

Appendix 1

# Toronto Food Strategy



## 2016 Update

## **Reference**

Toronto Public Health. *Toronto Food Strategy: 2016 Update*. October 2016

## **Authors**

Paul Coleman, Jill McDowell, Marian Yusuf and Barbara Emanuel

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## **For Further Information:**

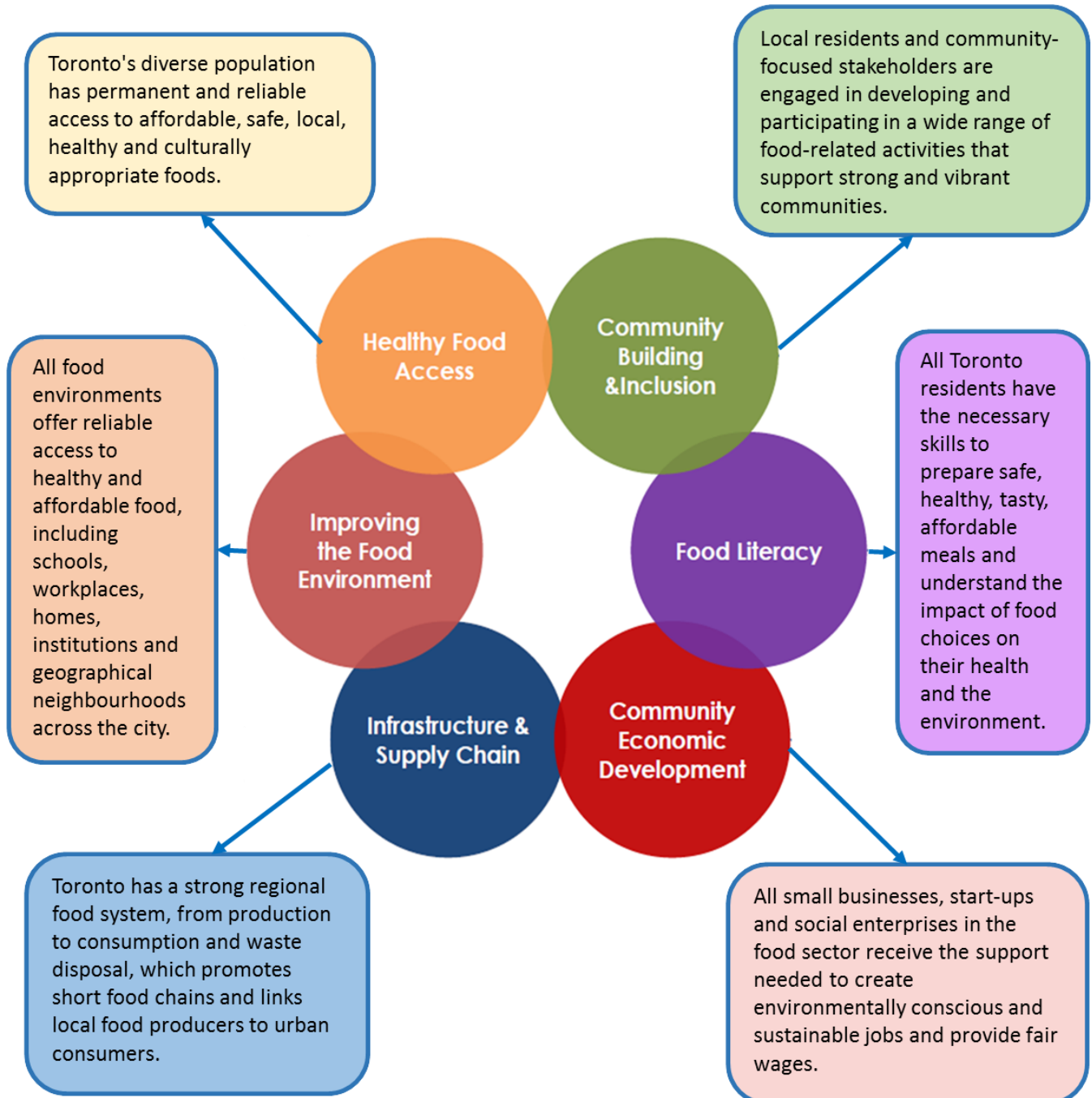
Toronto Food Strategy  
Toronto Public Health  
277 Victoria Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Suite 200  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
M5B 1W2

3-1-1

[foodstrategy@toronto.ca](mailto:foodstrategy@toronto.ca)

# Toronto Public Health Food Strategy

## Strategic Goals



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## Setting the Global Context

### Food Security and Food System Health

The global food system is intricately linked to many of the greatest problems facing the world today, from the rise of non-communicable diseases and food insecurity to species loss and climate change. Over recent decades, the food system has become increasingly wasteful, processed and environmentally damaging.

