

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Food Access

Nutritious food is essential for good health. Access to safe, dependable, affordable and healthy food improves both individual health and health of the community. Although Ontario has an abundance of nutritious food, not everyone has easy access to it. Some communities do not have grocery stores or farmers' markets. This means that some people need to travel long distances to buy nutritious food.

Food security means safe, healthy, affordable and personally acceptable food is available to everyone. Food-secure communities value local food and understand the impact on the environment (e.g. food that travels long distances contributes to climate change). These communities recognize the importance of agricultural land, and the need to preserve and protect farming land, water and other resources. Communities designed with food access in mind can result in improved food security for everyone.

DID YOU KNOW?

- People are more likely to meet their nutritional needs when they have easy access to grocery stores that sell healthy, safe and affordable food. Fast food outlets and convenience stores often sell highly processed food and beverages which are less nutritious.
- York Region is home to more than 700 farm-based businesses and 270 food and beverage manufacturers and distributors.
- Gardening improves healthy eating, promotes social interaction and is good exercise.
- Approximately 43% of York Region's landbase is designated agricultural or specialty crop lands. In fact, York Region includes more than half of the Holland Marsh, which is one of the largest vegetable producing areas in Ontario.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1-877-464-9675

york.ca/healthybuiltenvironment

19-5254

The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white bird or wing shape above the text "York Region" in a white, serif font.

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You make a difference when you . . .

- Buy locally grown vegetables, fruit and other healthy foods
- Ask grocery stores and restaurants (and other places where food is served) to provide more local food
- Participate in community, roof top or other shared gardens to make your community more self-sufficient, beautiful and neighbourly
- Learn more about community food programs and services available in your area
- Learn more about your municipality's official plan and how this plan can be used to promote access to healthy food

Municipalities show leadership when they . . .

- Make it easy for people to shop for healthy foods. Zoning by-laws should ensure healthy food is available in all parts of a municipality. Grocery stores, farmer's markets, produce stands and other food vendors need to be close to the people they serve
- Identify community garden sites in spaces such as parks, underused areas, and land around schools and recreational facilities. Garden groups need to be provided with start-up support and access to water
- Support a local food charter and set up a local Food Policy Council. Municipal governments, community organizations, farmers and community members can work together to improve access to local food
- Adopt land use policies that protect agricultural land
- Consider both healthy eating, and local food policies at recreation centres and municipal buildings

BE AN ACTIVE PARTNER WHERE YOU LIVE, LEARN, WORK AND PLAY.
Participate in building healthy communities!