COMMUNITY GROWN: VIBRANT COMMUNITY OWNED PUBLIC SPACES

A CASE STUDY

November 2016

Centre for Sustainable Food Systems

All photos provided by authors unless otherwise indicated.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

CONTENTS

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Executive Summary

Ending hunger from all angles, working 'from field to table' using food's capacity as the great connector to empower people by creating Canada's most successful non-profit food hub, connecting urban dwellers directly to fresh produce, to local farmers, to each other, and to the cooking and growing skills needed to choose healthy food for a healthy future.

FoodShare's Long Term Vision

Community Grown is a model for building meaningful and lasting community connections through urban market gardening. Two innovative community-led designs were created through collaboration between FoodShare Toronto, Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Public Health, and stakeholder groups from two neighbourhoods in Toronto. The project is being piloted in Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge neighbourhoods, both of which have an existing relationship with FoodShare and have been identified as neighbourhood improvement areas with high urban agriculture potential.

In the summer of 2015 two extensive public consultation sessions were carried out to develop community-based designs for market gardens in Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge neighbourhoods. The designs aimed to bring people of all ages and backgrounds together to make meaningful connections with other community members, increase local food security, improve environmental stewardship, and provide local economic opportunities. The project also aims to provide a medium for formal and informal knowledge exchange opportunities, in turn building local capacity and fostering local leadership. The programs proposed for each site are diverse but they are both anchored around food. Community Grown hinges on just decision-making processes and collaboration to be sustainable and cross-sectoral partnerships allow the project to scale up from the garden level to form networks with the broader Toronto community.

The Flemingdon Park neighbourhood is awaiting approval from Hydro One before the first phase of the design can be constructed. In Gordonridge, however, market garden infrastructure has been in place since spring 2016 and the project is well underway. Gordonridge will serve as the primary example of the Community Grown model in this report, with reference made to Flemingdon Park where the process differs in a significant way.

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Project Overview

I think what's clear in both of these projects and in our community development work, if done right, you know we're working on creating steering committees, and leadership and good decision-making processes and good community development processes...other projects come out of it... it's like a clove of garlic. You plant one clove of garlic and six more come out of that.
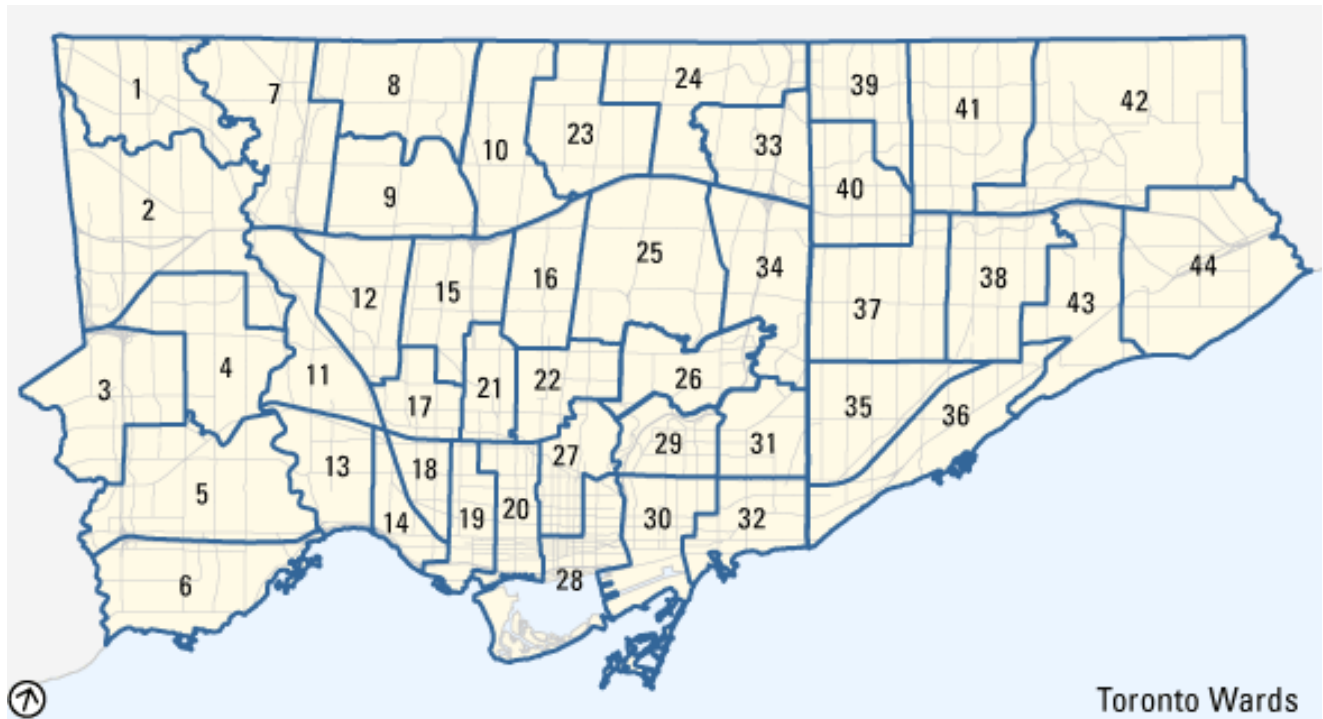
- *Angela ElzingaCheng*

Founded in 1985, FoodShare Toronto is a non-profit food hub and community food education centre that works with communities and schools across the city to provide healthy food and food education. By building lasting relationships, developing innovative programming, and forming important partnerships, FoodShare seeks to help communities across Toronto improve their access to high quality, affordable vegetables and fruit. FoodShare is a leader in the local movement working to solve food issues. FoodShare places emphasis on collaborative decision-making and accountability, both of which can be evaluated by measuring the impact that its programs and projects have on communities. This is reflected in FoodShare's updated theory of change, which shows "the change we want to accomplish, the impact we want to create, the outcomes that must be reached over the next three years to be successful, and what types of activities we want to undertake to create the change we seek."[1]

This case study has been compiled as part of ongoing research by the Southern Ontario chapter of the FLEdGE Project (Food, Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged). We seek to understand the tensions, compromises, and opportunities involved in the scaling up and out of sustainable food system initiatives. Through participatory observation at FoodShare over the summer of 2016, we explored the process undertaken by FoodShare and partners to scale up from community gardens to market gardens in Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park neighbourhoods.

