

13.0 MOVING FORWARD



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13.1 Summary

The roots of a local sustainable food system in Middlesex-London are beginning to develop; however, there is room to help these roots flourish, particularly by using the many strengths and assets within the area. Residents and staff of Middlesex-London identified strengths across the food system, with the greatest number of strengths identified in the areas of food production, retail and consumption. It was also noted by these individuals that residents express a great interest in the local food system and that this interest is growing.

With such a great deal of food system strengths and individuals interested in the local food system, it is an opportune time for Middlesex-London to take action in building a stronger, more sustainable local food system. Throughout this community food assessment, many opportunities have been identified that will help to accomplish this goal. In some areas, there are major gaps in information that need to be addressed in order for the issues to be understood in their entirety; without this understanding, appropriate initiatives to strengthen the food system in these areas cannot be identified. In addition to many opportunities for transformation, the Middlesex-London food system is not without its challenges. The effort exerted towards growing crops for export out of the local food system, the lack of healthy lifestyles of residents, the many barriers facing new farmers, and the numbers of food insecure residents are some of the key challenges facing the Middlesex-London food system. The following section of this community food assessment focuses on moving forward to a stronger, healthier, more sustainable food system and the many ways Middlesex-London can work toward this goal.

13.2 Recommendations

One of the means of transitioning to a stronger, more sustainable local food system involves conducting additional information on important food system related information that is not currently/readily available. Conducting this research will help to build a clearer picture of the local food system, and therefore, appropriate initiatives that would make the food system stronger. The areas identified in need of future research are organized in the tables below by the section of the report in which they were identified.

Table 58: Further Research Needed in Population


	POPULATION	
	Amount of people experiencing homelessness in Middlesex-London	
	Data on the number of people receiving ODSP and the number of beneficiaries (i.e. dependents) of social assistance within Middlesex-London	
	Initiatives that target food insecurity amongst Indigenous peoples	

Table 59: Further Research Needed in Food Production

	FOOD PRODUCTION	
	New crops that Middlesex-London can specialize in, as well as, the opportunity to work on a future regional crop diversification strategy;	
	Number of on-farm sustainable agricultural policies;	
	The specific goals and measures used and implemented in farm plans;	
	Number of independent farm policies and practices;	
	New crops that Middlesex-London can specialize in, as well as, the opportunity to work on a future regional crop diversification strategy	
	Soil and climatic conditions in regards to growing various crops	
	The amount or proportion of food being sold locally versus the amount of food being sold into the wider system—Provincially and beyond	

Table 60: Further Research Needed in Food Access and Distribution

	FOOD ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION	
	Development in alternative food distribution in Middlesex-London, which may include co-ops, developing food hubs, or programs like Coupons for Hunger	
	Additional information on food distributors, wholesalers, aggregators and warehouses, as well as community food hubs, is also needed, and a map of these within Middlesex-London	
	Micro-food processing activity that is taking place in the area	
	Annual amount of food produced for Community Shared Agriculture programs (CSAs)	
	Identifying market vendors and the products they sell at farmers' markets	
	Defining and breaking out the number of fast food establishments from the total number food service outlets	
	The percentage of food that gets processed and sold to Middlesex-London residents, alongside information on the potential barriers and solutions to	

FOOD ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION

increasing local food processing and procurement
Small-scale wholesale and distribution activities of food, as well as food storage and aggregation points in Middlesex-London
Availability of local food in the area made available through distribution and processing activity in Middlesex-London

Table 61: Further Research Needed in Food Purchasing and Consumption

FOOD PURCHASING AND CONSUMPTION	
	Total dollar value of food purchased in Middlesex-London, over the last 10 years, by type of establishment;
	Total dollar value of local food purchased in Middlesex-London, over the last 10 years, by type of establishment
	General public's attitudes and behaviours toward healthy, local and sustainably produced food;
	General eating habits by sub-population (disaggregated by age, gender, ethnicity, place of residence, education level, income level)
	Total dollar value of food expenditure by BPS institutions located in Middlesex-London
	Total dollar value of household food budget increase through the purchasing of food that is either healthy, local or sustainably produced, compared to the average household food budget
	Collect and standardize information on local food purchasing (including a definition for "local" food) to track progress across the Middlesex-London food system
Types of food being purchased, by type of establishment, and how much of this food is local;	

