



Rexdale Urban Agriculture Strategy

Prepared by TRCA Sustainable Communities Team

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INTRODUCTION

Urban agriculture is a fundamental element of a sustainable community, delivering important environmental benefits such as greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction; improved soil health and air quality; improved rainwater retention (which helps with flood and erosion reduction); and increased biodiversity. In addition, urban agriculture initiatives deliver numerous socio-economic benefits including increasing social interactions and community connections; offering education, skills building and employment opportunities; beautifying local greenspaces; improving access to nutritious and affordable food, and stimulating economic opportunities.

Urban agriculture initiatives also have the ability to produce a positive impact on both physical and mental health, including increased contact with nature; encouraging healthy, active living; and offering mental health respite. One of the key findings of the most recent Toronto Population Health Profile was a decline of mental health during the pandemic.¹ A massive breadth of literature supports the mental, psychological, and social benefits of gardening, so much so that prescriptions for gardening are being recommended as non-clinical supports for individuals in need.² Horticultural therapy has been found to be helpful in improving physical function and quality of life in older adults, including individuals with dementia.^{3,4} It follows that a well-managed urban gardening program could be very useful for this growing demographic and could help improve health at a community level.

For neighbourhoods with complex food security issues, like the Rexdale neighbourhood, local urban agriculture initiatives can serve as a much-needed source for nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food for many low-income and food insecure households. Local projects are often initiated with the sole intention of supporting food box delivery programs, to augment donations to local food banks, or to support low-cost market programs offered in the community. Without a doubt, a thriving, local urban agriculture community can offer short-term emergency assistance, as well as providing longer term support like community gardens, surplus harvest sharing and low-cost markets. As noted in the report, *Towards a Food Secure Future for North Etobicoke*, while “urban agriculture is not a solution to food insecurity, which will only come about through substantial economic and policy changes to improve the incomes of low-income households; urban agriculture does play a critical role in improving access to food.”⁵

¹ Toronto Public Health. (2023). *Toronto's Population Health Profile*. <https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/940f-Torontos-Population-Health-Profile-2023.pdf>

² Howarth, M., Brett, A., Hardman, M., et al. (2020). What is the evidence for the impact of gardens and gardening on health and well-being: a scoping review and evidence-based logic model to guide healthcare strategy decision making on the use of gardening approaches as a social prescription. *BMJ Open*, 10 (7). <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/10/7/e036923.full.pdf>

³ Hsieh, Y., Lan, S., Lu, L. (2019). Horticultural Therapy in Patients with Dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *American Journal of Alzheimer's Disease & Other Dementias*, 35 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1533317519883498>

⁴ Lu, S., Wang, Z., Zhang, Y., et al. (2022). Horticultural therapy for general health in the older adults: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLoS One*, 17 (2). <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0263598>

⁵ Darwin, F., Saxena, R. (2022). *Towards a Food Secure Future for North Etobicoke*. *North Etobicoke Food Security Report*.

In addition to improving access to food and providing other health benefits, urban agriculture initiatives have the potential to help achieve numerous neighbourhood-wide goals and objectives, like those identified in the Rexdale SNAP Action Plan. The Action Plan identifies goals and objectives for a number of sustainability themes, as well as identifies a series of recommendations across four action areas to help achieve those goals and objectives. The four action areas include Open Space Revitalization and Green Infrastructure, Boosting the Sharing and Circular Economy, Retrofits for Sustainable Housing, and Retro-Transformation of Streets and Intersections. Urban agriculture is represented under the Open Space Revitalization and Green Infrastructure action area. Within this action area, the Action Plan recommends development of an urban agriculture strategy to help identify opportunities for projects that will not only increase access to food, but that will also help achieve other important goals, including increased pollinator habitat, increased tree canopy through planting of fruit trees; increased opportunities to convert impervious surfaces to pervious to improve stormwater retention and soil health (e.g., converting paved areas to community gardens); increased opportunities for rainwater harvesting; increased planting of native edible and medicinal plants for food, but also to contribute to Truth and Reconciliation through knowledge sharing and education.

The Rexdale Urban Agriculture Strategy also aligns with the objectives and recommendations presented in the High-Level Resilience Strategy for Rexdale, and the Growing Healthy Towers: Transformative Partnerships for a Healthy Built Environment report. The High-level Resilience Strategy was developed alongside the Rexdale SNAP Action Plan, to integrate climate change resilience with the neighbourhood sustainability action plan. The report provides a number of adaptation and resilience strategies to help address key climate change vulnerabilities in Rexdale and help build community resilience in the neighbourhood. The strategies were developed based on input gathered through extensive community engagement (conducted as part of both the SNAP action planning process and the Northwest Toronto Neighbourhood Infrastructure Engagement Initiative) and technical analysis of neighbourhood-specific information through a neighbourhood-scale climate change vulnerability assessment. A number of the key strategies identified in the report can be directly addressed through implementation of urban agriculture initiatives, including opportunities to improve sense of community, mutual aid and the sharing economy; opportunities to enhance access to healthy, affordable food and to increase local food production by growing and preserving food locally and increasing the number of affordable, or free, outlets; establishment of community resilience/food hubs; opportunities to support continuous learning; and increased opportunities to improve tree canopy cover and access to greenspace to alleviate heat stress, among others.

The goal of the Growing Healthy Towers project was to establish intersectoral partnerships and identify integrated solutions needed to collectively address built environments and affect positive change on a number of social determinants of health. The project was supported by close to 50 organizations across Peel and Toronto regions and over a dozen sectors including public health, academia, social services, municipal staff, public housing, etc., who came together to help co-design potential solutions. Coming out of that project was a recommendation for the development of an urban agriculture strategy for the Rexdale neighbourhood given the potential for urban agriculture to help address a number of the socio-economic concerns that are top of mind for residents living in tower buildings, including insufficient access to food; lack of meaningful and well-paying employment; lack of social interaction and programming; urgency of a changing climate; and physical and mental health awareness and amenities. The Rexdale Urban Agriculture Strategy fulfills this specific

recommendation and the multi- sector partnerships developed through the Growing Healthy Towers project will be instrumental to the success of implementation efforts.

Unlike other priority neighbourhoods in Toronto, Rexdale has significant suitable space to support urban agriculture initiatives, residents have expressed a keen interest and desire to grow their own food, and there is already a growing urban agriculture scene, making Rexdale an area with enormous food generating potential. The Rexdale Urban Agriculture Strategy provides an overview of the current landscape and identifies key players who are already leading urban agriculture projects and programs in the Rexdale community. The main intent of the strategy is to provide recommendations to boost urban agriculture in the neighbourhood, including identification of supports needed to enhance existing initiatives and identification of potential new initiatives, partnerships, and approaches. A secondary goal of the strategy is to identify how urban agriculture projects can be leveraged to achieve other sustainability and resilience goals (e.g., improving soil quality, harvesting rainwater, creating habitat, encouraging community connections, building skills, etc.).

ABOUT THE REXDALE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In 2019, the City of Toronto and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) undertook a neighbourhood screening exercise led by TRCA's Sustainable Communities Team as part of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP). The exercise was designed to identify priority neighbourhoods within the City, that had overlapping climate, environmental, urban renewal and socio-economic priorities and that would be well suited for the SNAP program. Through this process, Rexdale was identified as the most vulnerable neighbourhood in Toronto, both from a climate risk perspective and from a socio-economic perspective.

What is SNAP? The Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Program (SNAP) of Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) is a collaborative, neighbourhood-based approach for advancing urban renewal and climate action in older urban areas. SNAPS help municipalities and other community collaborators improve efficiencies, draw strong local support, and build innovative partnerships for the implementation of a broad range of initiatives in the public and private realms.

The Rexdale SNAP neighbourhood is in the northwest corner of the City and is bounded by Steeles Avenue to the north, the Martin Grove Hydro Corridor and the Humber Arboretum on the west, the Humber River to the south, and Kipling Avenue and another branch of the Humber River on the east. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the Rexdale SNAP study area.

The study area is home to approximately 54,454 people with a diverse demographic: 89% of residents belong to a visible minority group, 64% identify as recent immigrants, and 52% have a mother tongue other than English or French.

Rexdale has been identified as one of the City of Toronto's Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA), and the United Way identified the neighbourhood as an area of concentrated poverty and vulnerable populations. Food insecurity, physical and mental health, employment, housing, affordability, and gang

violence are some of the key issues affecting the community. The average household income is \$79,968 and 28% of residents are considered low income. Throughout the extensive public engagement process, many residents shared their struggles due to precarious immigration status.

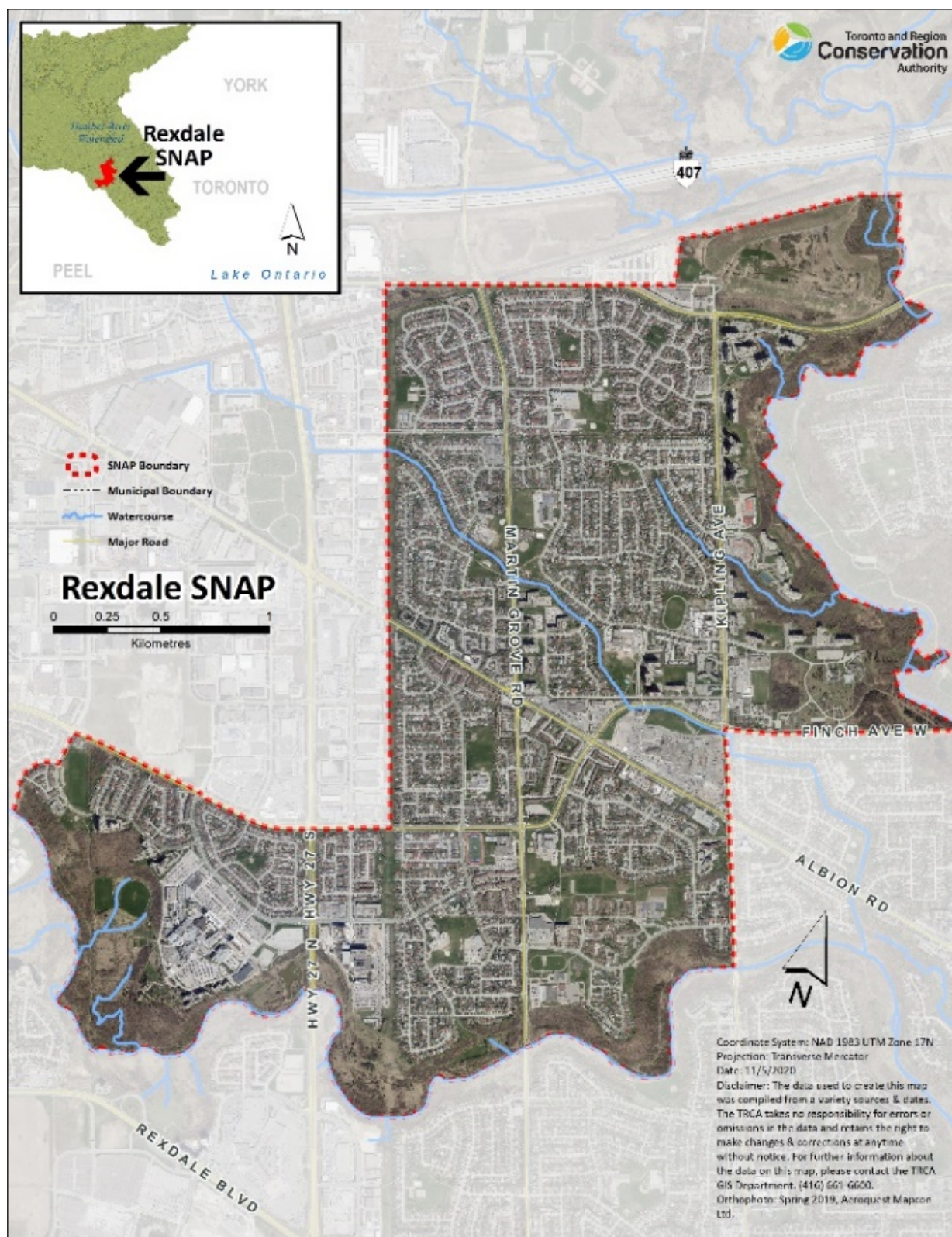
As noted in the Rexdale Food Access Committee (RFAC) Action Plan (Background Document), some of the key factors that differentiate North Etobicoke's communities include:

