

Community Focus Bulletin: ***Creating Community Conversations***



Prepared by Merriam & Associates

No. 4– 2018

“Planning Locally for the Future of Food & Farming”

**Fourth Summit of Sustainable Peterborough’s Future of Food & Farming
Working Group**

March 19, 2018



**For the complete report on the proceedings of the summit go to:
sustainablepeterborough.ca/community-plan**

For the past five years, the **Future of Food and Farming Working Group (FFFWG)** of Sustainable Peterborough has researched food and farming trends and needs in the city and county, based on the Sustainable Peterborough Plan. The community goal for food and agriculture for 2036 is “we will feed ourselves sustainable with local, healthy foods”. Three strategies were identified in the Plan:

- Maintain adequate farmland availability to support our sustainable agricultural needs.
- Facilitate the production, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing of local, healthy food.

- Encourage farmers to practice good environmental stewardship.

The continuing changes to our climate and to the demographics of our farming community and consuming public remind us that we are planning for a different future.

On March, 19, 2018 the **FFFWG** held its' fourth summit. Over 40 participants attended, representing the farming community, government decision makers and community groups concerned about the future of food and farming. The focus of the summit was on protecting farmland. The intent of the summit was:

- to provide information that will assist participation in the current Official plan reviews in both our City and County,
- to share research and data that will help inform decision-making over the next couple of years and,
- to learn more about those issues facing food and farming and how to integrate these issues into the official plan process for the county and the city.

Preserving food-producing lands, planning our communities in a sustainable manner and promoting the importance of local food are imperative to our future as a community, as a province, and as a nation.

The decisions made today by our community in 2018 about our agricultural lands and our food and agricultural systems will impact future generations and their ability to feed our communities.

Goals of the summit:

- To provide tools for influencing public policy
- To position food and farming on the public radar
- To challenge/encourage decision makers (municipal and provincial) to support local food and farming?
- To illustrate the economic development components of food and farming

Presentation by Steve Duff, Chief Economist, OMAFRA

Here are some highlights from the presentations:

- Compared to the provincial level, Peterborough County has seen a more rapid:
 - Loss of total farm numbers, total farm area and total land in crops
 - Increase in the number of farm operators under 35 years of age
 - Reduction in the number of farm operators working full-time on the farm
 - Increase in farms less than 10 acres and between 1,100 and 1,600 acres

- Characteristics of farmland in Peterborough County like many parts of central and eastern Ontario has meant that large scale agriculture is not the norm:
 - 27% of farmers work full-time on the farm compared to provincial average of 49%
 - 21% of farmers work full-time off the farm compared to provincial average of 27%
 - Proportionally more farms under 69 acres
 - 72% of farms have under \$50,000 in gross farm sales compared to provincial average of 50%
 - Proportionally more beef and small livestock farms and less fruit and vegetable farms
- Compared to the provincial level, Peterborough County has seen a more rapid:
 - Loss of total farm numbers, total farm area and total land in crops
 - Increase in land prepared for seeding
 - Increase in the use of conservation tillage
 - Increase in the number of farm operators under 35 years of age
 - Reduction in the number of farm operators working full-time on the farm
 - Increase in farms less than 10 acres and between 1,100 and 1,600 acres
- 178 farms sell direct to consumer which is 18% of total farms compared to provincial average of 15%

Peterborough County Living Expenditures

- Average Peterborough County household has 2.3 people meaning their total annual living expenditures equal roughly \$65,267
- Average Peterborough County household has an annual income of \$80,787 before taxes – leaving very little for savings, investments, unknown expenses etc
- Some townships in Peterborough county exceed this annual income while others are much lower
- Rural Ontario residents and especially residents in lower income communities are facing living costs across the board that are putting significant stress on personal budgets
- In today's society, consumers have more discretion in controlling food costs than they do transportation, or housing as an example
- This means that many rural Ontario and Peterborough County residents are likely to look at their food purchases, sources and budgets in a much different manner than the average Ontarian.
- Rural residents as well as any lower income consumer are increasingly concerned with stretching their food dollar