In total, one billion people do not have access to enough good food to lead healthy active lives while two billion people are either overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> This is not just a case of too much food in developed nations and not enough food in developing nations.

#### Global Food Security:

- One billion people do not have adequate access to healthy food
- 2 billion people are overweight or obese
- 19-29% of greenhouse gas emissions are from the food system
- One third of all food produced is wasted
- 70% more food must be produced to meet global demand by 2050



In reality, food insecurity, hunger and malnutrition often coincide with over consumption of processed foods and obesity within the same country, city or even household.<sup>2</sup> Over the last half-century, there has been a global upsurge in the consumption of meat and processed foods rich in saturated fats, sugars and salts. Meanwhile there has been a steady decline in the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, pulses and whole-grain products. This "western diet" is responsible for a global rise in diseases such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis and certain types of cancer.<sup>3</sup>

Poor nutrition is often a cyclical condition. Children who are obese are more likely to be overweight as adults, while malnourished mothers are more likely to have underweight children. Nutrient deficiency in childhood is known to hinder cognitive development, which in turn leads to poorer school performance and lower future earnings. This pattern can keep families and communities locked in cycles of poverty for multiple generations.<sup>4,5</sup>

Population growth and a rising middle class will continue to place increased pressure on the already strained food system. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, total food production must increase by 70% to meet global demand by 2050.<sup>6</sup> This demand will not be met by continuing with "business as usual". One-third of the world's land surface is already used for food production and it would be imprudent to convert remaining areas of nature, such as forests and wetlands, into agricultural land given their vital role in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Along with the possibility of future water shortages, rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, droughts, pest species outbreaks and slower global agricultural production growth,<sup>7</sup> it is going to be a challenge for the existing global food system to keep pace with demand over coming decades.<sup>8</sup>

### Food Security in Canada:

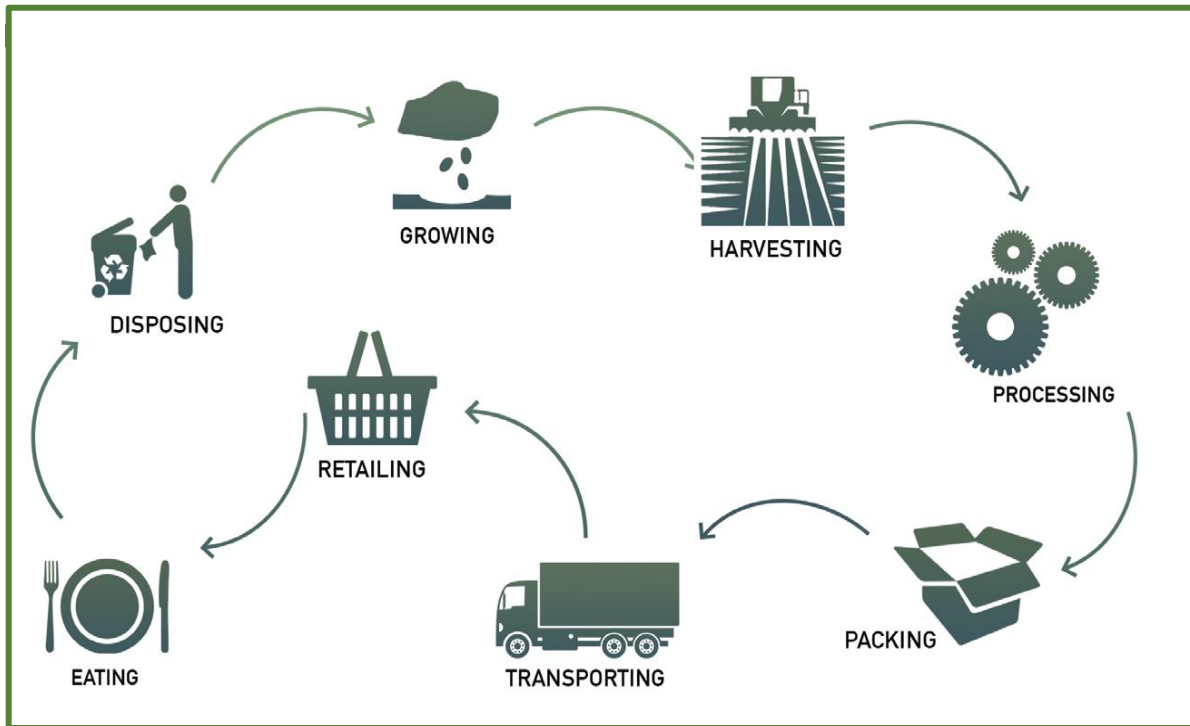
- 1 in 8 families struggle to access food<sup>1</sup>
- 20.3% of all purchased food is wasted<sup>2</sup>
- 10.3% of average household expenditure is on food<sup>2</sup>
- 79,000 people access food banks for the first time each month<sup>3</sup>



## International Food Systems Action

Addressing food security and a degraded food system is a complex global problem, and a problem that requires innovative and strategic solutions because the world is facing a nutrition crisis: three billion people from across the world have low quality diets.<sup>9</sup> Policy makers need to ensure that all parts of food systems work together to deliver affordable, nutritious diets for all (see Figure 1). Food systems also need to be repositioned from just supplying food to providing high quality diets for all.<sup>9</sup> This means thinking beyond agriculture to consider all processes and activities involved in food production, processing, packing, storage, transportation, retail, purchasing, eating and disposal.