Our study is exploratory in nature, using qualitative interviews and document review to describe the process undertaken at both sites. The FLEdGE question we address through our research is: how do urban agriculture projects expand and strengthen their partnerships and networks in order to scale up sustainable food systems?

---

[1] For FoodShare's complete theory of change visit: http://foodshare.net/about/stratplan/

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Social and Geographical Context

City-wide ward boundary map (City of Toronto, 2016)

City of Toronto Context

The City of Toronto has a population of 2.6 million people (Census, 2011) that continues to grow at a fast pace, growing 4.5% between 2006 and 2011. Though the city is growing rapidly, the age structure of the city is shifting. The population age groups that grew the fastest between 2006 and 2011 were 60-64 years and 85+. Toronto also identifies itself as a diverse city. According to the 2011 census, 49 % of Toronto's residents represent 230 different ethnicities.

In 2010, 19% of the population identified as low- income based on Statistics Canada's Low Income Measure. "Toronto continues to have a higher incidence of low income than the rest of Canada, Ontario, and rest of the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (RGTAH)." (City of Toronto, 2011). In addition to this the city also has the highest prevalence of low-income children under the age of 6 across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area. Of those that are identified as low income in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Areas, 52.4% live in Toronto (City of Toronto, 2011).

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Neighbourhood Context
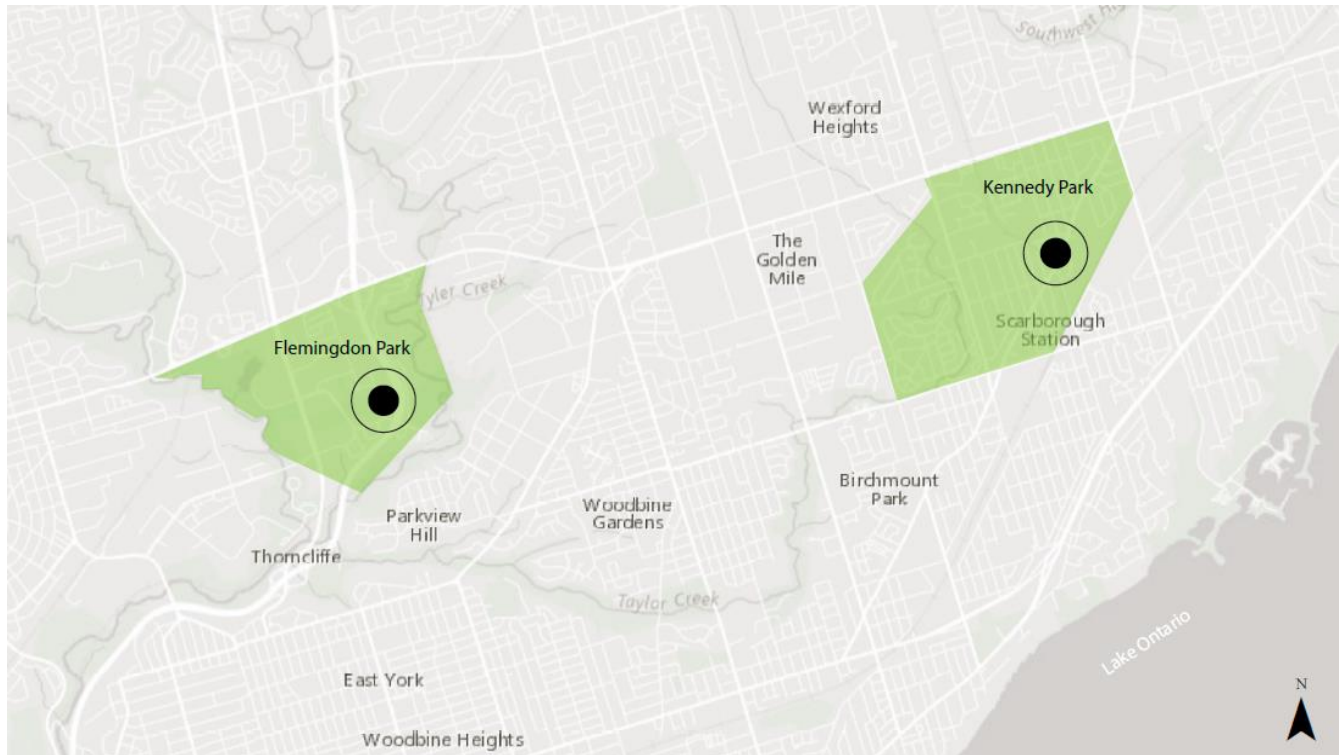
Context map showing catchment areas of Community Grown neighbourhoods (green) and location of market gardens (black circles) (Source: Author).

Flemingdon Park

The Flemingdon park neighbourhood is located in Ward 26, Don Valley West, and is predominantly residential - made up of high rise apartment buildings and row house apartments. Most of the housing is rent-based with some subsidized rent-to-own housing. It is described as "The home for many new Canadians seeking affordable housing in the City of Toronto". Since 2011, the population of the neighbourhood has surpassed 22,000 with over 80 languages spoken. 62% of people have obtained a post-secondary degree, however, 30% of the neighbourhood is considered low income (City of Toronto, 2013).

Gordonridge

The Gordonridge neighbourhood (also known as Kennedy park) located in Ward 35 in Scarborough Southwest has many housing types from small bungalows to semi-detached homes. Many of these homes were constructed in the 1940s and 1950s. The neighbourhood also includes high and mid-rise rental apartment buildings, most of which are owned by the Metro Toronto Housing Authority and residents are able to rent to own their apartments. Over 17,000 people live in the Gordonridge

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is diverse, with 50% of the population speaking a non-official language. Many residents were either born in Canada or immigrated to Canada before 2005 and have thus established roots in the area. Over 50% of the population has a post-secondary education, however 29% is considered low-income (City of Toronto, 2013a).