- Greater proportions of visible minorities, non-economic migrants (such as refugees and those reuniting with their families in Canada) and families with single parents when compared with the rest of Toronto.
- Areas in and around North Etobicoke have the greatest density of Black populations in the City of Toronto: historically, Toronto's Black population has faced systemic racism and discrimination in areas such as criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, education, and political representation
- Average Household Income in North Etobicoke is 41% less than that of the City of Toronto and incomes need to support more numbers of household members and children
- The region has historically had an overdependence on manufacturing jobs which have been rapidly declining over the past few decades. This trend, coupled with lack of investment in infrastructure like transit, has led to limited economic opportunities accessible to the population within North Etobicoke.⁶

Despite the socio-economic pressures, Rexdale is blessed with great social assets. The neighbourhood has numerous dedicated resident leaders that collaborate constructively with local agencies, investing significant energy and time towards improving their community. There is also a culture of mutual aid, with many residents helping neighbours with groceries, sharing prepared food, overcoming language barriers, car sharing, and other supports. Rexdale also has an impressive artistic community that infuses vibrancy into the life of the neighbourhood. There is also a significant proportion of the population that practices and shares expertise on mind-body activities like yoga and meditation, brought from their countries of origin.

⁶ Rexdale Food Access Committee. (2023). *Action Plan: Rexdale Food Access Committee (Background Document)*.

Figure 1 - Rexdale SNAP Neighbourhood



EXISTING URBAN AGRICULTURE INITIATIVES

A number of approaches and information were used to compile the existing state of urban agriculture initiatives in the community. In addition to desktop research, TRCA conducted a series of stakeholder interviews, as well as organized a number of site visits to gather information about existing projects and programs. Formal public engagement of key stakeholders was also performed. The urban agriculture strategy was presented and discussed with the Rexdale Food Access Committee and the North Etobicoke Cluster Table, whose members collectively represent some 25+ service organizations in the community and who are both focused on providing emergency support for food insecure families, as well as facilitating long term action to address access to food and food insecurity. Various teams within the City’s Social Development, Finance and Administration Division were also consulted about the strategy, including Poverty Reduction staff who led the development of the City’s Poverty Reduction Strategy which prioritizes food access as a key pillar. Staff also considered the feedback received during the significant amount of engagement that was carried out as part of the Action Plan and High-level Resilience Plan, the Growing Healthy Towers project, as well as the feedback received through the Rexdale Community Hub’s North Toronto Neighbourhood Infrastructure Initiative.

In total, TRCA staff connected with 18 stakeholders in the community, including resident groups, not for profit organizations, municipal divisions, for-profit businesses, landowners, academia, and local service agencies. Table 1 highlights the full list of stakeholders that were engaged during the development of the strategy.

Table 1: Community Stakeholders Engaged

Organizations engaged in development of the Rexdale Urban Agriculture Strategy	
Braeburn NBH Place	Panorama Community Garden
City of Toronto	Rexdale Community Health Centre
Coopers Foodscaping	Rexdale Community Hub
Foodshare	Rexdale Women's Centre
Humber Arboretum	Rexlington Community Garden
JJD Organic Harvesting	Toronto Public Library
Mama's Healing Garden	Woodbine Entertainment
Markbrook Resident's Association	Youth Without Shelter
PACT Urban Peace Program	Zawadi Farms

The engagement and research revealed there are fourteen active projects, six proposed projects or proposed opportunities, and three inactive projects within the neighbourhood. Of the existing projects identified, five are community gardens being supported through the City of Toronto’s Community Garden program or through the Toronto Public Library, three are projects being operated at multi-unit residential buildings, one project is located at a local school and five are located on private property or run by a private business. It was also noted that there are 10 foodbanks within the community. Figure 2 illustrates the location of both existing and proposed projects in the neighbourhood. As shown in Figure 2, projects that are located just beyond the

Figure 2: Rexdale Urban Agriculture Initiatives

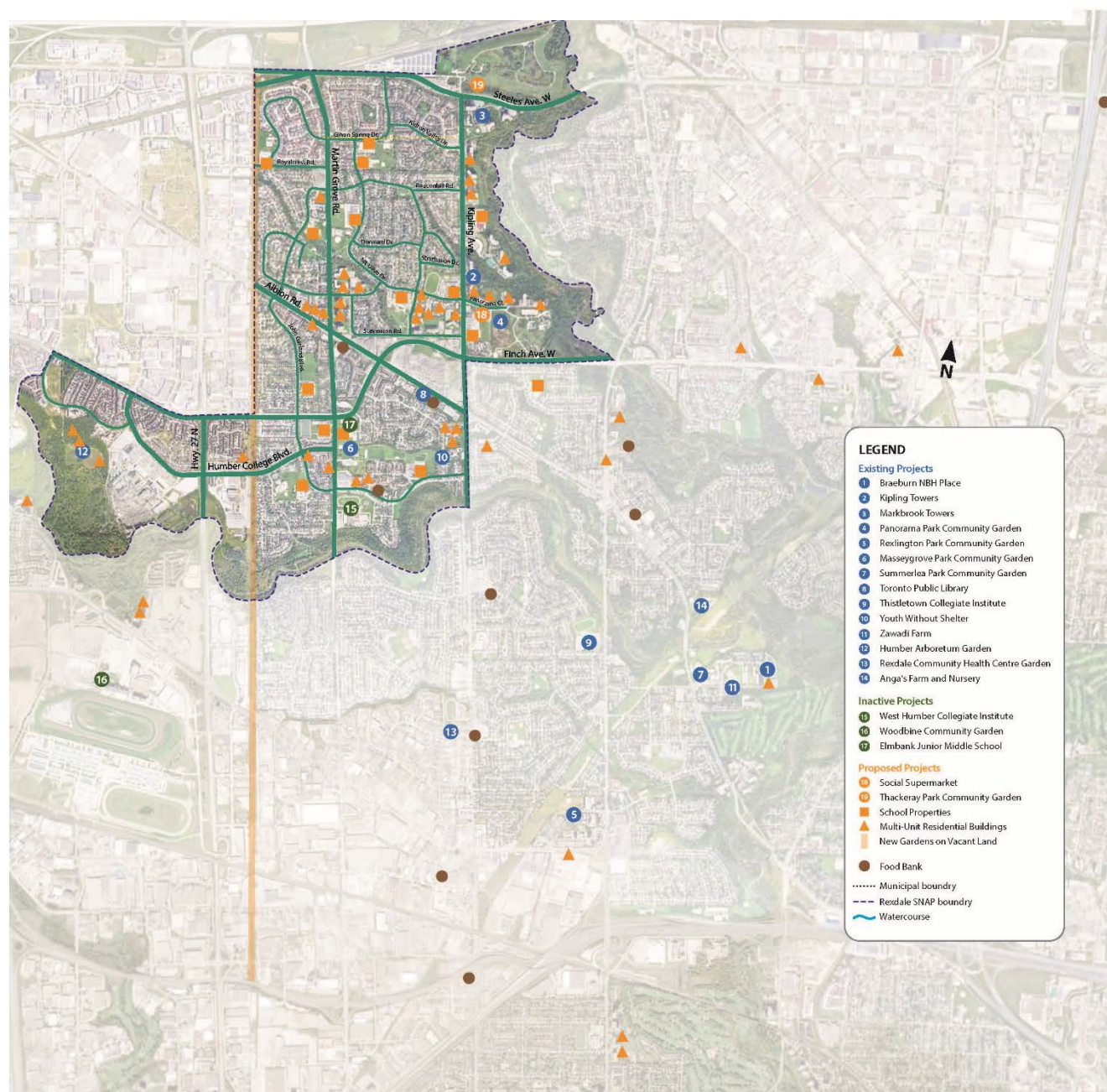


Table 2: Existing Projects

Project Name	Project Address	Lead Organization	Project Description
Anga's Farm and Nursery	89 Bankfield Drive	Private Ownership	Garden centre and nursery and oldest operating farm in Etobicoke
Humber College and Arboretum	205 Humber College Blvd	Humber College and Arboretum	Food learning garden, greenhouse, nut grove, fruit orchard and public programming. Produce is distributed within the campus community with some support to the community. Relevant college programs (nutrition, culinary, health and wellness, etc).
Kipling Towers	2667 Kipling Towers	Rexdale Women's Centre	Community garden and orchard, onsite compost and green bin program. Also offer related programming and youth camps
Markbrook Towers	10, 21, 41 Markbrook	Markbrook Resident's Association	Informal balcony garden program
Masseygrove Park Community Garden	10 Rampart Rd	City of Toronto	Allotment garden, managed by volunteer group
Panorama Park Community Garden	31 Panorama Court	City of Toronto and Panorama Community Garden Group	Allotment garden, managed by Panorama Park resident's group
Rexdale Community Health Centre	8 Taber Road	Rexdale Community Health Centre	Garden program to support Good Food Box program, managed by staff and volunteers. Also administer the Urban Harvest Toronto program which is funded by City of Toronto Waste Management Division
Rexlington Park Community Garden	30 Bergamot Ave	City of Toronto	Allotment garden, managed by volunteer group
Summerlea Park Community Garden	2 Arcot Blvd	City of Toronto	Community garden, new in 2023, managed by Mama's Healing Garden, harvest will be donated to support food insecure families
Tandridge Towers	75 Tandridge Cres	Braeburn Neighbourhood Place	Allotment garden, balcony gardens and tower gardens. Also offer related programming and youth camps
Thistletown Collegiate Institute	20 Fordwich Cres	PACT Urban Peace Program	Community garden that is managed by PACT, students help to maintain garden and produce is sold at low-cost markets or donated to community
Toronto Public Library Albion Branch	1515 Albion Rd	Toronto Public Library	Community garden (new in 2023 in partnership with North York Harvest Food Bank), and ongoing food-access related programming
Youth Without Shelter	6 Warrendale Court	Youth without Shelter	Community garden project with support from local faith-based organization
Zawadi Farm	118 Tandridge Cres	Private Ownership	Community Supported Agriculture business with donations being directed to food insecure families. Also deliver training/support for new growers.