Figure 1



Internationally, the City of Toronto is working to promote healthy and sustainable food system change as a signatory to the [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#)<sup>10</sup> and participating in the [C40 Food System Network](#).<sup>11</sup> Canada has also committed to ending poverty, inequality and injustice and tackling climate change by working towards the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

# The Global Food Movement



The **Milan Urban Food Policy Pact** engages cities in both the global north and south in promoting sustainable, equitable, resilient and diverse food systems while minimizing waste and mitigating impacts of climate change.

The Pact provides 120 member cities with 37 specific goals, associated with six key themes, which can be adopted, grouped and implemented as necessary to suit individual city requirements. **On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015 the City of Toronto endorsed the Pact. By signing the Pact the Mayor committed to supporting a sustainable, equitable food system for all.**



The **C40 Food System Network** is a partnership between the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group Initiative and the EAT foundation.

The C40 Food System Network encourages cities to share information and develop new policies that enhance food security; enable local and low-carbon food production and distribution; advance food waste management solutions; and develop food systems options that result in carbon reductions and improved health equity.

**The Manager of the Toronto Food Strategy represented the City of Toronto at the launch of the C40 Food System Network in June 2016.**



In September 2015, world leaders adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. Several of the SDGs **are directly related**

**to food security**, including:

SDG 1: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

SDG12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans and marine resources.





## Setting the Local Context

### Food Security

Despite levels of food insecurity being measured and monitored across Canada for the past decade, little progress has been made in reducing the number of people struggling to access good food. Accessing good, healthy food is a constant struggle for thousands of people living in Toronto. In total, 12.6% of households in the city have inadequate access to food due to financial constraints (known as food insecurity).<sup>12,13</sup> The majority of food insecure households are in low-income neighbourhoods where healthy food options are often the least accessible, while processed foods high in sodium, sugars and saturated fats are more affordable and readily available.

Attempts to address food insecurity have been offset by rising food prices, wage stagnation, cuts in social assistance rates and increasing cost of living. Consequently, more people are coming to rely on food banks, with a 13% rise in the number of people using food banks in Toronto since 2008.<sup>12</sup> The first three months of 2016 have seen the kind of rapid increase in food bank users that has not been experienced since the 2008 recession.<sup>13</sup> This is the result of stagnant incomes, rapidly rising food and living costs, and Canadian newcomers, including Syrian

### Fact Box: Cost of food insecurity

The full economic burden of food insecurity is unknown, but it is estimated that the direct and indirect costs of diabetes alone take about \$5 billion per year out of Ontario's economy.<sup>14</sup>

refugees, who are struggling to access the food they need. Meanwhile, the minimum cost for a household in Toronto to eat a healthy diet increased by 20.1% between 2009 and 2016 (the estimated weekly cost of the [Nutritious Food Basket](#) for a family of four is \$858.81 per month).<sup>15</sup> The cost of fruits and vegetables increased by 11% over the 12 months ending in April 2016<sup>16</sup> – propelled by adverse weather conditions and a weak Canadian dollar.

Newcomers to the city are particularly vulnerable to living with food insecurity because of higher levels of unemployment, poverty and social isolation. They also face the added challenge of adapting to how food is purchased, prepared and consumed in a new country. These factors, among others, result in newcomer's health often deteriorating after first arriving in Toronto.<sup>17</sup> Food insecurity is not confined to newcomers – many young Canadians and adults also lack the basic skills to prepare fresh, healthy meals from scratch. Meanwhile, a rapidly aging population is placing increased pressure on how society meets the nutritional needs of its seniors.

## Health and Social Impacts

Food insecurity is often found hand-in-hand with other social problems such as poverty, unemployment and lower levels of education. It is also associated with a range of chronic health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis and obesity (see Table 1)<sup>18,19,20</sup>

**Table 1. The health impacts of food insecurity associated with different age groups**

Demographics	Health impacts
<b>Infants</b>	Delayed socio-emotional, cognitive, motor and neurophysiological development Increased risk of weakened attachment to parents
<b>Children</b>	Increased likelihood of hyperactivity, inattention and poor memory Poor performance on language comprehension tests Increased risk of obesity and higher frequency of chronic illnesses, including asthma and depression
<b>Youths</b>	Increased risk of depression and suicidal behaviour Mood, behaviour and substance abuse disorders
<b>Adults</b>	Multiple indicators of chronic disease and poorer health including diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, certain types of cancer and obesity Increased levels of stress
<b>Maternal adults</b>	Higher likelihood of developing post-natal depression Higher likelihood of unresponsive caregiving practices