Food Systems in Toronto

Much progress has been made recently in Toronto towards supporting urban agriculture in the city. The GrowTO Urban Agriculture Plan was approved by Toronto City Council staff in 2012, and the following year, the Toronto Agriculture Plan was completed. GrowTO is intended to remove some of the barriers that prevent commercial urban agriculture initiatives from expanding.

In 2016, the Toronto Food Policy Council and the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council launched Food by Ward[2]. This initiative documents food assets and opportunities by ward across the City of Toronto. The dynamic document uses a community food assessment methodology (CFA) to characterize the local food system for wards across Toronto. The results highlight issues with local food security and can help identify site-specific barriers and opportunities to increase access to healthy food.

The Food by Ward assessment for Flemingdon Park shows a number of food services in the ward including two of 34 Good Food & Mobile Markets supported by FoodShare Toronto. There are 28 'Healthier Food Retail' compared to the 1,653 city-wide. There is only one community food agency and only three emergency food assistance programs. The ward is home to only one farmers market, one food co-op and four school & community gardens.

In Ward 35, where the Gordonridge neighbourhood is located, there are three Good Food & Mobile Food Markets and 26 'Healthier Food Retail' locations. There is no community food agency in the Ward and there are only three emergency food assistance programs. Furthermore, the Ward is not serviced by any farmers markets or food co-ops. There are, however, seven school and community gardens within the ward.

Market Gardening

> *So there's a lot of room for, for different incarnations of market gardening. And that's kind of what excites me about it because there are a lot of people who are thinking through different ways of growing food and different kinds of food, so I think that's really important. The other thing that I think is really great, particularly when you're working with very diverse communities, particularly culturally and racially diverse communities is you're shortening the supply chain for food.*

> *-   Rhonda*

---

[2] Visit Food by Ward online to assess your neighbourhood: http://tfpc.to/food-by-ward

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Broadly defined, urban agriculture in Toronto includes activities that range from food growing and preparation to distribution - all in an urban setting. Urban agriculture refers to plant cultivation as well as animal husbandry practices (e.g. beekeeping). While a primary goal of urban agriculture is to provide the surrounding urban population with access to fresh produce, it has many other benefits, including: the promotion of food literacy, community-building, and the greening of open spaces. Urban agriculture is an umbrella term for community gardens, urban farms, allotment gardens, market gardens, and private gardens. The most common form of urban agriculture in Toronto is the community garden, with over 200 active gardens in the city. Community gardens are open to the public and provide space, resources, and support for gardeners to grow food for personal consumption on a small scale. Most urban agriculture projects are organized and maintained by community members, a large distinction from conventional agriculture which is primarily organized by individual farmers or corporations.

Market gardens expand on community gardens both in terms of spatial capacity as well as the scale of operation. Market gardens function as a social enterprise, emphasizing production for profit, however, they offer a wide range of activities centred on food growing. Market gardens can promote related programming such as community kitchens, composting programs, and pollinator gardening, among others. FoodShare has supported countless community gardens across the City of Toronto but being true to its culture of innovation, sought to expand upon the community garden model by encouraging an entirely new one in Toronto through market gardening.

FoodShare Precedents

Sunshine Garden

The Sunshine Garden is FoodShare's first market garden project, initiated through a partnership with the Canadian Association for Mental Health (CAMH) in 2002. CAMH provided FoodShare with approximately 0.5 acres of institutional land, access to a greenhouse, and permission to sell produce on site at weekly markets during the growing season from July through October. The project is also the first market garden to be permitted on institutional land in Canada. Over 30 CAMH inpatients and outpatients are able to participate in garden activities and receive numerous health benefits. The Sunshine Garden offers participants access to horticultural therapy, opportunities for community connections, skills training, and fresh, affordable vegetables and fruit.

Entrepreneurial activities are supported at the Sunshine Garden

Tensions, compromises and opportunities inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable food system initiatives

Centre for Sustainable Food Systems

Photograph of the Sunshine Garden in the summer (Photograph courtesy of FoodShare)

School Grown

In 2010 FoodShare formed School Grown, a school food growing project, through a long term partnership with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The project supports the creation of food production gardens for children and youth on school rooftops and lawns. School Grown strongly promotes food literacy, a key goal of FoodShare's long term vision. FoodShare currently supports two School Grown sites, one at the Bendale Business and Technical Institute in Scarborough and the other at Eastdale Collegiate Institute in Riverdale. Bendale's 0.25 acre market garden sits in the front and rear lawns of the school property while Eastdale adopted a more innovative approach, replacing former tennis courts with a 0.5 acre rooftop garden. While FoodShare provides support through project management, fundraising and resources (eg. compost), TDSB also contributes by providing site infrastructure and by hiring summer students to work on the farms.

School Grown fosters connections between students and food, enabling them to apply knowledge outside of the classroom. The program has succeeded in including food production in school curricula; teaching, training and employing students in the market gardens; and supporting youth leadership through urban agriculture. The program also employs trained farmers at each site who provide ongoing support to the students and work in a project management capacity. Through the lessons learned at Bendale and Eastdale, TDSB has gone on to start up and support food production projects in other schools across Toronto. As this illustrates, a major success of School Grown is that the model is self-sustaining and replicable at many scales.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge gardeners explore planters at Eastdale Collegiate Institute market garden during an urban agriculture bus tour of Toronto led by FoodShare staff.