In addition to the above noted existing projects, three inactive projects were identified. Table 3 summarizes the inactive projects including a brief description of the initiative.

Table 3: Inactive Projects

Project Name	Project Address	Lead Organization	Project Description
Elmbank Junior Middle School	10 Pittsboro Road	PACT Urban Peace Program	Community orchard, project is on hold pending renovations to the school grounds
Woodbine Community Garden	555 Woodbine	Woodbine Entertainment	Community garden and greenhouse, currently seeking partner to manage project
West Humber Collegiate Institute	1675 Martingrove Road	unknown	SNAP unable to connect with school at this time, but pre-COVID school was partnering with Humber College

PROPOSED INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to the above noted existing projects, a number of proposed projects and opportunities were identified. Two of these projects, the Social Supermarket and the Solar Powered Greenhouse, are in the initial planning stages with various levels of commitment, funding and/or support. Collectively, these projects and opportunities represent substantial potential to amplify the level of urban agriculture activity in the neighbourhood provided the appropriate support and funding can be secured. Opportunities to leverage urban agriculture initiatives to support broader, community-wide programs that will generate other positive impacts, apart from access to food, have also been identified.

Social Supermarket

The proposed Community Grocery Store Model project is being led by the Rexdale Community Hub in collaboration with a number of key stakeholders, including local ethnocultural food retailers; researchers from Toronto Metropolitan University's Centre for Studies in Food Security; municipal health promoters leading the City of Toronto's Food Strategy; a food bank and food distribution social enterprise; and local resident leadership. This project is looking to rely on local food system service structures to provide local residents with affordable, culturally appropriate food. The long-term goal of the project is achieve a food secure North Etobicoke; while the near term goal (5-10 years) is to develop a local food system that includes a community grocery store with a social purpose.

Solar Powered Greenhouse and Community Farm

The vision for this project is to secure land to construct a community farm, including 4 x 50-foot solar powered greenhouses where food would be grown all year round. The greenhouses would operate on a net-metering system and any surplus electricity would be sold back to the grid. The operation would also potentially include mushroom compost processing, bee keeping, and pollinator gardens.

This would be a community-based initiative and would strive to hire local youth, seniors, and immigrants to work on the farm and to run the retail side of the business (i.e., farm stand or social supermarket). It is anticipated that the operation would run as a not-for-profit business and produce would be sold at low cost to community members.

Thackeray Park Community Garden

The Markbrook Residents Group has expressed interest in developing a new community garden, or children's garden, in Thackeray Park which is managed by the City of Toronto. During the Action Plan engagement process, the project was discussed with the City's Parks Recreation and Forestry staff who noted that one of the primary concerns with this location is the fact that the area was formerly used as a landfill site. The residents' group is open to exploring options for raised garden beds to alleviate any concerns around potential site contamination.

Opportunities on Vacant Land

As noted earlier in the report, Rexdale is unlike other neighbourhoods in the City in that there is an abundance of open space within the community. These open space areas should be explored to identify specific locations that would be suitable for new urban agriculture projects. A suite of criteria will need to be developed to help identify whether or not a site is suitable, including factors like access to water and sun, easily accessible by residents, opportunity to store tools, etc.

Through the SNAP engagement process, residents suggested a number of possible locations, including the hydro corridor, which runs north-south through the neighbourhood, public right-of-ways and public parks that are owned and managed by the City, as well as valley lands which are owned by TRCA.

Opportunities at Schools /Institutional Properties

There are 16 schools in the Rexdale SNAP neighbourhood, and several others just beyond the SNAP boundaries. Only two or three to date, have hosted urban agriculture projects. Schools represent an exciting partnership opportunity, not only because they have an abundance of available open space that could partially be allocated to agriculture initiatives, but also because of the opportunity to engage students from a young age to improve food literacy, model healthy active behaviours, and encourage healthy eating through curriculum-based programming. School facilities also present an opportunity for shared use of community meeting space. A number of the schools in the neighbourhood likely have

commercial kitchens to support in-house food services and all would include gymnasiums or auditoriums and classroom spaces that could address community needs through a fee-for-service or partnership arrangement. School projects will need operational support over summer months. This could be achieved by hiring a third-party organization to oversee operations, as is the case at the project at Thistletown Collegiate Institute. Other obstacles, including provision of access, cleaning/maintenance, etc. during summer months or after school hours will also need to be addressed. The City's *Toronto Fun* camp program, which uses school facilities during summer months, could be a good model to replicate to support urban agriculture initiatives.

Similar to tower properties, many institutional properties, including faith-based organizations, also have underutilized green spaces and meeting spaces and/or kitchens that could be used to support urban agriculture projects and programming. Faith based institutions traditionally focus their operational efforts on serving and helping their members, many of whom come from the local community. The addition of urban agriculture initiatives, led by these institutions, could be a natural extension of their mission to give back and to support those in need.

Opportunities at Private Towers and TCHC properties

There are 36 multi-unit residential buildings in the Rexdale neighbourhood including 12 of which are operated by Toronto Community Housing Corporation. Many of these properties have active residents' associations or condo boards. Many house people with low incomes, new immigrants and refugees and many support multi-generational families. These properties also have a lot of underutilized green spaces which could be converted into 'publicly accessible' agriculture projects.

In addition, towers provide a unique opportunity to offer balcony garden programs which are often appreciated by seniors or those with mobility issues. Concerns related to drainage issues and/or the aesthetics of balcony gardens can be addressed through creative solutions. A pilot conducted in the San Romanoway Towers in the Black Creek SNAP, used a self-watering system for 120 balcony gardens. The project received zero complaints from tenants and demonstrated that these types of initiatives can be very successful if carefully planned.

The San Romanoway Project also demonstrated that urban agriculture initiatives can help foster a sense of community among tenants, promote a sense of pride, contribute to multiple health benefits, provide improved aesthetics, and help generate employment opportunities for tenants. These types of initiatives also benefit property owners and management companies by contributing to improved corporate social responsibility, improved tenant retention and satisfaction rates as well as operational efficiencies.

Opportunities for Food Sharing

Increased urban agriculture initiatives will bring about more opportunities for food sharing within the community. Food sharing programs could be formalized where applicable, for example between gardens and local food outlets/food banks and/or local restaurants and supported through the creation of

neighbourhood-based online or mobile applications. Informal food sharing programs are already happening in the neighbourhood, but could be enhanced through an increase in urban agriculture activities. Informal food sharing could be between neighbours, among members of faith-based institutions, within tower buildings, etc.

Opportunities for Low-Cost Food Markets

In addition to the proposed Social Supermarket initiative, increased urban agriculture activity could expand the potential for a series of affordable fresh food markets or farmers markets to be offered throughout the neighbourhood. Local gardens could provide fresh produce to support these initiatives or to supply or supplement local retail outlets with fresh produce grown locally.

Opportunities for Skills Training and Employment

Urban agriculture activities could provide an excellent opportunity for the development of hands-on, local skills training activities and educational programming to help build capacity for local leadership and to provide much needed employment opportunities. Training and programming could be developed with the intention of increasing urban food growing knowledge and skills, and to support learning and links to several other areas including nutrition and health, environmental sustainability, and to locally relevant social and cultural aspects of growing food.

KEY SUPPORTS NEEDED

Stakeholder engagement revealed that there are a number of key supports needed to not only help sustain or grow the operations of existing initiatives, but these same supports are also required to get new projects up and running. Key supports include:

Funding and/or In-kind Donations

The majority of the existing urban agriculture projects in the community are being managed by resident volunteer groups or not-for-profit organizations, both of which have limited funding at their disposal. Resident groups rely primarily on membership dues, which are minimal, as their main revenue stream. This income is not enough to sustain operations year-over-year and many of these groups look to partners in the community or to micro-grants, where eligible, for funding and or donations (i.e. soil, plants, hoses, wood, tools, etc.). Some projects that align with landowner objectives/corporate values may benefit from financial support from the landowner, in addition to permission to use the land. Not-for-profit organizations often have specialized expertise, a deep interest to do more in the communities they serve, and a unique ability to be extremely resourceful; however, they are limited in their capacity to expand because funding is often short term or precarious, both of which preclude operational flexibility.

Administrative Support

In order to be successful, most projects or programs need a dedicated core of volunteers, or paid staff, to manage day-to-day operations, attract new members, secure funding, and provide project oversight. Administrative support is most commonly needed for initiatives that are being led by resident groups. These groups may need to secure an organization to act as a trustee on their behalf. Trustees will manage finances, secure insurance, enter into partnership agreements, and apply for grant funding, among other roles, on behalf of the resident group. Without a formal administrative body or group of dedicated volunteers to oversee the operations of a project or program, many projects will fail or will not get off the ground in the first place. Through the SNAP engagement process there was resounding interest from residents for urban agriculture initiatives. There may be many groups who have ideas they would like to try, but without the know-how to get started, or the time required to administer a project, these initiatives may never come to fruition.

Partnership Brokering and Coordination of Neighbourhood Initiatives

Similar to administrative support, partnership brokering is a key tool for ensuring the success of projects and programs in both their infancy stage as well as to sustain long term operations. The Growing Healthy Towers project revealed the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships to accelerate the pace of neighbourhood-based, healthy built environment solutions, including urban agriculture initiatives. Securing key partnerships can be critical for overcoming barriers, supporting project or program growth, reaching new markets/clients, etc. With respect to urban agriculture, critical partnerships could be leveraged to secure access to land, sponsorship and operational support and/or to negotiate supplier discounts and/or donations, etc. Partnership brokering would greatly benefit resident groups, but other, well-established programs and projects can always benefit from aligning with new stakeholders to achieve mutual objectives.

Within the Rexdale community there is already great collaboration taking place among the numerous social service agencies, City staff, community groups and resident champions through forums like the Rexdale Food Access Committee and the North Etobicoke Cluster Committee. Opportunities to engage with the private sector should also be explored and encouraged. Appealing to businesses who are interested in improving their corporate social responsibility could be one way to leverage more support from private sector organizations.

Volunteer Support

Many of the initiatives that are happening in the community rely heavily on volunteer support to keep the projects operating. For projects that employ a user-benefits model, it is less difficult to attract and retain volunteers because volunteers receive immediate benefits (i.e., allotment gardens where volunteer keeps the harvest from the plot they maintain). For other projects that are purposely designed to provide a community-wide benefit, as opposed to user-benefit, these have a tougher time attracting and retaining volunteers. Student volunteers may be easier to attract as many are fulfilling

volunteer hour requirements to graduate; however, many will not remain committed for the long term. Many of the volunteer tasks require a certain level of physical stamina (e.g., moving/replenishing soil, weeding, repairing beds, etc.) which may not be appropriate for all volunteers. Rexdale has many resident champions that dedicate many hours to community initiatives; however, life demands, other priorities and burn out may prevent champions from taking on new tasks or supporting new projects.