*Adapted from 18,19,20,21,22*

The health impacts of a poor diet can be long lasting, with children raised in food insecure homes displaying higher levels of social anxiety, depression and suicidal behaviour in their teenage years and in later life.<sup>21</sup> Adults experiencing food insecurity are also more likely to develop chronic diseases and mental health disorders, as well finding it more difficult to manage existing health conditions.<sup>22</sup> They are also faced with increased medical costs, which can be up to 76% (\$1092) per year higher than in food-secure homes.<sup>23</sup>



## Municipal Action

The cost of food insecurity is not just felt by individuals and households but also by neighbourhoods, the city and country as a whole, through increased medical costs, lost productivity, premature death, illness, disability and lower professional and educational achievement.

Municipal governments have a duty to ensure that all residents have geographic, financial and physical access to culturally appropriate and safe foods, and that people have the necessary skills to prepare their own healthy meals. Investment in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity can ultimately deliver great benefits to individuals, society and the economy.

### Food Security in Toronto:

- 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese
- 45.8% of adults are overweight or obese
- 12.6% of households experience food insecurity
- \$7 billion spent annually on buying food
- 1 in 8 people work in the food sector
- 128,000 meals are served per week by charitable programs
- 13% rise in food bank users over the past 8 years
- 18.4% rise in food prices over the past 5 years



Sources: 12,13,15,17,25

There is an urgent need to restructure the food system so that it promotes good health while addressing the interrelated threats of climate change, poverty, hunger, inequity and social injustice. Municipalities such as Toronto – with robust economies, high levels of industrial innovation and diverse network of academics, entrepreneurs and social enterprises – are well-placed to lead the way in developing healthy, sustainable, affordable and equitable food systems.

#### Fact Box: Cost of addressing food insecurity

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN estimates that every dollar invested in addressing food-insecurity will yield 5 to 20 times as much in benefits.<sup>24</sup>

Toronto is already gaining a global reputation as a food leader. It has a long history of a formal food policy mandate, starting with the establishment of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) in 1991 and the Toronto Food Charter in 2000. City of Toronto staff and three City of Toronto Councillors support the TFPC. It is a community-led organization that has pioneered the field of urban food system thinking. Harnessing knowledge and perspectives from across the city region food system, the TFPC plays a prominent role in bringing local, national and international attention to issues such as urban agriculture, local and sustainable food, rural-urban partnerships, nutrition labelling and genetically engineered free milk. The TFPC played an integral role in developing the Toronto Food Charter and launched the world's first Youth Food Policy Council in 2008 – both of which have since been replicated globally.

## Toronto Food Strategy

In 2008, Toronto City Council launched the Toronto Food Strategy – **the vision of the Toronto Food Strategy is to champion and support a healthy and sustainable food system for all through research, facilitation, partnership building and, incubating and implementing specific, tangible projects.**

Toronto Food Strategy and TPH staff engage and collaborate with numerous partners, including a number of City divisions and community and private sector partners, to launch projects, prototype initiatives, conduct research and promote enabling policies that help make Toronto a healthy, vibrant place for everyone to live and work.

The activities of the Toronto Food Strategy are closely aligned with those of the TFPC. Members of the TFPC act as advisors and collaborators on numerous Food Strategy projects, while Food Strategy staff provide regular updates to the TFPC. Together the Toronto Food Strategy and TFPC leverage their connections and build on the momentum of the food movement and local activities to identify and implement innovative ways of achieving multiple objectives through food.



## Toronto Food Strategy: Strategic Goals

Addressing the interrelated challenges of poverty, food insecurity, obesity, malnutrition and poor-diet requires a holistic food systems approach that considers all aspects of the food system. The Toronto Food Strategy takes an “action research” approach to develop and prototype projects that concentrate on addressing complex, interconnected elements of the food system.

This is reflected by the six key objectives of the Toronto Food Strategy, which in turn support the strategic goals of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (of which Toronto is a signatory). The six strategic goals of the Food Strategy are:

### Goal 1. Healthy Food Access

**Toronto's diverse population has permanent and reliable access to affordable, safe, local, healthy and culturally appropriate foods.**

The availability and affordability of healthy foods in neighbourhoods influences food purchasing behaviour, dietary habits and long-term health. Individuals leading an active lifestyle and with regular access to fresh food are less likely to develop heart disease, diabetes, obesity, certain types of cancer, and osteoporosis.

### Goal 2. Community Building and Inclusion

**Local residents and community-focused stakeholders are engaged in developing and participating in a wide range of food-related activities that support strong and vibrant communities.**

Neighbourhoods need opportunities to use food to build stronger and more vibrant communities. Local residents need the support, knowledge and resources to create

a local food system that provides everyone with reliable access to good, culturally appropriate food.

