

Halton Food Council



Community Garden Initiative

Advocacy Plan

A Living Document

Funding for this initiative provided by



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Introduction

Canadian Municipalities are becoming increasingly supportive of local food systems. This has resulted in the creation of municipal food policies, food and nutrition charters, and changes in land use policies and zoning by-laws. In 2013 the Province of Ontario passed a *Local Food Act*.

The Halton Food Council (HFC) was established as an independent community council in 2009. The Council has been successful in increasing awareness of food system issues through various planning and educational forums. As well, the *Halton Food Charter* has been endorsed in principle by the Regional Municipality of Halton and its four municipalities. Furthermore, support for local food systems has been embedded in the Halton Region's Draft ***Healthy Communities Guidelines***.

The promotion and location of community food centres, small, medium and large scale food retail options, local food businesses and restaurants, community gardens, farmers markets and roof gardens within the community context, furthers the accessibility of locally grown food, enhances food security and creates a local food economy.
(Draft Healthy Communities Guidelines, Halton Region, 2012)

One of the primary goals of the HFC is to foster the development and use of community gardens throughout the region.

“Community Gardens are shared spaces where people gather together to grow fruit, vegetables, and/or flowers collectively. Community gardens can help promote food security for participants by increasing physical and economic access to adequate amounts of healthy food. Community gardens provide health, economic, educational, social, and environmental benefits to participants and the community at large.”
(Halton Food Council)



Today's Snapshot of Community Gardens in Halton Region

Community gardens already exist in Halton in different settings and manifestations depending upon the interests of the particular community organization that initiated the garden. A 2013 report by Dillon Consulting¹ identified and mapped out the following gardens in each municipality. In addition, there are 6 “edible gardens” on school lands.

Burlington - A pilot project has been underway since 2011 for two community garden sites, with one currently in operation (Central Park) on municipal parklands. At the end of the pilot project, the City will evaluate the community gardens for consideration by Council, and Staff.

The Town of Milton – The town has been supportive of community gardens on a site-specific request basis. The Town is in the process of developing a sustainability plan that may include provisions for community gardens. Currently, there are two community gardens located in Milton on municipal lands.

Oakville - The Town's *Parks, Recreation and Library Facilities Master Plan* includes statements of support for the development of community gardens and orchards. The Town has supported a number of community garden projects that have been driven by community groups. For example, there are currently three allotment gardens in Oakville on municipal lands.

Halton Hills – The establishment of past community gardens relates to numerous strategic directions, as well as multiple *Strategic Plan* goals, objectives and strategic actions. Existing gardens are operated under their own management agreements. In partnership with community groups, the Town has supported the establishment of two gardens on municipal lands.

Existing Community Gardens on Municipal Lands

Burlington • Central Park Community Garden



Milton • Milton Community Garden
• Chris Hadfield School Community Garden, Dempsey Park



Oakville • Lyons Lane Park Allotment Garden
• Shell Park Allotment Garden
• Kingsford Gardens Allotment Garden and Orchard
• OakvilleGreen Community Garden, Trafalgar Park



Halton Hills • Georgetown Allotment Garden, Dominions Garden Park
• Acton Community Garden



Note: This map is not an exhaustive list of all community gardens of various types across Halton Region and includes only those located on municipal lands. For a complete directory, including gardens on church lands as well as a list of farmers' markets, community kitchens and more, visit: www.oakvilleorganicmarket.com/pdfs/MAPApril10th11.pdf



¹ Dillon Consulting. (2013) Community Garden Policy: Considerations for Halton region and Local Municipalities.

The Community Garden Initiative

In January 2013, the HFC received funding from the Healthy Communities Fund (Ministry of Health & Long Term Care) for a Community Garden Policy Initiative that would focus on developing supportive policies and by-laws. The goal of the Community Gardens Workgroup (CGW) is to create a consistent policy objective across all municipalities that would allow community gardens to be built in “open spaces”.² In the winter of 2013, the HFC hired Dillon Consulting to conduct a scan of existing policies regulations and by-laws supporting community gardens. Following the completion of the report, the CGW received funding from a Heart & Stroke Spark grant to create an Advocacy Plan that would guide the HFC, CGW and local stakeholders in advocating for policy changes required to support community gardens in Halton region.