The Community Grown Model

A (Short) History of Community Grown

> *Even if people have just some supplement to their income it makes a huge difference to their quality of life. Being able to take the TTC to their doctor, being able to send their kids on a school trip, being able to buy extra things that they couldn't afford before. So huge, huge impact... that was why it was really important to me and to my organization to... push for that and to allow for that on public land.*

> \- Maria Calvachi, Flemingdon Community Health Centre

FoodShare's involvement with both Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge neighbourhoods predates many of the organization's staff, including the current Executive Director, Debbie Field. When asked about FoodShare's relationship with Community Grown neighbourhoods, Debbie reflected, "I know that years before there was ever a garden in Flemingdon Park we had a long partnership with the Flemingdon Park Community Health Centre around a healthy community kitchen program and we co-published a cookbook with them" (Debbie Field). Before the community garden, FoodShare had a Good Food Market with the Flemingdon Health Centre. The Flemingdon Health Centre has been in existence for forty years and it understood that food security was a need in the neighbourhood. They had also identified that there were many people in the community who were gardeners and that they were not only gardeners, but they were farmers and had immigrated to Canada with a lot of place-

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

specific farming knowledge. FoodShare recognized this as a *need* in the community for gardening and farming opportunities.

FoodShare's role in spearheading a proposal for a market garden in Flemingdon Park was timely and allowed the organization to collaborate with the Flemingdon Health Centre on a larger community-led initiative aimed to anchor three community revitalization projects around food. These projects included: updating and expanding the existing Flemingdon Park Community Garden, piloting tactical urbanism to animate the Flemingdon Park Town Centre project, and co-designing the Flemingdon Park Vibrant Place Market Garden in partnership with FoodShare.

FoodShare started supporting Gordonridge in 2007 through the development of a community garden. Gordonridge has a long history of community involvement and has collaborated with many organizations to implement projects aimed to engage families and youth. An existing partnership with The Stop Community Food Centre served as a liaison between FoodShare and the Gordonridge community. In 2010, FoodShare, in partnership with Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), conducted a city-wide consultation for strategic priorities for TCHC on the potential of urban agriculture to meet community health outcomes. Since then, opportunities for urban agriculture expansion have been explored at Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park.

> *All of these projects are pieced together in different ways. Now we've taken the school model, the School Grown model and we're asking the question, "Can we do this in the community?" And that's what we're piloting now. What would that look like? Because in the community we're working with youths as well as lots of adults. And for the adults there's not that kind of funding. So what does working with an adult model look like? Can we pair? Can we use employment grants and then looking at supplemental income opportunities...So we're scaling it on a different level and being able to pilot something completely different.*
>
> *-Angela ElzingaCheng*

In both of these communities FoodShare recognized that a consultation process was required to ensure that the needs and vision of both communities were being accurately represented. FoodShare secured funding to hire a landscape architecture firm based out of Guelph in 2014 to conduct the consultation process.

Progress at Gordonridge reached a standstill as FoodShare sought funding to continue project planning. In the early fall of 2015, Flemingdon Park was ready for a community consultation, the landscape architects were then able to conduct both community design processes concurrently over a period of six months. Each consultation produced site- and community-specific information and identified questions and considerations that were instrumental in developing the final designs for the market gardens. After a series of consultations with both communities in the fall and winter of 2016, an official 'project reveal' was announced for Community Grown on March 18th, 2016.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Boards with concepts developed at the Flemingdon Park community co-design session (Image courtesy of Shift Landscape Architecture)

Perspective rendering for Gordonridge showing market garden activities including planting and beekeeping (Images courtesy of Shift Landscape Architecture)

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Plan and perspective renderings for Flemingdon Park showing a market garden, orchard, and food forest (Images courtesy of Shift Landscape Architecture)

Project Resources

Physical Infrastructure and Natural Resources

The space allocated for the Flemingdon Park Market Garden is centrally located on land within a Hydro One corridor. The City of Toronto Parks and Recreation Department is arranging to sign a lease with FoodShare permitting the new use on land designated for parks and open space. While the project is still pre-construction, the space offers a lot of potential. The designated land is essentially an open field with soil that has been tested positively for food growing.

The market garden at Gordonridge is located on Toronto Community Housing property situated behind three high rise residential buildings. Infrastructure constructed for the market garden in the summer of 2016 replaced underutilized tennis courts with 24 raised beds. All of the raised beds were built off-site by FoodShare staff.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

View of the preliminary market garden at Gordonridge.

The plans for Community Grown have allocated spaces for a community garden, market garden, dog park, orchard, hammock forest, and bee hives. Materials and equipment are sourced from various places, including FoodShare and other nonprofits and community centres around Gordonridge.

Financial Resources

Community Grown is funded differently in Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park but in both cases, financial resources have been awarded by a number of different sources. The Ontario Trillium Foundation provided financial support for the one year consultation and engagement process undertaken in both communities. Funding for Community Grown in Flemingdon Park has been secured through grants including Live Green, Ontario Trillium Foundation, and a substantial three-year commitment from the Weston Foundation pending project approval by City of Toronto Councillors. TCHC has provided funding for soil, seeds, and the beekeeping initiative. Because the project is only in the beginning stages, any sales from the market garden at Gordonridge were minimal and did not generate enough revenue to cover any inputs or labour. Additional funding is being applied for on an ongoing basis by FoodShare and the steering committees in both neighbourhoods. FoodShare has committed to supporting the project on an ongoing basis, however, there is currently no funding available for Community Grown staffing.

Human Resources

The progress made to date with Community Grown would not be possible without the help of the support networks that were formed at project conception and those that were developed throughout the process.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

FoodShare Staff

FoodShare Toronto is the primary nonprofit organization providing support to Community Grown. Project management for the project is undertaken by Angela ElzingaCheng, the Urban Agriculture, Community Food Animation and Evaluations Senior Manager at FoodShare. She is responsible for organizing funding applications, monthly steering committee meetings, workshops, and leading partnership-building in general. Erica Angers was the Community Grown Lead Farmer for six months, hired in the summer of 2016 under a seasonal contract by FoodShare to work on the initial phases of the market garden at Gordonridge. The farmer assists with on-the-ground support for tasks including the construction of raised beds, planting and harvesting, compost development, and plant cultivation, among others. Erica also assists with the organization and delivery of workshops designed to share knowledge between partners and residents. To date ten workshops have been held: beekeeping, orchard maintenance, composting, and garlic planting.

