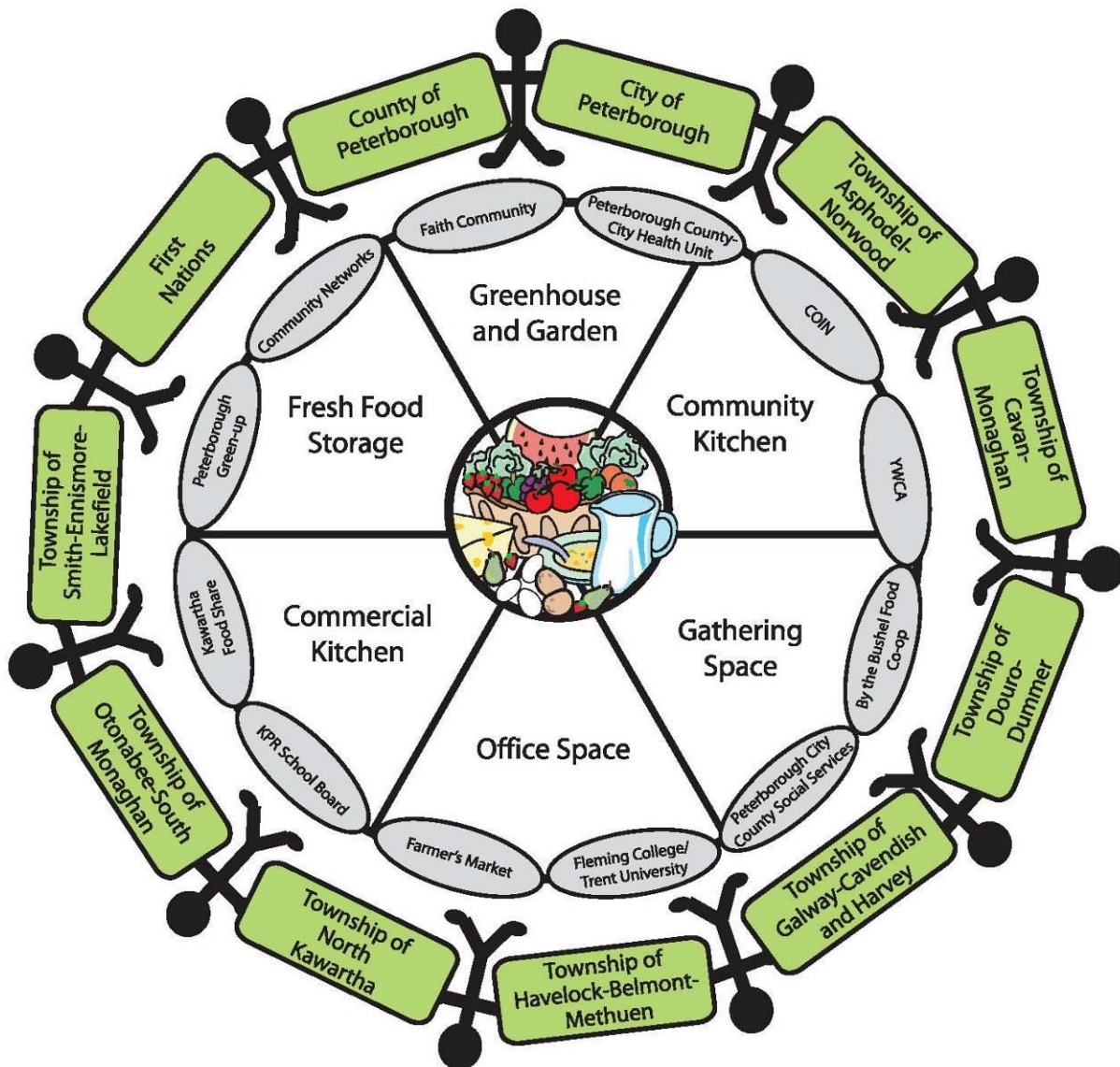


Kawartha Community Food Hub

A place for sharing - where people living on low incomes and others can access fresh nourishing food, and learn about growing and preparing food.



