

Parks and Environment Committee - Parks & Environment Committee - for Record - Item PE 23.1

From: <adow@mfrfc.org>
To: <pec@toronto.ca>
Date: 10/17/2013 11:31 AM
Subject: Parks & Environment Committee - for Record - Item PE 23

Good Morning:

I am writing concerning the adoption and implementation of the proposed Toronto Agricultural Program arising from the work of many actors within the City of Toronto and the GrowTO Urban Agriculture Action Plan. In the last 5 years, Malvern Family Resource Centre and our community development arm - Malvern Action for Neighbourhood Change have been developing a comprehensive neighbourhood food security plan. With the support of local residents (over 200) we have developed approximately 20,000 square feet of urban agriculture space in the form of community gardens in 2 City of Toronto parks within Malvern and also at a private apartment dwelling. Not only has this created more dynamic park and play spaces for the community, but it has engaged residents of all incomes as well as a significant number of elderly persons in the community. We see that issues related to food have the power to mobilize the entire community regardless of age, sex, employment status, length of time in the country, etc. We have seen the transformative effects of such a program when we engage the local schools with volunteer-run programming that goes on in the garden. All of this has been done through leveraging external funding and in partnership with our Parks Department and local City Councillor. However, it is important that the City of Toronto adopt a supportive framework to encourage the expansion of similar neighbourhood initiatives. Collectively, over 2500 volunteer hours have been spent in urban agriculture in the community in the past 4.5 years.

This represents a significant success for our 'neighbourhood improvement area'/'priority neighbourhood' and would be further supported through the adoption of the staff recommendations on October 23rd. We are looking at developing urban agriculture programs in the next few years that would teach youth how to grow their own food, and connect them to employment opportunities in the food industry. We know that youth unemployment and underemployment is a challenge for Toronto over the next decade, where in priority neighbourhoods the youth unemployment rate is higher than the 16% recently cited by the Province in announcing their youth employment strategy.

For our community (and others) to create local solutions to issues of poverty and food insecurity, we must be supported by the City of Toronto.

Thank you for incorporating this feedback into your decision to support the staff recommendations.

Best,

"BUILDING A DREAM" - The Journey Starts Here...



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