



**City of Kingston
Report to Council
Report Number 25-004**

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Jennifer Campbell, Commissioner, Community Services
Resource Staff: Ruth Noordegraaf, Director, Community Development,
Wellbeing & IIDEA
Date of Meeting: February 4, 2025
Subject: Fines for Food Update and Next Steps

Council Strategic Plan Alignment:

Theme: 4. Foster a Caring and Inclusive Community

Goal: 4.2 Help address food insecurity and sustainability.

Executive Summary:

On February 20, 2024, Council passed a motion directing one month of parking ticket revenue totalling \$180,000, to be distributed equally to free foodbanks and food pantries. Council endorsed the 2024 Fines for Food distribution plan in June 2024 with contributions to seven community agencies. Council directed staff to report back with 2024 pilot results and options for the pilot to continue.

The information shared by the participating community agencies indicates that the pilot improved access to nutritious food, alleviating food insecurity for recipients in the short term. Through the pilot thousands of food hampers, meals and snacks were distributed, providing crucial nutritional support to residents, including seniors, students and low-income households. Agencies collaborated with local farms, suppliers and other community groups to maximize impact, reduce costs through bulk purchasing and donations, and enhance their operational capacity.

Staff recommend continuing the Fines for Food program for up to five years, and to work with food partners on an allocation and distribution proposal. The establishment of an annual

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evaluation and impact report of the program will ensure the funds get distributed appropriately and with the highest impact.

In addition to recommending continued distribution of funds to food providers, staff explored other opportunities for food solutions that are sustainable and cost effective. Staff recommend that a portion of the funds from this program be used to support a collaboration with Growcer, a social enterprise and vertical farm manufacturer now based in Kingston that is producing local and nutritious leafy greens that can supplement the non-perishable stock of food more commonly available through providers. Through this initiative it is expected that 66,000 units of fresh produce will be grown annually (valued at \$200,000) and will in turn be donated to local food agencies.

On January 14, 2025, Council declared a Food Insecurity emergency in the City of Kingston. As part of the 2025 operating budget a one-time contribution of \$200,000 for food programs was approved. Additionally, staff were directed to report back to Council by April 2025 with the proposed allocation of these funds as an enhancement to the funding provided through the Fines for Food program. Through the same reporting staff will also bring forward a Food Framework for endorsement by Council.

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to continue the Fines for Food program for up to five years and to provide annual reports on distribution and impact of the program to Council through the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies committee; and

That Council direct staff to enter into an agreement with Growcer and establish a Local Food Vertical Farm Project and direct up to \$80,000 annually from the Fines for Food program toward this pilot for up to five years; and

That Council authorize the Mayor and Clerk to execute all documents and agreements related to the Fines for Food funding allocations and all other approvals outlined in Report Number 25-004, in a form satisfactory to the Director of Legal Services.

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Options/Discussion:**Background**

The Fines for Food initiative came out of a motion on February 20, 2024 moved by Councillor Glenn and seconded by Councillor Ridge:

Whereas City Council has included “Help address food insecurity and sustainability” as one of its priorities within its 2023-2026 Strategic Plan; and

Whereas food insecurity has become more prevalent in lower and middle-class income housed populations which has triggered different program changes including the Municipal Fee Assistance Program; and

Whereas food banks and pantries, including the Queen’s University and St. Lawrence College food banks, have all identified a surge in demand, particularly in low to middle class income households, over the last year and their inability to supply sufficient food and items to the community; and

Whereas the needs in the community and on post-secondary institutions are pressing, considering the end of the school semester in April 2024; and

Whereas the City of Kingston can leverage revenues, outside of property taxes, to support various programs such as Toys for Tickets;

Therefore Be It Resolved That staff implement a pilot project to establish “Fines for Food” month which would redirect parking fine revenues estimated at \$180,000 equally to free food banks and free food pantries only; and

That the 2024 operating budget be amended to reflect a reduction of \$180,000 in the transfer to the Parking Reserve Fund and a corresponding contribution to others; and

That Council direct staff to report back by the end of 2024 on the results of the pilot project and options to continue this program.

On June 4, 2024, Council endorsed the 2024 Fines for Food distribution plan ([Report Number 24-165](#)) with contributions to seven community agencies for food hampers and emergency pantry items.