Landowner Authorization

Landowner authorization will be required for the majority of proposed initiatives and opportunities where organizations are seeking to implement projects at new sites, and for existing projects interested in expanding. Authorization could take the form of simple verbal approvals to complicated agreements. Several groups involved in existing projects indicated an interest in expanding their current operations (including access to greenhouse space), but have yet to secure available land, or appropriate landowner support. Negotiations with key landowners could be managed collectively to improve efficiency (i.e., identify multiple opportunities at once for each landowner) and could be led by key organizations with pre-established relationships to improve outcomes.

Community Amenities

Community amenities should be an important consideration for all projects. Amenities like seating, shade structures, message boards, interpretive signage, art, etc. can often be added to projects to help achieve co-benefits. While some concerns have been raised from property owners related to liability issues and loitering or illicit activity, etc., experience has shown that the addition of amenities serves to animate community spaces, attracts more users/visitors and creates a sense of pride and a greater sense of security.

POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

In addition to the numerous projects identified through the engagement and research, it was also recognized that there are numerous organizations that are currently delivering programming, or actively supporting urban agriculture projects in the community. These organizations have valuable expertise and existing program offerings that could be leveraged to help scale up activities in the community, including potential for local employment and skills training. Some of the key organizations include:

PACT Urban Peace Program – is a registered Canadian charity that is committed to supporting and empowering youth, families and seniors, systemically under-resourced communities, and youth in the criminal justice system. PACT has a mission to strengthen community wellness by supporting and empowering residents with a focus on community programming, food security initiatives, coaching and mentorship and through the provision of experiential learning opportunities. PACT is currently partnered with the Toronto District School Board and supports urban agriculture initiatives at two schools in the Rexdale neighbourhood through their Grow to Learn program. PACT is interested in

expanding their service offerings, including cooking classes, community market and fresh food box programs should committed funding become available.

Zawadi Farms – is a private, community supported agriculture business with active farms in Rexdale and Downsview neighbourhoods in Toronto. Their mission to provide fresh, locally sourced produce and to contribute to a range of community and environmental benefits is what drives this business. Zawadi actively supports local food banks and charitable organizations to help increase food access to those in need. Zawadi is actively looking for available land to support their business operations and they are passionate about building the capacity of growers. They offer hands-on learning and educational opportunities to better help people understand where their food comes from and the importance of sustainable agriculture.

Foodshare – is a food justice organization, advocating for the right to food, and working to challenge the systemic barriers that keep people from accessing the food they need to thrive. Foodshare supports community-led food initiatives and works alongside communities most affected by poverty and food insecurity: Black and Indigenous people, people of colour, people with disabilities, and folks living on a low income. Foodshare supports a variety of projects, including urban farms, subsidizing local produce markets or coordinating community kitchens.

Anga Farms and Nursery – was declared the last remaining working farm by Etobicoke City Council on October 6, 1997. This private, family owned and operated business has a history of growing and selling food to local wholesalers and residents. The current owner has rebuilt the greenhouses, maintains a fruit orchard, produces honey, and grows thousands of plants each year which are grown and sold onsite. It has been reported that local schools arrange for visits to the garden centre and that Anga Farms has helped to support several local groups by offering discounts or donations of garden supplies.

Etobicoke/Toronto Master Gardeners – are local gardening groups comprised of active members and Master Gardeners. Both organizations partner with local groups, including Humber College and Toronto Public Library, to deliver in-person and virtual educational programming and events. Program offerings range from plant identification, pruning, pollinator friendly gardening to growing your own food. Both of these organizations are actively delivering programming in the Rexdale neighbourhood and could be an excellent delivery partner for enhanced urban agriculture-related programming.

Humber College and Humber Arboretum – have potential to be significant partners in the Rexdale urban agriculture community. With an existing food learning garden, greenhouse, nut grove, fruit orchard and apiary on site, along with free public programming, in partnership with Etobicoke Master Gardeners, the Arboretum staff are already very active in this space. Coupled with the College's culinary, nutrition, and health and wellness programs and development of a new micorcredential for urban farmers there are many opportunities to explore for future partnerships.

City of Toronto – provides access to land within the City’s parks system through its Community Garden program. Local community groups can apply for access and once approved, the City helps to provide initial support for capital improvements to support these projects (i.e., water supply, fencing, etc.). The City currently operates community gardens at four parks in the Rexdale neighbourhood; however, there are over 15 public parks that could potentially have space to support urban agriculture projects. In addition to the Community Garden program, the City also delivers other important initiatives that could help accelerate urban agriculture activities in the Rexdale neighbourhood, including Urban Harvest and LiveGreen Toronto. The Urban Harvest program was initially created by TRCA as part of the Black Creek SNAP project. The program has now been scaled and is funded by the City’s Waste Management division. The Rexdale Community Health Centre oversees the day-to-day operations of the Urban Harvest program. The City also offers food-related programming both in person at many of its public library branches, including the Albion Public Library, as well as virtually.

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) - operating since 1957, TRCA is one of the largest landowners in the GTA with a vision of achieving safe and resilient communities. TRCA can support urban agriculture initiatives by offering educational programming, delivered by our Community Learning Team, assisting with fundraising and through in-kind support to community projects, and through partnership arrangements that include use of TRCA owned lands for urban agriculture initiatives.

Other Partners

In addition to those organizations noted above, who have a direct interest in urban agriculture activities, there is a role to play for other key community stakeholders as backbone agencies, community connectors, information sharers, coordination support, etc. Examples of key stakeholders include the Rexdale Community Hub, who play a vital role in connecting the community to much needed services, the Rexdale Community Health Centre, and the Rexdale Food Access and the North Etobicoke Cluster committees, each of which include representation from a wide variety of community organizations and service providers.

Residents with lived experience also have a role to play in advising on new initiatives and sharing perspectives. Residents can be engaged through volunteerism or paid employment opportunities. Residents should be supported to encourage long term involvement, local leadership development and to influence decision making in their community.

As noted above, the private sector can also play a key role in supporting local urban agriculture initiatives. Many private businesses are looking for opportunities to give back to the communities they serve and in which they are located. Private investment can generate significant benefits for the community, while also helping businesses improve their corporate social responsibility and to demonstrate their environmental, social and governance principles. The GTAA’s commitment to the Rexdale community is an excellent example of how private investment and partnership can have a profound impact at the neighbourhood level.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of recommendations serves as a guide to help identify both short term interventions, as well as innovative approaches to implement in the mid and long term, that will collectively help support a robust, collaborative and productive urban agriculture community in the Rexdale neighbourhood. In addition to improving affordable access to nutritious food, the recommendations will also help to achieve neighbourhood environmental, social and economic co-benefits.

Implementation of these recommendations will require a collaborative effort between public, private and not-for-profit sectors. TRCA could play an integral role to help facilitate next steps and short-term action; however, the long-term goal of the strategy is to continue building capacity and facilitating collaboration opportunities among local organizations and individuals.

1. Secure a lead organization to chair a newly established Urban Agriculture Committee

- Committee could be comprised of organizations, resident groups, individuals, not-for-profits, private business owners, City staff and staff from other agencies and local service providers (committee could be a sub-committee of an already established group e.g., Rexdale Food Access Committee).
- Committee would be to serve as the backbone agency providing many of the supports described earlier in the report, including coordination and administrative support, knowledge sharing and expertise, partnership brokering, agreement negotiations, grant/funding identification, volunteer recruitment and coordination, communications, etc.
- Committee will help build community-wide awareness and increase the potential of collective action.
- Committee could help identify local trustee organizations that have capacity to support resident or informal groups
 - Match trustees as needed with informal groups looking to establish new projects.
 - Trustees to assist informal groups manage operational logistics including landowner authorization, financial administration, membership oversight, volunteer recruitment, grant writing, etc.

2. Secure annual and long-term, committed funding

- To support a dedicated staff person, or paid position to lead, in collaboration with/or as part of the Urban Agriculture Committee:
 - Identification of grant opportunities and communicating this information to local groups
 - Researching sponsorship opportunities from the private sector towards urban agriculture across the neighbourhood.
 - Once funding is secured, facilitate calls for proposals to access the funding, sponsorships, etc.
- To provide committed, long-term assistance to local service providers and not-for-profits
 - Funding would be used to support organizations to continue or expand current program offerings, particularly those that involve youth and/or school groups.
- To support art and other environmental initiatives (i.e., pollinator gardens, bird/bat houses, etc.) which offer benefits beyond access to food and which help beautify the community and encourage community connections.
- To support community food-focused events (i.e., Foodie Festival).

3. *Secure access to land and facilities*

- Initiate discussions with local school boards to explore opportunities for after hour use of school kitchens, meeting spaces, greenhouses, etc. to allow for expanded programming on a fee-for-use basis (i.e., cooking classes, nutrition workshops, food processing workshops, private business ventures, etc.).
 - Identify schools in the Rexdale neighbourhood that offer culinary, nutrition or related curriculum-based programming to determine most suitable candidates for outdoor urban agriculture projects.
- Initiate discussions with public landowners (e.g, City and TRCA) to identify any potential locations that would be suitable for urban agriculture initiatives. Match available locations with interested parties as needed.
- Initiate discussions with private landowners, including tower property owners/managers and faith-based institutions, Hydro One, etc.
 - Gauge support for urban agriculture initiatives on underutilized open space on individual properties or explore support for other related projects (i.e., balcony gardening, green bin/compost programs).
 - Explore potential for community use of meeting spaces, greenhouses, etc. to support programming.
- Coordinate pairing of available land/resources with interest from community organizations and local groups.

4. *Secure in-kind donations*

- Secure donations of soil, tools, wood, plants, planters, etc., from local businesses to contribute to neighbourhood initiatives.
- Secure in-kind contributions from the City of Toronto, and other large corporations, etc., for the benefit of all projects.
- Develop an inclusive and fair system for distribution of donations and contributions across all neighbourhood projects.

5. *Coordinate and support training, education, and skills training*

- Identify local training providers and develop an inventory of available curriculum, including identification of programming gaps.
- Develop a delivery model that is geared to a variety of interests (i.e., homeowners to small scale growers) and learning styles and make available in a variety of formats (i.e., in person and virtual).
- Offer formal skills training and entrepreneurship programs (e.g., through Humber Entrepreneurship Innovation Centre) related to urban agriculture and encourage related businesses to implement intern programs and to encourage hiring of local candidates.
- Offer educational programming geared to the general public related to nutrition, urban gardening, balcony gardening, fruit tree care, etc.

6. *Support expansion of a local volunteer network*

- Offer volunteer honorariums for leadership roles to encourage greater uptake and to guarantee long term involvement.
- Provide formalized training that develops transferable, employable skills.
- Encourage local residents to commit volunteer hours in exchange for training opportunities in urban agriculture, leadership, garden management, etc.