Table 62: Further Research Needed in Food Education, Knowledge and Literacy


FOOD EDUCATION, KNOWLEDGE AND LITERACY	
	How many people within Middlesex-London are taking part in food education programs, courses, and resources;
	Food literacy level of Middlesex-London residents;

Table 63: Further Research Needed in Food Waste Management


FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT	
	Data on the percent of diverted waste and diverted organic waste, as a total of all diverted waste;
	Composting behaviours of Middlesex-London residents (why some people compost and others do not);
	Amount of food wasted by producers, restaurants and supermarkets, fast food chains, processors, and distributors;

Table 64: Further Research Needed in Risk Management and Food Safety



RISK MANAGEMENT AND FOOD SAFETY	
	Number of provincial level food recalls that affect food sold in Middlesex-London; and
	A clear indication of the number, and/or how often, local food risk assessments are conducted.

Table 65: Further Research Needed in Funding, Financing and Investment

FUNDING, FINANCING AND INVESTMENT	
	Number and value of grants allocated to food system projects in Middlesex-London;
	Total number of loans awarded to farms and food businesses in Middlesex-London;
	Perceptions of access to credit along the food system value chain;
	Number of unique investors that finance food system activity in Middlesex-London and how much they are investing.

In addition to conducting research in various areas, there are a number of other initiatives that Middlesex-London can implement to support a stronger, more sustainable food system. The recommendations provided in Sections 2-11 of this report have been gathered and themed according to related food system topics. In Middlesex-London, recommendations fall within the following categories: innovative food policy, food funding and investment, urban agriculture, supporting farmers, local food procurement, infrastructure development, food waste, community programming and food literacy. An additional theme has been created for recommendations that do not fall within these themes and has been labelled “Additional Recommendations.” Below is a chart for each of the themes including all of the corresponding recommendations.

Table 66: Recommendations for Innovative Food Policy

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
INNOVATIVE FOOD POLICY				
Form a Food Policy Council, representing a diversity of stakeholders across the value chain, to begin moving forward on community-led initiatives and raising the profile of food within the municipal political environment.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prepare a draft terms of reference for the food policy council detailing the composition, number of meetings per year, roles and responsibilities, decision-making and voting process. Once the council is formed it can make any amendments to the terms of reference that it sees fit.		✓		
Use a fair and transparent nominations and election process for appointing members of the food policy council		✓		
Utilize any available staffing resources (e.g. through the Public Health Unit) to assist in administrating the food policy council and organizing the many working groups involved in supporting community initiatives		✓		
Use regulations to ensure that animal farming is ethical and humane.		✓	✓	✓
Implement procurement policies in institutions that facilitate the procurement of locally produced foods and drink.				✓
Develop land zoning policy to accommodate smaller farms.				✓
Create policies to support communication across the food value chain in regards to waste management.			✓	✓
Add “level of food insecurity” as an eligibility criterion to the City of London Community Improvement Policies for				✓

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
residential areas.				
Develop and launch a local, healthy and sustainable food system survey for local councillors focusing on gauging their willingness to support progressive agri-food policies and areas where immediate and longer-term results may be achieved.		✓	✓	✓

Table 67: Recommendations for Food Funding and Investment

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
FOOD FUNDING AND INVESTMENT				
Designate funding to community-led food initiatives that target food insecure populations.		✓	✓	✓
Reallocate funding for large-scale farming to include dollars for small-scale farming.		✓	✓	✓
Designate funding to community-led food initiatives that target food insecure populations		✓	✓	✓

Table 68: Recommendations for Urban Agriculture

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
COMMUNITY-BASED AND URBAN AGRICULTURE				
Implement community gardens in every neighbourhood, prioritizing those in communities designated as food deserts.		✓		
For those community gardens with re-occurring wait lists, Increase the number of community garden plots available.		✓		
Implement urban food projects, such as rooftop gardens, the planting of food		✓		✓