Following this 75% of the funding allocation was provided to partners in August 2024, and the remaining 25% of the funding was provided in December 2024, after receipt of the agencies’ impact report. This report outlines the funding allocation and usage, highlighting how funding supported the agency to increase food access through hamper distribution, pantry stock enhancement and partnerships with local suppliers. The impact reports received from agencies also included metrics, challenges faced and recommendations for sustaining and expanding the

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initiative. An impact report template has been developed and is attached as Exhibit A and a summary of the reports provided in 2024 is included in the analysis of this report.

Analysis

The Fines for Food initiative was launched to address food insecurity by redirecting parking ticket revenues to local food banks, pantries and emergency food providers in Kingston and has demonstrated significant impact during its initial pilot period (August to December 2024). Table 1 provides an overview of the funds distributed to each provider.

Table 1 - Fines for Food – Funds Distributed

Agency	Fines for Food Pilot Funding
Partners in Mission Food Bank	\$50,000
Kingston Community Health Centres (KCHC) - Seniors Good Food Box	\$25,000
St. Vincent de Paul - Food Pantry	\$25,000
The Food Sharing Project	\$35,000
Salvation Army – Community Pantry	\$10,000
Queen’s University AMS Food Pantry	\$10,000
Student Association St. Lawrence College Food Pantry	\$10,000
Contingency Budget	\$15,000
Total	\$180,000

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Program Highlights and Achievements

Even though each program is unique and provides different food solutions, it is estimated that through this pilot in the first five months, approximately 7,105 individuals were supported with hampers, food boxes and snacks. Below is an overview of the impact of the program for each provider.

Partners in Mission Food Bank - Partners in Mission Food Bank distributed 4,993 food hampers between August 19 and November 14, 2024, providing support to approximately 2,546 households. This is a 10% increase from the previous year. The Fines for Food funding supported an additional 203 to 300 hampers (valued at \$125 to \$185 each), benefiting approximately 234 to 346 individuals based on household size.

KCHC Seniors Food Box Program - The Seniors Good Food Box program achieved a significant milestone by clearing the waitlist of 80 senior households, exceeding the initial projection of removing 45-50 individuals over two years. In late September 2024, after receiving the funding, the Seniors Food Box program began clearing their waitlist by removing 40 senior households, followed by another 40 in October. The funding allowed KCHC to purchase and distribute 240 food boxes, serving 80 households. Monthly distributions will continue for 80 senior households until December 2025, ensuring sustained food access for this group.

St. Vincent de Paul - From August to October 2024, the emergency food pantry distributed 830 food hampers total, serving between 320 and 350 individuals each month. An estimated 600 additional hampers were distributed in November and December, bringing the annual average to 300 hampers per month. Monthly spending on non-perishable food increased by 52%, rising from \$2,500 earlier in 2024 to around \$3,800 in the later part of 2024. The Fines for Food funding has allowed the pantry to collaborate with local farms and food suppliers to include fresh produce in hampers, ensuring nutritional variety, and based on the current number of clients, it is anticipated that the funding will support an additional 40 individuals and families in 2025.

Student Association of St. Lawrence College - The Fines for Food funding supported flexible food access initiatives at St. Lawrence College, benefiting approximately 600 students. The funding supported the Student Nutrition Access Kit (SNAK) program and over 200 \$25 gift cards were distributed to students in emergent need. The Student Association hosted four pop-up Fresh Food Markets in collaboration with Lionhearts, distributing 700 coupons, valued at \$5 each (105 redeemed to date), organized three free breakfast events, serving over 200 students and partnered with St. Larry's Pub providing hot lunches benefiting over 150 students.

The Food Sharing Project - The contribution of \$35,000 enabled the distribution of approximately 12,000 nutritious meals (approximately \$2 per meal) and 12,000 healthy snacks (approximately \$1 per snack) to students across Kingston schools between September and December 2024. As of October 31, 2024, The Food Sharing Project has purchased \$250,000 worth of food at wholesale prices with bulk discounts, supported in part by Fines for Food funding. While the funds were integrated into overall purchasing and not tied to specific items or

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individuals, their impact is reflected in the ability to provide substantial food support to hungry students at reduced costs.