Contributing FoodShare Staff from left: Erica Angers, Orlando Lopez, Angela ElzingaCheng, and Yara Janes

Partnerships

Project development for Community Grown in Flemingdon Park is supported by partnerships with Hydro One, the Flemingdon Ministry, and the Flemingdon Community Health Centre. Evaluation planning will also be undertaken in partnership with Toronto Public Health once the project at Flemingdon Park is implemented. Gordonridge maintains strong ties with Toronto Community Housing Corporation and the Gordonridge Steering Committee. Both communities hold partnerships with the City of Toronto and FoodShare Toronto.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Community Resources

FoodShare does not pursue projects in the city unless they are conducted in a collaborative capacity through strong partnerships. The Steering Committee at Gordonridge (Gordon Ridge Grows) is the most important partner represented at this site for Community Grown. The Committee is volunteer-based and is composed of both residents and nonresidents who represent institutions and local government. The Flemingdon Park neighbourhood is well-represented by a steering committee made up of members of the Flemingdon Urban Fair Committee, Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office, Better Living, TCHC, and the Flemingdon Ministry. City of Toronto Recreation staff have also participated in the development of Community Grown in Flemingdon Park.

The Gordonridge Steering Committee is volunteer-based and includes representation from residents of the site's three highrise apartment buildings as well as non-residents including board members who represent Toronto Public Health and Toronto Community Housing. During the implementation phase in the summer of 2016, market garden infrastructure at Gordonridge was constructed by Erica Angers with assistance from Canada Summer Jobs youths and community volunteers.

Key residents on the Steering Committee have been involved in various essential ways[3]. Residents have contributed by creating connections with their existing strong networks of community members and expertise in connecting with Toronto Community Housing. These networks have been built over many years, and are expressed by being voted in as tenant representatives and in the case of one resident in particular- as the Community Garden Lead. These residents are also active in the market garden and community garden activities themselves. They support the administration of beekeeping on site and undertook beekeeping training themselves. They organized the planting of the pollinator garden, planted the orchard and continuously maintain the health of the pollinator garden and the fruit trees. Residents also prepare food for special events and participate on the Steering Committee, which sometimes met twice a month this past year.

Building Community Ownership

Decision-making

> *Both communities came up with compensation models... each community reflected the makeup of the community. All of that was documented very thoroughly. What community members voted on, what members wanted, and since that time we've been able to ask for funding to make both of these projects come to life.*
>
> - *Angela ElzingaCheng*

The decision-making process was not an easy one for everyone involved in the development of the Community Grown project in Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge. FoodShare has extensive experience in facilitating community gardens through conception, implementation, and in ensuring long term

---

[3] Len Mirander is the Coordinator of the Gordonridge Community Garden, is heavily involved in the community and oversees urban agriculture activities on the TCHC property. Len was a key contributor to this case study on behalf of the Gordonridge Steering Committee.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

sustainability. After supporting more than thirty community gardens across the city, FoodShare has developed a set of best practices for this type of project. While the process was not the same for Community Grown, similar practices can be identified. These include an emphasis on shared: leadership; collaborative work; interpersonal and group- communication; developing a collective vision and goals; ensuring a transparent decision-making process; establishing guidelines and project plan; meeting regularly; ensuring participation; establishing a presence in the community; and developing strong and strategic partnerships.[4] While FoodShare's involvement has been instrumental in the visioning and implementation of Community Grown, the nature of the organization's involvement is subject to change over time. Consequently, having a strong steering committee in place to make important, collective decisions, is essential to the sustainability of the project.

Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and partnership agreements were written for both Community Grown projects outlining the agreed upon decision-making process developed by the steering committees and FoodShare Toronto. The MoUs and Partnership Agreements were written in the summer of 2016 and are valid for one year; as living documents, they are subject to revision and renewal yearly for the next five years (minimum). The agreements represent FoodShare's long term commitment to the project and to the partnership with the committee and with the community at large. The MoU describes the "objectives, responsibilities, financial arrangements, dispute resolution and other conditions under which FoodShare Toronto and Gordon Ridge Grows will enter into partnership arrangements with institutions, organizations and other agencies, whose mandates and philosophy of operations closely resemble that of FoodShare Toronto"[5]. Most importantly, the Partnership Agreement establishes a process and policy for conflict resolution to ensure that all decisions that are made are just and collaborative.

FoodShare staff and partners emphasize the process of succession planning as a step in establishing sound decision-making. Having a strategy in place to ensure that institutional/organizational knowledge about the project is preserved will reduce future challenges that might relate to funding, management, and relationships. Succession planning can be done on an individual basis as in Gordonridge where the community garden coordinator is transferring knowledge to a youth volunteer who has shown interest in being a community leader on the project in the future. In Flemingdon Park succession planning has been addressed by ensuring that more than one staff member of the FHC is represented on the steering committee.

---

[4] Complete guidelines for community garden planning can be accessed at:
http://foodshare.net/custom/uploads/2015/11/What_makes_for_a_successful_community_garden.pdf
[5] The MoU can be requested by contacting FoodShare urban agriculture staff

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

> *There's a whole time period in the beginning of a project when people are really excited about the project and are more forgiving of process that isn't that great and we're all trying to figure this out and good intentions. There's a time period where rubber hits the road and it becomes the end of goodwill around these things. And it becomes extremely important that we figure all this stuff out. Terms of reference, who owns the refrigerator if a group leaves? Who owns the beehives if FoodShare leaves? ... How do the decisions get made about money and are you being transparent? These are all questions that have to get figured out but they can't all get figured out over one meeting, they get figured out over ten meetings or fifteen meetings.*
>
> *- Angela ElzingaCheng*

Consultation

> *I think what's clear in both of these projects and in our community development work that, if done right, you know we're working on creating steering committees, and leadership and good decision-making processes and good community development processes - the other projects come out of it. It could be another food project… it's like a clove of garlic. You plant one clove of garlic and six more come out of that.*
>
> *-   Angela ElzingaCheng*

A strong emphasis was placed on the consultation process in developing Community Grown. This was required, in part, to represent the large population more fairly and because the process of initiating a social enterprise itself has more risk embedded in it than simply starting a community garden.