Belonging through Growing, Cooking, Eating, and Enjoying Food

TAKING ROOT

Kawartha Community Food Hub

July 2011

There is a growing concern that our current food system is not working well – some would say it is broken. In Ontario, many farmers are facing an income crisis. Too many people lack access to healthy food. And, despite growing demand for local food, our centralized, large-scale food processors, distributors, and retailers are unable to provide it. Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas For Ontario¹

I. Rationale for a new food system

The concerns expressed by Menu 2020 are being experienced throughout our country. We are at a crossroad. Many economic forecasts expect to see significant increase in the price of food, while the number of family farms will continue to drop. If realized, these predictions will only intensify the tensions which permeate our food system and create further problems for people living on low incomes. Fortunately, these pressures are also feeding the growth of a dynamic movement, a movement looking to build an alternative food system rooted in the principles of equity, sustainability and economic viability. Through this approach, food will no longer be perceived as a commodity and will resume its essential role in shaping the health of individuals, communities and the planet as a whole. The first step in creating this viable alternative to our existing food system requires new ways of thinking about food, farming and a new food infrastructure.

In the 70s, when faced with similar structural challenges in the area of health and health care delivery, Ontario established a network of Community Health Centres (CHC) intended to support, in particular, the most marginalized community members in accessing primary health services. This model became very successful and today, CHCs dot the Ontario landscape from North to South and East to West. Inspired by this approach, food-based organizations under the leadership of The Stop² are proposing the idea of creating a network of Community Food Centres (CFC). The network would offer meeting spaces for all members of the community to experience and learn about food in all its facets (from production to consumption), talk about why food is not a commodity and explore opportunities to re-build the food system and revitalize agriculture from the ground up. The needs of people living on low incomes will be addressed by ensuring transportation, child care and program costs are not a barrier to participation.

¹ Lauren Baker, Philippa Campsie and Katie Rabinowicz. *Menu 2020 Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario*. Metcalf Foundation, June 2010, p.4.

² Located in Toronto, The Stop works to increase access to food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds health and community and challenges inequality. Originally one of Canada's first food banks, the Stop has blossomed into a thriving community hub where neighbours participate in a broad range of programs that provide healthy food, as well as foster social connections, build food skills and promote engagement in civic issues. The Stop runs community kitchens and gardens, cooking classes, drop-in meals, peri-natal support activities, a food bank, outdoor bake ovens, food markets and community advocacy initiatives.

Adopting this model to our unique landscape

Since the mid 90s, food has been a source of many activities locally. Representatives from various food sectors have been focusing on addressing three main challenges: lack of access to healthy and nutritious food for low-income communities, rapidly declining income for farmers, and the increasing erosion of the natural environment. Over time, this work led to the creation of the Peterborough County City Community Food Security Partnership, By the Bushel Food Co-op, the Community Food Network, and the Peterborough Community Garden Network. In addition, Kawartha Choice FarmFresh started as a result of the impact of the BSE crisis on local beef producers. (See Appendix 1: Peterborough Food Program Mapping). The premise behind the development of this CF Hub is that the creation of a place for food, where low-income individuals and families can learn new food skills and engage in food advocacy, will lead to critical knowledge transfer and new connections with food. This will address, in the long term, the three main challenges that have dominated the food system for so long.

The initiatives that have already been implemented have taught us that in order to be successful, a Kawartha Community Food Hub cannot simply mirror a structure like that proposed by the Stop. Our context is unique. It knits together both urban and rural realities and includes several townships and First Nations communities with distinct histories. To embrace all these differences, our CFH model needs to embrace the creative tension of generating a rural and urban equilibrium. In other words, our structure needs to be decentralized in its essence.

Building on a strong farming tradition

While the idea of creating a local Community Food Hub is new, the concept behind this approach is not. Traditionally, food has been the essential thread weaving a strong connection between rural and urban spaces. For example, Peterborough has had a Farmers Market since 1825. A local community food hub will ultimately enable us to revive this traditional connection by raising awareness about local food in our urban environment while revitalizing the agricultural landscape and farming tradition of this area.

II. Structure of CFCs and the Kawartha Community Food Hub

While the previous outline articulated the reasons that have led to the idea of creating CFCs throughout the province, we now need to examine the potential structure of CFCs and the ways in which our Community Food Hub may be unique. To ensure consistency and effectiveness in approach at the provincial level, the CFCs network will necessitate the adoption of core principles which will guarantee that those who have the least access to food come to play a central role in redesigning the system. Seven principles have been articulated by The Stop and are applicable to our regional context:

1. Good Food is an Investment in Good Health

Countless studies have documented the strong connection between good food and people's health. In order to make a difference, CFCs need to commit to offer fresh, nutritious, safe and delicious food in all their activities. This principle will enable centres to grow people's understanding of the inherent link between food and health as well as develop long-term, meaningful relationships with growers and suppliers in their areas.