Salvation Army - There was a delay in onboarding the Salvation Army to the program and therefore the impact numbers have not been included in this first update report. The agency has confirmed that the Fines for Food funding will be used to increase the variety of pantry items and non-perishable goods available. This support will also enable the pantry to expand its capacity, serving more individuals and families and ensuring broader support within the community.

Alma Mater Society (AMS) Food Bank at Queen's University - The AMS Food Bank faced increased demand due to rising food costs and limited funding, making it challenging to consistently meet the growing needs. With the funding, the pantry supported approximately 6.5 weeks of groceries at \$1,500 per week, serving 667 students, including 100 students with families. The funding allowed for a significant increase in pantry stock. An additional \$450 per week was allocated to accommodate dietary needs, such as lactose-free milk and gluten-free items. AMS clients noted that increased stock availability reduced lineups and eased the urgency to visit at opening times.

Challenges and Considerations:

The impact reports from participating agencies have identified several challenges and considerations summarized below:

A key challenge faced by the Partners in Mission Food Bank is the limitation imposed by organizational resources, facility size and distribution capacity, which restrict their ability to respond to the growing demand for their services. Their current infrastructure supports a maximum distribution of 100 hampers per day, limiting their ability to meet the needs of the increasing number of individuals and families experiencing food insecurity.

KCHC's Seniors Food Box program has a limited pool of volunteers, particularly drivers, which impacts their delivery capacity. A consideration for ongoing funding is the need to recruit additional volunteers or establish partnerships with organizations to provide support. This approach would help address delivery capacity challenges and ensure the consistent distribution of food boxes to seniors in need.

St. Vincent de Paul's Emergency Pantry is managing increased demand while addressing resource constraints. Costly non-perishable items, such as cereal, have been temporarily removed to manage expenses. Updates to the service model, including a controlled entry system to improve client privacy, have enhanced the client experience but require additional staffing resources to operate effectively.

The Student Association St. Lawrence College Food Pantry is managing a growing volume of requests for support and a key challenge is the limited staffing capacity. They have shifted from preparing food hampers and offering a food pantry to distributing gift cards and SNAK kits. Their partnership model with Lionhearts has helped address these challenges. Further expansion of

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free breakfast programs and fresh food markets remains constrained by funding and staff resources.

The AMS Food Bank has faced an increase in demand and is struggling to meet needs due to stagnant funding, limited storage (three fridges and one freezer) and shortages of key perishables. Upgrading stock systems, increasing outreach through food drives and digital campaigns, and adopting donation models like larger food banks is seen as essential to expand the program's reach and sustainability.

The Food Sharing Project faces challenges with storage and transportation logistics due to bulk purchases and limited freezer capacity further restricts the ability to increase perishable stock, complicating efforts to expand food support. Another challenge is that the distribution of food often falls on support staff in the school system, adding to their workload. A consideration could be to hire a dedicated nutritional coordinator to help with the distribution of food at area schools.

Organizations participating in Fines for Food funding face several common challenges, including the need for long-term funding, volunteer recruitment and infrastructure upgrades to meet growing demand. Limited capacity for storage, transportation, combined with staffing constraints, poses significant challenges to effectively expanding services. These are important trends and needs to take into consideration for further funding, partnership and project opportunities. Staff are working with partner agencies to understand challenges and identify opportunities with consideration of both in the development of a Food Framework for Kingston and the distribution of the additional funding approved by Council at its January 14, 2025, meeting. Recommendations will come to council along with the Food Framework in April of this year for endorsement.

Vertical Farm Project Complementing Fines for Food Program

In addition to distributing funds from the pilot to foodbanks and food pantries directly, staff have explored other opportunities to add food solutions in the community that are sustainable and cost effective. Staff were put in touch with Growcer, a vertical farm enterprise providing a local sustainable food option that could offer a complementary and nutritious food source for residents in Kingston accessing food programs. By utilizing a part of the Fines for Food funds to support this initiative the farm could produce 66,000 units of fresh produce (leafy greens) annually, valued at \$200,000. This produce will be donated to local food agencies and supplement the existing stock. More information on the proposal can be found in Exhibit B.