At Flemingdon Park over 700 residents were engaged in a community-led redesign of existing open space by means of a formal consultation event (approximately 500 participants) and through door to door surveys (200 participants). The consultation process was led by FoodShare in collaboration with the Flemingdon Health Centre.

Compensation

> *We're not talking about creating jobs that would be great too. But even if people have just some supplement to their income it makes a huge difference to their quality of life. Being able to take the TTC to their doctor, being able to send their kids on to a school trip, being able to buy extra things that they couldn't afford before. So huge, huge impact so, so that was why it was really important to me and to my organization to, uh, to push for that and to allow for that on public land.*
>
> *-   Rhonda*

A key element of the partnership agreements between FoodShare and the steering committees of Community Grown addresses the compensation models that each neighbourhood would like to see realized through the project's life cycle. The agreements outline the process by which collectively determined compensation models will be established in future meetings. The agreements also outline the procedures to be followed in securing funding to support the project. For example, FoodShare will have a role in preparing and submitting grant applications for the project but the Gordonridge Steering Committee may also apply for funding through other partner organizations. Procedures and policies for accepting and soliciting donations, infrastructure management, and insurance are also stipulated in the partnership agreement.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

It was important for all stakeholders to be clear about the fact that the market garden will provide supplemental income through entrepreneurial activities; the model does not have the capacity to replace a participant's full income at the scale at which it is being implemented. Many factors contribute to this including the physical scale of urban farming as well as the wide reach of the projects that invite a great deal of community involvement. The urban farmers onsite will receive a full wage and can support participant farmers in social enterprise initiatives.

Building Knowledge

Just waiting for you I sat there and I saw two birds that I've never seen before. And I went and I got the farmer, I saw where they landed and we went and we found them but she had never seen those. She's from Quebec, she's in Ontario and she had never seen them before so that's one thing.

- *Len*

One of FoodShare's primary goals is to increase universal food literacy, this is achieved by facilitating and encouraging knowledge and skill sharing in all of its activities. All participants, regardless of whether they are involved in a managerial capacity or as volunteers, report gaining new knowledge about food production through their participation in Community Grown. Both participation and observation in gardening activities promotes knowledge mobilization through interpersonal communication and manual labour. Gardeners at Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park come from many different backgrounds and cultures and have culturally-specific knowledge of gardening techniques, practices, and subsequent food preparation. More importantly, this knowledge becomes intergenerational when parents and grandparents who are gardeners have access to infrastructure that allows them to share their wisdom and skills with the younger generation.

Extra-long Cucuzza Squash growing at both Gordonridge (left) and Flemingdon Park (right) community gardens. Normally grown in warm Mediterranean climates, the success of this variety in Toronto community gardens is a testament to the food growing skills of local gardeners.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Knowledge-mobilization that is specific to market gardening might include building an understanding of the different processes inherent in smaller-scale, urban farming as opposed to conventional, rural farming. Shared opportunities for learning also exist in skills training to to improve the employability of participants - these skills range anywhere from physical growing practices to the management of market gardening as a social enterprise which teaches financial planning and business marketing skills. Participants come from a wide range of backgrounds and for many English is a second language. Working alongside people from different countries is also an opportunity to build language skills.

Fostering Innovation and Entrepreneurship

You know, part of for us of doing community work and being innovators is being able to see opportunities and being able to make sure that these are things that people want and actually can work in the world.

- Angela

Among the reasons FoodShare stands out as a leader in the food security movement in Toronto is its creativity in driving community food solutions. The diversity of roles and backgrounds represented by FoodShare staff encourages new ways of thinking about how to integrate urban agriculture in community development projects. The engineering and architectural design of the Eastdale rooftop garden is an example of a successful innovative approach spearheaded by the organization and its partners. Central to urban agriculture projects pursued is a focus on departing from conventional farming practices and adopting more culturally and ecologically sound ones for example, through organic growing, promoting culturally appropriate vegetables and fruit, and promoting multifunctional growing spaces, among many others. Community Grown adopts this approach by providing opportunities for entrepreneurial activity, promoting organic agriculture, and sharing knowledge about the culturally specific growing practices represented by participating residents.

Bridging Divides

FoodShare's approach to finding community food solutions is universal - it seeks to improve the health of underserved people in a way that is non-stigmatizing and empowering. People from all cultural and economic backgrounds and of all ages are welcome to participate. As such, through food growing, Community Grown attempts to bridge both cultural and economic divides as well as those experienced between generations. The project's dedication to locally-produced, organic, and culturally diverse vegetables and fruit creates opportunities for the participating communities to engage in broader food, environmental, and social justice movements. FoodShare and partners like Toronto Urban Growers act as connectors between engaged residents at Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park with the wider urban agriculture community, strengthening citywide networks through local action. Community Grown also serves as a model for other neighbourhoods in Toronto seeking ways to work with local government and institutions to improve public space through innovation in community engagement.

Perhaps one of the most challenging barriers is the incompatibility between institutional policies, city planning policies, and the visions that communities have for open space. FoodShare's advocacy work

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

and on-the-ground programming through pilots like Community Grown make a strong case for alternative approaches to community development through food growing. Evidence gathered from both the process undertaken and the future outcomes of Community Grown will help resolve some of these differences.

Constraints

I think it made developing the site rather complicated because… what we found out from the Hydro process is they have a lot of restrictions on what they will allow and what they won't. And so to trying to match what the community was asking for with what Hydro was demanding was really difficult.