### **Goal 3. Food Literacy**

**All Toronto residents have the necessary skills to prepare safe, healthy, tasty, affordable meals and understand the impact of food choices on their health and the environment.**

Food literacy is a set of skills and attributes that help people sustain the daily preparation of healthy, tasty, affordable meals for themselves and their families. It involves understanding food safety, how to buy, grow and prepare healthy food, how to read food labels and being able to pass these skills on to the next generation. In particular, many newcomers in Toronto want opportunities to find culturally appropriate foods, understand food marketing, and adapt their food skills to their new home.

### **Goal 4. Community Economic Development**

**All small businesses, start-ups and social enterprises in the food sector receive the support needed to create environmentally conscious and sustainable jobs and provide fair wages.**

The food sector is a fundamental part of Toronto's economy. It is the city's number one industrial and service employer – with food production, processing, distribution, marketing, retail and services employing one person in eight. At a time of heightened environmental awareness, there is the potential to make an expanded food sector a centrepiece of a sustainable economy.

### **Goal 5. Infrastructure and Supply Chain**

**Toronto has a strong regional food system, from production to consumption and waste disposal, which promotes short food chains and links local food producers to urban consumers.**

Research suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase healthy, locally grown produce if they are more knowledgeable about where food comes from. Buying local food will help minimize greenhouse gas emissions while supporting local producers and processors.

### **Goal 6. Improving the Food Environment**

**All food environments in Toronto offer reliable access to healthy and affordable food options. These environments include schools, workplaces, homes, institutions and neighbourhoods across the city.**

What makes up the food environment is vast and varied, including how people access food, and what food is available in their homes, schools, workplaces, community centres and retail environments. The availability and cost of nutritious foods can influence food purchasing, eating behaviours and long-term health.



## Project Updates

At Toronto Public Health, the work of the Toronto Food Strategy and its partners is based on a “food systems perspective” of seeing the food system as a complex web of interactions and networks, with each part of the system interacting with other parts in a range of different ways. As such, many of the Food Strategy’s initiatives are influenced by, and have an impact upon, a mix of food system elements including nutrition, disease prevention, food supply chains, social justice, food literacy, environmental protection, climate change mitigation and economic development.

Projects are conducted in partnership with other groups/organizations at the local, national and international level, including government agencies, non-profit and charitable organizations, academic institutions and private sector companies. Emphasis is placed on incubating initiatives that have the potential to be scaled up on a system level. The Food Strategy has been engaged in a number of interconnected initiatives **designed to address multiple elements of the six strategic goals outlined in the previous section**. The next section provides an update on the following key projects, followed by an overview of numerous ongoing initiatives:

- ❖ **Grab Some Good**
- ❖ **FoodReach**
- ❖ **Community Food Works**

# GRAB SOME GOOD



Healthy Corner Stores. Mobile Good Food Markets. TTC Pop-Up Markets.

## Grab Some Good

Toronto is a city with a wealth of supermarkets, local grocery stores, farmers' markets, specialty food stores, artisan cafés and restaurants. Yet in many neighbourhoods, Torontonians do not have equitable access to good, healthy food. In fact, Toronto neighbourhoods typically have four 'less healthy' convenience stores for every 'healthier' outlet within 1km walking distance.<sup>25</sup>

In particular, traditional food retailers are absent in some low-income neighbourhoods. Instead, food retailers with a focus on selling non-perishable food items high in salt, sugar and fat often serve these neighbourhoods.

While Toronto does not technically have any '**food deserts**' (areas with no access to food), there are 30,000 households over 1 km from the closest supermarket or grocery store – out of which 9,284 are over 1km from any kind of food outlet. Toronto does however, have a number of '**food swamps**' neighbourhoods - places where unhealthy foods are more readily available than healthy foods.

### What is Grab Some Good?

In response Toronto Public Health, through the Toronto Food Strategy, has launched Grab Some Good – a series of food access initiatives operated in collaboration with FoodShare and other community partners to bring healthier food into underserved neighbourhoods across the City. Grab Some Good also engages residents in a wide range of food-related activities, helping build strong and vibrant communities. The concept is still emergent in how it achieves its goal of establishing novel and inexpensive food supply chains, as well as developing new markets for local suppliers and, in some cases, creating employment for local residents. It also relies on a local demand for fresh, healthy food options.



## The Projects

Grab Some Good is a brand that emerged as three discrete projects: Healthy Corner Stores; the Mobile Good Food Market and Subway Pop-Up fresh food Markets. Each of these initiatives was developed through collaborating with a range of partners including Toronto Transit Commission, FoodShare, local convenience store operators and other community organizations.