- Secure short-term volunteer help by leveraging students working toward community service hours, private businesses organizing corporate team building initiatives, etc.
- Capacity building could be led by urban agriculture groups, or other implementation partners or through a train the trainer program, where experienced resident leaders train volunteers.
- Coordinate volunteer opportunities related to urban agriculture with other volunteer opportunities in the community to improve efficiency.

7. Encourage actions that facilitate a sharing economy as it relates to urban agriculture

- Support sharing of resources (e.g., tools, seed libraries, tool storage, etc.) to achieve efficiencies and cost savings.
- Encourage initiatives that support sharing of food (e.g., expand urban harvest program, small donations from local gardeners and homeowners, etc).
- Secure materials such as wood, fencing, etc., to support local initiatives (e.g., utilize TRCA's Partners in Project Green's Material Exchange program).
- Develop a composting program(s) to encourage residential kitchen waste collection and make compost available to local projects.
- Encourage/formalize neighbour-to-neighbour skills sharing (e.g., gardening, cooking, food processing, fruit tree care, etc.).

8. Support actions that achieve co-benefits and enhance urban agriculture initiatives

- Secure funding and/or donations and property owner approval for public amenities that will enhance the user experience (e.g., benches, shade structures, working tables, tool sheds, water fountains (in parks) etc.).
- Support complimentary programming and activities that purposely encourage community connections/ friendships.
- Advocate for projects to include art and cultural activities to further animate the spaces.
- Encourage projects to implement rainwater harvesting, soil best management practices and implementation of pollinator gardens to achieve greater ecological benefit.

9. Support the proliferation of low or no-cost food initiatives to increase community resilience

- Support the Rexdale Community Hub's efforts to establish a Social Supermarket for the community.
- Secure partnership agreements with organizations and/or service providers to build on the social supermarket model to establish a network of local, low-cost food outlets/fresh food markets/member-based food and farm co-ops, etc.
- Encourage local projects to participate as network suppliers through the provision of surplus harvest donations and/or wholesale purchases.
- Establish a community resilience hub that also serves as a food hub for the community.

10. Identify an evaluation framework to measure the success of urban agriculture initiatives within the neighbourhood.

- Research existing metrics and approaches used to measure success in urban agriculture projects (e.g., Toronto Urban Growers, *Indicators for Urban Agriculture in Toronto: A Scoping Analysis*).
- Ensure framework includes appropriate indicators that capture social, economic and environmental outcomes
- Publish metrics on an annual basis to clearly demonstrate the range of co-benefits realized through urban agriculture initiatives, and to leverage future investment/funding.

NEXT STEPS

The following steps are intended to be short term actions that will be completed in 2023 and will be integral to growing, supporting, and formalizing an urban agriculture community within the Rexdale neighbourhood. It is proposed that these steps will be carried out by the TRCA SNAP team using available funding.

1. Conduct stakeholder outreach to gauge interest in leading an urban agriculture committee (UAC) with the intent of securing a lead organization and hosting an inaugural meeting during fall of 2023 to explore mission and goals for the committee, and participant roles.
2. Distribute available implementation funding to support local organizations and groups through a competitive and widely promoted, ***Call for Interest***. Funding will support 2023-2024 project activities.

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APPENDIX 1

Rexdale SNAP Urban Agriculture Projects/Initiatives Profiles

Profile #1: Summerlea Park Community Garden

Project Name	Summerlea Park Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Mama's Healing Garden (Annisha Stewart)
Location	Summerlea Park, 2 Arcot Boulevard, Toronto, ON
Start Date	Spring 2023
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Public – Mama's Healing Garden will have an agreement with the City of Toronto, but not until total set up is completed (fencing, storage, garden beds)
Key Partners	Delta Family Resource Centre, Rexdale Community Hub, Cooper's Foodscaping, Sundance Harvest, Foodshare (unofficial partner, but they have made donations to the project)
Funding	The City of Toronto has paid for everything so far, she needs funding for vegetables, she will also be soliciting donations. She will need funding to run programming and to implement any art projects to make it a welcoming and vibrant community space.
Maintenance	Garden will be maintained by Mama's Healing Garden
Project Evaluation	None to date
Plans to Expand Project Scope	None at this time, will revisit once project has been initiated

Project Description

This community garden was initiated under the City of Toronto's Community Gardens program which is operated by Parks, Forestry and Recreation. The program currently supports small-scale urban agriculture through community and allotment gardens. Individuals interested in securing an allotment garden are required to obtain a seasonal permit from the City of Toronto.

Day-to-day operation of the garden will be managed by Mama's Healing Garden, a local non-profit organization with support from other project partners, including Cooper's Foodscaping, Foodshare, Delta Family Resource Centre and Rexdale Community Hub.

The focus of the garden will be to grow food to support food-insecure families in the Rexdale neighbourhood. In addition, the garden will offer programming over time related to growing and processing food as well as offering wellness-based programming (i.e., Indigenous-led, BIPOC focused, African drumming, caregiver support groups, etc.). The approximate size of the garden is 70x70 feet.

Mama's Healing Garden is incorporated and in the process of obtaining not-for-profit status.

Annisha Stewart started Mama's Healing Garden to support self-empowerment for people to get well both mentally and physically. Annisha grew up in Rexdale and currently still resides in the neighbourhood. She is a community development service worker and sits on the North Etobicoke Resident Council (NERC) as Treasurer. She also is on the Board of Directors for the Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People. She is coordinating the physical installation of the garden, with the intention of growing food for families experiencing food insecurity using a collective growing model where people can attend a workshop, learn how to grow, and take home some of the harvest. She currently has a list of 100 families that are experiencing food insecurity that food can be donated to. Workshops will be open to the entire catchment area in Rexdale, hoping to teach people how to grow food for themselves rather than meeting the immediate need for food. Mama's Healing Garden will decide what crops to grow based on community feedback and will feature culturally appropriate and highly nutritious foods. Mama's Healing Garden has access to a community kitchen in the Tandridge Recreation Space, but likely will need a larger space to utilize as they have substantial interest in workshops to be offered.

Supports Currently Received

The City of Toronto is covering implementation costs, but Mama's Healing Garden will pay for costs moving forward to operate the garden. The City of Toronto will help with maintenance/repairs moving forward but will not be providing any operational funding.

Supports Required

- Funding to purchase vegetables, organize programming (hire program leaders)
- May need support to figure out delivery logistics
- TRCA funding in 2023 will be used for grand opening event for the garden
- Need funding to install trellises and other beautification projects, edible art – want people driving by to notice, stop, explore
- Funding to help garden administrators learn about or offer workshop about packaging foods and processing food so they can provide food all year round

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #2: Panorama Community Garden

Project Name	Panorama Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Eleanor Jimenez
Location	Panorama Park, 31 Panorama Court, Toronto ON
Start Date	2011
Number of People Served	45 participants before COVID-19 began
Land Ownership	Public
Key Partners	Rexdale Community Health Centre, Rexdale Community Hub, Etobicoke Master Gardeners, Park People
Funding	Originally funded through the United Way and Westin grants, now funded by microgrants to support maintenance and programming
Maintenance	Maintained by members, members bring their own soil and plants, but some donations received every now and then
Project Evaluation	Evaluations completed pre-COVID-19; they want to reinstate evaluations to determine benefits from gardening in the wake of COVID-19
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Want more space, but are restricted by City of Toronto and Province of Ontario land ownership

Project Description

This community garden was started in 2011 with help from the Action for Neighbourhood Change and United Way. The garden is community-based, featuring individual plots available for those who apply to participate. There is no fee for participation, but participants are responsible for providing their own soil and plants. Before COVID-19, there were 45 participants. Most of these participants were senior citizens, but there are a handful of younger participants as well. Given the limited space available, there are often 10-20 people on the waitlist who are unable to participate. As such, they are looking for more space to expand into. However, they have encountered barriers to expansion due to the presence of both provincial and city lands on the property.

The Panorama Community Garden works closely with the Rexdale Community Health Centre as well as the Rexdale Community Hub, the latter being a garden trustee.

The Panorama Community Garden received a \$50,000 grant for one year and used this funding to deliver a 6-week kids camp, cooking classes, school gardening projects, and rebuilding the garden. They have also received microgrant funding through Park People. The City of Toronto has not provided funding or support

directly but does have microgrants available that the Panorama Community Garden has applied to. Specifically, they have applied to a microgrant focused on mental health and gardening. This is a key area of focus for the garden as the Rexdale community has been significantly impacted by COVID-19. The community garden is used as a gathering space, where tea sessions are held to invite discussions about the challenges faced by the community and provide support to one another.

Participants in the garden are primarily residents from 2677, 2667, 2645 Kipling Avenue and Panorama Court multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs). Although most participants are from these buildings, anyone from the neighbourhood can apply to participate. Participants manage their own plots and get to take their harvest home for consumption. The crops grown are often culturally appropriate and reflect the wants/needs of garden participants. Some of the most grown crops are tomatoes, Swiss chard, peppers, and callaloo.

The Panorama Community Garden hosts an annual cleanup day, a community event in Panorama Park with support from Park People. During this event, they get the word out about the garden and provide information about how to apply. They also identify which garden members are returning, as these individuals have priority. After they have been taken care of, registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Supports Currently Received

Currently they have no financial support from the City of Toronto. They often apply for micro grants to help with garden maintenance and programming.

Supports Required

- Funding for rebuilding plots, buying plants, and replacing soil.

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #3A: Masseygrove Park Community Garden

Project Name	Masseygrove Park Community Garden (also called the Elmbank Community Garden)
Lead/Contact Name	Althea Martin (Rexdale Community Health Centre)
Location	Masseygrove Park, 10 Rampart Road, Toronto ON
Start Date	1990s
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Public
Key Partners	Rexdale Community Health Centre, Elmbank Community Centre, City of Toronto Parks and Recreation
Funding	N/A
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	None to date
Plans to Expand Project Scope	N/A

Project Description

The Rexdale Community Health Centre is a social service agency operating out of the Rexdale Community Hub. As a leader in health system transformation, the Rexdale Community Health Centre uses its deep understanding of community needs to improve lives through strategic advocacy, strong partnerships, and innovative programs and services. Several of the programs and partnerships offered through the Rexdale Community Health Centre help to facilitate improved access to fresh, healthy food in the community.

The Masseygrove Park Community Garden was started almost 30 years ago, when a resident championed the project. The resident worked with the City of Toronto to identify and secure the space. Original funding was provided by an organization that no longer exists due to funding cuts. Then, the City of Toronto Parks and Recreation department took over garden maintenance. Staff at the Elmbank Community Centre was also involved in the maintenance of the garden for a period.