- Rhonda

At the Policy Level

The Community Grown project has experienced barriers at many stages of development. FoodShare's executive director Debbie Field explains that there are "negative policies" surrounding food growing in Toronto. It has tended to be instinctual for various organizations, institutions, and bureaucratic agencies to say "no" to projects like Community Grown that fall outside of the norm. Angela ElzingaCheng elaborated on this by explaining that even when institutions and government bodies say "yes" - ironing out the details and actually implementing the project can be difficult. For example, moving ahead with Flemingdon Park Community Grown is hampered by zoning bylaws and institutional policies that require special permission to be amended. Hydro One owns the land but it is being leased to City of Toronto Parks and Recreation, who will then lease it to FoodShare on behalf of the project. Consequently, changing Hydro One policies to permit community uses beyond recreation must be a joint effort between FoodShare, the Steering Committee at Flemingdon Park as well as The City. The success of the project hinges on its ability to be a permanent feature of the community, people will feel that investing in it both financially and socially is worthwhile because it will provide long-term returns. The innovative nature of the design faces complex restrictions that do not apply to temporary or existing uses within hydro corridors such as events simply requiring tents and removable structures.. While there is a lot of public support for Community Grown, it is also slowed by concerns that stakeholders have surrounding accountability and liability.

Funding and Staffing

…our ability to bring in partners, different kinds of funding, our ability collectively to work really well together can make a lot happen but if we don't have that person to bring in all of these different pieces, managing the volunteers, working with the farmers, ... the project will fall apart.

-   Angela ElzingaCheng
-

A recurring limiting factor is funding. Unreliable funding risks shifting the project's focus to achieving short-term results, undermining project planning. Underfunding or a lack of funds entirely affects staff

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

commitment, reducing long-term organizational knowledge and risks compromising the sustainability of the project. Staffing is an essential part of projects like Community Grown because while funders have been keen to finance the physical infrastructure for various activities in these spaces, there has to be staff to 'animate' it. Furthermore, achieving desired outcomes in sustainability and in community development is a long-term process and does not always align with short-term funding cycles.

Decision-making

A major barrier to the project's development has been the *time* required to ensure that on the ground and at the community level there is consistency in the "implementation of good, just practices" (Angela ElzingaCheng). Establishing a good terms of reference, calculating budgets and expenses, and finding consensus on partnership agreements has proven to require more time than originally anticipated during project planning. A key practice of FoodShare's towards ensuring collaborative decision-making is communication. Work to get all stakeholders on the same page requires time, effective conflict resolution policies, and full participation. In the long term, clear communication makes partners accountable to community members and will ultimately increase the project's longevity despite the setbacks experienced in the beginning stages.

FoodShare staff have described the disappointment that comes from not meeting community expectations for projects when obstacles to success present themselves. As a result, being as transparent as possible from the beginning will prevent the spread of misconceptions about what the project will yield. For example, as Erica Angers, the Urban Farmer at Gordonridge explains, "I think a lot of people think that farming is a lucrative business. It's not. Under no circumstances is it. You are never going to get a huge profit." Having a dedicated staff member to clarify the potential of the project during decision-making meetings shows that main partner is committed to being transparent and considers its accountability seriously.

Successes and Challenges Overcome

> *We've been actively advocating for these changes at Toronto City Hall for all of our history, again before any of us were here. We're active members of the Toronto Food Policy Council, we have made submissions, we depute – you know we try to encourage the City to take on more... friendly policies to gardens and markets in public spaces. We've written articles, I wrote a piece for the Toronto Star on this a couple of years ago. So we advocate at a variety of levels to try to open up the barriers.*
>
> *- Debbie Field*

Production Lessons

Implementing the market garden at Gordonridge happened behind schedule due to the barriers facing the project. Once the partners received the green light to put it 'in the ground', it was already midsummer in Toronto. The urban farmer and the steering committee explored planting quick turnover crops such as leafy greens and radishes to get the garden in production. The summer was particularly hot and dry and the team had to adapt volunteer tasks to ensure that the crops were well watered and

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

protected from pests. Installing garden plots in midsummer was a successful learning experience for all involved and was an exercise in creativity and adaptation!

Decision-making

After months of meeting with the steering committees and partners at Gordonridge and Flemingdon Park, FoodShare was successful in collaboratively developing workable Terms of Reference, Partnership Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding with both communities. Angela, the Project Manager expressed that these achievements, while not tangible on the ground, are extremely valuable in maintaining a strong relationship with the project communities. While establishing just decision-making practices is a long term process, maintaining transparent and open communication by holding bi-weekly and then monthly meetings with the steering committee has been a considerable success in Community Grown. Reflecting on the decision-making process undertaken for the project, Angela provided valuable insight, "I could hold to it and say, "this is the amount of work it took, these are the kinds of decisions we made, this is the kind of conflict it caused, this is the way that people were thinking through this".

Funding

> *Funders are excited about it, so currently just for infrastructure we've fundraised not a lot but maybe about 380,000, and there's more in the works. I'd say you know funders are excited about the potential of this project. Almost 90% of that is all infrastructure. So the really challenging part of this project is that we know it takes infrastructure and staffing.*
>
> - *Angela ElzingaCheng*

Funders have shown support and excitement for Community Grown. FoodShare and partners such as the Flemingdon Health Centre have succeeded in securing funding but as Angela notes, most of this is granted for infrastructure, being a tangible and easily measured output. Securing funding for staffing, however, remains a challenge.

Future Plans

> *More of them all over the city [laughs]. I think uh, what I would like to see in Flemingdon specifically and then in Gordonridge is someone growing food that you never would have imagined to be able to be grown and doing things with that food that we wouldn't have pictured. So are there different ways of processing it, different ways of sharing it with the community, or different ways of selling it, new business, new initiatives?*
>
> - Rhonda

The overall vision for the Community Grown projects is to create community-centred multifunctional spaces that encourage active learning, participation, and socialization through food growing for a diverse population, but most importantly, a place that a community can call its own. It would be used by the community "unconsciously" as a central meeting place or community hub. The spaces are hoped

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

to be used not only by the neighbourhood but by surrounding communities as well encouraging a wider social network and exchange of knowledge and ideas.