The goals of Grab Some Good are:

1. To offer healthy, affordable and culturally diverse fresh food to residents living in areas that are underserved by healthy food retailers.
2. To provide fresh produce at convenient locations at prices that are lower than the average grocery store.
3. To promote healthy and sustainable eating habits among all Toronto residents and to support good nutrition and disease prevention interventions.



**The Mobile Good Food Market**



## Grab Some Good: Healthy Corner Stores

### The Issue

Corner stores are a valuable neighbourhood asset providing local residents with convenient access to a range of everyday items. In some neighbourhoods – particularly low-income areas not well served by traditional supermarkets – corner stores can also be the only source of readily accessible food. This can be limiting for the surrounding community, as these stores often focus on selling nutrient poor products with long shelf lives such as candy, chips, ice cream and soda.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, people living closer to corner stores often report less healthy diets and increased body mass.<sup>27</sup>

### The Response

There is clearly a need for corner stores to provide residents with regular access to nutritious and affordable food. To support this vision, Toronto Public Health (through Grab Some Good) has been working closely with storeowners in three Neighbourhood Improvement Areas to build healthier produce and other food options into their existing business model. The success of the Healthy Corner Store initiative relies on establishing connections between corner storeowners and wholesale suppliers to provide access to healthy food at affordable prices, while ensuring owners still make a profit.

The existing Healthy Corner Stores initiative is a collaboration between Toronto Public Health, private sector suppliers, local landlords, community agencies, retail experts and academic advisors.

## The Outcome

Since launching in 2014, all three stores have seen increased revenue and received positive responses from the local community. Owners have reported an increase in customer visits, particularly from shift workers and parents with young children visiting the store.

The Healthy Corner Store initiative is helping change the food environment in underserved neighbourhoods. However, it has proven to be very resource intensive and may not be sustainable in the long-term with current resources. Toronto Public Health will continue to provide support to existing storeowners and is exploring how the lessons learnt from this initiative can be applied to other initiatives.

**Testimonials from the Healthy Corner Stores**

**“This is so great. Trying to get me and the baby and the stroller to the grocery store is just so difficult”**

**“I've lost weight since I started eating the fruits and vegetables”**

**GRAB SOME GOOD**



## Grab Some Good: Mobile Good Food Market

### The Issue

Many Toronto neighbourhoods are underserved by supermarkets and grocery stores and have insufficient space for the development of new supermarkets. Therefore, they require novel solutions to address the gaps in food access.

### The Response

Mobile Good Food Markets are 'produce stores on wheels' bringing low cost, fresh fruits and vegetables into communities underserved by traditional suppliers of healthy food. They focus primarily on Neighbourhood Improvement Areas where a high proportion of newcomers, single-parent families and seniors living in high-rise apartments do not have ready access to good food.

Launched in 2012, the project is a collaboration between Toronto Public Health and FoodShare. Two donated TTC wheel-trans vehicles have been retrofitted as Mobile Markets. One operates throughout the year in 11 low-income neighbourhoods and the second served the Toronto General Hospital through a pilot collaboration with the University Health Network that ended in September 2016.

Discussions are underway with health care institutions about continuing or expanding this pilot.

### The Outcome

Findings demonstrate that residents will purchase fresh produce as long as it is affordable, culturally appropriate and easily accessible.<sup>28</sup> In 2015, the markets sold 51,604 lbs of fresh fruit and vegetables to 6,140 community members.<sup>29</sup>

Communities served by the Mobile Good Food Markets love the convenience and quality of produce served. However, sales do not cover the operating costs and efforts are underway to secure additional resources and implement operational efficiencies.



## Testimonials from the Mobile Good Food Market

**“This market is easier access for me because with two kids, I have to push the stroller and pull the shopping buggy if I go to the supermarket”**

**“When I buy stuff here, it normally lasts two weeks but when I go to the supermarket the vegetables turn bad in two to three days”**

**GRAB SOME GOOD**



## Grab Some Good: TTC Pop-Up Markets

### The Issue

Over 1.6 million people use Toronto's subway system every day. Yet Toronto's subway system, like many around the world, encourages impulse purchasing of processed 'fast food' snacks and sugary drinks, with few healthy food options available to people on their daily commute.

### The Response

To bring healthy produce into Toronto's subway system, Toronto Public Health partnered with Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) and FoodShare, to launch new pop-up markets in three stations with a high volume of passengers and inadequate food access to traditional retailers (Downsview, Victoria Park and Kipling). These pop-up markets, officially launched in May 2016, are open twice a week during peak commuter times, bringing fresh, healthy and culturally diverse foods to busy commuters as they travel through their day.