The Masseygrove Park Community Garden is no longer active. They do not have a designated champion responsible for maintaining the garden. There was at one time a local foodbank nearby, but since it closed during COVID-19, there were reduced numbers of visitors to the garden.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

N/A

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #3B: Rexdale Community Health Centre Garden Boxes

Project Name	Rexdale Community Health Centre Garden Boxes
Lead/Contact Name	Althea Martin (Rexdale Community Health Centre)
Location	8 Taber Road, Toronto, ON
Start Date	2010s
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Private (leased by Rexdale Community Health Centre)
Key Partners	Foodshare, Healthy Kids Community Challenge (Ministry of Health)
Funding	Healthy Kids Community Challenge (Ministry of Health)
Maintenance	Staff and volunteers, water supply from adjacent building
Project Evaluation	None to date
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Exploring options for microgrants to expand quantity of garden beds

Project Description

The Rexdale Community Health Centre leases space at 8 Taber Road and has control over the activities on the property. They have 3 garden boxes and 2 garden beds at the Rexdale Community Health Centre. The harvest from these planters goes toward their food box program which supplies 600 boxes bi-monthly to residents in the Rexdale community.

The project started with senior citizen volunteers who helped with growing herbs and vegetables. This continued throughout COVID-19 with support from the Black Creek Community Farm. COVID-10 caused the Rexdale Community Health Centre staff to maintain and look after the gardens. They are interested in getting more senior citizens involved in garden maintenance.

There are two hydroponic towers at the Rexdale Community Health Centre that they hope to revive this summer. They have also bought some hydroponic towers for local schools/apartment buildings.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

N/A

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #4: Markbrook Lane Residents Group

Project Name	Markbrook Lane
Lead/Contact Name	Markbrook Lane Residents Association (Monika Chopra, Jatin Solanki)
Location	10, 21, and 41 Markbrook Lane
Start Date	N/A
Number of People Served	1
Land Ownership	Balcony gardens are private, parks are public
Key Partners	North Etobicoke Cluster, City of Toronto, Rexdale Community Hub, Park People (potential)
Funding	Balcony gardening kits provided by SNAP, plants and materials provided by Kwame at Kipling Towers Reduce Reuse Hub. Sherry Phillips and Park people both encouraged them to apply for the available grants. They were successful in receiving micro grants such as sparking change grants, but TD grant application was not approved.
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	None to date
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Increased participation in balcony gardens, pollinator garden implementation in public spaces

Project Description

The Markbrook Lane Residents Association has identified several potential urban agricultural projects that they would like to see developed.

First, they are interested in exploring the potential of balcony gardens at 10, 21, and 41 Markbrook Lane. At 21 Markbrook Lane, there are currently about 20 balcony gardens. These balcony gardens were supported by Kwame at the Kipling Avenue Reduce Reuse Hub and STOP Community Food Hub. This influx in balcony gardening started in the wake of COVID-19.

At 21 Markbrook Lane, there is also interest in adding new trees/shrubs on the east side of the building. They have also contacted the City of Toronto's Parks supervisors for North Humber Park to express their interest in more trees and pollinator gardens.

Secondly, they are interested in creating a community garden at Thackeray Park. This location was a former landfill, but they would like to implement raised beds for vegetable gardening. So far, there have been no discussions with the City of Toronto, but initial discussions with the Rexdale Community Hub have taken place. One potential barrier to implementation is a water supply, which would need to be investigated to determine feasibility.

Thirdly, they are interested in implementing pollinator gardens at both Haimer Park and North Humber Park. These public parks do not have any flower beds, and the park is highly used. Sherry Phillips of the City of Toronto and the North Etobicoke Cluster has encouraged the Markbrook Lane Residents Association to apply for a TD Parks grant to initiate small projects e.g., garden clean ups, in North Humber Park, but they were unsuccessful. Local residents have been very vocal about these two parks, speaking with the local Councillor about their desires for revitalization.

The community at the Markbrook Lane towers has strong cultural ties to farming, handicrafts, arts, dance, etc. They are hoping to have an urban project similar to "Wychwood Barns" at Thackeray Park and children garden under the sustenance of Rexdale Community Hub as to respectfully utilize the land for the community.

Supports Currently Received

The new management and board at these MURBs are open to new programming and projects. However, they do not have funding to help get projects going.

Supports Required

- They would like to have more plants donated and are interested in offering programming for residents

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #5: Woodbine Cares Community Garden

Project Name	Woodbine Cares Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Kimberley Medeiros
Location	555 Rexdale Boulevard, Toronto, ON
Start Date	Unknown
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Private
Key Partners	Woodbine Entertainment, North York Harvest, Evergreen, Telus, Humber College/Arboretum. GTAA, Etobicoke General Hospital
Funding	Woodbine Entertainment
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Open to discussions

Project Description

The community garden on the Woodbine Entertainment property which was last active in 2019 pre COVID-19. It was an important project for Woodbine employees who enjoyed participating and maintaining the garden. It was originally implemented to support Woodbine Entertainment's community impact and employee engagement initiatives. The food produced in this garden was being donated through North York Harvest. There is ample space and a large greenhouse on the property.

The community garden became inactive during COVID-19 when Woodbine staff started to work remotely. Now that staff are back in the office, there is a desire to reactivate the community garden. However, they are seeking partner organizations to assist with supporting garden maintenance. They are currently working with the TRCA tree planting team and are a member of TRCA's PPG.

When the garden was active, Woodbine Entertainment paid for all the garden materials, plants, etc. Woodbine Entertainment has microgrants up to \$5,000 focused on vibrant and connected communities, as well as environmental communities. In the past, Albion Neighbourhood Services as well as the Rexdale Community Hub have been recipients of these grants. Woodbine also engages in long-term giving to Humber College, Etobicoke General Hospital, and two different women's shelters. These are based on long-term partnerships and do not require organizations to apply for this funding. They are actively looking to fund initiatives which address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as well as Indigenous Relations.

Woodbine has engaged the TRCA to conduct management vendor selection on our behalf over the next 8 months, with the goal of revitalizing the garden beginning in Spring 2024.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

- They would need support for garden maintenance and management
- They are open to discussing options to pay interns, local youth, and residents

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #6: Humber College Food Learning Garden

Project Name	Humber College Food Learning Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Janet Almeida and Jimmy Vincent
Location	Humber College, 205 Humber College Boulevard
Start Date	2016/2017
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Private
Key Partners	Humber College, Etobicoke Master Gardeners, West Humber Collegiate Institute
Funding	Centre of Excellence and Innovation (Centres of Innovation Network), TD grant for \$20,000, Humber Alumni department supported grant applications
Maintenance	Humber Arboretum staff
Project Evaluation	Tracking of weekly harvests
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Adding more fruit trees, finding ways to donate excess/surplus harvest when students aren't around (i.e., in the summer). Update: Through the Centre of Innovation for Health & Wellness connection, the majority of the produce is now being distributed to the Rexdale Community Health Centre which supports 70 local families.

Project Description

Humber College's Food Learning Garden is one element of the Humber Arboretum. Produce grown from this garden is being dispersed throughout the Humber community, namely to residents/students, the College's culinary program, on-site restaurants, and camp programs where educational opportunities are aligned with the growing season to allow participants to learn to grow and consume what is grown.

Humber College has a "pay what you want" soup bar that is supported by the garden. Update: the soup bar program is currently not running. We will let you know if this changes. Jimmy is already in discussions with our Student Union representatives to determine future plans from their end and how we can support.

There is a nut grove on site at the Humber Arboretum that features black and Persian walnuts, and they are looking to establish an orchard on the property. They currently have crab apple and cherry trees.

Supporting Rexdale CHC has changed the need as we are supporting quite a few families in the area. This garden involves multiple departments at Humber, including the Office of Sustainability (Lindsay Walker), Community Workforce Development (TBD), and Centre for Innovation in Health and Wellness (Vanita Varma).

In partnership with West Humber Collegiate Institute, the two parties are developing an outdoor learning space from an old urban farm that was funded by PACT and provided food to local foodbanks. Note: this has no connection to our Food Learning Garden. Perhaps this is removed?

Humber College brings in students from different programs for them to tour, harvest, and learn about the garden. The Nutrition and Lifestyle Management program (Peter Rick) offers a food supply chain course which could be a good collaboration to discuss how produce can be utilized and not wasted. The hope is that this program will be free of charge for students (working with Humber's student federation called IGNITE) and could facilitate the dispersal of excess food to those in need.

Janet has connected with the Garden Pods Project at the Humber College Lakeshore campus in partnership with LAMP – they grow seedlings in their greenhouse that are then transported to the Lakeshore Campus. However, it should be noted that the greenhouse does not belong to the Arboretum, it belongs to the Faculty of Applied Science and Technology.

They are also keen to start a garden for their Traditional Chinese medicine program. However, this is still in exploratory phases.

They have a strong partnership with the Etobicoke Master Gardeners, who run free workshops about gardening throughout the year.

Supports Currently Received

The Humber Arboretum team currently oversees and maintains all initiatives connected to the Food Learning Garden with some funding support from Humber Central.

Supports Required

- Looking for additional funding support in order to continue to flourish this area, expand resources, educate and ensure no harvest goes to waste.

Project Photos: Video shared by Janet

Profile #7: Youth Without Shelter

Project Name	Youth Without Shelter
Lead/Contact Name	Khaleah
Location	6 Warrendale Court, Toronto, ON
Start Date	March 2022, restarted spring program in March 2023
Number of People Served	4-10 people per session
Land Ownership	Private
Key Partners	N/A
Funding	Local church group
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Want to offer more outdoor and gardening programming

Project Description

Youth Without Shelter is a privately run shelter who received support from a local church group to implement an urban crate program. This program is a gardening project that grew vegetables in crates.

This experience has inspired them to take on more gardening projects.

They often offer hikes and walks in the spring and summer months and are always looking to offer outdoor programming. Due to transportation limitations, programs will either need to be in walking distance or alternative transportation would need to be arranged.

As they work with a transient population, they can't ensure the number of participants for programs/events.

Many of the residents are high school students who need volunteer hours.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

N/A

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #9: Kipling Towers Community Garden

Project Name	Kipling Towers Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Maurine Campbell
Location	2667 Kipling Avenue
Start Date	2016
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	Private (Humber Property Management)
Key Partners	Rexdale Women's Centre, Kipling Residents Association, Seneca College, Urban Harvest, Live Green (supporting balcony gardens), City of Toronto Tower Renewal
Funding	Foodshare has helped in the past, all funding goes through tenants' association to decide how to spend, City of Toronto has provided materials in the past and supported their bike hub
Maintenance	Individual gardeners responsible for plots
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Would like to expand the size of the garden and offer health/nutrition programming

Project Description

The Kipling Towers Community Garden is a garden with 12 plots and 6 raised beds and fruit trees nearby. The garden also helped to implement balcony gardening in these MURBs.

They also run a 6-8 summer camp program where kids learn about reducing, reusing, and recycling, as well as garden/water/weed one day a week and grow plants from seed. The camp is targeted for kids 10-14 years of age, and they typically have approximately 15 participants. They initially worked with the City of Toronto's Tower Renewal program to develop this program.

They also offer an after-school program which is an extension of the summer camp, aiming to keep kids outdoors and active, and out of trouble.