The Advocacy Plan project objectives were twofold:

- To increase HFC and CGW member knowledge, understanding and capacity about advocacy and how it can be used to influence public policy development
- To develop a plan that outlines advocacy priorities, provides clear direction to HFC and CGW members, and identifies actions required to affect community garden policy change in Halton municipalities.

The project deliverables included:

- 1 half day advocacy education session for the HFC and members of both workgroups including the CGW and the Community Food Collaborative Workgroup (CFCWG)
- 1 full day planning session for HFC and CGW members (to develop key elements of the plan)
- 1 written draft advocacy plan

In further discussions, the CGW decided to sharpen the scope of the plan to design:

- A high level plan for Halton Region and a more detailed plan for the City of Burlington that might serve as a template for the other municipalities.

This document captures: 1) the foundational ideas from the initial advocacy workshop with multiple stakeholders; and 2) the action plans which were co-created in the subsequent session with members of the HFC and the CGW.

² Open spaces are defined as: *any and all undeveloped land (public, commercial or community) and/or available space (such as rooftops)*

Understanding Advocacy

Participants in the educational workshop deepened their understanding of advocacy by responding to a series of questions:

1. *How would we define advocacy?*

Advocacy is:

- ❑ Educational because it promotes public understanding of food security, equitable access to local healthy foods, and physical activity.
- ❑ A grassroots movement that engages the community.
- ❑ A process for change which
 - Influences complex policy change and decision makers;
 - Is slow and continuous, responsive, reactive, opportunistic;
 - Builds common ground and unity of purpose;
 - Creates partnerships; and
 - Involves all the critical stakeholders in our region (individuals, community services, government and corporations).

2. *What are the risks of engaging in advocacy?*

- ❑ It may affect credibility if not done well, or it could be seen as controversial.
- ❑ The passion exhibited may alienate some groups that could be potential partners.
- ❑ Advocates may not have full awareness of the political landscape. It's important to know in advance the issues; the important partners (current and potential); the opposition; and the best pathways for building new relationships with stakeholders (such as by-law officers).

- ❑ The messaging needs to be clear and consistent.
- ❑ Some existing grassroots initiatives, which are now under the radar, may become exposed.

3. *What are the risks of not engaging?*

- ❑ The current policy landscape is biased towards intensification of property development.
- ❑ Momentum forward could stall.
- ❑ The evidence is compelling but people are not hearing it because of lack of promotion and publicity.
- ❑ There is the potential to lose passion and volunteer assistance.

Our Vision & Guiding Principles

Vision Statement

By 2018 Halton Region is a place where community gardens flourish!

Guiding Principles

We will do our best work when we have:

- Common language and messages
- Broad community engagement
- Solid research
- Champions on board and stakeholders engaged
- Clear expectations, goals, strategies & commitment
- Stories & successes to share
- A respectful and collaborative spirit of interaction

Our Possible Champions

- Media
- City Planners
- City Councilors
- Local gardeners and citizens
- All municipalities (which have adopted the Halton Food Charter)
- Public School Boards and private schools (supporting the “Edible Gardens” concept)
- Property Developers

Crafting Our Message

An advocacy message needs to be compelling and powerful enough to attract key decision makers and champions. In a brainstorming session, CGW members identified numerous reasons why people would want to support community gardens.



