

# York Region Food Charter Action Day

Angus Glen Community Centre

March 2012

## Community Gardens

Strategies to develop community gardens

- Development & % of levy to community gardens
- The development of more gardens by Pan Am Games- 2015 community gardens
- Make it an issue in the next municipal election
- Developing sponsors & partnerships for community gardens

Health & wellness- all age groups

- Promotion of health
- Prevention of illness
- Community social hubs

School Gardens

“Mindset issues”

- Reluctant schools
- School community partnership
- Lions club adopt/sponsor gardens
- Schools have eco-clubs

Accessibility of community gardens

- Public transit
- Various disabilities- wheel chair accessibility
- Access to water
- Access to specialists

Unutilized spaces

Year round gardening = greenhouses

Community brick garden

By-law changes to allow veg. in front gardens

# Engaging Kids in Healthy Food

## Challenges:

- Bureaucracy/ School board for ground enhancing projects

## Solutions:

- Start where people are at
- Start with container gardening in schools
- Growing compost (Cathy's Creepy Crawlies) → planting → harvest → prep of food
- Outside workshops – engaging parents & children to cook together with fresh food
- Invite community member/seniors to participate
- Connect kids to farms/farmers- field trips
- Give them hands on experience/ see the magic of the process
- Focus on the multifunctional use in growing food gardens
- Try also at community centers, day camps, day cares, religious groups
- Marketing playing a huge role “what’s more fast food than an apple”
- Having the kids put forth a marketing campaign
- High school kids mentoring elementary students
- Engaging kids in cooking- helps with economic and healthy issue
- Cost of eating out vs. cooking

# Accessibility to Food

## Problems

- Transportation
- Reaching those who need help (those who fall through the cracks)
- Stigma & judgment to individuals accessing breakfast programs and food banks

## Recommendations

- Social assistance rates
- Eliminate stigma- through education
- More nutritious food available at food banks
- Engage community in social justice
- Social planning council York Region

# YR Food Policy Council

There isn't one

What do we want to do?

- Connect rural & urban
- Bringing more healthy food to people
- Bridging
- Facilitating body for food issues and projects
- Healthy food policy
- Marketing- incentives for urban agriculture
- Year round farmers markets
- Food as a centerpiece for resilience/sustainability plans
- Bridge regional departments
- Core funding supported financially by York region- Arms length
- Demonstrate commitment
- Legs of the food charter
- System thinking

Who do we want?

- Representation
- Agriculture
- Activists
- Processors-promoting
- Health
- YRFN
- Housing
- Citizens
- Education
- Faith groups
- Poverty groups
- Government
- Retailers
- Farmers markets

## Food Charter

Develop the frame

Implement, supervise and advocate

Develop a plan

Develop an action

Develop an outcome or indicators

Writing food charter draft

Buy-in from poverty- farmers, youth groups, faith groups

Charter must be flexible, general, goals

# Going Beyond Community Composting

Idea to approach IBM, which has 1000's of acres of land in York region to donate land for community gardens. Work through the York Region Food Network and talk to the commissioner of York Region Environmental Services, Economic Development and Natural Heritage and Forestry Departments to help make York Region a leader in Municipality Education from a health perspective in terms of doing training on :

- Building nutrient in soil
- Reducing waste
- Creating more green space
- Planning for climate change

Work also with GTA Clean Air Council under the Clean Air Partnership and approach the Canada Green Building Council to bring idea to them for creating community energy and education centers where demonstration projects can all be done under one roof to achieve York Region's Climate Action Plan and New "vision 2051" sustainably strategy.

## Community Kitchens

Charitable donations

Foundations

Community kitchen different from breakfast program, church meal programs

Recommendations

- Find out who is interested in creating community kitchens
  - o Committee & Network
- Find sustainable funding for community kitchens
  - o Food
  - o Marketing
  - o Staff/volunteers
  - o Transportation
- Follow "The Stop" food center model

Important Goals

- Availability of foods
- To learn to cook
- To be fun, interactive, social get together

Questions to be answered

- How many community kitchens are there
- Where is the greatest need
- What resources are there
- How do we know
- What brought people together

# Local Vs. Non-Local Production

- Answer in this room in “local”
- Only one method, a marketing tool, not a type of farming, same crop, same field- u-picks, stores, wholesale
- Local ≠ sustainable
- Not all grown here, not all processed here
- Not all is fruit and veg. that can be, and that can go to market
- More complicated
- Boundaries- York Region vs. neighboring places
- What is the definition of local
- Food miles- 1 truck vs. cars coming to a u-pick
- Why food different than other products
- Balance of self supporting & external trade
- Enabling rather than barrier
- Distribution system, contracts means local makes it to grocery stores
- Seasonal education- ask at grocery stores, community kitchens
- Continuous improvement
- Should we grow what we are best at or for the local population
- Spirit tree in Caledon, only so many processors, but selling other products they don't grow... enabling local cooperatives
- Packaging of food- waste producing, help source products/reduce waste

## Solutions

- Education on what is grown/processed here
- GTAAAC Plan- 2<sup>nd</sup> largest food processing cluster
- Focus efforts where it makes sense w/ local
- Promote our local successes (granola, beer (King), etc.)
- Revive the food guide for local farmers markets, Ontario farmers markets, u-picks

# Land Use for Growing Food

## Economic Pressure

- Where should we put the money and where should we put the reserves
- Therefore the “soft” issues related to food have less attention
- Land use- selling to developers brings higher value

Can we reduce the barriers for food procurement- so many policies and acts that prevent

At a municipal level- official plan, land use designation is determined

- Do you change the land use designation  
i.e. a family owns an acreage zoned as agriculture they want to change it to rural (they haven't been farming anyways)

Public Parks – when the subdivision plan dictates how big the park/playground would be- to change it would require a zone bylaw- water/safety

### “Blue Skying”

- Must have the local municipality on board
- Would have to fit with what the municipality has as its long-term vision
- Need people in the community that would champion the issues
- Useful if you
  - Make deputation to the council, we would want help and how can we make this happen
  - Meet with the planning dept., what would need to be done to change from a park to a community garden
- Best would be to meet with the planning staff

### Land Pressures

- May be needed for sports field
- Not ideal for houses
- May be better for food

Which subdivisions are not yet finalized therefore more opportunity for adding a community garden.

## **Explore Partnerships to Communicate the Process & Results of the Charter Effort for a Wider Audience**

### Potential Partners:

- Community to Community
- Unlikely partners (edge concept)
- Community to Government
- Person to person
- Community to all levels of educational institutes

### How to:

- Word of mouth
- Newspapers
- YouTube
- Social media
- Town hall meetings
- Television/radio

### Who to:

- Health Units
- Social Services
- Churches
- Agencies who serve free meals
- Gyms/ recreational
- Chamber of commerce
- All & any trade associations
- Municipal senior centers
- Salvation Army

- Goodwill

#### Message Fundamentals

- Message must be clear
- Win/win situation
- Essential part of the green movement
- Not waiting for government action
- All communication designed to reduce isolation and lack of improvement in certain social sectors
- People in food charter group must be empowered to pass it on, pay it forward
- Consumer is the expert on what they need
- Communication of “the experts” (people who study this) and the community specializing themselves
- Top/down & bottom/up & side to side=success

#### Who can:

- Other agencies who are helping people who are disfranchised
- To draw up usable promotional material each stage of food charter process so group participants can pass it on/ pay it forward
- Approach research funders & researchers for university programs
- Regional & municipal need in departments support
- Local marketing organizations & business companies