### The Outcome

The goal of the pop-up markets is to promote access to fresh produce at affordable prices in TTC subway stations. A series of preliminary interviews conducted in 2016 found the majority of customers believed their diets had improved since first visiting the market, with one customer stating "before coming to the market I would buy chips as a snack. Now I'm eating more fruit. I will definitely be healthier because of this." Another customer reported "I pass here every day after work; it's easy for me to grab healthy foods on my way home". Data are being collected in order to complete a more detailed analysis. The pilot phase ends in February 2017, at which time the feasibility of continuing will be assessed.



# FoodReach

One Stop Healthy Food Ordering for Community Agencies and Schools

## FoodReach

### The Issue

Over 1,000 community agencies, 750 school-based Student Nutrition Programs and 900 childcare centres across Toronto serve millions of meals per year to children, families, low-income adults, newcomers and other vulnerable groups. Food is critical to the mission of these organizations. Yet, food supply often relies on unpredictable donations or purchasing food from supermarkets and grocery stores. Consequently, it is a constant challenge to provide enough good food to those who need it most.

### The Response

FoodReach was created as a systemic response to this problem. This is a collaboration between TPH, Parkdale Activity-Recreation Centre, Student Nutrition Toronto and the Metcalf Foundation. The intent is to increase nutritional quality and decrease costs of foods served.

Through an online portal, members place orders for fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy, eggs and bread with a variety of suppliers (additional products are currently being negotiated). Fresh produce is sourced (by a third-party consolidator) from the Ontario Food Terminal and local farmers and delivered directly to members the next day, with no delivery fee and a minimum order requirement of only \$50.

Critically, FoodReach aggregates the collective purchasing power of its members, regardless of their size, to provide access to healthy food at wholesale prices, something which only large organizations were able to do in the past.

FoodReach members can also access the online Knowledge Exchange Portal. The Portal, which is currently under development, provides a platform for members to collaborate, share resources and menu ideas, access training materials and learn more about healthy diets and the local food system. It will also provide links to local farmers and could allow members to share surplus supplies. For example, if a farmer donates several bushels of carrots to one agency they can use the Portal to contact other agencies and through the FoodReach supply chain share the produce with other agencies or obtain information on how to preserve this produce for future use.

### The Outcome

Since being launched in May 2015, FoodReach has attracted over 80 registered users, of which 45 place regular monthly orders. This is expected to grow considerably over coming months as new full-time members of staff come on-board. FoodReach is in the process of becoming a not for profit organization and has acquired funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation, Metcalf Foundation and Public Health Agency of Canada.

Looking to the future, FoodReach is working with Toronto Community Housing to supply food to a food-buying club in one of Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, with the intention of replicating this model in other locations. FoodReach is also exploring ways to serve City of Toronto programs across multiple divisions as part of the city's social procurement initiative. Preliminary conversations are also underway with faith communities to use FoodReach to supply their food programs.







## Community Food Works

### The Issue

Community Food Works (CFW) is a Toronto Public Health initiative that integrates food handler training and certification, food literacy, and employment support by applying a learner centred, adult education approach to food and employment skills development.

Many low-income residents face barriers in accessing jobs in the food service sector and in opening their own food-related businesses. In particular, low-income groups often face financial and cultural barriers in acquiring food handler certification ([Food Handler certification for Food Handlers](#)), a prerequisite of many food-based jobs (see [Bylaw 678-2006](#)).

### The Response

The program is delivered in partnership with community agencies and other City divisions to support low-income residents in accessing employment in the food sector, while improving basic food and nutrition skills. CFW provides this training at no cost to participants. The initiative highlights ways in which integrating food literacy with food safety, while addressing employment as a determinant of health, can break down social isolation, promote health and result in income generation or employment outcomes.

Community Food Works also enables residents who want to start their own catering businesses to earn supplementary income. Delivery in a community kitchen provides participants with practical understanding of food safety as well as healthy eating, by facilitating healthy cooking skills that integrate theory and practice.

**Toronto Public Health** is also in the process of developing a guide to establish food safety practice in food banks and community organizations called '*Food Safety in Food Banks and Community Organizations*'.

It is a citywide initiative that strives to achieve equitable access; however, priority is given to those most in need and to communities that have the capacity to facilitate and adapt the program to the needs of the local community.

### The Outcome

An evaluation of the CFWs in 2014/2015 showed that of the 405 participants trained: 100% reported increased knowledge in food skills and nutrition; 88% obtained food handler certification, of which 49% found some kind of employment. Employment outcomes included:

- ❖ 76 in the food sector,
- ❖ 58 self-employed (e.g. catering), and
- ❖ 43 in non-food sectors.

This is a high employment outcome given the target population and low cost of the intervention. In 2015/2016, 350 participants were trained with approximately 90% obtaining food handler certifications. This is expected to increase to over 450 participants by the end of 2016.

### Community Food Works for Arabic Speaking Newcomers

Since November 2015, a large number of Syrian refugees have arrived in Toronto. Many newcomers arrive in Canada with existing food related skills and knowledge about preparing, cooking, producing and preserving food. This prompted Toronto Public Health to create a CFW pilot-initiative to meet the specific needs of Arabic speaking newcomers.