Building our neighbourhoods one garden at a time

In a role playing workshop, participants practiced “*getting our message out*”. A number of insights emerged:

- Develop a consistent message or “ask” that can be tailored to the specific individual or group, and have a one page fact sheet that can be left behind with everybody.
- Regardless of whether you are talking to a City Councilor, a local chef, a community member, a by-law officer, a school administrator...
 - Do your research so you understand their interests, customize the message, and make the connections to their perspective;
 - Be prepared for their questions on logistics (cost, location), how it fits with their work, how they can get involved, or surprising/unexpected questions;
 - Know your information, admit what you don’t know, and speak about the opportunities & benefits;
 - Build the relationship and the trust; and
 - Know when to say thank you.
- Ask questions of possibility (appreciative inquiry questions) such as:
 - *What is the smallest change we could undertake that would have the biggest impact?*
 - *What possibilities exist that we have not thought about yet?*
 - *What solutions would have us all win together?*

Six Reasons Groups fail in their Attempts to Influence Government³

Groups fail because they:

1. Ask for the wrong or unclear thing or something that’s not within the power of the government representatives.
2. Get active too late; quit too soon.
3. Don’t have a plan.
4. Fail to help the government think it through and see how it fits within the bigger picture.
5. Don’t have a champion in government or haven’t built relationships with influencers, decision makers and enablers.
6. Haven’t used media selectively, may have “trash talked” politicians, or resorted to form letters.

³ (Adapted from Oxfam and Advocacy School www.advocacyschool.org)

Advocacy Action Workplan – Region-Wide Initiatives

Our Advocacy Aspiration: *By 2018, Halton Region is a place where community gardens flourish.*

Key Objectives	Actions, Location, Time Frame & Who	Our Strengths	Our Allies Partners Supporters	Our Opportunities	Additional Resources (Funds, staff, skills & information)	Results (2018)
<p>1. Design a Master Food System Plan</p> <p>1.1 Create a consistent community garden policy across all municipalities for the future sustainability of nutritious and available food for the population of Halton</p> <p>1.2 Build ongoing capacity of community gardens & network</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>1.1 Host a regional Forum in 2014 (Attract stakeholders within & outside of the Region)</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>TBC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halton Food Council members & website Regional/provincial/national interest & support Ontario Food & Nutrition Strategy members (Lynn Roblin, Mary O'Brien) Halton Region Health Dept. liaisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OMAFRA AMO Ontario Community Gardens Network Sustain Ontario Various municipal focused partner agencies like Halton Com Development, OSFP, Burlington, Oakville & Milton Green, HEN's Food in Halton site Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with communities who have done this – e.g. Vancouver (<i>Regional Food System Strategy</i>, Metro Vancouver⁴) The CGW has \$ for an educational forum The Draft Healthy Communities Guidelines support community gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Local Food Procurement Actions and Reports Scan</i> (Clean Air Partnership – Greater Toronto)⁵ Farmers; HRFA newsletter Foodland Ontario OMAFRA (\$500) HFC (\$) <p>1.2 Halton Food Council submitted a proposal for Trillium funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master Food Strategy ✓ Community gardens in every ward on public & private lands Community gardens supporting local food banks <p>1.2 Paid Coordinator/ Staff</p>

⁴ <http://www.metrovancouver.org/planning/development/AgricultureAndFood/Documents/RegionalFoodSystemStrategy.pdf>

⁵ http://www.cleanairpartnership.org/files/Local_Food_Procurement_June%202011%20Final.pdf

