

Food and the Official Plan: Comments on the Role of Food in the City of Peterborough's Draft Official Plan

Submitted to:

Mr. Ken Hetherington, Chief Planner
City of Peterborough
500 George Street North
Peterborough, ON K9H 3R8

Submitted by: Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN)

Date: Sept 20, 2019

Contact: Dr. Rosana Salvaterra
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health

Dear Mr. Hetherington,

In 2011, the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN, formerly the Community Food Network) submitted [Plant It](#), a report to provide recommendations related to food and the Official Plan (OP). We are writing to share our feedback on the draft OP, in light of these recommendations.

We would like to congratulate the City for inclusion of food-related goals and targets throughout the 2019 [draft OP](#).

There are many positive inclusions of food language in the draft, such as:

- 5.2.3: There is discussion of affordable housing and reference to targets in the housing and homelessness plan. Addressing availability of affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing is relevant to food insecurity, as many individuals who face food insecurity also face housing insecurity.¹
- 5.4.6.a: There is acknowledgement of the benefits of local food production. Many of these align with pillars identified in the [Peterborough Food Charter](#).
- 5.4.6.b: Support of growing and sharing of produce through accessible community gardens and community kitchens; space for farmers markets, and spaces for people of all incomes and abilities to access nutritious food; support for continued use of rural transitional lands for agriculture; consideration of edible landscapes (including urban orchards), small scale food processing, and permissions for food-related home occupations; and designation of land for food-related industry and uses.

We encourage that sections related to food be retained in the final 2019 OP. We also would like to identify opportunities to further strengthen six areas of the official plan that relate to access to food and water to further support the health and well-being of Peterborough residents.

Suggestions to strengthen the official plan include the following:

[2.2.1: Guiding Principles, Complete Community](#)

An area in which the OP could be further strengthened relates to adoption of stronger language defining the guiding principle of complete community.

For example, to reflect the importance of community food security as part of complete community, “healthy food options” in 2.2.1.vi could be expanded to include the following: *adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally acceptable food available to all* (adapted from the [City of Toronto Official Plan](#)).

[2.2.5: Strong and Diverse Economy](#)

It is strategic that there is consideration of opportunities to offer incentives for business growth in the area of food production as indicated in 2.2.5 vii. Additional components of the food system such as processing and distribution are also important to mention. It is noteworthy that

non-conventional business models such as co-ops, collectives and social economy models are valuable assets to Peterborough's economy.

For example, 2.2.5 vii could be modified to highlight opportunities beyond traditional food production: *Considering opportunities to offer incentives for business growth, particularly in the green and knowledge economies and food production, processing, and distribution.*

4.1.5: General Policies for Food Stores

It is great to see mention of distributing small food stores throughout Peterborough, and efforts to minimize large-scale food stores being concentrated in a few areas. It is also positive that the City will monitor population growth, off-campus post-secondary student housing, and food store floor space growth.

Of particular concern for PFAN are areas that may be considered food deserts, including parts of the north end of the city. A 2016/2017 survey done at Trent University found that 67% of first year students living away from home were severely, moderately, or marginally food insecure.² According to a survey conducted by Meal Exchange Canada, 39% of students across the country had experienced food insecurity over the previous year.³ While physical access to food stores does not reduce food insecurity, equitable distribution of food stores offering affordable healthy choices is important. Consideration could also be given to distribution of lower-cost food stores.

A possible strategy to promote physical access to healthy affordable food, could be to use distance from grocery stores as an alternate or additional measurement method. This could encourage distribution of stores throughout the city, rather than concentration within sub-areas.

For example, this section could include the following to encourage walkability: *Priority will be given to large and small scale food stores that service areas with residences that do not currently have access to food stores within 800 metres.* This is a distance used in the draft Active Transportation Indicators Report Update, scheduled for release in fall 2019, identifying food deserts as areas more than 800 metres away from food stores. It is also noted that additional forms of food access are important for residents, such as community gardens and food markets.

5.3: Parkland and Open Space

Access to water is critical in City parks. Accessible, free drinking water is essential for the health and well-being of residents. Water access may be of particular need in the central area, which currently has limited access to outdoor water sources. This includes water fountains or refill stations that are accessible for all, including:

- people experiencing homelessness, and those who may not be comfortable or able to enter buildings to access water;
- children and families; and
- animals servicing people living with disabilities.

Access to water for current or possible future community gardens is essential from a food production perspective.

Examples of modifications to address public water access could include the following:

- in 5.3.2.c.xii, and 5.3.3.b.v, language could be added such as: *including water fountains or water refill stations;*
- in 5.3.6.1.b.vi, language could be added such as: *as well as publicly-accessible drinking water through the provision of water fountains or water refill stations;* and
- in 5.3.2.c.xii, 5.3.3.b.v., 5.3.4.b, and 5.3.6.1.b.vi, the following language could be added to ensure water access for community gardens in the Planning and Design Guidelines for Regional Parks and Other Open Spaces, Community Parks and Other Open Spaces, Neighbourhood Parks and Other Open Spaces, and Primary Urban Park Spaces: *Include a water stub to support future community garden use.*

5.4.6: Policies for Local Food Production

As mentioned above, the inclusion of this section is very positive. The intent of this section could be furthered through stronger language. As Peterborough has lost much food-related infrastructure over the past forty years, supporting Peterborough's food system is indeed an important strategy for cultivating a strong economy.

For example, 5.4.6.b.iv could be modified from "considering" to: *supporting the expanded use of City land for growing food, including edible landscapes.* Similarly, 5.4.6.b.v could be modified from "considering" to: *supporting permissions for small-scale food processing.*

Additionally, it may be helpful to provide a definition for urban agriculture, which is mentioned both in 2.2.2 and 5.4.6.

The following is a sample definition of Urban Agriculture provided by adapted from a local [Urban Agriculture Report](#): *a multitude of activities, all of which connect growing, processing and distribution of local food and food-related products in and around cities.*

5.4.8: Policies for Climate Change

As food is linked to the environment and climate change, mention of food and food waste is appropriate in this section.

For example, this section could include the addition of a point in 5.4.8.b. such as: *promoting local food, food security and soil health, and protecting the agricultural land base* (wording from [Urban Strategies Inc.](#)).

Thank you for your review of these recommendations. If you require any additional information or clarification, please let us know how we can support.

By committing to intentional steps to foster a healthy food system, the City of Peterborough can create local, diverse and green economic development; protect and sustain the

environment; and build a stronger community while supporting nutrition and disease prevention for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

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Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health

cc: Brad Appleby, Planner, City of Peterborough
Milan Nguyen, Planner, City of Peterborough

¹ Ballamingie, P., Andrée, P., Martin, M.A., & Pilson, J. (2017). Connecting food access and housing security: Lessons from Peterborough, Ontario. In I. Knezevic, A. Blay-Palmer, C.Z. Levkoe, E. Nelson, P., Mount. (Eds.), Nourishing communities: From fractured food systems to transformative pathways (pp. 3-22). New York: Springer International Publishing)

² Dasne, A., & Furgal, C. (2017). Food Security at Trent University: Key Results from the 2016-2017 Food Access Survey.

³ Maynard, M., Lahey, D., & Abraham, A. (2018). Campus Food Report Card: The State of Food on Ontario University Campuses. Meal Exchange. Retrieved from:
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5941c85ae4fcb533d8d82767/t/5a54b5bb652deace1b6d80da/1515501008089/Campus+Food+Report+Card%2C+full%2C+Jan+5+2018+-+min.pdf>