Growcer is a Canadian vertical farming social enterprise enabling anyone to grow fresh, local produce year-round using a hydroponic modular farm. Growcer has manufacturing operations in Kingston specializing in modular vertical farming solutions designed to address food security challenges, particularly in remote, urban and underserved communities. To date, over 70 farms grow more than ten million servings of local, nutritious greens across Canada.

The vertical farm is climate-controlled and capable of producing fresh, locally grown produce year-round. The farm is equipped with advanced hydroponic systems, energy-efficient LED lighting, and automated environmental controls, enabling precise growth conditions for various

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leafy greens, herbs and microgreens. Aligned with the work on climate initiatives in the City of Kingston, this solution emphasizes sustainability by minimizing water usage, reducing transportation emissions and supporting local economies.

In addition, Growcer provides comprehensive support services, including farm training, business planning assistance and ongoing technical support, empowering users to operate their farms effectively. Growcer works with municipalities, Indigenous communities, educational institutions and businesses seeking to enhance food sovereignty and reduce the environmental footprint of food production. By integrating technology and community-focused programs, staff believe this additional project provides a scalable and impactful approach to vertical farming that addresses food insecurity locally and sustainability.

The benefits of the vertical farm initiative range from the operations being independent from weather conditions ensuring consistent supply, maximizing production in urban areas due to the small footprint, lowering transportation costs, provision of food education and training, reduction of water use and the opportunity for a variety of (social) enterprise opportunities. The farm offers an opportunity to enhance food security and help build sustainability in not-for-profit organizations in the space. In addition to the benefits, staff have also reviewed risks of initiating this farm project in the community - addressing financial, operational, environmental and community-related challenges. A more comprehensive overview of the benefits and the risk mitigation strategy can be found in Exhibit C.

The initiative aims to achieve self-sustainability over the next five years. The objective is to reach cost neutrality while maximizing the farm's impact on Kingston-based food distribution agencies. To achieve this goal, the partners will also engage corporate donors to pledge support for specific operating costs, solicit contributions from donors and sell a portion of the produce to local businesses and community members.

Recommended Next Steps

The Fines for Food pilot has proven effective in strengthening short term food access for students, seniors and families, through diverse food distribution programs and collaborative efforts. Given the ongoing affordability pressures in the community and the increase of food insecure households, staff recommend continuing the program for up to five years. Food programs and community needs continue to be evolving.

Based on the first impact reports and the common challenges provided by agencies such as staff capacity, transportation and storage issues, staff are recommending working with the food provider group annually on a fund distribution plan. Moving forward there could be an opportunity to align the Fines for Foods fund with other existing funding programs that support social infrastructure in the community. Staff also recommend informing Council on the program annually with an evaluation and impact report provided to Council through the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee.

Staff also recommend utilizing up to \$80,000 of the estimated \$180,000 annual Fines for Foods fund to annually invest in the Vertical Farm project, adding an estimated 60,000 units of healthy

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leafy greens to the food system, and to work with Growcer on the implementation of this project and to leverage additional funding through Provincial and Federal funding streams.

On January 14, 2025, Council declared a Food Insecurity emergency in the City of Kingston. As part of the 2025 operating budget a one-time contribution of \$200,000 for food programs was approved. Additionally, staff were directed to report back to Council by April 2025 with the proposed allocation of these funds as an enhancement to the funding provided through the Fines for Food program. Through the same reporting staff will also bring forward a Food Framework for endorsement by Council.

Climate Risk Considerations

The introduction of the Vertical Farm project aligns with the recommendations in the climate leadership plan.

Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility (IIDEA) Considerations

The program will provide increased access to food for individuals and families in the community. The vertical farm project will provide the potential for skills development for various community groups.

Existing Policy/By-Law

None

Notice Provisions

None

Financial Considerations

The estimated \$180,000 contribution to the Fines for Foods program is captured in the 2025 Operating budget as a transfer to others within Parking operations. The additional \$200,000 contribution to this program in 2025, that was approved by Council at its January 14, 2025, meeting is a one-time transfer from the Working Fund Reserve.