A pilot project has been developed using a select group of Arabic speaking newcomers. The pilot utilises a peer-to-peer training model and has been adapted to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of Arabic Speaking Newcomers.

This project is a collaboration with the [Working Women Community Centre at Victoria Park Hub](#) and [Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture](#). The pilot will train three groups of 20 participants between September 2016 and January 2017. Toronto Public Health recruited, trained and mentored seven peer educators to help deliver the program. These peer leaders are now running the food skills and nutrition sessions of the CFW. An evaluation will be undertaken at the end of the pilot in early 2017. If successful, additional resources will be sought to continue to deliver CFW as a settlement program, while improving health and nutrition.



## Ongoing Projects

In addition to the projects already covered, the Food Strategy is engaged in numerous initiatives, involving both internal and external partners, to support a healthier, more sustainable food system for all. These initiatives include:

### TPH Food Innovation Labs

The TPH Food Innovation Lab is a space to bring TPH food related ideas, issues and initiatives to groups of interested staff to foster division-wide collaboration. The lab enables staff to explore and prototype new ideas, rapidly co-create solutions to problems, share research, explore opportunities for program integration and share marketing and promotion strategies. The TPH Food Innovation Labs aim to:

- embed a broader food systems approach among staff;
- provide an opportunity for people to bring ideas forward, explore new initiatives and provide feedback and input on existing or emerging initiatives;
- enable action-oriented engagement on significant TPH food issues.

Innovation Labs are dynamic and evolve based on the needs of team members. Sessions to date include:

- Healthier Supermarkets
- Healthy Corner Stores
- Nutritious Food Basket
- Food Literacy
- Bulk Food Buying Club Mini Lab
- Climate, Health and Food

Future labs are scheduled for late 2016 and early 2017, including 'Food by Ward' and 'Food Marketing to Children'.

## Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture is an effective mechanism to engage diverse communities and build strong neighbourhoods, while increasing access to local food. Urban agriculture contributes to social and environmental outcomes and has multiple community benefits such as increased engagement, employment or income support, sustainability, capacity building and community safety. Urban agriculture also promotes food literacy, the consumption of fresh food and physical activity.

Toronto Public Health, in collaboration with [Toronto Urban Growers](#) and the TFPC, is developing an Urban Agriculture Indicator Guide to identify and measure the health, social, economic, and ecological benefits of urban agriculture. These indicators will be a way to measure and quantify the impacts of urban agriculture over time.

Toronto Public Health and the TFPC are also continuing to collaborate with Social Development, Finance and Administration on the Community Engagement and Entrepreneurial Development (CEED) Gardens in hydro corridors.

## Climate, Health and Food

Under the [Climate Change and Health Strategy for Toronto](#) (2015), Toronto Public Health set out a direction to better understand and respond to the health effects of climate change. To further this work, Toronto Public Health, in collaboration with Environment and Energy Division hosted a Food Innovation Lab on 'Climate, Health and Food' attended by TPH and other staff, as well as external stakeholders. Participants worked collaboratively to identify, prioritize and strategize on the key issues for climate, health and food in Toronto.

Toronto Public Health will report in December 2016 on progress in implementing the Climate Change and Health Strategy.

## Food Retail Research

Toronto Public Health has been working with researchers at the University of Toronto on one of the first studies mapping spatial and temporal access to healthy food retail establishments in the city.<sup>30</sup> Examining food access over time is important for populations whose day-to-day activities do not align with a typical work schedule.

Results indicate that access to healthy food retailers is severely diminished for large segments of the population in the late night and early morning. This work will inform future food retail initiatives of the Toronto Food Strategy.

## Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC)

Toronto Public Health is also working in collaboration with the TFPC on numerous initiatives. For more information on the activities of the TFPC, see the Toronto Food Policy Council 2015-2016 update report.



## Looking to the Future

Food insecurity is an intricate, multi-layered problem, caused not just by poverty and financial constraints but also by physical and behavioural barriers, lack of food preparation skills, high living costs, low availability of culturally appropriate foods and poor health.

Toronto Public Health takes an “action research” approach to develop and prototype innovative projects that attempt to address these interrelated threats. The intent is to facilitate policy change, engage all stakeholders and promote a healthy sustainable food system. The Food Strategy will continue to champion and support a healthy and sustainable food system for all by working in partnership with other levels of government, public and private sector organisations and multiple stakeholders. The Food Strategy will build on current City wide initiatives including:

- [The Official Plan](#)
- [TO Prosperity](#)
- [City of Toronto Strategic Actions 2013 - 2018](#)
- [Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020](#)
- [Long Term Waste Strategy](#)

The Food Strategy will also continue to build on the momentum of international initiatives such as the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, the C40 Food Systems Network and UN sustainable development goals.



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