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
producing trees in public spaces, front-yard vegetable gardening, and making use of existing public space to grow food.				
Support urban food projects, such as rooftop gardens, the planting of food producing trees in public spaces, front-yard vegetable gardening, and making use of existing public space to grow food.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support the use of green (environmentally friendly) infrastructure in urban agriculture projects (e.g. rain gardens).	✓	✓	✓	✓
Apply for Greenbelt’s local food literacy grant stream and utilize grant money received to increase food literacy amongst residents.		✓	✓	
Explore additional means of receiving money, aside from funders (such as banks).		✓	✓	
Support the funding and financial landscape work that is currently being undertaken by such organizations as Sustain Ontario and FoodShare Toronto.		✓	✓	✓
Create a database of harmonized information on local food funding in Middlesex-London and/or Ontario.		✓		
Create funding streams where big food businesses fund local food system projects.			✓	
Leverage local dollars to acquire matching contributions of Provincial and Federal dollars.		✓	✓	✓
Work with funders to educate them on the types and needs of food system initiatives and activities.		✓	✓	
Help local food projects to clearly identify how their project meets the specific objectives as set out in the grant streams they apply to.		✓		

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
Create a local investment fund for food system projects.		✓	✓	✓
Incentivize purchasing on local and healthy food.		✓	✓	✓
Assist small local producers in marketing and retailing their product.		✓	✓	✓
Build the “Plant a Row, Grow a Row” model into each community garden. (see section 8.5 for more information)		✓		
Participate in the “Plant a Row, Grow a Row” campaign. (see section 8.5 for more information)	✓	✓	✓	
Make an explicit commitment to support urban agriculture through The Official Plan for London.		✓		

Table 69: Recommendations for Supporting Farmers

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
SUPPORTING FARMERS				
Increase the variety of crops that are grown; specialize in crops that grow in soil and climatic conditions found in Middlesex-London.			✓	
Engage in succession planning for the future of the agricultural industry in Middlesex-London.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create environmental farm plans that include social aspects (reflecting a full sustainability plan).			✓	
Integrate sound environmental management practices into farming operations.			✓	
Support farmers who choose to transition towards more sustainable farming practices and renewable energy sources.		✓	✓	✓

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
Promote farming as a career choice.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Incentivize and reward sustainable farm practices.		✓	✓	✓
Develop support programs for farmers, such as farm mentorship and internship programs and farm incubators.		✓		
Subsidize and protect new farm businesses through cost-neutralizing or guaranteed income programs.				✓
Promote participation in community shared agriculture programs.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expand community shared agriculture programs through involving more farmers and more shareholders.		✓	✓	

Table 70: Recommendations for Local Food Procurement

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT				
Offer locally produced, healthy food in variety and convenience stores.			✓	
Incentivize supermarkets/grocery stores to offer more local products.		✓	✓	✓
Offer a healthy, fresh and local food at concession stands in recreational facilities.			✓	
Encourage restaurants in Middlesex-London to participate in the Feast ON program.	✓	✓	✓	

Table 71: Recommendations for Infrastructure Development

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT				
Invest in local processing infrastructure for the small-to-medium sized farmers and food businesses focused on value-added products.			✓	✓
Establish a local food hub that can help to facilitate the logistics involved in alternative distribution.		✓	✓	
Leverage land use policies to develop Netherland-style care farms. (see section 8.5 for more information)		✓	✓	
Develop agrihoods, where agriculture and neighbourhoods work in tandem with one another. (see section 8.5 for more information)				✓

Table 72: Recommendations for Food Waste

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
FOOD WASTE				
Identify where and how the seven creators of waste are contributing to the waste problem and who needs to be part of the food waste solution.		✓	✓	✓
Implement a curbside green bin composting program in London.				✓
Encourage, promote, and demonstrate composting to acquaintances, friends and family.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Expand Community Harvest Program to other food bank locations in Middlesex-London.		✓		
Create a long-term vision for collective waste management.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 73: Recommendations for Community Programming

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING				
Utilize commercial kitchens (available through local businesses) to offer community space to groups that can shop, prepare food and cook together. Create an incentive for local businesses to offer their commercial kitchens.		✓		
Implement organized physical activity, regularly occurring, for families to participate in together.		✓		
Create and/or adapt existing healthy living programs for students to focus on healthy eating and physical activity.		✓		

Table 74: Recommendations for Food Literacy

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
FOOD LITERACY				
Transform food banks into food literacy centres (i.e. growing, cooking, cleaning, preparing, processing and eating food).		✓		
Educate the public about the local food system by hosting events that build local food awareness.		✓		✓
Increase awareness amongst the public about the true cost of fresh quality food so as to combat the false perceptions that food should be cheap.	✓	✓	✓	
Set up an interactive blog on food and food system issues, educating people on the importance of not only whole foods but also which of these foods come from local farms.		✓		
Advocate for food education to be built into elementary and secondary school curriculum.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
Expand food education efforts in elementary and secondary schools.		✓	✓	
Build a school garden in every school.		✓		
Advocate for a school garden in every school.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase awareness of the London Food Charter.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 75: Additional Recommendations