2. Meet People's Immediate Needs and Meet Them Where They Are

Community-based agencies are fully cognizant of the fact that no significant change can take place unless programs are designed to meet people's immediate needs. Programs must also be able to

provide every participant with a meaningful entry point into the discussion about food; otherwise CFCs will not be able to engage the full spectrum of the population.

3. Provide a Welcoming and Respectful Environment: Reduce the Blame and Shame

This principle derives directly from the previous one. In addition to addressing people's immediate needs, CFCs food initiatives can only grow strong if they provide everyone present with a welcoming and respectful environment, a place where everyone gains a strong sense of belonging and connection. Without this core principle, CFCs would come to reproduce the dominant food system and would fail to offer an alternative.

4. Remake Ourselves: Build Knowledge and Skills to Grow, Prepare, and Advocate for Good Food

Food is essential to our lives. As a result, the more we learn about it, the more we grow individually and collectively. For millennium, individuals' and families' knowledge about food was extensive. As food started to be perceived as a commodity, however, this culinary and cultivation knowledge came to be undermined. Nowadays, more and more generations of children are developing without learning where food comes from, ways to grow it and how to cook it. By regaining access to these skills, participants in CFCs activities will gain more control over their lives as well as a new sense of worth and pride. In addition, as people connect deeply with food, they become strong advocates for good food.

5. Work to Remake the Food System

Ensuring that people have access to healthy and delicious food is an essential step in unsettling the concept of food as a mainstream commodity. Exploring ways the food system can be re-imagined to ensure that the food we consume fosters the health of all of us and the places in which we live is the other integral undertaking of these community food centres. Currently, income is a core determinant of access to healthy food. CFCs need to become strong advocates for a new food system which will ensure that everyone has access to healthy, ecologically-produced food, regardless of income.

6. Build Infrastructure and a Critical Mass for Food Programming

The way we organize space shapes our relationships to one another. In order to engage community members in envisioning new possibilities for the future, CFCs need dedicated public spaces. Establishing public spaces where people can gather together to exchange stories, explore alternatives to mainstream practices and work together for change is essential. This will ensure that CFCs come to be viewed as strong actors in the food debate and strong players in shaping the meaning of food in their respective communities.

7. Take Advantage of the Inspirational Power of Food to Make Friends and Raise Money

When spending time at community meals, farmers' markets, collective kitchens, food box drop-off sites, community gardens and cooking workshops, one can see the magical capacity of food. It draws people together. And when people gather around food, they share what is meaningful to them and build connections that would otherwise never take place. Food connects us all. Food can also provide an avenue to raise money. Most fundraisers integrate food in one way or another. Recently new food-related fundraisers have started to generate revenue for food programming. CFCs would be in a great position to benefit from that movement. This fundraising aspect of the work would offer greater sustainability for this new network.

8. Ensuring urban/rural equity

Our local experience differs from the one encountered by the Stop. As a result, our Community Food Hub necessitates an eighth principle which articulates how decentralization is a core component of our local model. This principle ensures that while we will seek to establish a food hub in the City of Peterborough, we will also build a dynamic presence throughout the County. It is this network as a whole which will shape all the components of this Community Food Hub. To make this structure viable, we are committed to using existing community spaces such as schools, community centres and church kitchens wherever possible. This approach will maximize impact while minimizing costs. A mobile outreach component will also be integrated into this system to ensure presence in smaller communities.

9. Building from our collective strengths

We believe that, to be successful, our community food hub needs to build on the strengths and expertise of all the individuals and agencies working in the food system in our community. So our model rests on a wide network of key stakeholders (as illustrated in the graphic on our cover page). Working in partnership can be messier as it requires on-going negotiations and open communication. This may be the reasons why, funders tend to prefer dealing with one agency rather than a group of partners. To address this issue, a lead agency will step forward and become the administrative body in charge of the network. Presently the network selected the YWCA to be the lead. This may not always be the case. The lead can change, depending on needs. Our guiding principle is to ensure that our approach remains fluid and flexible so that we benefit from opportunities as they rise.

III. Structure and components of the Kawartha Community Food Hub

All our network spaces will offer core knowledge transfer programming such as food skills training focusing on growing and cooking food, advocacy, social enterprise development around food and a strong youth component. The urban centre will incorporate essential components such as a large meeting room to host information sessions, workshops and advocacy campaign activities; an incubator/commercial kitchen where groups who are exploring the opportunities to establish food-related businesses can build their capacity; a smaller kitchen for cooking programs; a classroom-size space for food-skill training for a wide range of groups of all ages; fresh food storage space and a green house. The rural centres, which may be located within a school or church space, will provide at a minimum, a large meeting room, a small kitchen as well as classroom-size space for food-skill training, and space for food related businesses. One of the sites in the county will also incorporate a teaching farm.