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Craig Desjardins, Director, Strategy, Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, Strategy, Innovation and Strategic Initiatives

Soren Christianson, Project Manager Climate Leadership, Climate Leadership Division

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Ben Leslie, Community Development Coordinator, Community Development & Wellbeing and IIDEA

Laird Leggo, Manager, Licensing, Parking Operations and Policy, Licensing & Enforcement Services

Exhibits Attached:

Exhibit A - Impact Report Template

Exhibit B – Growcer Proposal

Exhibit C - Overview of Vertical Farm Benefits and Risk Mitigation

Impact Report for Fines for Food Distribution Plan

Prepared for/Name of Organization: _____

Reporting Period: August 2024 - December 31, 2024

1. Introduction

This impact report outlines the outcomes and effectiveness of the Fines for Food distribution plan implemented by the City of Kingston. The initiative addresses food insecurity by reallocating parking ticket revenue to local food banks and pantries to enhance food access and support for the community.

Consideration for future funding is contingent on the following:

- The activities carried out by _____ align with the City Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan priority to address food insecurity and sustainability.
 - Worked closely with City staff, providing feedback and insights to shape the broader community food strategy.
 - Participated in regular meetings and discussions with other local food banks and community organizations.
-

2. Funding Allocation and Utilization

Total Funds Received:

Disbursement Schedule:

- **August 2024:** \$ _____ (75% of total funds)
- **December 2024:** _____ (25% of total funds, post interim impact report)

Funds Utilization Breakdown:

- **Food Purchases:**

_____.
 - **Other**

_____.
-

3. Program Activities and Achievements

Food Access and Distribution:

- Distributed _____ food hampers to families in need.
- Increased pantry stock to support _____ additional emergency food requests.
- Collaborated with local farms and food suppliers to secure fresh produce, ensuring nutritional variety in food hampers.
- Other

4. Impact Metrics, Data Collection and Reporting:

- I. **Collect and share data on the number of individuals and families served, types of food distributed and feedback from recipients, where possible.**
- II. **Prepare and submit an impact report to the City of Kingston, highlighting key metrics and outcomes.**

Metrics:

- Number of Individuals Served: _____
- Number of Food Hampers Distributed: _____
- Increase in Pantry Stock: _____%
- Recipient Satisfaction Rate: _____ % (based on feedback surveys, if applicable)
- As you know, impact can extend beyond numbers, so please feel free to include any additional information that helps explain how this funding assistance has contributed to providing essential food assistance to the community.

Prepared by:

[_____] [Title:_____]

Name of Organization

Submitted to:

[Name] [Title] The Corporation of the City of Kingston



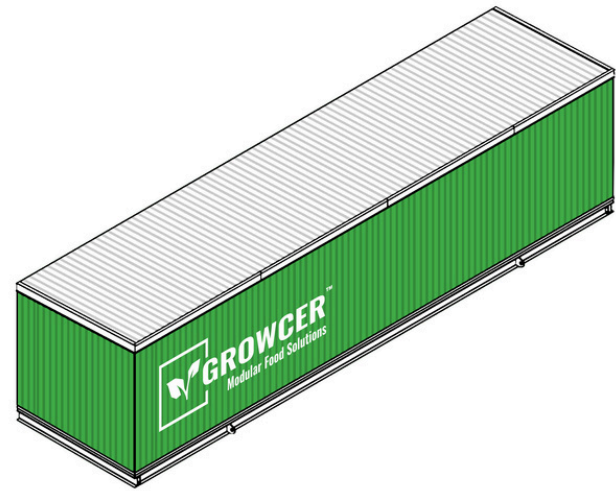
GROWCER

Local food for all.

PROGRAM SCOPE & OPERATING BUDGET BREAKDOWN



Program Phase One : 1x Growcer Osiris 2.0



ANNUAL PRODUCTION VOLUME: 66,000 UNITS OF GREENS

FOOD PRODUCTION VALUE ANNUALLY: \$200,000

FOOD PRODUCTION LOCATION: 945 PRINCESS ST, KINGSTON

FOOD DISTRIBUTION: “FINES FOR FOOD” RECIPIENTS AND
OTHER AGENGIES

Annual Power Cost	\$16,000
Annual Labour Cost	\$60,000
Growcer Materials & Packaging	\$20,000
Total Operating Costs	\$96,000
Annual Equipment fee cost including maintenance: Farm (5-year term)	\$60,000