Economically Resilient Local Food

- A local food system balances these questions by first recognizing that the answers lie at the individual farm and consumer level.
- Farmers need to:
 - Know their costs in order to appropriately price their products
 - Develop a sound value proposition to articulate to consumers
- Consumers need to:
 - Understand what value propositions matter most to them: price, quality, other attributes
 - Understand what attributes the product offers
 - Recognize seemingly similar products may be different due to value propositions that are not physical in nature – e.g. local food

Summary:

- Ontario and Peterborough County are part of an integrated North American food system
- In many respects all food produced in Ontario is local
- Like the province itself, no one county or community is truly self-sufficient in balancing food demand and production
- Local food production in Peterborough County is extremely visible but of smaller scale and size than most other parts of Ontario.
- Food is also a much bigger issue for many residents due to higher overall living costs and lower average incomes.
- The ability of a community, and its food producers to understand the local balance of food demand and production and the income situation of its residents is vital to maintaining an economically resilient local food system.
- The data would suggest Peterborough County has already to some degree embraced this reality but there is considerable room for growth of this trend

Panel on Local Research: Pat Learmonth, Jill Bishop, Carolyn Doris: Overview of local research re farmland, urban agriculture, food charter

Peterborough Food Charter: for all residents of Curve Lake & Hiawatha First Nations and the County & City of Peterborough.

A Food Charter is “a value, vision, or principle statement and/or a series of goals developed by a city, town or region that has a broad base of support and describes what a community wants their food system to look like”. Charters help to facilitate collaboration across groups/priorities and help guide food policy discussion/development. This food charter, requested and endorsed by the Peterborough Public Health Board of Health, has been an opportunity to integrate food

insecurity, community food security, local agriculture, food production, and sustainability together to support through food system discussions, local research and work.

Farmland, Farmers and Food Production in Peterborough County

This report was produced by the Sustainable Peterborough Working Group on the Future of Food and Farming in 2014 and has since been updated to include 2016 Census of Agriculture data. To read the full report go to:

“Farmland, Farmers and Food Production in Peterborough County”

<https://sustainablepeterborough.ca/about-us/working-groups/future-of-food-and-farming-working-group/>

“Cultivating a Fertile Environment for Urban Agriculture in the Greater Peterborough Area”

Urban Ag Task Force of the Future of Food & Farming Working Group of Sustainable Peterborough developed this report in 2017. Urban Agriculture is a dynamic concept that includes a multitude of activities, all of which connect growing, processing, and distribution of local food and food-related products in and around cities. As Urban Agriculture takes different forms in different cities, it is best defined locally.

Panel on the Official Plan Process: Brad Appleby, Planner of Subdivision Control and Special Projects for the City of Peterborough, Bryan Weir, RPP, MCIP, Director of Planning, County of Peterborough

The purpose of the panel was to explain:

- the relevance of the information presented,
- how it will help people engage in participating in the Official Plan process
- Connecting relative information to the municipal and provincial elections re issues of food and farming

Facilitated Discussion: participants reflected on the following questions and identified other questions that should be considered by decision makers:

- Should we be doing more to protect farm land? Should we be doing more than what is proposed by the province?
- What is the optimal farm-parcel size?
- Is the reduction in the number of farmers and farm businesses a concern?
- Should climate change affect planning? How?
- Is there a place in the Official Plan for farm stewardship and if so what is the main issue that should be included?

- Are their strengths/weaknesses in the existing food system/market linkages?
- How can the Official Plan help to encourage better utilization of agricultural lands in Peterborough County

For results of the discussion see the full report at sustainablepeterborough.ca/community-plan

For more information about our Community Focus Bulletins or to view past editions go to

<http://www.merriam-associates.com/contact-us>

Or email Dawn Berry Merriam at dawnbm@merriam-associates.com

or John Merriam at john@merriam-associates.com

or call 705-743-8050.

May, 2018