The future of the project requires having a stable organizational structure to facilitate collective decision-making. The hope is that the amount of physical space available for growth will not become a limitation as new uses are proposed for land in Toronto's dense built environment. Ideally the community-based design will be realized in full and expanded upon as the project becomes self-sufficient both in terms of funding and project and management. The many actors involved dream of not only expanding the Flemingdon Park and Gordonridge projects but of seeing the model replicated around the city. FoodShare's role has been to act as a catalyst to support organizations and groups in kickstarting projects such as Community Grown.

> *...currently we're partnering as a lead partner, helping to provide direction for the project, looking for funding, doing the capacity building, running the workshops, building the composters. Like we have a very, very engaged role at GR and soon FP when it starts to get built. If the project gets to a point where the community leaders and the organizations are like, "we're going to run this on our own" then FS will become a very different thing.*

- Angela ElzingaCheng

Relevance to Other Projects

Community Grown is part of a citywide urban agriculture project between the City of Toronto and three community organizations to pilot urban agriculture in underutilized hydro corridors across the city. Titled Community Engagement and Entrepreneurial Development (CEED) Gardens, the project aims to develop a new model for urban farming that scales up community gardens through strong partnerships and innovative design. The project expands upon allotment gardens that the City of Toronto currently supports on Hydro One lands which are leased and zoned for recreational purposes. Toronto Urban Growers has partnered with The City and other organizations (including FoodShare) to establish more growing spaces in the city using the CEED model. This model focusses on multifunctional land use, community economic development, social enterprise, public access to green space, and sustainable urban agriculture.[6]

Synthesis and Recommendations

For sustainable food groups and community organizations looking to 'scale up' from community gardens to market gardens, Community Grown may serve as a model for effective process development. The benefits of market gardens to communities are manifold: increased access to fresh produce; increased food literacy; reduced social isolation; increased community connections; strong partnerships within and beyond the neighbourhood; knowledge sharing; supplemental income opportunities; and environmental stewardship, among others.

Other groups can also learn from the number of site-specific challenges that Community Grown has faced. Among one of the most notable was the difficulty of promoting permanent food growing projects on property governed by policies that favour temporary land uses and which falls under multiple

---

[6] http://torontoist.com/2015/07/pilot-project-could-turn-hydro-corridors-into-urban-farms/

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

jurisdictions (Hydro One and City of Toronto Parks and Recreation). It was difficult to sustain energy and enthusiasm for the project after the initial development stages. Securing funding commitments that went beyond physical infrastructure (e.g. to support an urban farm lead) were also challenging to come by. Finally, establishing a consensus on terms of reference and compensation revealed many tensions within the community and between partners, and showed how essential it was to develop a carefully considered and transparent decision-making process.

The following may be useful considerations for new market garden initiatives:

Project design:
- Identify opportunities to expand community gardens where there is space available and where the community expresses a *need* and *desire* for food growing.
- The facilitating organization should also identify if there is a core group of people who are able and interested in assuming a role in the project (ideally there will be at least 1-2 people who will be present in the long-term and have time and resources to devote to helping with coordination or manual gardening activities).
- Identify the specific community expected to participate and invest in the project. For example, if the garden is located at a TCHC property there may be long-term residents willing to get involved for an honorarium or as a volunteer. If it's at a school with a fairly transient population, you may need to hire a staff member to coordinate and maintain the project from year to year (while working with a volunteer group and farmers).
- Design a consultation process with a wide reach to include the insight of residents, community groups, and institutions.
- Take advantage of neighbourhood improvement planning processes (such as TCHC Revitalization communities[7]).
- Find resources/establish key staff time to lay the foundation of a project this size and scope. This will help ensure community participation later.
- Find resources to work with an architect. The architectural drawings were a key factor in getting funding for Community Grown. They added significant weight to the scope, validity, progress, and vision of the project.

Project Resources
- Early in the process, get staffing commitments from a diversity of invested organizations. This does not have to be full time, however, a commitment to work on pieces of the project is beneficial.
- Collectively seek and apply for funding to strengthen proposals.
- Seek funding that will support both infrastructure and non-infrastructure needs (e.g. funding for a full-time urban farmer).
- Ensure that temporary land use restrictions do not apply to the market garden site.

---

[7] https://www.torontohousing.ca/revitalization

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Decision-making

- Establish a steering committee that is representative of the community and major partners. Consider establishing a steering committee that has more community representatives than organizations and note how that might change the project.
- Develop just decision-making processes that clarify roles and responsibilities through arrangements such as Terms of References (ToR), Memoranda of Understanding (MoU), and partnership agreements.
- The above must be very clearly explained/drafted, line by line. Special attention should be given to the language used in any legal documents which can often be confusing or unclear for people not used to reading that style of writing, i.e. anyone who is not a lawyer.
- Consider best practices for succession planning for individuals, garden coordinators, the steering committee, and within partner organizations.
- To ensure transparency, keep public records of all decisions, when they are made.
- The project team should document lessons learned. For example, note who is contributing to successes, problem solving and solutions in order to have an experimental, collaborative learning mindset. This approach will alleviate stress and conflict when things don't work out as planned and celebrate successes.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems

Online Resources

FLEdGE Research - https://fledgeresearch.ca/about/what-we-do/scaling-up/
FoodShare Toronto - http://foodshare.net/
Flemingdon Park Community Grown - https://communitygrownflemingdon.net/
Gordonridge Community Grown - https://gordonridgegrows.net/

References

City of Toronto. (2016). *Ward Profiles*. Retrieved November 1, 2016 from
http://www1.toronto.ca/wcmAsset/images/ward_maps/wards_keymap.gif

Context map [map]. Scale 1:45,000. Data layers: Base map ArcGIS [computer files]: University of Guelph, Guelph, ON: Generated by Aislin Livingstone, October 24, 2016. Using: ArcGIS for Desktop Advanced [GIS]. Version 10.1. Redlands, CA: Esri, 2012.

Tensions, compromises and opportunities
inherent in the scaling up and out of sustainable
food system initiatives

Centre for
Sustainable
Food Systems