ROLES AND RESPONSABILITIES PER PARTNER



Item	Lead Partner	Annual Commitment over 5 years
Site & Site Prep	Modern Niagara	\$40k to \$60k (one-time)
Installation & Commissioning	Growcer	\$22,000 (one-time)
Power Cost	Modern Niagara	\$16,000
Labour Cost	Growcer	\$60,000
Growcer Materials & Packaging	City of Kingston	\$20,000
Insurance	Modern Niagara	\$12,000
Annual Equipment fee cost including maintenance (5-years terms)	City of Kingston	\$60,000



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS PER PARTNER

Partner	FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION
CITY OF KINGSTON	\$80,000 per year over 5-years
GROWCER/GROWCER FOUNDATION	\$82,000 in year-1 \$60,000 per year over 4 years
MODERN NIAGARA	\$78,000 in year-1 \$28,000 per over 4 years



5-YEAR PROGRAM PLAN

Under the leadership of Growcer, and in close collaboration with Modern Niagara, the Food Community partners, and the City of Kingston, the program aims to achieve self-sustainability over the next five years. The objective is to reach cost-neutrality while maximizing the farm's impact on Kingston.

To achieve this goal, the group will:

- Engage corporate donors to pledge support for specific operating costs.**
- Solicit contributions from donors within food community partners.**
- Sell a portion of the produce to local businesses and community members.**





GROWCER TRAINING PROGRAMS



ROOTCAMP

2-day training providing participants with practical skills and knowledge in hydroponics, indoor farming, plant science and farming operation.

Skills applicable to Indoor, Greenhouse and Traditional Agriculture industries.



FOOD RESILIENCY PROGRAM

A 3-month in-depth training program offering a blend of in-person sessions and an online self-learning platform. Focus areas include horticulture, hydroponics, controlled environment agriculture, plant science, farm economics, and farm operations.

Skills applicable to the: Indoor, Greenhouse and Traditional Agriculture industries.



Get in Touch.

If you have any questions about this opportunity, or would like to explore in more detail, reach out to our team.



Florent Schmahl - Chief of Staff

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GROWCER OSIRIS® 2.0



Growcer OSIRIS® 2.0, backed by industry-leading research, delivers consistent and high-quality fresh greens year-round in all-weather conditions.



- 5,300 planting slots grow **20,000lbs of food yearly verified**
- R28.5 insulated 5-inch SIP panels sustaining **-45C to +40C**
- Deep Water Culture (DWC) ensures reliable hydroponic operations
- Remote monitoring and support for your operation with **your farm success team**

STEP INSIDE THE FARM HERE

Overview of Vertical Farm Benefits and Risk Mitigation

Overview of Benefits

Using the vertical farm model could offers benefits for not-for-profits in the food security sector, enabling them to address community needs effectively and sustainably. These benefits include:

- Climate-controlled units operate independently of weather conditions, ensuring a consistent supply of fresh, nutrient-dense produce year-round. This stability can help not-for-profits maintain reliable food distribution programs, even in harsh climates or seasons when traditional agriculture is not feasible.
- The modular vertical farm units maximize production per square foot, making them ideal for urban or space-constrained environments. Not-for-profits can set up operations in underutilized spaces, such as vacant lots, to grow food locally without requiring expansive farmland.
- By producing food locally, vertical farm units reduce dependency on supply chains, lowering transportation costs and ensuring that fresh produce reaches communities faster. This is especially critical in food-insecure areas (food deserts) where access to fresh, affordable produce is limited.
- While there is an initial setup cost of the unit, its operational model can lead to long-term cost savings through efficient water use, reduced food transportation and minimal waste. Not-for-profits can redirect savings into other critical programs, amplifying their impact.
- The vertical farm units can serve as educational hubs, offering training and employment opportunities for community members. Not-for-profits can integrate workforce development programs, equipping individuals with valuable skills in sustainable agriculture and food production.
- The use of hydroponic systems minimizes water consumption compared to traditional farming methods. The units also eliminates the need for pesticides and reduces food miles, supporting not-for-profits in their mission to promote environmental stewardship.
- Units are modular and customizable, allowing not-for-profits to scale operations based on their specific needs and resources. Individual units can address immediate community requirements, while multi-unit configurations can support broader food distribution networks.
- The model emphasizes collaboration with local businesses, governments and academic institutions. Kingston not-for-profits can leverage these partnerships to enhance their funding opportunities, access expertise and expand their reach.
- Vertical farms significantly enhance the capacity of not-for-profits to address hunger and improve nutrition in underserved populations. The surplus produce could also support meal programs, food pantries, food hampers and community kitchens.
- The vertical farms units can be tailored to support social enterprise business models, enabling not-for-profits to sell excess produce and reinvest the proceeds

into their food security programs or other community initiatives thereby reducing dependency on ongoing government subsidies.