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS				
Decrease meat consumption and increase consumption of both fresh fruits and vegetables.	✓			
Every school in Middlesex-London participates in the Ontario Student Nutrition Program or a program that provides fresh, healthy food at no cost.		✓		
Participate in future action planning that is directed towards steering food dollars away from restaurants, especially fast food restaurants, and towards retailers of fresh whole healthy food. Couple this action with food literacy skills development work that empowers households to cook more often at home using fresh local ingredients.		✓	✓	✓
Implement actions required to achieve the objectives set out in the London Food Charter.		✓	✓	✓
Adopt a more holistic perspective when it comes to risk management, focusing on food safety and food availability.		✓	✓	✓
Strengthen local academic institutions research and innovation program in agri-food to ensure a clear focus on solutions			✓	

Recommendation	Participation in Implementation			
	Individual/ Household	Community- led/ Organization	Industry/ Stakeholders Across the Value Chain	Municipality (Middlesex- London)
that enhance a local, sustainable food system.				
Collaborate with corporations in the region on food-based projects.		✓	✓	

In addition to the recommendations provided in sections 2-11 of this report, the community also identified four initiatives that would assist in making the local food system stronger and more sustainable. The four ideas include:

- Carrying out a quantification exercise to determine how much food waste there is in Middlesex-London;
- Establishing a food literacy working group;
- Establishing a municipal policy bylaw mandating public institutions to procure a designated percentage of local food in their menus; and
- Creating a food hub that focuses on customers, logistics and storage.

Each of these initiatives is outlined in detail in Section 12.3 of this report.

As can be seen, there are numerous recommendations Middlesex-London can implement towards building a stronger, more sustainable food system. In deciding which initiatives may be most helpful, Canadian food policy analyst and writer, Wayne Roberts, provides 10 key recommendations for “issue managers” in the food sector; these recommendations can be used to prioritize what initiatives should be implemented first and foremost. Issue managers include those working towards addressing food system issues in various capacities (public, private, non-profit sector) and at various levels (individuals, community, municipal). Wayne recommends for issue managers to:

- Position yourselves as "solutionaries" and problem-solvers, not problem-raisers.
- Look for icebreakers and conversation-starter issues to begin with, so you can create a ladder of engagement. Move with assets already in place but that are currently underused.
- Position yourselves to be the tipping point; push an issue that already has already been identified as problematic on a larger level.
- Make full use of soft power, rather than limiting yourself to hard power (legal enforcement) of government. Try the power of example (e.g. a food garden in front of a prominent building).
- Make sure there is already a skilled and respected champion on side and make sure you have a respected partner (e.g. a faith organization or food bank) before moving on an

issue. The saying goes – If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

- Work on "universal" issues; take up issues of general public interest (such as school gardens that serve all children at the school, not just one group).
- Stick with issues that have consensus. Look for issues that have interest, relevance and benefits across the spectrum (e.g. initiatives that are good for environment, business, city finances, health and community).
- Look for issues where food has leverage, even if the issue is not a food issue. For example, a community garden can establish community cohesion and safety, and the provision of food is another benefit.
- Food work requires resources and skills and persistence, and deserves the backing needed to be sustainable. Most often, this requires the support of the municipalities. It does more harm than good to have a project start, flare up, and then end prematurely.
- The issue must have some tangible and direct impact on the wellbeing of city and county residents and the City and County as institutions.

As with many of Ontario's regions, the Middlesex-London food system is ripe with assets and opportunities for developing a healthier, sustainable, resilient and equitable food system. With an engaged public and collaboration from local community organizations, public institutions, industry and government, much will be accomplished with the appropriate initiative, resources, time and policy change. A food policy council will provide an on-going place for dialogue, decision-making, and the coordination of a variety of initiatives that may be citizen-led, community-led, industry-led, municipally-led, or truly cross-sector. A food policy council will not only ensure that the vision of a local and sustainable food system is served—and preserved—through the many projects it undertaken but a food policy council will also be the platform for information-sharing, knowledge transfer, and citizen engagement between the many activities and initiatives taking place on-the-ground.