There is a senior and adult program where residents/tenants work directly in the garden.

They have a partnership with Seneca students/interns to help with the community garden, community outreach to educate residents on proper use of kitchen waste.

They also have a green bin program attempting to incentivize residents to properly dispose of kitchen waste. However, there is only one dumpster-sized green bin split between the two MURBs, and it has proven to be inconvenient for residents as the compost cannot be put down the garbage shoot.

They are also exploring the option of finding one or more resident champions in each building to increase community engagement.

The MURBs have a community kitchen where they are reinstating the Urban Harvest programming which is open to the public.

There is a bike hub (funded by the City of Toronto) as well as a food donation hub (Foodshare, African Food Basket, Abode Community Service Centre, as well as local churches and individuals). The food donation hub enables food donations to go to the community.

One key partner is Foodshare who manages community gardens and composting at many buildings throughout the City of Toronto.

Live Green is an organization who has supported these MURBs by providing support for balcony gardening.

Lastly, there was a “Leading Healthy Eating” program that connected participants with dieticians from George Brown.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

- Require funding for materials to expand the garden and involve more residents
- If they were to receive funding support, it would go to the Rexdale Women’s Centre or the Residents Association (Rexdale Women’s Centre provides trusteeship to the Residents Association)

Project Photos: Photos sent after meeting

Profile #10: Toronto Public Library

Project Name	Toronto Public Library Albion and Kipling
Lead/Contact Name	Elton D’Costa and Kara Miley
Location	1515 Albion Road
Start Date	2023
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	City of Toronto
Key Partners	North York Harvest, Toronto Master Gardeners
Funding	TPL Operational funding and grants
Maintenance	N/A, but water supply from building
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Once they have a new idea, they find funding to run a pilot and then if successful they find funding to scale idea up

Project Description

The TPL Albion branch is in the process of getting grant funding to build a community garden. This funding will support the development of 10-12 garden beds in addition to programming (they plan to hire a programmer to deliver programming around food access and food security. They plan to partner with North York Harvest to have them manage the garden but these logistics are still being sorted out. Pre COVID-19 they had a gardener on staff who offered programming such as gardening in small spaces e.g., balcony gardening. They consistently had about 20 participants over a 6-week course.

They also partner with North York Harvest to provide snacks for youth hubs. Monday-Friday from 3:30-7 PM they offer drop ins at the youth hubs which is usually accompanied by programming. This initiative is a social enterprise aspect of their work. Most of the funding goes back into the neighbourhood to create more sustainable food options. They have received an initial/interim report and have been able to add 8 more communities to their roster.

North York Harvest foodbank also has a satellite foodbank location in the TPL Albion parking lot on Wednesday and Thursdays. TPL simply offers the space and North York Harvest manages this program and it often gets quite busy with community members.

In 2017, they had an environmentalist who ran programs during the course of their 12-week residency. This is a program of the TPL where this individual delivers the same program across many TPL locations/branches.

In 2015 the new library was built in this location, giving them an opportunity to engage with the community to see what they wanted. The results indicated that kids spaces were particularly important, and that the community was interested in a food market on the property.

Their partnership with Toronto Master Gardeners has been fruitful, with lots of interest and engagement from the community in relation to their available programming.

Lastly, they have hosted a Foodie Festival in the past. It was at one time run by the Rexdale Community Hub, but during COVID-19 was paused. The TPL has an interest in reviving this event and is working on fundraising to support this event.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

- Volunteers will be required once the project is up and running.

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #13: Rexlington Park Community Garden

Project Name	Rexlington Park Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Januja Jeyarajah
Location	Rexlington Park, 30 Bergamot Avenue
Start Date	2023
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	City of Toronto (1-year garden permit has been issued)
Key Partners	City of Toronto, North York Harvest, Master's Pantry, Markham Food Bank
Funding	Through Urban Farm Initiatives (not-for-profit), as needed
Maintenance	A water supply line is installed, Urban Farm Initiatives responsible for day-to-day operations and the year-end clean up. The City of Toronto will provide soil/compost for the first year but subsequent years, the not-for-profit is responsible.
Project Evaluation	None to date
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Pollinator gardens, educational school programming

Project Description

A proposal for this community garden was ready in 2018, but the project was delayed because of COVID-19. The first year was implemented in June 2023, after all the garden beds and water supply was fixed.

In 2022, they piloted the project with a small garden plot (4x6 feet), producing 2 kilograms of food, which was donated to a family in need. Once the project is implemented, its intent is to be a community garden with collective gardening of organic produce.

Urban Farm Initiative is the non-profit that was formed to oversee the Rexlington Community garden. They currently have another site in Markham where they partnered up with Unionville Alliance Church. The site is about 3000 square feet, the site has gone through soil testing, tilling of the soil and installation of garden beds. The produce from this site will be dispersed throughout the community and Masters Pantry.

They have approximately 12 volunteers from the Rexlington community garden, who were recruited through public announcement boards. At each of the harvest, the volunteers who helped at the garden

receive a certain portion of the harvest and the rest of the food generated from this project is donated to North York Harvest. To date, we have harvested 35lbs of produce from the first harvest event.

The garden is approximately 5,000 square feet. The City of Toronto completed all of the start-up work including fencing, water, garden preparation, supplying tools, paying for soil testing. The City of Toronto also provided a concrete bunker, but the design prevents them from harvesting rainwater.

The coordinators of this community garden want to ensure the community is involved and have partnered with a local women's shelter who they have donated seedlings to in the past.

Supports Currently Received

They have a greenhouse in Januja's backyard where they grow seedlings for donation (YWCA, Rexlington community garden and Unionville Alliance Community Garden).

Supports Required

- Seedlings – this year they grew 1500 to 1700 seedlings from seed, but in future years funding to help purchase seedlings would be good
- Soil, compost, water totes, seed packets, pollinator plants, trellis

Project Photos: Instagram

@ufitoronto

Profile #14: Braeburn Neighbourhood Place Community Garden

Project Name	Braeburn Neighbourhood Place Community Garden
Lead/Contact Name	Shobha
Location	75 Tandridge Crescent, Toronto, ON
Start Date	N/A
Number of People Served	Approximately 300 families served total (35 families in community garden, 265 families in balcony gardening)
Land Ownership	N/A
Key Partners	N/A
Funding	City of Toronto
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	Balcony garden program has been evaluated and results indicated that it gave families and kids routines, helped them eat better, and people got sick less often.
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Expand balcony gardens

Project Description

The Braeburn Neighborhood Place Community Garden started as a resident group in the 1970s, when women in the community had a vision for what they wanted to see.

Braeburn Neighbourhood Place is a grassroots organization that grew in the 1970's from the vision of women living in the Tandridge and surrounding community with little or no access to services. In the early 1990's food insecurity became an increasingly troubling issue for many families. The agency was able to access outdoor space that became the start of community gardening where families were able to work together, grow their own vegetables and herbs, and freeze excess produce so that in the winter months they continued to have access to much needed nutrition. Braeburn provided and continues to provide seeds, soil, plants and garden tools for all families for all gardening programs to remove as many barriers as possible to successful participation.

The community garden was not able to operate during COVID-19, which is when they implemented a balcony garden program. It proved to be a popular program as people could participate without having to leave their homes, and it turned out to be better for seniors/older adults as far as accessibility. Now that it is operating, it is used by adults and families.

For those interested in participating, there is a sign-up sheet for the community garden. They offer some culturally appropriate produce options such as okra, fresh herbs, peppers and zucchini.

During COVID-19, they offered virtual educational programming via Zoom. These Zoom programs are still continuing through parent/child EarlyON programs, which have a STEM focus. Families can share ideas, successes and learn together. About 30 families come with their children onto the Zoom Gardening programs weekly.

They have also created a summer camp program for children aged 6-12 years where they learned about composting and participated in both STEM activities and outdoor education. They received a small pollination grant. They also added a component to teach children about how to sprout food.

For the balcony gardening program, residents were provided with buckets/containers, soil, hand tools, and plants (from Anga Farms, Sheridan Nurseries, and Lowes). The most recent reports indicate that 300 balcony gardens were implemented.

Supports Currently Received

Supports Required

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #15: PACT School Gardens

Project Name	PACT School Gardens
Lead/Contact Name	Mariela Libedinsky, Anne Bell, J. Paige Lockett
Location	Various (see details of each below)
Start Date	8 years ago, PACT entered into a formal agreement with the Sustainability Office and Educational Programming
Number of People Served	400 people per week served through food box program
Land Ownership	Private – school properties
Key Partners	School boards in the GTA
Funding	Vast majority of funding provided by PACT (primarily for infrastructure); school boards provide nominal support
Maintenance	GTL Staff and Canada Summer Jobs students
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Expand number of school gardens, implement projects on private property, e.g., MURBs and delivery skills training and educational programming outside of schools, expand fresh food box program

Project Description

PACT's Grow to Learn (GTL) program teaches schools and communities about food and gardening. GTL feeds families and seniors in under-resourced neighbourhoods, it creates safe, green spaces for pollinators, and it transforms communities in the Greater Toronto Area.

Their organic school gardens/urban farms provide safe, experiential, and positive learning environments and help to raise awareness of important issues related to healthy eating, nutrition, environmental sustainability, and food security in our schools and local communities.

GTL works with school boards to select schools for garden implementation. They also offer programming to schools without current community gardens (mostly downtown Toronto schools). Preference is often given to Eco Schools and/or schools with existing or proposed food education.

Generally, it costs approximately \$100,000 to run a school garden (they also pay the school board).

Thistletown Collegiate Institute (TCI) is the largest garden in the GTL program. It is comprised of 18 field beds that grow a variety of vegetables. They also have some fruit trees on the property. Anne is the

manager of this garden, and she works closely with one assistant and 2 Canada summer jobs students. To maintain the garden, it requires two full time staff, and the Canada summer jobs students, and they collectively do most of the work. Students participate twice a week in the form of compost hauling and weeding. Once harvested, the food is connected through a food box program which is subsidized and dispersed throughout the GTA. Surplus food is also available for students and staff to take home.

On a monthly basis, the GTL program organizes school markets which are community-focused events that sell produce and offer engagement activities. They hope to host their first one at the end of June 2023.

TCI has a culinary arts program which has proven to be an important asset for the success of the garden. One of the teachers sees great benefit to the garden and has incorporated it into his teaching.

At TCI, they process all of the compost (through both closed and open bin programs) and provide education about what to compost.

Some of the educational programming delivered as part of the GTL program includes compost workshops, plant identification, agriculture, food systems, food supply chains, etc.

Elmbank Junior Middle School is another school that the GTL program operates within. They have a fruit orchard on site, and the garden is in transition because of playground renovations. The plan is to restart programming next year. This garden is orchard based, with approximately 15 trees and raised garden beds. As this garden is smaller in comparison to TCI, this garden is focused on educational programming as opposed to production. GTL is working collaboratively with a landscape architect to design a new garden. The plan is to expand the garden to increase its size and capacity. Food harvested from this garden will go towards the fresh food box program and market program.

