTY REDUCTION coalition

Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Networks receives support from

CITY OF VANCOUVER

Vancouver Coastal Health