

SUMMERLAND REVIEW



COLUMN: Summerland council values local agriculture Agriculture and agriculture-based businesses and services have

long been a strong economic driver Jun. 11, 2018 3:00 p.m. / COLUMNISTS / OPINION









social wellbeing of residents.

strategic directions.

beverage producers.

regional food initiatives.

Okanagan-Similkameen.





of culture by including a fourth 'pillar', in the district's strategic plan.

By doing so, council acknowledged that culture is as essential to a vibrant,

In 2015 this council publicly and formally showed their commitment to the value

healthy community as matters relating to the economy, the environment, and the

In September 2016, council adopted the community Cultural Plan, a guiding document that, with input from more than 2,500 residents, identifies five key

The strategies build on the community's values (see below) and can guide Summerland's cultural development into the future.

the community; the quality of life; the community's history and heritage; and local agriculture ... are what make the community unique. These [values] are what define Summerland's culture."

Agriculture and agriculture-based businesses and services have long been a

A statement in the Summerland Cultural Plan reads, "The arts; the character of

sustaining part of our history. Some businesses have been here long enough to be considered Summerland

'pioneers' while others are relative newcomers, including the many alcoholic

strong economic driver in Summerland — this sector is an important and

Community-led initiatives complement and celebrate our agricultural history, too.

Summerland hosts two community markets; farm to table events; and, after a

three-year hiatus, we'll enjoy a revitalized Summerland Fall Fair this September. What do all of these businesses and initiatives have in common?

They are the result of the passionate people who live here.

sector) local agriculture enjoys some very committed champions. In addition to elevating the importance of recognizing and developing a strong

Through a combination of natural resources (soil, water, climate) and human

resources (the hundreds of people who earn a living and/or volunteer in this

In 2017 the Summerland Chamber of Commerce and the district contracted a local consultant to conduct a feasibility study for siting the Okanagan Agriculture Innovation Centre in Summerland.

cultural identity in Summerland, council is also playing a role in advancing some

within the agriculture industry to achieve a sustainable, resilient and prosperous regional economy" (Okanagan Agriculture Innovation Centre Feasibility Study, 2017, p. 6)

The vision of the Centre is "to foster and advance innovation and technologies"

The Okanagan Bioregion Food System Project, a food system project, is a twoyear research study being conducted in the three regional districts of the

The feasibility study was well received by the B.C. Ministry of Agriculture and

the next step — a business plan — is well underway.

The Institute for Sustainable Food Systems (ISFS), a research branch of Kwantlen Polytechnic University, leads the project, which is just getting underway.

In collaboration with UBC-Okanagan, regional government staff, producers, First Nations, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Okanagan College and other stakeholders, researchers will gather data on what is occurring in terms of agriculture in the Okanagan.

When the project is completed, policymakers will have quantifiable data on the economic, environmental, and social opportunities of moving to a more regionalized food system.

Although the decision on whether or not to financially support the Okanagan Bioregion Food System Project was made by regional district government (Mayor Peter Waterman and Coun. Boot are RDOS board directors), Summerland council fully supports the project.

As you have read, a lot is going on in Summerland in local agriculture. W

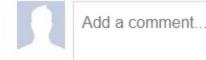
e are fortunate to live in an area with the all resources we need.

We can be leaders in local agriculture—a sustainable sector that is aligned with Summerland's character, enhances our quality of life, and makes our town more resilient.

Toni Boot is a Summerland councillor.

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