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<p>2. Facilitate Bylaw Changes</p> <p>2.1 Region wide policies support changes in municipal zoning by-laws as needed to allow community gardens on any and all undeveloped land and/or available spaces</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>2.1 Identify the more immediate opportunities for By-law change (see Burlington Action Plan)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dillon Report will be circulated & used for discussions with Bylaw officers & planners in each municipality (see Objective 3.2) 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and planners have promoted and supported municipal bylaw changes
<p>3. Enhance Communications</p> <p>3.1 Develop a common understanding of the benefits of CGs</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>3.1 Clarify Message & identify who is talking to whom</p> <p>Long Term</p> <p>3.1 Every resident aware of community gardens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More community leaders More community garden opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dillon Report Existing relationships with individual by law officers at each level and town \$600 available for Dillon report revision Supportive media & media contacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ted McMeekin (Flamborough MPP) Julia Hanna – Kids and Cook – Chair BIA Michelle Knoll – Freedom Centre Food for Life Erin Walsh (teacher) Community networks (success stories) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kathleen Wynne Chairman – Glen Powell (Ontario Farmer) Ted Brown (Georgetown Independent) Gary Carr and other counselors / mayors – all political groups and staff Harvest Halton (Involve chefs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HFC Food assessment in Halton Map out our connections & networks Ontario Municipal Association Best Practice in Local Food report (AMO) Sustain Ontario videos Friends of the Greenbelt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every resident is aware of community gardens Strong community garden network (regional) Quantified number of community gardens (before & after-Snapshots)

<p>3.2 Engage municipalities in a discussion of the Dillon Report's "Considerations"</p> <p>3.3 Conduct a complete scan of current success stories which can be part of our conversations with each municipality (possibly publish)</p> <p>3.4 Increase education and awareness</p>	<p>3.2 Build relationships and establish the need for the Dillon Report. Complete final revisions as required for accuracy. Milton & Burlington will be the pilot (See Appendix A: Burlington's plan)</p> <p>3.4 Get revised Dillon Report and 1 page summary out once report is ready</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFC website links to articles • Complete the community garden survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bloggers/social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Halton Food Community Garden Network (forum) • The "Bob Rumbell" story demonstrates what can be accomplished in "open spaces" 	<p>or a map of each municipality</p>
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APPENDIX A: Advocacy Action Workplan for Burlington

Our Advocacy Aspiration: *By 2018, Halton Region is a place where community gardens flourish*

Key Objectives & Actions	Actions, Location, Time Frame & Who	Our <u>Strengths</u>	Our <u>Allies</u> Partners Supporters	Our <u>Opportunities</u>	Additional <u>Resources</u> (Funds, staff, skills & information)	<u>Results</u>
<p>1. Build momentum & commitment</p> <p>1.1 Encourage City Council to see themselves as leaders and part of a larger healthy community strategy focused on community gardens</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>1.1 Pilot evaluation report to committee Nov. 25</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michelle (BG) & Gayle <p>Long Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are all connected with the HFC and Community Garden Work Group • 1 pilot garden plus 1 public allotment garden this fall • 1 communal garden at Applemead cooperative housing complex (cont'd operation TBC) • 3 allotment gardens on church properties (current, +1 past) • 6 edible gardens on school properties, communal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maurine Rabchuk (Sr. Parks Manager – Oakville) • City of Burlington staff • Multiple stakeholders and local gov't involvement, supportive public policy – 3 pillars of healthy vibrant communities. Council and staff need to be leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burlington council meeting to review the pilot (Nov) • HFC delegation to council • Edible gardens delegation (?) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City staff recommendation for dedicated funding for garden coordinator for coordinating & managing a network of gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community gardens in every ward on public & private lands

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<p>2. Build relationships and ownership for community gardens 2.1. Share the Dillon Report in Burlington</p>	<p>Short Term</p> <p>2.1 Dillon to meet with the planners from Burlington to validate the info and obtain approval to share. Ask them how they see document being used.</p> <p>Long Term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 120+ very happy gardeners • Donation to food banks of 1000 lbs per year; • Visual demonstration of how to grow food, how to incorporate it in home landscape planning; • Supportive media endorsing a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Peachey • Chris Glenn (director of parks) • Ward 1 – Rick Craven • Ward 3 – John Taylor • Ward 2 – Marianne Meed- Ward • Mayor Rick Goldring • Ward 5 – Paul Sharman • Burlington Sustainable 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend contract with Dillon to bring Sari back • Bylaw update also happening where we could possibly influence zoning changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unanimous support for the report and a commitment to implementing recommendations.

		good community story and concept	Development Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott Stewart – General Manager (Development & Infrastructure) 			
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