

Sunday Harrison, Green Thumbs Growing Kids

It's great to see decarbonization named as the goal of much of this plan. This is where we need to go, and it's not going to be easy. We need to change the culture. TransformTO is to be congratulated for a deep and meaningful plan, with many appropriate benchmarks and accountability mechanisms. However, some of the City's own documents and resources are not as well aligned with the plan as they could be. For example,

#### **24. Leverage Live Green Toronto to develop and implement a city-wide climate action awareness campaign**

In conjunction with this excellent suggestion, I would add that the City's existing Community Reduce & Reuse Programs, as part of the Long-Term Waste Management Strategy, should also be ramped up across the city, which includes Urban Harvest, Sewing and Bicycle Repair Hubs, Community Composting and Sharing and Reusing Spaces. This is community-scale change that should be increased across all neighbourhoods, not just a few, leveraging the enormous reach of the schools, non-profit organizations and community centres who could be participating – this could be so impactful to reach the goals of changing consumption and behaviour. It would clarify the message of decarbonization, and include a strong Food component, not just food waste management but food production, from backyards, community gardens, parks, golf courses and rooftops.

- **Greenhouse gas emissions from food the City of Toronto procures are reduced by 25 per cent**

This is a good start, but I wonder what happened to the Food Lens as we adopt a Climate Lens – can we not have a pair of glasses with one lens for each? Admittedly, food and waste are lower down on the emissions ladder and as such, might be overlooked from a reductionist and quantitative point of view. We argue that food, as a core human activity, should be part of the vision of solutions, and that community-scale actions will bring the TransformTO plan to life at the level of individual and neighbourhood change.

#### **Food Waste**

Organics recycling via the Green Bin focuses mainly on anaerobic digestion, and the production of biogas. While this is an appropriate technology for energy production, it diverts nutrients from the food system into the energy grid. Plus, we are still sending 2/3 of our organics, generated by business, to Michigan. Increasing the supports for aerobic composting at the community and home scale could take pressure off the Green Bin program, leaving nutrients in place for urban agriculture.

#### **Consultation Reports**

We note that the many varied consultations that led to this proposed plan pretty much all included food production and composting in their vision of solutions.

Community consultation: Vision of Toronto in 2050. "Our neighbourhoods are surrounded by green space; such as parks, naturalized spaces, green roofs and green walls. Most of our food is grown and sourced locally. We produce almost no waste."

Key Ideas and Action Areas: HOW WE LIVE – "We observed locally sourced food as the largest priority in this section"

Indigenous discussants at the single-day consultation event highlighted indigenous food sovereignty – more access to land and water - as important to climate mitigation. “There should be fields of food, not just small community gardens ... but bigger plots and more community control. City-run golf courses ... could be farms full of corn and other foods. Our rivers should be full of fish, managed through neighbourhood hatcheries.”

The Engagement and Equity report also found Urban Agriculture and Locally Sourced Food to be Engagement Highlights (p27), also not reflected in the current TransformTO document.

### **Other Cities**

Montreal, with the support of the province of Quebec, is embarking on a program under Climate Action Quebec to support commercial-scale urban farming. This program is worth watching as it will likely generate CO2e reduction data that is very transferable to Toronto. See <http://www.aulab.ca/montrealculteurs/>

### **Schools**

I would be remiss not to mention the enormous potential of schools in the decarbonization drive. The education sector represents a key public infrastructure asset and schools are the hub of the community. They must be fully engaged with decarbonization, from buildings and facilities through to teaching and learning. School grounds represent opportunities for teaching food production, composting, tree care, overall climate science and solutions. Our organization focuses on these lands and is supported in part by the City of Toronto Urban Forestry, along with other levels of government and the private sector. We teach about food and climate solutions, with all our practices and teaching geared to CO2 drawdown through healthy soils and plants. Thank you for your time.