West Humber Collegiate is another school that the GTL program operates within.

Supports Currently Received

Supports Required

- Would like to expand the program and have as many school gardens as possible
- Funding to support program coordination, management, and admin
- In addition to space and funding for staff to continue and expand the program, GTL also needs infrastructural support at the existing and new gardens (some of which is already established or needs reinforcing). Specifically in the form of water access for the irrigation systems, electrical outlets to consider adding coolers or fridges at or near the gardens (if consistent access to inside the schools and their fridges is not an option), as well as health and safety guidelines and protocol for outdoor work and food processing, such as a sink with running water, shade, seating,

Project Photos: See video of cooking demo on social media – teacher had students harvest from the garden and did a cooking demonstration.

Profile #16: Zawadi Farm Inc.

Project Name	Zawadi Farm
Lead/Contact Name	Jessey Njau
Location	Backyard locations in Rexdale, renting ½ acre space at Downsview Park
Start Date	2016
Number of People Served	100 customers across the GTA
Land Ownership	Currently renting land at Downsview Park through Fresh City Farms
Key Partners	Fresh City Farms, Zawadi Connections (NFP), Foodshare Toronto, fellow small-scale farming operations, Neighborlink Food Hub
Funding	Self-funded in 2023 but looking for grants (grants strong enough to cover capacity building which is what he needs)
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Capacity building, space expansion, education and training

Project Description

Jessey Njau, the founder of Zawadi Farm, has been farming in Rexdale for the past seven years. He aims to create an extensive network of small-scale farmers across the province.

Zawadi Farm's mission is to effectively utilize the available space and resources to their full potential, to make nutritious food more accessible to every resident in Toronto. They are committed to improving food security and fostering a sense of community by focusing on sustainable small-scale agricultural practices and innovative techniques. Through their efforts, they aim to contribute to the well-being of fellow citizens and promote a healthier, more inclusive urban environment.

Due to the high demand for his knowledge and expertise, Jessey is expanding his offerings to more people through capacity building.

The three foci of his business are to:

1. **Increase growers** - Developing and supporting local small-scale farmers
 - Jessey offers a 5-day intensive program to train more growers and expand his offerings' reach. Together with Homestead TO, he also developed a 5-year incubation program to add more growers to the market.
2. **Increase Growing Space** - Another way to expand small-scale farming and food production is by increasing access of available growing space. This can be achieved by expanding the existing spaces within and around the city.
3. **Increase Market Access** - Find a solution for food access - Building and connecting markets to bring food to the community.

All his farming practices at Zawadi Farm and to all who are learning from him, are based on high organic growing standards with zero tilling, and ecologically sensitive practices. He ran a

community farmer's market in the Rexdale Toronto Community Housing neighborhood for a period. He even started a farmer's market located at Woodbine Mall, but he has noted that this location is not as accessible to the community.

Zawadi Farm offers a subsidized program – a Community Shared Agriculture project supplied by his backyard farm operation in Rexdale and the plot he rents at Downsview Park. With less than an acre of growing space, he can feed 100 customers across the GTA and offers surplus produce at low cost to the Rexdale and North York communities.

Supports Currently Received

- Subsidized shares are purchased by private donors and distributed to low-income communities through local charities and food hubs across the city.
- Canada Summer Jobs Program - we hire youth and other members of the community to join us during the farming season

Supports Required

- Infrastructure
 - Land, for growing space and training
 - Warehouse with adequate space for a cooler and produce processing stations,
 - Certified community kitchen, to run educational programming about food storage, preservation (canning, etc.), and cooking.
 - Office space for capacity building, education, and training
 - Build a small-scale farmer food terminal to add to the local food economy and logistics.
 - Indoor market space for a year-round presence
- Promotional Visibility
 - Funding for promotion/visibility of what's available within the network, including
 - Education and training
 - Employment
- With 20 acres, he would need 40 staff for gardening, delivery people, and produce processing

Project Photos: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/44131Ka6LZZVhmtN9>

Profile #18: Kosarainc

Project Name	Kosarainc
Lead/Contact Name	Jennetta Lee
Location	51 Panorama Court
Start Date	N/A
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	TBD
Key Partners	TBD
Funding	TBD
Maintenance	TBD
Project Evaluation	TBD
Plans to Expand Project Scope	TBD

Project Description

Jennetta has lived in the community for over 20 years, and currently donates food to Rexdale Community Hub every week. She rents land in Burlington where she currently operates a Organic farm. She has a diploma in Food and Nutrition Management and also a Chef Training.

She is interested in securing about 3 acres of land at 51 Panorama Court. The property is about 70 acres in size and is owned by the Province of Ontario. It is slated to be developed for social housing and a nursing home. However, Jennetta has been in touch with the local Councillor who will be meeting with Doug Ford to request approximately 3.0 acres at 51 Panorama site for a solar run of the grid greenhouse and farming operation.

The operation would include 5 x 50-foot solar powered greenhouses where food would be grown all year round. The greenhouses would operate on a net-metering system and any surplus electricity would be sold back to the grid. The operation would also potentially include mushroom compost processing, bee keeping, and pollinator gardens.

This would be a community-based initiative and she would be looking to hire local youth, seniors, and immigrants to work on the farm and to run the retail side of the business (i.e., farm stand or social supermarket). It is anticipated that the operation would run as a not-for-profit business.

Produce would be sold at prices more affordable than supermarkets. And with any surplus in food production left these foods will be donated back to the Rexdale Community Hub food bank and local food banks in the area to help those individuals who are marginalized and racialized with finding healthy foods.

Project has been costed out and she has provided this information to the Rexdale Community Hub, proposing that this project be part of the Social Supermarket/Rexdale Community Hub Grocery Store (but this project could also be run independently as well).

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

- Space to expand

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #19: Rexdale Community Hub Grocery Store

Project Name	Community Grocery Store Model
Lead/Contact Name	Russ Mitchell, Rexdale Community Hub
Location	TBD
Start Date	July 1, 2022
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	TBD
Key Partners	Toronto Metropolitan University, FoodShare, North York Harvest, North Etobicoke Residents Council, City of Toronto, Al-Meezan Grocery
Funding	United Way
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	Ways to utilize surplus harvest

Project Description

Russ Mitchell of the Rexdale Community Hub (RCH) is leading this collocative initiative with other team members from the RCH and wider community stakeholders.

The idea of a local community grocery store had been considered in recent years, but did not come to fruition due to space and funding limitations. This project approaches the community grocery store idea with a new lens by building on established relationships with local businesses, RCH's experience of other food-related events and initiatives in the community, and collaborative learnings during the pandemic. The project idea is to develop a social supermarket model that uses local infrastructure, food systems, and service infrastructure, and provide local residents with culturally appropriate, affordable food. The long-term goal of the initiative is a food secure North Etobicoke.

Central to this project is a feasibility study that will consider the desirability, feasibility and viability of a grocery store. With a focus on 'desirability', the research part of the study is being led by a team from Toronto Metropolitan University and supported by community-based participatory researchers; consultants retained for the project will also explore the operational requirements (its feasibility) of the initiative and its financial viability.

In the first year, a team of researchers and consultants were brought together, along with a cross-sector group of stakeholders to form a Food Action and Advisory Collaborative (FAAC). Now, having confirmed a potential grocery store model, year 2 of the project will first focus on research, data collection and analysis of findings for the project's feasibility study, followed by prototyping and testing models to see what works. In year 3 the final feasibility study and financial model will be completed. In addition, all the learnings to date will be available to inform a design charrette in preparation for a full pilot project.

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

N/A

Project Photos: N/A

Profile #23: FoodShare

Project Name	FoodShare Toronto
Lead/Contact Name	Orlando Gomez
Location	N/A
Start Date	N/A
Number of People Served	N/A
Land Ownership	N/A
Key Partners	N/A
Funding	N/A
Maintenance	N/A
Project Evaluation	N/A
Plans to Expand Project Scope	N/A

Project Description

FoodShare has a range of existing projects and initiatives, but not in Rexdale specifically.

The Flemington Park Garden, located in the Hydro Corridor, has 9 farmers involved.

There are over 600 community gardens across the City of Toronto, however many are not able to sell the food they grow (it is for personal use only).

FoodShare is working with CAMH on a garden project whereby clients can join the garden and participate in maintenance and in the greenhouse. This garden is located at 100 Queen Street West.

FoodShare is also a trustee for the Black Creek Community Farm and has a partnership with the TDSB. In fact, they have a greenhouse on site at Burnhamthorpe Collegiate Institute where they are growing seedlings. From this project, they donate approximately 30,000 seedlings annually, and deliver between 4,000-5,000 good food boxes.

Suggested resources to explore are:

1. Toronto Farmers Network
2. Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario
3. National Farmers Union of Ontario

Given Orlando's extensive experience in this field, the following were identified as large-scale, neighbourhood-wide aspirations for the Rexdale community:

- Facilitate access to land – lots of groups interested in community gardens but have no land to use, Foodshare trains young farmers and is trying to connect them with people who have land
- See more BIPOC people involved and in leadership positions
- Raising awareness among leaders and funders – educate these people about need for urban agriculture so they can support initiatives
- Summarize policies (i.e., right to food)
- Urban Agriculture Week (September) – get more communities involved and sharing stories
- Funding – long term/sustainable to support staffing/initiatives
- Build capacity within communities to run their own programs/gardens
- Circular economy – find ways to link this to urban agriculture (i.e., pay people for their compost, encourage sharing/swapping food, tools, etc.)

There is potential for partnerships and collaborations on the following initiatives:

Trustee Role (see Supportive Partnerships Platform on website)

- Application form on their website
- Trustee receives 15% of any grants to cover their administration costs
- Groups do not need to be incorporated to apply
- Groups have access to Foodshare policies, or can create their own

Community Compost Programs (see website for more info)

- Currently working with Panorama Garden, Rexdale Women's Centre, Rexdale Community Hub on compost programs

Good Food Market (see website for more information)

- Requires a group of residents to oversee market coordination and logistics (receive food, sell food, manage any excess, financials, manage partnership with Foodshare, promote market, etc.)
- Order food from Foodshare and arrange the delivery, funds get sent to Foodshare after the market
- Food is sold at low-cost, Foodshare can provide some credits each month if not all food gets sold
- Need a location to run the market
- Can be run up to 1x per week
- Priority is to make food affordable, second is to use local

School Grown

- Gardens on school property
- Needs to involve parent councils to run through the summer
- He was able to use the kitchens in some schools

Great Big Crunch

- Schools request to participate, register, receive apples

Chefs in the Classroom

- Invite chefs to come into the classroom
- Share their experience/journey to becoming a chef
- Program inspires kids to be involved in food industry, learn about careers related to urban agriculture

Train the Trainer, Gardeners Network

- They also offer training for groups who want to start a community garden
- They started a gardener's network in BC SNAP, need a local agency to lead, brings people together to share knowledge, share tools, offer training/workshops, Foodshare helps connect these groups to grants

Supports Currently Received

N/A

Supports Required

N/A

Project Photos: N/A

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