

December 1, 2021

To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee



Re: IE 26.16 Transform TO: Critical Steps for Net Zero 2024

I would like to congratulate City staff for drafting a plan that advances the critical goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing Toronto's resilience.

There are some missed opportunities that can be made more explicit within the recommendations. Food is only mentioned directly in the context of municipal purchasing. This is an important objective, but food can and should be included in other places.

The report references commitments the City has made to food and climate change, such as the Cool Food Pledge and the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration. I would also add the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.

The City can uphold these commitments and strengthen citizen engagement by including the following food-related emission reduction strategies in the Net Zero 2040 Plan:

Support community-based mid-scale composting as a method of reducing emissions from food waste in landfill sites, creating a closer cycle of re-use and involving residents in do-able actions. Neighbourhood-based non-profits and city-wide organizations like FoodShare have the expertise to run successful community-based composting programs and have the relationships to engage diverse residents (including those living in multi-residence dwellings, newcomers and people who are marginalized).

Short term action: 70 per cent residential waste diversion from the City of Toronto's Integrated Waste Management System #16 Continue implementation of the City's Long Term Waste Management Strategy which sets a goal of diverting 70 per cent of waste managed from City customers away from landfill, by focusing on waste reduction, reuse and recycling activities that promote resource conservation and reduce environmental impact.



Support urban food production and pollinator gardens.

Container, balcony and rooftop gardens convert paved spaces into green infrastructure that cools buildings without fossil fuels – places where trees may not thrive. To have a significant impact on urban temperatures, we need to scale up the number of people and spaces growing plants. Food and pollinator plants provide extra incentives.

Short term action: Develop and implement strategies to improve greenspace infrastructure to build climate resilience #17 Increase canopy cover and biodiversity and enhance greenspaces

As the report rightly notes:

*"Achieving net zero is not simply a technology solution. The combination of attentive urban design, city planning, active transportation, and transit systems, **changes in consumptive behaviour and supportive net zero consumer choices**, will all need to work in step to cumulatively increase the efficiencies of corresponding urban systems."*

There's an added benefit to food gardens – research shows that people who grow their own food tend to shift to lower-carbon diets. So, it's not only about the amount of fruit and vegetables that's grown in the city, there is an impact on what foods people purchase in general.

Food grown close to home, through gardens or community farms, requires less packaging, particularly less single-use plastic packaging.

Food growing or buying food from local, urban producers is a small first step that encourages people to take further steps. The more the City supports people to consume local food, the greater the cumulative effect.

Short term action: Ensure equitable implementation and ongoing improvement of engagement and reporting #18 Support resident-led climate action and engagement

#19 Work with Indigenous rights holders and urban Indigenous communities to share knowledge and learnings

This is important but needs to go further. The City must offer more opportunities for Indigenous land and water stewardship. Yes, we have a lot to learn from Indigenous knowledge keepers, but it is critical to get Indigenous people back on the land, not just sharing their knowledge.

#23 Encourage the growth of green industry to provide the products and services needed to enable a net zero city

Yes, and explicitly include urban agriculture businesses as green industries.

Lead by example

Yes! There are many demonstration sites the City could create to inspire and instruct residents on food gardens. Community groups are natural partners, please leverage their knowledge, passion and energy.

In closing, please let food growers and eaters see themselves reflected in this plan. They will be more likely to get behind it and dig in to net zero efforts.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Teitel-Payne

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