Overview of Potential Risks and Mitigation

Investing in the vertical farm model offers a promising opportunity for the City to enhance food security and help build sustainability in not-for-profit organizations in the space. To mitigate risk, the following overview will address initial financial, operational, environmental and community-related challenges.

Financial Risk: Need for capital and operational costs to be covered by City budgets.

Mitigation:

- Conducted a detailed cost-benefit analysis, including ROI projections, to justify the investment.
- Continue to seek diversified funding sources such as grants, sponsorships and private partnerships.
- Negotiated co-investment opportunities with Growcer or other stakeholders to share financial burdens.

Technological Risk: Technology failures or obsolescence may disrupt operations.

Mitigation:

- Ensure technology includes robust warranties and a clear maintenance plan.
- Develop a partnership agreement with Growcer for ongoing technical support, upgrade, and staff training. Explore adding post-secondary education institutions to the collaboration to provide research and development expertise.
- Ensure a backup power system to prevent outages from impacting food production.

Operational Risk: Insufficient management expertise could hinder farm performance.

Mitigation:

- Train dedicated personnel with expertise in hydroponics and vertical farming.
- Develop a clear operations manual and standard operating procedures in collaboration with Growcer.
- Partner with post-secondary institutions for internships, and workforce training programs.

Market and Demand Risk: Insufficient market demand or inability to distribute produce effectively.

Mitigation:

- Conduct market research to identify local demand for fresh produce and potential buyers.
- Establish partnerships with food banks, schools, hospitals and local businesses to ensure consistent distribution channels.
- Develop a branding strategy for locally grown produce to foster community support and demand.

Community Engagement Risk: Limited public buy-in or concerns over equity in food distribution.

Mitigation:

- Engage the community early through consultations and education campaigns about the benefits of vertical farming.
- With local food providers create and evaluate an allocation plan to ensure equitable distribution.
- Continue to provide transparency in decision-making and regularly report on the farm's impact on food security.

Environmental Risk: High energy consumption or water use may offset sustainability goals.

Mitigation:

- Invest in renewable energy solutions like solar panels or wind energy to power the farm.
- Monitor and optimize water usage through advanced hydroponic systems and closed-loop recycling.
- Conduct an environmental impact assessment and establish sustainability benchmarks.

Policy and Regulatory Risk: Regulation or policies could delay implementation.

Mitigation:

- Collaborate with relevant City departments to align the farm with zoning, building codes and food safety standards.
- Work with Growcer to ensure the farm complies with all regulations and certifications.
- Advocate for supportive urban agriculture policies at the provincial and federal levels if needed.

Economic and Market Shifts Risk: Changes in market dynamics (i.e. economic downturns) could affect profitability.

Mitigation:

- Diversify revenue streams by integrating educational programs, tours or partnerships with local businesses.
- Implement adaptive pricing strategies for produce to remain competitive.
- Build flexibility into the farm's operations to grow a wide variety of crops based on market needs.

Long-Term Sustainability Risk: Lack of clear long-term planning could lead to project failure.

Mitigation:

- Develop a long-term strategic plan with milestones and performance indicators to measure success.
- Periodically review the farm's financial, environmental and social impact, making adjustments as needed.
- Establish an exit strategy in case the project becomes unsustainable, ensuring assets and resources are repurposed effectively.

Reputational Risk: Failure of the project could damage the municipality's credibility.

Mitigation:

- Set realistic goals and communicate them clearly to stakeholders and the public.
- Publicize successes and benefits of the farm to build trust and support.
- Partner with credible organizations like Growcer, which has a proven track record in vertical farming.