We are currently in conversation with the Peterborough Centre for Social Innovation (PCSI) to assess the possibility of sharing spaces and building synergy between our respective mandates. PCSI plans to become the home for social innovators in the Greater Peterborough. It will bring together entrepreneurial talent and change agents from a variety of backgrounds around a shared set of values, bridging, as a result, sector and cultural divides in order to promote creativity and collaboration. PCSI will serve as a highly visible hub to accelerate social innovation locally and regionally. Its work, consequently, complements nicely the vision of the Community Food Hub and we feel that together we can create a vibrant space dedicated to new possibilities, ideas and activities.

IV. Goals and objectives:

The Community Food Hub provides an avenue to revitalize our local food culture and economy by engaging more residents in eating food produced locally by growers who, in exchange, receive a living

wage for their work. Equally essential in this vision for our hub is the idea that everyone in our community is able to access nutritious, fresh food, regardless of income and food knowledge. Consequently, we envision this Community Food Hub as marking an important step in the creation of a new food system based on inclusion and equity for all and sustainability for our land.

The following six objectives will enable us to achieve our goals:

- To create a vibrant network throughout the city and county dedicated to nutritious local food
- To establish a dynamic governance model for the food hub
- To assess spaces conducive to anchoring our food programs/activities in the city and county
- To select and/or create food sites throughout our region
- To build a new food culture in our area
- To create an alternative food system over the long term.

Benefits to community members:

As the title for our community food hub indicates, we envision the Kawartha Community Food Hub as a place for sharing, where all people can access fresh nourishing food, and learn about growing and preparing food.

As illustrated below, community members participating in the centre's activities will benefit from programming focusing on four interrelated facets of the food system: Growing food, Producing food, Advocating for better food and Eating and Enjoying food. A sense of belonging will be nurtured through participation in these activities.

Individuals wanting to learn to *Grow Food* will be able to join a wide range of workshops and educational opportunities:

- in the Greenhouse
- through regularly scheduled events
- at the demonstration garden site

Participants wanting to learn about ways to *Produce Food* will find stimulating initiatives such as:

- collective kitchens and cooking programs
- the community bake oven
- food micro-processors and social enterprises
- an incubator/commercial kitchen

Individuals focused on how to *Advocate for Food* will be able to participate in:

- 'kitchen table talks' focusing on food security
- educational sessions which will raise awareness about the food system
- local, provincial, federal and international campaigns focusing on food in all its facets
- charting a local food policy

Community members who want to *Eat and Enjoy Food* will be able to:

- shop at the local Farmers Market
- join community meals and social gatherings
- participate in the food box and co-op packing and depot site
- support various micro- and social-enterprises (restaurant/bakery/catering)

Community Partners

The following community partners are presently around the Community Food Centre planning table:

By the Bushel Community Food Cooperative
Community Opportunities and Innovation Network (COIN)
Community Members
Community Social Plan – Peterborough
Downtown Peterborough Wednesday Farmer’s Market
Faith Community Members involved in Community Meals
Fleming College
Fleming College Sustainable Building/Renovation Program
Kawartha Food Share
Kawartha Pine Ridge District Board of Education - Community Use of Schools
Peterborough County-City Health Unit
Peterborough Community Food Network
Peterborough Community Garden Network
Peterborough Green Up
Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network
Peterborough Social Planning Council
Transition Town
Trent Centre for Community Based Education
Trent University – Emphasis on Food & Agriculture Program
YWCA Peterborough, Haliburton and Victoria

APPENDIX 1

Peterborough Community Food Program Mapping

COMMUNITY MAPPING LEGEND

- APCP – Aboriginal Prenatal Nutrition Program
- CMHA – Canadian Mental Health Assn.
- COIN – Community Opportunity and Innovation Network
- CPNP – Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program
- GPAEDC – Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation
- KPRDSB – Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board
- KWIC – Kawartha World Issues Centre
- LLNWA – Lovesick Lake Native Womens Assn.
- OPIRG – Ontario Public Interest Research Group
- PCGN – Peterborough Community Garden Network
- PCCHU – Peterborough County City Health Unit
- PFRC – Peterborough Family Resource Centre
- PSPC – Peterborough Social Planning Council
- PVNCDSB – Peterborough Victoria Northumberland Clarington District School Board
- SNP – Student Nutrition Program
- TCCBE – Trent Centre for Community Based Education

